Reorientation Through Interruption: On the Relation of Immanuel Kant's Modes of Egoism to His Critical Philosophy

Giancarlo Tarantino
Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation
http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/524

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 2010 Giancarlo Tarantino
Why is it that when something tragic, or something incredible occurs in our lives that we often feel a kind of disorientation? When a parent or child is suddenly taken from us, when we find ourselves (not) loving someone, there is a common experience of feeling like our life has lost some stability, that we don’t feel the same amount of confidence in answering questions like “where am I,” “what time is it,” or sometimes even “who am I?” What is just as common a phenomenon is that this same sense of disorientation occurs when we go through a significant change in the way we think about our lives, and the world. The two clearly go hand-in-hand. When we are hurt by a loved one, we may begin to wonder about the nature of human relationships, or about the character of people, or more specifically about our own selves - “how could I have let this happen,” “what did I do,” “why would they do this to me,” etc, etc.

The phenomenon of orientation bears a close kinship to the phenomenon of being interrupted. It seems almost trivial to point out that what disrupts our lives is often what disorients us. An unexpected rupture between two people can have the effect of leaving both scrambling to re-orient their lives. Even something as mundane as being interrupted when we are immersed in our work can force us to throw our plan for the day out of the window. Of course the term “interruption” usually bears a negative connotation, but this is not entirely warranted. After all, what is it to be surprised to see an old friend unexpectedly than to be interrupted? An interruption is simply whatever breaks up the
“direction” in which things had been going, and which does so by “ barging in;” that is to say, at the exact moment of interruption it is always that case that we “didn’t see it coming.” If we find ourselves completely bored, for example, almost any interruption will be welcomed. What is more, if we try to eliminate the possibility of any interruption from our lives because of the danger it always presents to our current orientation, we may very well miss the chance to discover a deeper orientation (even if by “deeper” we simply mean something like “Que serà, serà”), not to mention an anxiety disorder. Yet, the phenomenon of being interrupted did not earn its negative connotation entirely without justification. If an interruption, however small, provokes the movement orientation-disorientation-reorientation, it may not be without some kind of risk/danger/anxiety/lament. Even when we bemoan the “direction” our lives have taken, we might think that any orientation is better than none at all. The pervasiveness of the phenomenon of orientation, and interruption are such that we might wonder to what extent they have been explored philosophically? Something which seems so common, and so central to the experience of being human seems to lend itself to such consideration.

Rather famously, Immanuel Kant claimed that he needed to be roused from a “dogmatic slumber” in order to see - perhaps discover - that there is an orientation issue involved even in the use of reason itself. Whether in a practical use, or in a specifically theoretical use, reason must have a sense of “direction.” More fundamentally however, Kant believes reason is, to a large extent, capable of discovering its own (dis)orientation, as well as capable of re-orienting itself. Howard Caygill remarks that, to a considerable
degree “Kant’s entire philosophy may be read as an exercise in the orientation of
judgement.”¹ On another level, we might parallel Caygill by noting the incredible extent
to which Kant’s philosophy itself is a major point of philosophical orientation for almost
any serious student. Yet we cannot appreciate Kant’s critical-transcendental exploration
of the concept of orientation if it remains divorced from the overall life of a human being.

Critique and “anthropology” are profoundly intertwined, though the question of
how to explore this connection remains a difficult problem. While some may wish to
side-step the complication by keeping strict boundaries between the two, this paper will
attempt to reveal why this is, both textually, and philosophically, a great disservice to
Kant’s work. Specifically, we will try to show an important link, though there are sure to
be many, between Kant’s critical work, and his “anthropological” description of different
forms of “egoism.” Kant’s concept of egoism, as we will hopefully see, presents itself as
a unique kind of “link” between anthropology, and critical theory - a link that is both
structural (the modes of egoism correspond to the three critiques), as well as theoretical.

As we will discuss below, this largely has to do with the intriguing, and complex role
Kant claims for it in relation to the bifurcated “ego” (i.e. the transcendental unity of
apperception, and the empirical ego). What will hopefully emerge is a picture which
suggests that the (re)orientation of the mind is at the same time the interruption of so
many tendencies toward egoistically assuming one is already (properly) oriented. From
one perspective then, this paper will be primarily theoretical, even largely exegetical; but
from another perspective we will try to keep in mind Kant’s “pragmatic” spirit, defined

as “the investigation of what [man] as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself” - in this case, a disposition to re-approach questions of truth, goodness, and beauty with more “humility”, and less “egoism.” Moreover, coming back to the phenomenon of interruption, we will attempt to uncover the ways that “egoism” can be said to be interrupted, so as to engender, and make possible, the movement orientation-disorientation-reorientation. Insofar as an interruption could be said to be unexpected, and occasionally a bit “shocking,” it may be helpful to look to that which Kant himself was surprised, and shocked, to discover, namely the antinomies of reason. As we will see in a letter to Christian Garve below, Kant’s original philosophical orientation, which he later referred to as a “dogmatic slumber,” was interrupted by the antinomies which helped to point the way to Kant’s transcendental reorientation. However, before we can do this we must begin with a more specific discussion/problematization of the relationship between anthropology, and critical philosophy. With this in place, we will then turn to an exposition of Kant’s modes of egoism as they are found in his Anthropology, before finally being in a position to investigate their relationship to the three critical works.

I. Preliminary Remarks on the Relationship Between Anthropology and Critique

In Michel Foucault’s The Order of Things, he writes that “man” qua specific topic of anthropological-philosophical speculation, remained largely unexplored, until around the 18th century - unexplored, in fact, because it did not exist. It is a distinctive turn in late 18th century philosophy, Foucault argues, that it begins to posit “man” as something

which needs to be specifically conceptualized (i.e. “normalized”). Within this turn “man” re-appears in a rather confused, and unspecified philosophical position. At the turn of the century, Foucault writes, “man appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows: enslaved sovereign, observed spectator.”

Before we can attempt to open up the existing relationship between Kant’s concept of “egoism,” and its relation to his critical work, we must take a moment to enter into this “ambiguous position.” For insofar as we will be principally dealing with Kant’s Anthropology as well as his “three critiques,” we are at the same time necessarily dealing with a question of how the enslaved can be sovereign, the observed a spectator. What is the relationship between “anthropology” and “critique?”

Immanuel Kant hints at just such a discussion in his “Jäsche Logic” lectures by posing four essential philosophical questions, namely “What can I know?” “What should I do?” “What may I hope?” and “What is man?” Each question, in turn, corresponds more-or-less to a specific domain of philosophical study. “Metaphysics answers the first question, morals the second, religion the third, and anthropology the fourth.” Yet Kant immediately complicates this systematic picture by writing “Fundamentally, however, we could reckon all of this as anthropology, because the first three questions relate to the last one.” Unfortunately, Kant does not give specific elucidation of this statement, and we are thus left philosophically in Foucault’s “ambiguous position”; that is to say, we are left

---


5 Ibid., p. 538.

6 Ibid., p. 538.
to wonder how this last question relates to the first three? Moreover, we can ask, is the questions of how the first three questions relate to the fourth, the same, parallel, or different from, the question of how “anthropology” relates to “critique?”

Yet, it is not immediately clear how we are to approach, or attempt an answer to these questions. Are the “four questions” merely evidence of Kant’s desire for architectonic, and/or is their formulation an attempt to disclose the horizon in which a philosopher operates? In Kant’s “Bloomberg Logic” he writes that “that circle within which we can see things is called our horizon...What lies beyond the horizon...ought to mean such things as one cannot cognize even if one wanted to, ignorance of which is necessary.”

However, “it is very hard to determine what is really beyond our horizon,” and further “the horizon of our cognition changes with time. What is now beyond it finally comes finally within it, if I gain more capacities and cultivate these properly and better.”

The horizon of our knowledge is necessarily finite and limited, for “nothing can be outside the horizon of an unlimited understanding.” Thus, for our human understanding, the question of the horizon of our knowledge presents itself as a “problem,” i.e., in need of determination, and re-determination over time. How are we to do this?

In fact, Kant treats this question explicitly in the “Jäsche Logic” where he tells us that our human horizon can be determined logically, practically, and aesthetically.

Logically, the horizon is determined “in accordance with the faculty or powers of

---

7 Ibid., p. 50.
8 Ibid., p. 51.
9 Ibid., p. 52.
cognition in relation to the interest of the understanding. Here we have to pass judgement on how far we can go in our cognitions, how far we must go, and to what extent certain cognitions serve, in a logical respect, as means to various principle cognitions as our ends."\(^1\) Here we have an implicit reformulation of the question “what can I know” which is to be answered through metaphysical investigation (*The Critique of Pure Reason*). Yet, Kant must formulate the question critically, i.e. “what are my limitations?” because the “subject” under investigation is also the site of the finite, limited, human subject which Kant refers to as “man.”

Practically, the determination of the horizon of our knowledge occurs “in accordance with use in relation to the interest of the will.”\(^2\) The practical horizon, insofar as it is determined according to the influence which a cognition has on our morality, is pragmatic and is of the greatest importance.”\(^3\) Again, the question “what ought I do?” is fleshed out here as the extent to which a cognition is capable of determining the will practically, and this question can be explored through moral investigation (*The Critique of Practical Reason*).

Finally, the horizon of human knowledge can be determined aesthetically “in accordance with taste in relation to the interest of feeling. He who determines his horizon aesthetically seeks to arrange science according to the taste of the public, i.e., to make it popular, or in general to attain only such cognitions as may be universally

\(^{10}\)Ibid., p. 550.

\(^{11}\) It should be noted that reference to the term “interest” will be discussed below. For now it should suffice to note that the “interest” will find it’s meaning and purpose in its relation to the concepts of “horizon” and “orientation” - i.e. the interest of (understanding, will, feeling) orient the use of these faculties by providing a “purpose”, a “task”, for the faculties.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 550.
communicated, and in which the class of the unlearned, too, find pleasure and interest.”¹³

Prima facie, this aesthetic determination of the horizon does not necessarily correspond to the question “what may I hope?” which was to be investigated religiously. That said, Kant ends this discussion by writing “thus the horizon concerns passing judgement on, and determining, what man can know, what he is permitted to know, and what he ought to know.” - logically, aesthetically, practically respectively.¹⁴ The relationship between what one is “permitted” to know, and what one may “hope” for become intertwined within Kant’s third critique (The Critique of the Power of Judgement), although it may be more appropriate to look for this relationship within his explicitly religious works. What is key for our current purposes is merely to point out the critical bent which is given to the “four questions” by connecting them to the concept of a “horizon.” The questions must be critical because their horizontal determination is intimately bound to the finite human subject who also poses the questions. The fourth question “what is man?” serves to re-orient the first three questions by bringing their critical, finite, limited character to the foreground. Further, the fourth question is itself only determinable through a critical exploration of the limits of human finitude.

These tasks when taken as a whole, constitute the horizon of the philosopher, and yet it is quite clear that this is no simple undertaking. Following Foucault, or more precisely Martin Heidegger’s work in Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Kant is attempting to point to the need for an “analytic of finitude” - a task which provokes one

¹³ Ibid., p. 550.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 550.
to wonder whether it is possible to have “empirical knowledge of finitude?” Foucault notes the vastness, the never ending quality of such a task, in writing “man’s finitude is outlined in the paradoxical form of the endless; rather than the rigor of a limitation, it indicates the monotony of a journey which, though it probably has no end, is nevertheless perhaps not without hope.” We are perhaps not without justification when we reappropriate what, in another context, Gilles Deleuze referred to as a labyrinth which “is no longer a circle, or a spiral which would translate all its complications, but a thread, a straight line, all the more mysterious for being simple…” Kant himself notes the difficulty in writing “a beginner commonly thinks that nothing is beyond, but rather everything is within, his horizon, that he is perfectly well in a position to cognize, and to settle, everything. But with time one sees the illusion and knows how to limit his horizon, or else falls into the thought that everything is hard for us, or beyond our horizon.” The horizon of the philosopher must be determined in full view of the complexity, immensity, and potentially endless quality of an “analytic of finitude.” What is more, Kant claims that the philosopher who does not emerge from the understanding of a “beginner” who believes that they possess an unlimited understanding, or are in need of no critical determination of the horizon of their knowledge, no analytic of finitude, is unworthy of the title: “How many are there among the so-called philosophers in name only who are concerned only about their external glitter, and completely conceited, who

15 Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2008).
in fact think that they are in a position to be the teacher of a philosophy. Yet such a thing is far beyond their horizon.”

We have here reached an appropriate place to begin exploration of the importance on the connection between Kant’s critical philosophy, and his concept of “egoism” - and insofar as this is the case we have come upon a key aspect to the question “what is man?” The “philosophers” who are “completely conceited” believe they are “in a position” (a horizon) to “be the teacher of a philosophy,” when in fact “such a thing is far beyond their horizon”; and this is the case precisely because, in their conceit, they have disregarded the need to take upon themselves the task of an analytic of finitude. Without taking the time go through every place where Kant speaks of egoism in his lectures on logic, it may be helpful to quote a few passages which highlight the importance of the concept for Kant. In the “Bloomberg Logic” Kant writes:

Men have, as it were, a calling to use their reason socially and to make use of it. Just so too the temporal goods of this life. From this it follows naturally that everyone who has the principium of conceit, that the judgement of others are for him utterly dispensable in the use of his own reason and for the cognition of truth, thinks in a very bad and blameworthy way...This so-called logical egoism consists, then, in nothing but the presumed but often false self-sufficiency of our understanding, existing for itself and, so to say, isolated, where one believes he knows enough by himself, and believes he is infallibly correct and incorrigible in all his judgements. And we easily see that this conceited mode of thought is not only completely ridiculous but is even most contrary to real humanity.

Here Kant refers to the “calling to use their reason socially and to make use of it,” later he writes that “there lies in our nature a certain inclination to communicate our opinion to others, as we indicated above, so that if someone were in the desert and had to

---

19 Ibid., p. 52.

20 Ibid., p. 119.
stay there without any human society, all his judgements would seem to him to be for nothing and in vain...opposed to this inclination of human reason to communicate its judgement is *logical egoism*...”\(^{21}\) This desire to communicate is a “touchstone” (of which we will say more below) by which we strike our own judgements against the insights of others to determine its character more truly. To intentionally make use of this is the conceit of the “philosopher” who assumes they have an unlimited horizon. Towards the end of the “Bloomberg Logic” Kant writes “*the prejudice of excessive trust placed in oneself* is nothing other than *egoism*. Egoism, however, is *vel cosmologicus*, when one holds that there is no other thinking being, no world outside me, *vel logicus*, when one holds that he alone judges rationally, that no one else is in a position to judge something or to be better able to have insight into it.”\(^{22}\) Interestingly, Kant notes that although a *correct* judgement is correct regardless of whether it has been communicated or not, the point is that “on closer investigation we find that one cannot be certain whether one has judged rightly or not if one has not compared his judgements with the judgements of others and tested them on the understanding of others.”\(^{23}\) That said, Kant points out further that there is actually a form of logical egoism which “arises from a certain kind of meekness and faintheartedness, since one trusts himself and his insights far too little and

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 141.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 148.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 148.
believes that his judgements would not be worth being known by others in the whole learned world.”

In the “Vienna Logic” there is one passage in particular that is worth noting. This occurs in the middle of a discussion on the nature of a “horizon.” The limited aspect of human cognition is said to arise, in part, from two “imperfections” - ignorance, and error. Kant writes that “the fate of someone who errs is worse, then, than that of someone who is ignorant, for error hinders the entry of truth. To remove it one must first reduce the man to ignorance. Thus it is a double imperfection.” Error, as Kant refers to it in this context, is a stumbling block to further progress towards the truth because one clings to it in one’s “idiotic pride.” Interestingly Kant explicitly resists applying the term “idiot” to the ignorant person, but rather reserves the term for the person who “presumes to judge of all things.” What is especially noteworthy about this passage is that it offers to us a preliminary understanding of how to understand the relationship of “egoism” and critical philosophy, namely through the movement orientation-disorientation-reorientation. In other words, we may be justified in looking to the critical philosophy as that which exposes one’s presumptuous claims to truth as an egoistically nurtured error (orientation), and further which reduces one first to ignorance, described by Kant here as “the imperfection of a lack, which thus constitutes an empty space” (disorientation), in order to make room for the re-cognition of one’s limited, human, horizon (reorientation).

24 Ibid., p. 149.

25 Ibid., p. 275.

26 Ibid., p. 275.
Yet, we might wonder, what is that which would “jump-start” the orientation-disorientation-reorientation movement which reveals the tripartite nature of the single question “what is man?” as that which requires one to critically undertake an “analytic of finitude?” Is it the question(s) itself? No doubt there is much to be said for the repetitive character of this approach, an approach which Foucault has masterfully explored in his own work. Yet, we can perhaps add to this approach by also suggesting that the three Critiques, each in their own way, and in particular in their individual “antinomies,” are what “shocks” reason itself - and thereby changes the non-movement of “dogmatic slumbering” into the critical movement orientation-disorientation-reorientation. Or, to put it another way, perhaps it is the antinomies which interrupt/disrupt the smooth uninterrupted egoism which makes claims to a horizon which it cannot possibly have in its finitude. In this case, the insertion of a logical gap in between one’s cognitive interests and abilities, is not unlike the insertion of a practical/psychological gap/pause in between what a child wants, and what a child gets in time - a waiting period which suggests that the opposite of egoism might not necessarily be simply humility, but rather patience. In order to explore this approach to the above discussion it will be necessary to begin with an explication of Kant’s conception of “egoism” as it is found in his

*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View.*

Immanuel Kant begins his Anthropology with the sentence, “The fact that the human being can have the “I” in his representations raises him infinitely above all other
living beings on earth.”

(“Daß der Mensch in seiner Vorstellung das Ich haben kann, erhebt ihn unendlich über alle andere auf Erden lebende Wesen.”) Just a few paragraphs later Kant seems to connect this to his concept of egoism by writing “From the day that the human being begins to speak by means of the “I,” he brings his beloved self to light wherever he is permitted to, and egoism progresses unchecked.”

(“Von dem Tage an, da der Mensch anfängt durch Ich zu sprechen, bringt er sein geliebtes Selbst, wo er nur darf, zum Vorshein, und der Egoism schreitet unaufhaltsam fort.”) These two rather perplexing sentences pose a number of difficulties and questions, taken separately as well as together. Before we can pursue an explication of the term “egoism” it will be necessary to first elucidate what Kant means by “I,” and especially the puzzling phrase “to speak by means of the ‘I’” (durch Ich zu sprechen). That is to say, we need to take the time to show how something like egoism could be said to emerge from something like an “I.” In other words, we will have to trace the (dis)connections between the “transcendental unity of apperception” and the “ego,” and finally the eruption of “egoism.” Further complicating matters, such a discussion will also necessitate investigating the way in which Kant uses terms such as “subject,” “person,” “identity,” “consciousness,” etc. It should be noted from the outset that this psychological “history” will not end without unsolved aporia.

---


28 Ibid. [7:128]
II. Anthropology, Section 1

In the first section of the Anthropology, “On Consciousness of Oneself,” Kant writes “the fact that the human being can have the “I” in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a person, and by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person...an entirely different being from things...This holds even when he cannot yet say “I”, because he still has it in his thoughts, just as all languages must think it when they speak in the first person, even if they do not have a special word to express this concept of “I”. For this faculty (namely to think) is understanding.”  

In order to draw out some of the meaning of this difficult opening paragraph, we must begin by parsing out the different ways that Kant typically uses the term “I.”

When Kant opens with the phrase “have the ‘I’ in his representations” (in seiner Vorstellung das Ich haben kann), he is not referring to the “transcendental unity of apperception,” but rather the “empirical ‘I’” as an object of intuition. For Kant, the “I” is an essentially bifurcated term, and it is of the utmost importance that we do not confuse its two uses, as this will obscure our understanding of the emergence of egoism.

Following Caygill’s terminological dictionary, “the first I is the ‘psychological I’” and “this I may be considered as an object of intuition, and its workings described through psychological or anthropological observations.”  

Because Kant spends much of the opening section describing the nature of the “I” from the perspective of the development of children, it is clear that he has the empirical ego in mind. The reason for this is that the

---

29 Ibid. [7:127]

30 Caygill, op. cit., p. 233.
“second ‘I,’” as Caygill puts it, “is not an object of intuition,” but rather “the logical terminus of a process of abstracting from the predicates of knowledge to a postulated, ultimate subject which underlies them and which cannot be further specified.”\(^{31}\) This transcendental I is a bare indexical prefix, a “completely empty representation...we cannot even say that this is a concept, but only that it is a bare consciousness which accompanies all concepts.”\(^{32}\) (CPR A436/B404) Caygill underscores this point, writing that the transcendental “I” “does not of itself exist as an ultimate substance or ground underlying knowledge and experience, but is simply a necessary logical function which accompanies it.”\(^{33}\) Terminologically we can differentiate between the (transcendental) “I,” and the (empirical) “ego.”

Working within this terminological clarification, Gilles Deleuze nicely summarizes this aspect of Kant’s thought in writing “the Ego itself is in time, and thus constantly changing: it is a passive, or rather receptive, Ego, which experiences changes in time. But, on the other hand, the I is an act which constantly carries out a synthesis of time, and of that which happens in time, by dividing up the present, the past and the future at every instant. The I and the Ego are thus separated by the line of time which relates them to each other, but under the condition of a fundamental difference. So that my existence can never be determined as that of an active and spontaneous being.”\(^{34}\)

---

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 234.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 233-234.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 234.

\(^{34}\) Deleuze, op. cit., p. viii.
In a footnote at the end of section four of the *Anthropology*, Kant gives explicit treatment to this doubling of the “I”: “the human ‘I’ is indeed twofold according to form (manner of representation), but not according to matter (content).”

In other words, Kant continues, we can view the “I” “as subject of thinking (in logic), which means pure apperception (the merely reflecting ‘I’), and of which there is nothing more to say except that it is a very simple idea,” or we can view the “I” “as object of perception, therefore inner sense, which contains a manifold of determinations that make an inner experience possible.”

Unfortunately, this distinction is left ambiguous in the opening section of Kant’s *Anthropology*. To refer again to the opening paragraph of section one, Kant writes “the fact that the human being can have the “I” in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a person, and by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person.”

What makes the passage so difficult is not so much that Kant seems to refer to the bifurcation of the “I,” but rather that the bifurcation is unspecified. Here it seems as though Kant is saying that the empirical ego (“the human being can have the “I” in his representations”) is part of what establishes personality (because of this he is a person), and further that the transcendental “I” is what maintains a person’s unified

---


36 Ibid. [7:134]

37 Ibid. [7:127]

38 The term “personality” will be discussed in detail below. Suffice it to say that Kant is laying the groundwork for drawing a connection between the ability to take ownership of oneself and (moral) accountability for such freedom.
nature (“by virtue of the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, one and the same person”).

Yet, even this reading becomes muddied when Kant immediately introduces the ability to use language to express the concept of “I” which seems to emerge out of the logical function of the transcendental “I” - but which raises the question: how can we linguistically refer to the transcendental “I” if it is never an object of intuition? That we use the indexical “I” to refer to both aspects may cause some confusion in interpreting some of Kant’s texts. Kant writes that the fact the human beings cognize their unique individuality, and the dignity which is bestowed to them as opposed to mere “things,” “holds even when he cannot yet say “I,” because he still has it in thoughts, just as all languages must think it when they speak in the first person, even if they do not have a special word to express this concept of “I.” For this faculty (namely to think) is understanding.”

Here the point seems to be that when one expresses oneself, it does not really matter whether or not one uses the actual word “I,” but that any attempt to communicate understanding necessarily implies the logical work of the transcendental “I.” The transcendental “I” is only “cognizable” in the same way that we “see” a blind spot, that is, negatively. The empirical “ego” on the other hand is an object of intuition, and we know very well when, for example, we ourselves are enjoying the taste of a meal, or are dissatisfied with some political affair.

Kant continues the connection between speaking and the “I” in writing “it is noteworthy that the child who can already speak fairly fluently nevertheless first begins

39 Ibid. [7:127]
to talk by means of “I” fairly late (perhaps a year later); in the meantime speaking of himself in the third person (Karl wants to eat, to walk, etc.) When he starts to speak by means of “I” a light seems to dawn on him, as it were, and from that day on he never again returns to his former way of speaking. - Before he merely felt himself; now he thinks himself. - The explanation of this phenomenon might be rather difficult for the anthropologist.”^40 Whether or not we can agree with Kant’s linguistic-psychological history of childhood, it seems that he introduces such a history in order to make a more philosophical point, yet this point remains in some obscurity. The reason for this is that it is not exactly clear which “I” Kant is referring to when he writes of the significance of “speaking by means of the ‘I’.” One is inclined to say that it is the empirical ego which is at issue when the child begins to “speak by means of the ‘I,’” but even that is not entirely obvious. The problem is that Kant says that before the child speaks by means of the ‘I,’ they speak in the third person, which still seems to imply consciousness of oneself, but which was merely “felt” rather than also “thought” (Vorher fühlte es bloß sich selbst, jetzt denkt es sich selbst). In this case then, it seems that the bare logical function of the transcendental “I” allows for the emergence of the recognition of the empirical ego.

To “speak by means of the ‘I’” (durch Ich zu sprechen) is perhaps best understood as describing the “moment” at which a human being “begins” to thoughtfully communicate their existence - to themselves as well as another. In other words,

^40 Ibid. [7:127] In the original German: Es ist aber merkwürdig: daß das Kind, was schon yeimlich fertig sprechen kann, doch yeimlich spät (vielleicht wohl ein Jahr nachher) allererst anfängt, durch Ich zu reden, so lange aber von sich in her dritten Person sprach (Karl will essen, gehen u.s.w.), und daß ihn gleichsam ein Licht aufgegangen zu sein scheint, wenn es den Anfang macht durch Ich zu sprechen; von welchem Tage an es niemals mehr in jene Sprechart zurückkehrt. - Vorher fühlte es bloß sich selbst, jetzt denkt es sich selbst. - Die Erklärung dieses Phänomens möchte dem Anthropologen ziemlich schwer fallen.
consciousness of oneself is, in a way, tied to the ability to communicate that consciousness. There is evidence for this even in adulthood; for the extent to which a person can communicate their wishes and desires also seems to be the extent to which they are more than dimly aware of them - in Kant’s language, the difference between merely “feeling” oneself, and “thinking” oneself. As we will see, this reading gains support when we turn to Kant’s understanding of “egoism,” which seems to erupt out of the ability to represent oneself to oneself.

In any case, as we follow Kant through the rest of the first section we find him drawing a connection between increasing “experience” (progression of perception, to knowledge of objects of sensibility) and communicating (either to oneself or to another) one’s wishes and desires. Experience, consciousness of oneself, and communication of one’s existence cluster together in mutual progression. The logical unifying force of the transcendental “I,” over the course of a certain amount of time/experiences, gives birth to the recognition of oneself which is eventually expressed linguistically by means of the “I”. It is as though Kant sees the infant as initially awash in a flux of sensations which become slowly cognized/congealed and properly experienced, eventually birthing the ability of the child to lay conceptual and linguistic claim over those experiences. We find more evidence of this in Kant’s closing of section one by noting that this process is a playful and joyful one for the child - one in which the caregivers look on with a sort of vicarious longing and enjoyment. Yet it remains vicarious because “the memory of the teacher’s childhood does not reach back to that time; for it was not the time of experiences, but merely of scattered perceptions not yet united under the concept of an
object.”[^41] (“Die Erinnerung seiner Kinderjahre reicht aber bei weitem nicht bis an jene Zeit: weil sie nicht die Zeit der Erfahrungen, sondern bloß zerstreuter unter den Begriff des Objekts noch nicht vereinigter Wahrnehmungen war.”)

Interestingly, this account parallels Kant’s understanding of the concepts of humanity and personality. Kant writes that as the child’s experience progresses, so too does their “development toward humanity” (Entwicklung zur Menschheit), which is to say, as experience progresses so too does the “feeling of sympathy” and the ability to “communicate universally one’s inmost self.”[^42] This developmental period, according to Kant, is a time in which the child is open and innocent in regard to their experiences, and in which “no dissimulation and no malice are present.”[^43] (wobei noch kein Hehl und nichts Arges ist) There is no tendency to disguise or conceal oneself, one is comfortable with one’s nakedness, and, perhaps partly because there is also no tendency to view others with malicious intent. Both of these concepts - dissimulation and malice - arise out of the “progression” animality-hum...
some basic sense of “ownership” over one’s humanity, and eventually personality. From what other source would “dissimulation and malice” emerge but from the frustration (and fruition) of one’s wishes and desires which often occurs once one more-or-less takes the reigns over oneself. The interlocking of freedom and (moral) responsibility runs throughout Kant’s entire corpus, and should come as no surprise here either.

Thus, when Kant writes “The fact that the human being can have the “I” in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth,” we can surmise that he is referring to the ability to somehow claim one’s life experiences as one’s life experiences.\(^45\) It is the “being awake in the world,” both theoretically and practically, that is so profound for Kant. Yet it is this feeling of dignity and delight in being aware of one’s own life which seems to harbor a “darker” side, namely the eruption of egoism, to which we can now turn.

### III. The Emergence of Egoism

Having taken the time to explore some of what seems to lie behind Kant’s opening section of the *Anthropology*, we are now in a better position to make sense of his opening sentence to the second section: “From the day that the human being begins to speak by means of the “I,” he brings his beloved self to light wherever he is permitted to, and egoism progresses unchecked.”\(^46\) In fact, the original German is even stronger; “und der Egoism schreitet unaufhaltsam fort” - literally “and unstoppable Egoism strides

---

\(^{45}\) Ibid. [7:127]

Admittedly this is only possible because of the logical function of the transcendental I, but it is important to remember that when one represents oneself to oneself, one is not representing the transcendental I, but the empirical ego.

\(^{46}\) Ibid. [7:128]
Egoism, according to Kant, seems to erupt out of the ability to announce/enunciate one’s existence/perspective. Although Kant does describes the child who cannot yet say “I” as a “tiny dictator” who has their every wish and desire fulfilled, we cannot yet apply the term egoism to this period of life. The crucial difference seems to be that egoism only arises when we are able to re-present to ourselves and others what we think/feel/wish/desire/intuit/etc. It should be emphasized that Kant is not referring to the fact that, for example, I could sit down after a meal and reflect about the experience of it. Although such high-level cognitive capacities are necessary for some aspects of life - the philosophy classroom being a good example - they are certainly not necessary for most or all. At issue is simply the basic cognitive ownership one has over one’s experiences; that is to say that when, for example, I eat something I dislike, I don’t now need to ask someone else how I feel about it - I am simply aware that “I” don’t like the food. Moreover, Kant’s description above of the cognitive development of the child is pointing to the fact that there is a radical passivity in the infant and small child. What makes satiating a crying baby so hard is often that one does not know what they want, and that is because they do not really know what they want either. Even in toddlers we see something like this - the small child who has a little fall at the playground will often look to the parent as a point of reference to see how they will react. It is this profound place of imitation, mirroring, from which children begin, but from which they (hopefully) emerge as capable of playing a more conscious and active role in their own lives. As Kant has continually stressed, they way we speak is often the first and most common signal that something like this is occurring. We find Kant again underlining the
connection between being conscious of oneself, and the role of language at the end of section 2 in the “Remark. On the formality of egoistic language.” That publicity of communication occurs alongside the eruption of egoism is evidenced all the way down to the way people formally address one another.

When Kant writes that egoism progresses unchecked, or uninterrupted, he goes on to clarify that even when we appear to have “interrupted” it’s progress, it is often only a semblance, due to the opposition of other people. Oftentimes a person only makes pretensions of not being an egoist, and that is only done “to give himself a superior worth in the judgement of others.”47 That egoism’s uninterrupted progress runs so deep in human beings should not necessarily surprise us. For Kant has already told us that it is intimately tied to, and erupts out of, our awareness of our own judgements about ourselves, and our world. Thus when Kant writes “in order to know oneself, one must perceive oneself” he is saying that if we cultivate in ourselves an openness to “noticing” ourselves (Bemerken) - to “paying attention” (Kant opposes this term to “observing” oneself (Beobachten), which he says leads to mental illness.48 It seems that the basic contrast is that Bemerken does not imply that standpoint of an outside observer, but rather a kind of openness to realizing one’s state - we will discover in ourselves a tendency towards egoism.49 We should bear in mind that this is only the case so long as

47 Ibid. [7:128]
48 Ibid. [7:132]
49 At the beginning of §4, Kant writes “Das Bemerken (animadvertere) ist noch nicht ein Beobachten (observare) seiner selbst.”
we leave egoism uninterrupted. As we turn to the different forms of egoism, we will discover concomitant clues for “checking,” or interrupting, their progression.

IV. Logical, Practical, Aesthetic: Three Modes of Egoism

After introducing the term, Kant describes three basic modes of egoism - logical, practical, and aesthetic - which correspond to three basic kinds of “presumptions,” namely the presumption of understanding, of practical interest, and of taste. (“Der Egoism kann dreierlei Anmaßungen enthalten: die des Verstandes, des Geschmacks und des praktischen Interesse, d.i. er kann logisch, oder ästhetisch, oder praktisch sein.”)

Thus we are able to draw a connection between the ability to be conscious of oneself, and the eruption of the tendency to arrogantly “presume” (Anmaßungen) that (1) what one declares to be the truth is in fact the truth, that (2) “right action” is whatever one finds useful for one’s own happiness, and that (3) the highest form of beauty is whatever one personally at present finds to be beautiful.⁵⁰ In a way, we will see an underlying temporal dimension in that all three kinds of presumption give little to no regard for past or future progress in judgements (either from oneself or from another). Further, we will see that the egoist has nothing to do with, and is in opposition to, Kant’s remarks at the end of the first book of the Didactic which declares “unalterable commands” to “think for oneself” (Selbst denken), “think oneself (in communication with human beings) into the place of every other person” (Sich (in der Mitteilung mit Menschen) in die Stelle jedes anderen zu

⁵⁰ [7:128] Kant does not appear to draw a distinction, at least in this passage, between “egoism” and “egotism”. Rather it is the height of arrogance and a delusional sense of self-importance, for Kant (especially in the practical realm), to take one’s self-interest’s as the guide for behavior.
denken), and to always “think consistently with oneself” (Jederzeit mit sich selbst

einstimmig zu denken). 51

Logical Egoism: Kant writes that “the logical egoist considers it unnecessary to test

his judgement also by the understanding of others; as if he had no need at all for this
touchstone [Probiersteins] (criterium veritatis externum).” 52 The logical egoist’s

presumption of understanding then, is what drives them to believe that they have reached

the truth, and no longer (if ever they thought they did) need help from the input of other

people. The egoist, in perceiving the dignity and possibility for understanding of the “I,”

believes their own ego to be self-sufficient with regard to acquiring understanding. It is

this egoism which opens one up to error for Kant, because dialogue (qua testing one’s

own judgement with that of others) is a “touchstone” of truth for us. This, Kant believes,
is the most important reason why “learned people cry out so urgently for freedom of the

press. For if this freedom is denied, we are deprived at the same of a great means of
testing the correctness of our own judgements, and we are exposed to error.” 53 Freedom

of the press is a practical manifestation of the humble recognition that understanding is

never arrived at by oneself, and that the regular exchange of ideas furthers understanding

just as much as it restrains egoism. 54 The prone-to-more-error problem within logical

51 Ibid. [7:228]
52 Ibid. [7:128]
53 Ibid. [7:129]
54 Of course this only potentially so. Kant could not have foreseen the incredible scope, power, and

influence of “mass media” in connection with freedom of press. The extent to which logical egoism reigns

in contemporary political discourse of various media outlets is itself humbling. Perhaps we could better see
Kant’s point when we think about a robust academic conference where there is an exchange of papers with

varied viewpoints and a healthy dialogue concerning them.
egoism thus has very little to do with any interpersonal problem, although the two might not be entirely unconnected. For Kant *logical* egoism is to be avoided primarily not because it may hurt and belittle fellow humans, or damage a relationship, but because it blocks an important means of verification and adjudication.\(^{55}\)

**A Note on Kant’s Use of the Term “Touchstone” (Probierstein)**

“Testing the correctness of our own judgements” provides the basic and preliminary definition of the use of a “touchstone”. A touchstone, *geologically*, is that which allows one to discover the difference between real, and “fool’s” gold by noting the difference in color left on the touchstone after the supposed gold has been scratched against it. For the geologist, a touchstone is at the same time a standard, a benchmark, a test, a point of reference, and a guide. It is that which gives a sense of direction (“no this area is full of fool’s gold”, or “yes, i’ve found real gold here!”) by providing a *stable* point of departure (insofar as the geologist begins and ends her search for gold with the touchstone).

*Philosophically*, then, a touchstone is that which allows us to test, and be guided in our judgements. If critical dialogue is a “touchstone” for Kant, to reject it is to reject the need for directionality apart from one’s own judgement, which is the very thing in need of direction.\(^{56}\)

The concept of a touchstone is used by Kant to signify that which gives some “directionality” by critically testing our judgements with some point of orientation.

---

\(^{55}\) This will stand in contrast to the problems of the practical, or moral, egoist who precisely does not see the dignity and end residing in all other human beings.

\(^{56}\) This is not to say that the logical egoist is always “lost” or simply “wrong” in their judgements, since there are several other “touchstones” that Kant gives, and which will be discussed below. That said, the logical egoist is certainly more “prone”, more exposed, to being lost because of the rejection. Moreover, to reject all touchstones, would almost certainly lead one into a state of isolation and disorientation.
Because of this, as we have already noticed, a touchstone bears an important relationship to the concept of “orientation.” The concept of orientation, which has received surprisingly sparse treatment in the secondary literature is noted by Howard Caygill to be of great importance: “If the critical philosophy is read as an Epicurean canon for distinguishing between correct and incorrect theoretical, moral and aesthetic judgements, then Kant’s entire philosophy may be read as an exercise in the orientation judgement.”

In Kant’s essay “What is orientation in thinking?” he writes that just as human beings orient themselves in their physical environment (most primordially by means of the subjective sense of the left and right sides of the body), so too must humans orient themselves in their use of reason; that is to say, humans must find a way to locate the “spatiality” of reason itself - it’s secured domain, it’s limiting boundaries, it’s proper uses, and it’s difference from other modes of thought such as fantastical wishing, or mere opinion.

Just as in space we can most immediately discover where we are by feeling about with out hands - which are the harbingers of the subjective sense of left and right, so too in thought we must find a way to gain some sense of how we are to proceed in our thinking, that is to say, how to determine what “direction” our thought should go having determined what environment we are in (i.e. can experience guide us, or are we trying to push beyond what any possible experience could present to us for objective knowledge). Kant writes that humans need “the ability to orient oneself not just in space, i.e.

---

57 Caygill, op. cit., p. 311.

mathematically, but also in thought, i.e. logically."\textsuperscript{59} This implies several things for Kant, the first of which is the ability to “be guided, in one’s conviction of truth, by a subjective principle of reason where objective principles of reason are inadequate.”\textsuperscript{60}

Where objective principles are available/adequate (i.e. where sensibility provides us with understanding through the application of concepts), we are oriented quite-well. If I want to know if today is my mother’s birthday, I can look at a calendar, recall what day she was born, etc. What so many of Kant’s contemporaries did not see is that reason needs a different point of orientation when dealing with thoughts concerning the “supra-sensible objects” (e.g. God, Freedom, Immortality), that is, when we are trying to gain understanding about something which we have no intuition of. Or, to put it another way, Kant’s contemporaries failed to see that the concept of orientation, when dealing with matters that cannot be objectified/determined experientially, is always a problematical concept. For Kant, Leibniz, Wolff, and Mendelssohn were “dogmatic metaphysicians” who believed that a proper orientation was easily secured via one of the standard “proofs” for the existence of God. If these proofs turn out to be inadequate, as Kant tried to show that they are, the need to orient oneself re-emerges as a “problem.” As we have said, the way Kant deals with this is to draw an analogy to the subjectively felt difference between one’s left and right. For thinking, the “subjective principle” is based (justified by) on the “felt need” of reason (which it imposes on itself) to engage in judgement. Judgement, Kant says is not something we can decide to engage in or refrain from. Reason must secure a point of orientation “not only if we wish to pass judgement, but because we must

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 239.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 240.
The question is always already how to judge properly or improperly, in both theoretical and practical matters, that is to gain proper orientation toward the truth. Continuing, the “subjective principle” consists, at least in this essay, primarily in the “concept of an original archetypal being, both as the supreme intelligence and as the highest good.”

There are other points of orientation as well, for Kant, which we will see throughout the paper, such as the highest good, freedom, the moral law, and immortality (all of which have varying degrees of orienting influence). Going back to the geological analogy, the gold itself is the point of orientation, but it is specifically the touchstone which provides a real sense of directionality. A touchstone is of little use if one has no sense of what it is good for. Similarly searching for gold will be futile if one does not have a sense of direction for going about this. What is important for this paper is primarily the method by which Kant is always already oriented. Kant is keenly aware that reason has a theoretical and practical use, and that there is a proper and improper way to engage in judgement. What we will find is that the logical egoist has lost the ability, or is at least less able, to orient themselves precisely because of their hubris. In assuming that they can orient their own reason in any way they see fit, and come to understanding, the logical egoist is often led to disorientation, which Kant says can appear in the form of dogmatism, zealotry, libertinism, skepticism, etc.

The non-egoist

---

61 Ibid., p. 242.

62 Ibid., p. 241. Kant is primarily concerned here with God because he is first and foremost writing in response to Mendelssohn’s assertion of objective knowledge of the existence of God. Kant is saying that God is judged to exist because of a felt need of reason to be adequately oriented, not because of objective (sensible) knowledge.

63 Ibid., p. 241. This allows us to explain exactly some aspects of the dogmatist, and similarly the zealot. In being a logical egoist, they have cut off dialogue with those who think differently, and in doing so have exposed themselves to error and disorientation, which may reinforce the dogmatism. The dogmatist is
use of reason recognizes the need for certain signposts, and touchstones if it is not to slip into egoism or fantastical madness.

“Empty dreaming” and “fantasy instead of thinking” are the chaos that ensues if we are completely disoriented. Not only does Kant not deny that such disorientation is possible, he seems to have a keen eye for it in both his contemporaries philosophical literature, as well as the social-political sphere. In the present essay, Kant is writing in response to the logical egoism he has found in Moses Mendelssohn’s assertion of objective knowledge of God’s existence. Because Mendelssohn, one of the “dogmatic metaphysicians” Kant often speaks of, asserted that objective knowledge of God’s existence was possible, he was unable to see the depth of the problem of orientation, and insofar as this is true, he was profoundly dis-oriented, albeit a kind of naive disorientation. Yet, Kant’s formulation of the problem of orientation reveals consequences for all realms of living, not just the speculative theoretical debates of philosophers. Intriguingly, Kant’s essay “What is Orientation in Thinking,” is often found in, and referred to, the larger context of his political writings. We see that Mendelsson’s unrecognized disorientation is intimately connected to a larger potential social-political disorientation.

Similarly, Kant sees social-political restrictions following from a rejection of some point of orientation in thinking: “if reason does not wish to be subject to the law which it

afraid disorientation will set in if they engage in critical dialogue, because that may mean relinquishing some of their beliefs. But to make no use of such a touchstone, they have already created the conditions for a more thoroughgoing disorientation. Kant is not showing us how to avoid disorientation, but rather how to deal with it in a healthy manner by making use of “touchstones”.

64 Ibid., p. 240-241.
imposes on itself, it must bow beneath the yoke of laws which someone else imposes upon it; for nothing - not even the greatest absurdity - can continue to operate for long without some kind of law.” Kant cites “civil coercion,” that is the political restriction of the freedom of speech and writing, as following from such disoriented, and egoistic use of reason. Beginning at the point where there is “a confusion of tongues” resulting from the kind of “freedom” of thought which has no orientation, the “authorities intervene to ensure that civil affairs are not themselves plunged into complete disorder; and since they regard the most expeditious and forceful measures as the most appropriate, they may even abolish freedom of thought altogether and make thought itself, like other professions, subject to the laws of the land.” We might wonder, in our own “level-headed” thinking how Kant could paint such an Orwellian picture with such conviction? After all, how could any external authority abolish freedom of thought, regardless of its oriented, or disoriented use? Here we can come back to the concept of a “touchstone” to gain more insight.

As Kant described in the *Anthropology*, “freedom of the press” is a practical manifestation of the touchstone for truth that is engagement in critical dialogue with others. In his essay on orientation, Kant also places the freedom of *communication* in conjunction with the freedom of *thought* by writing “how much and how accurately would we think if we did not think, so to speak, in community with others to whom we communicate our thoughts and who communicate their thoughts to us!” We see again

65 Ibid., p. 248.
66 Ibid., p. 248-249.
67 Ibid., p. 247.
that “touchstones” provide a test for checking whether we are properly oriented, disoriented, or in need of re-orientation. Critical dialogue is one such means, and Kant cites another in “rationality” by writing that “reason is always the ultimate touchstone of truth.” 68 In fact it seems that rationality is really the only touchstone, but that one comes to it through critical dialogue along with “thinking for oneself.”

In a way, Kant is not so unlike Aristotle insofar as we consider Aristotle’s consistent use of the doxic method. So often in Aristotle’s writings he begins with a sort of survey of common beliefs and opinions in order to orient himself and the reader in the matter at hand. From here, Aristotle proceeds to accept, problematize, reject, or (most often) accept in light of some revisions, the thoughts of others. Further, Aristotle often looks for support in his assertions from the writings of other thinkers and poets. In the Anthropology, Kant writes that mathematicians, no less then philosophers, require dialogue as a criterium veritatis externum. Even when we do have access to sensibility we often require help in forming judgements about it, for example whether or not a ringing that we hear is merely in our head, or is coming from some public location. 69

Thinking for oneself and engaging in dialogue should not been read as a kind of strict dualism. The logical egoist equates the “I” with a kind of isolated self-sufficiency, which actually manifests most clearly in one’s public speaking. Kant instead sees the “I” as opening up the possibility for critical dialogue. Even when Kant seems to be at his most “individualist,” that is, espousing the virtue of “thinking for oneself” qua using “one’s own understanding without the guidance of another,” he is never far from a passionate

68 Ibid., p. 244.
69 Ibid. [7:129]
discussion about the properly public use of reason, which “alone can bring about enlightenment.”

To return now to the issue of logical egoism, for Kant, at least in the aforementioned essay, humans orient themselves by critically engaging in dialogue, both with others and with themselves, in an effort to come to the ultimate touchstone of truth in rational belief. Kant writes “a purely rational belief is the signpost or compass by means of which the speculative thinker can orient himself on his rational wanderings in the field of supra-sensory objects, while the man of ordinary but (morally) healthy reason can use it to plan his course, for both theoretical and practical purposes, in complete conformity with the whole end of his destiny; and this same rational belief must also be made the basis of every other belief, and indeed of every revelation.”

Again consistent with Aristotle, Kant writes that “it is a hazardous enterprise, even for intelligent people, to entertain an assertion that contradicts generally accepted opinion,” and that a writer “who finds no followers with his publicly avowed opinion on an important topic suspected of being in error.”

Of course we could wonder at this point to what extent Kant’s reasoning would lead us into mere “conformity” with public opinion? Certainly Kant was aware that even trying to be reasonable can get one into trouble with public opinion at times. To the

---


extent that public opinion helps to orient the use of reason, and serves as a touchstone for truth, an assertion contrary to public opinion may even appear as “irrational” and “unreasonable.” Indeed this has often been the case historically. Yet, Kant is not unaware of this issue, and his response is, perhaps, surprising. Kant writes that asserting something against public opinion may or may not stem from an egoism, but that at all times it can be called “paradox.” The tendency toward paradox, whether or not it stems from logical egoism, can be called logical obstinacy. This kind of obstinacy occurs where one desires to be a “rare human being” by trying not to be “an imitator of others.” The logically obstinate person must be willing to accept that they may or may not be perceived as “rare,” and usually are considered to be “strange.”

Insofar as one common reaction to the rare and/or strange is ridicule, Kant cites as a touchstone that “the ability to withstand ridicule is not a bad touchstone of its truth (especially in the case of a practical doctrine)...” Perhaps reacting to some criticism of his work from the publisher Freidrich Nicolai, Kant continues “the critical philosophy’s turn must finally come to laugh last and so laugh best when it sees the systems of those who have talked big for such a long time collapse like houses of cards one after another and their adherents scatter, a fate they cannot avoid.”

Thus we find that at the moment when we suspect Kant of leading us into mere conformity, he reproaches us with the maxim to “think for oneself” just as much as he reminds us to think from the perspective others.

73 Ibid. [7:129]


75 Ibid.
The question of egoism, then, is left undetermined, and the “reproach of paradox, when it is not based on vanity, or simply wanting to be different, carries no bad connotations.”76 Paradox is always first only a “semblance” of egoism. In other words, just because someone claims something which contradicts generally accepted opinion does not make them a logical egoist. Moreover, we can assume that just because someone agrees with generally accepted opinion does not exempt them from possibly being a logical egoist. The determining factor is the extent to which a person sees their own ego as isolated, in no need of the help of others, and yet capable of coming to understanding. The opposite of paradox is “banality, which has common opinion on its side”, and which “lulls one to sleep; whereas paradox arouses the mind to attention and investigation, which often leads to discoveries.”77 With this in view, we could even wonder in what way the “banal” one is more likely to be a logical egoist than the “paradoxical?”78

Kant writes in his essay “What is Enlightenment?” that there is a connection between the laziness and cowardice (in thinking) of a large amount of people, and the dogmatism of those who are their “guardians.”79 These “domesticated animals” are led by the “leading-strings” of “dogmas and formulas” which at all times “show them the danger


77 Ibid. [7:129]

78 To do this would be to wonder about the connection between “immaturity” (as opposed to enlightenment), dogmatism, and egoism.

which threatens them if they try to walk unaided.”  

This danger manifests, most immediately, in the form of disorientation - of the lack of a sense of direction: “...if anyone did throw them off [the leading-strings of dogmas and formulas], he would still be uncertain about jumping over even the narrowest of trenches, for he would be unaccustomed to free movement of this kind.”

We have hopefully seen, by now, that what it would mean in part to be “accustomed to free movement of this kind,” would be the ability to be guided by means of certain “touchstones” in order to (re)orient oneself toward the truth. The “free movement” does not imply a turn toward isolated individualism, but rather toward an active engagement in dialogue. What is more, Kant does not see enlightenment as occurring where one no longer is at times disoriented, but rather that one longer fears disorientation precisely because the use of “touchstones” is the use of that which may occasionally disorient in order to re-orient. We can think of the experience of that geologist who, in discovering (by use of the touchstone) that they have wandered into a veritable field of fool’s gold, experiences a moment of loss and now must re-orient their search for real gold in some other direction. In turning to Kant’s conception of practical, or moral egoism, we are at the same time turning towards that part of life, which Kant believes is most insistent in drawing out attention to the need for directionality, and re-orientation. Before doing this, however, we should take a moment to supplement the above discussion of logical egoism with a few remarks made by Kant in his “Reflexionen zur Anthropologie” pertaining to a mode of egoism which bears close resemblance to the logical mode, but which goes by the name “scientific egoism.”

---

80 Ibid., p. 54.

81 Ibid., p. 55.
Scholarly/Scientific Egoism: Kant’s discussion of the egoist of science (“ein egoist der Wissenschaft”) will help to shed more light on, particularly, the seeming tension between the tendency towards egoism, and the dictums to “think for oneself” and to “think from the perspective of others.” Given the obscurity of this text (and to my knowledge only translated to English once prior\textsuperscript{82}) I will begin with quoting a good portion of the reflection:

... in respect to the humble judgement about the worth of their own sciences, and some moderation of self-conceit and egoism, that a science gives, when this alone rule resides in humans, something is necessary to give humanity to the scholar so that he does not misjudge himself and (his worth over others) overestimate his powers too much.

I name such a scholar a Cyclops. He is an egoist of science, and he is still in need of an eye, which makes [it so] that he still sees his object from the point of view of other people. The humanity of the sciences is grounded upon this, that is to give the affability of judgement through which one is subjected to others judgement. The sciences (reasoning), which one can really learn, and which thus are always growing, without having it necessary that they acquire a test and a (public watch over their justification) [Fiscalseirung] is truly the reason that there are cyclops. The cyclops of literature is the most defiant; but there are cyclops of theology, law, and medicine. Also a cyclops of geometry. Each one must be affiliated with an eye out of a special factory...

...The second eye is therefore the self-knowledge of human reason, without which we have no sure eye for the size of our knowledge.

The situation of these various sciences is such that the Critique of them disgraces their inner worth a lot. Only mathematics and philology - the same with jurisprudence - have held against the sting; that is why they are also the most defiant. Egoism follows from there because of the extended use which they make of reason in their science, and hold it also in other fields to suffice.)

It is not the power, but the one-eyedness that here makes the Cyclops. It is also not enough to know many other sciences, but the self-knowledge of understanding, and of reason. Transcendental Anthropology.\textsuperscript{83}


I must also acknowledge the helpfulness of Wilson’s translation in particular regarding the difficult word “Fiscalseirung” which is a combination of middle Latin and German.

\textsuperscript{83} Kant’s gesammelte Schriften, Reflexionen zur Anthropologie, vol. xv: 394-395, Refl. 903.
Here we find another way in which logical egoism may manifest itself, namely through the one-eyedness of scientific/scholarly pursuits in general. Whereas before it seemed that Kant was reminding us that the way we pursue theoretical pursuits requires one to “test his judgement also by the understanding of others” in an effort to push back against the eruption of egoism, here Kant is saying that, insofar as we engage in scholarly/scientific pursuits at all, we may be setting ourselves up to become a kind of egoistic Cyclops - someone who believes their own discipline/field is best fit to handle problems in other fields, and more importantly someone who lacks the eye of “humanity.”

Kant tells us both that the second eye is the “self-knowledge of understanding, and of reason”, and expressly is not the pursuit to “know many other sciences.” That is, whether one knows quite a lot about many scientific fields, or just a little about one particular field, there is still the tendency towards an egoism which is Cycloptic in nature because it deems the scientific pursuit itself as the highest form of “sight.” That science has proven its worth practically by such great technological inventions and discoveries is enough to lead one to consider that such an “eye” is without need of another. Yet, this second eye of “self-knowledge” is essential, as this is what gives, and grounds “the humanity of the scholar.” We should recall the specific sense in which the Kant uses the term humanity, alluded to earlier as that which gives the “feeling of sympathy” and the ability to “communicate universally one’s inmost self.”

With this in mind we can begin to see the important role that “humanity” plays in interrupting the eruption of egoism.

---

84 Caygill, op. cit., p. 230.
Kant notes that each particular science has its own way of looking (“each one must be affiliated with an eye out of a special factory”), but even if it were possible to look through all the eyes of science one would still only have the scientific eye - which cannot give us a “sure eye for the scope of our knowledge.” In order to see the true extent and size of our scientific knowledge we must engage the critique which helps to provide “the self-knowledge of understanding, and of reason.” That said, it is clear that, here at least, Kant conceives of this critique as coming from the development of one’s humanity by submitting one’s judgements to the judgement of others so that “he still sees his object from the point of view of other people.” The one-eyedness of the scholar results “...because the popularity is missing out of an absence of social intercourse with different situations” (weil die popularitaet aus Mangel des Umgangs mit verschiedenen Ständen sehlt). The term “popularity” here can be best understood through the help of Michel Foucault’s “Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology.” Foucault writes of the term “Popularitaet”: “It is not an addition, an epithet, or a style of expression: it is a kind of perfection...,” a completeness, and “is to be distinguished from technical or scholastic perfection: it is not that they are incompatible, on the contrary, it is that the notion of Popularitaet adds something more. In scholastic discourse, we can never be whether or not the proof is ‘einseitig’ [one-sided]; in popular knowledge, on the other hand, there is an exigency which directs it toward the whole, toward exhaustiveness; it does away with the danger of partiality, and thereby authorizes [a total insight].”

85 Michel Foucault, Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2008), 93.
gaining in knowledge of others fields, but must come from the self-knowledge which arises out of “social intercourse with different situations,” and the development of one’s humanity. The development of one’s humanity qua scholar/scientist is essential to the ability to see clearly with two eyes, and thereby to see for the first time the more modest size of one’s knowledge, and the tendency towards (logical) egoism.

We find good confirmation of this interpretation of the above passage in Kant’s “Vienna Logic” lectures. Kant writes, “philosophy can tear down pride and make evident one’s true ends. Learnedness without philosophy is cyclopic learnedness. Philosophy is the second eye, and it sees how all the cognitions of the one eye agree with reference to a common end. One part of philosophy is called the humaniora. The character of humanity consists in sociability.” A few paragraphs later Kant connects this discussion to the concept of “popularity:” “Popularity requires familiarity with the world and intercourse with men, and he understands his subject best, certainly, who can make it comprehensible and clear to someone else who is not learned.”

Turning now to the second mode of egoism - practical egoism - as discussed in the Anthropology, we can begin to discern the moral connection between one-eyedness, egoism, and the importance of engaging with certain touchstones in an effort to re-orient, or to “open” one’s (second/popular) eye.

Practical/Moral Egoism: “The moral egoist,” writes Kant, “limits all ends to himself, sees no use in anything except that which is useful to himself, and as a eudaemonist puts the supreme determining ground of his will simply in utility and his own happiness, not

87 Ibid., p. 278.
in the thought of duty.” Kant has singled out the utilitarian ethicists here in defining moral egoism. The moral egoist, first views “utility for oneself” as the supreme ground for determining the will, and any end which may exist in a being unto itself is either excluded or deemed less substantial. Instead of orienting the motivation of their will in the thought of duty, the moral egoist is oriented toward themselves, specifically toward those actions which will bring about “happiness.” However, Kant shows us, the moral egoist does not necessarily go wrong in taking themselves as an end, but rather in the act of annexing all ends to their own - thereby turning the ends of morality itself into a mere means to their own personal use. When a person engages in this form of egoism, they in fact lose the possibility of having a sense for the concept of duty, which, as Kant tries to show in his work, is the only truly moral grounding of the will.

Like logical egoism, moral egoism bears a relation to the concept of a “touchstone:” “since every other human being also forms his own different concept of what he counts as happiness, it is precisely egoism which drives him to have no touchstone at all of the genuine concept of duty, which absolutely must be a universally valid principle.”

Both logical, and the moral egoist lack an important means by which they are able to orient

---


“Endlich ist der moralische Egoist der, welcher alle Ywekke auf sich selbst einschränkt, der keinen Nutyen worin sieht, als in dem, was ihm nützt, auch wohl, als Eudämonist, bloß im Nutzen und der eigenen Glückseligkeit, nicht in der Pflichtvorstellung, den obersten Bestimmungsgrund seines Willens setzt.”

89 Although Kant also clearly has in mind the Greek philosophers, I unfortunately do not have the space to dialogue with Kant’s conception of happiness as given to him by the utilitarians of his day, as opposed to a more robust (i.e. Greek) notion of eudaimonia. Even with that said, Kant’s pressure on the notion of “utility” is clearly weighing the most on his definition of moral egoism.

90 Ibid. [7:130]

“Denn weil jeder andere Mensch sich auch andere Begriffe von dem macht, was er zur Glückseligkeit rechnet, so ist’s gerade der Egoism, der es so weit bringt, gar keinen Probierstein des echten Pflichtbegriffs zu haben, als welcher durchaus ein allgemein geltendes Prinzip sein muß.”
themselves in their logical, and practical “worlds.” The moral egoist has lost the
touchstone of the concept of duty entirely, and for Kant this implies that they have no
way of “testing” to see if their actions are in fact moral or immoral.

However, unlike the logical egoist who may or may not be able to arrive at theoretical
truth without the touchstone of critical dialogue, the moral egoist cannot perform a moral
action because it is in fact a part of morality to orient oneself by means of the concept of
duty. For Kant, then, moral egoism is always at the same time moral disorientation,
whether or not it is recognized as such. Whereas the person who at least has a notion of
the concept of duty is able to engage in the life-long process of re-orientation, the person
who has lost this touchstone has also lost the only means by which the will can be
grounded morally. That said, there are different ways in which the touchstone could be
“lost,” thus producing different sub-types of moral egoism. For example, one person may
be simply unaware that the form of morality is grounded in the touchstone of duty, while
another may be aware of the necessity of the touchstone of duty, but choose to disregard
and flout it anyway. The inverse of these types would correspond to the difference
between a merely proper orientation which makes use of the touchstone of duty, and in
fact actually acting from duty.

Kant’s description of moral egoism in the Anthropology is quite short, and the same
will hold true for the “aesthetic” mode, in comparison to its “logical” counterpart.

---

91 While all of these claims presuppose some familiarity with Kant’s moral theory, because of the outline of
this paper, I have chosen to hold off on a more thorough exposition until the critical project is discussed at
length in the second half. The point of this exegesis of the Anthropology is preliminary in nature insofar as
it will provide the basis for which to investigate the critical project itself.

92 Perhaps we could couch this in the Aristotelian language concerning the difference between the person of
practical wisdom, the akratic, and the vicious persons.
Consequently, the full significance of his work here, especially as it relates to the concept of (dis)orientation can only emerge in light of Kant’s critical work, which will be dealt with below.

**Aesthetic Egoism:** Though Kant provides a rather short definition of the mode of “aesthetic” egoism, it is characteristically dense and provides significant resources for later bringing to light certain themes and generalizations which run throughout all three modes. Kant writes that the aesthetic egoist “is satisfied with his own taste, even if others find his verses, paintings, music, and similar things ever so bad, and criticize or even laugh at them. He deprives himself of progress toward that which is better when he isolates himself with his own judgement; he applauds himself and seeks the touchstone of artistic beauty only in himself.”

The aesthetic egoist is someone who gives no thought to improving their taste because they believe they have already found the best measurement of judgement, namely their own. Like the logical egoist, the aesthetic egoist “isolates”/encloses themselves within their own capacities, and thereby their own limitations. **Unlike the moral egoist,** it is not the case that the aesthetic egoist has no aesthetic sense, but rather that its capacities and refinement is necessarily stunted. Again, like the “logical” use of reason, looking to oneself as a touchstone for aesthetic judgement is an important part of the process of judgement. The issue is that the use is mishandled, and may lead one in the wrong direction inasmuch as one does not also make use of the touchstone of the judgement of others. The contrast with moral egoism,

---

Ibid. [7:129-130]

“Ist der ästhetische Egoist derjenige, dem sein eigener Geschmack schon gnügt; es mögen nun andere seine Verse, Malereien, Musik u. d. g. noch so schlecht finden, tadeln oder gar verlachen. Er beraubt sich selbst des Fortschritts zum Besseren, wenn er sich mit seinem Urteil isoliert, sich selbst Beifall klatscht, und der Probierstein des Schönens der Knust nur in sich allein sucht.”
resides in that the touchstone for moral actions is also the way in which the will is
determined. If the touchstone one uses is anything other than the concept of duty, one is
straightaway in a state of moral disorientation (insofar as one is even confused about how
to approach the questions of morality).

The aesthetic egoist says to themselves, as the saying goes, “I know what I like
because I like what I know,” which is to say “I have no interest in exploring what might
lie beyond my current judgements.” This helps to gives some sense of why Kant says in
this form of egoism the person is “satisfied” with their own taste, and “applauds himself.”
We can gain further insight into why the aesthetic egoist is “satisfied,” and what this
means, by taking a moment to examine Kant’s discussion of pleasure and pain within the
Anthropology.

We are able to contrast the aesthetic egoist with Kant’s example of the “good host”
whose aesthetic taste “shows itself in his skill in choosing with universal validity,
*something which he cannot bring about through his own sense of taste*, because his
guests might choose other foods or drinks, each according to his own private sense.
Therefore he sets up his meeting with variety...”\(^{94}\) The importance of this contrast lies in
that is shows us that the non-egoist is that person who gives *consideration* to the
judgements of others, whereas the egoist does not even see a purpose or a time for doing
so. Now one might object to the depth of this example by virtue of the fact that it deals
primarily with what Kant calls the “presentation” of one’s art with taste, which

\(^{94}\) Ibid. Italics mine. [7:242]
“presupposes a *social condition* (talking with others)…” That said, insofar as aesthetic taste is “the faculty for the play of the power of imagination to choose what is universally valid”, we can point to the overriding issue at work in the egoist, namely the lack of “play” in the imagination due to an “always already” structure of satisfaction.

Combining a “lack of play” with a feeling of “satisfaction” helps us to see why the aesthetic egoist must “applaud himself” in an effort to “reassure” the validity of his own judgements - the aesthetic egoist *atrophyes* his own capacities by limiting his active engagement with the judgement of others.

The “atrophy” issue is clearly on Kant’s mind throughout the first several pages of the second book of the *Anthropology*. In order to explain more easily why it is that the aesthetic egoist is that person who allows for the spoiling of their capacity for judgement, it is necessary to note that for Kant “pain must always precede every enjoyment; pain is always first”, and further, “pain is the incentive of activity, and in this, above all, we feel our life; without pain lifelessness would set in.”

The concept of enjoyment, and of “cultivation” are interrelated for Kant; and to cultivate oneself implies an active engagement with the world. The aesthetic egoist, however, feels no need to cultivate themselves, being always already “satisfied” with their judgements. Here we find an important connection with moral egoism. Kant notes, in the middle of his discussion on concepts such as contentment, enjoyment, emptiness, boredom, and amusement that “to

---

95 Ibid. [7:240]
96 Ibid. [7:240]
97 Ibid. [7:231]
better oneself is good and is also a duty.”98 Progress, or perhaps the “drive” itself, is lacking in the egoist’s “satisfaction.”

Thus the aesthetic egoist’s enjoyment is of a strange variety because it is idle in nature. Kant succinctly writes, extending his thoughts even beyond the realm of mere aesthetic satisfaction, “to be (absolutely) contented in life would be idle rest and the standstill of all incentives, or the dulling of sensations and the activity connected with them.”99 What is more, because one’s satisfactions are “idle” in nature (i.e. do not arise from the back-and-forth resulting from the play of the imagination and recognition of the aesthetic judgement of others) the aesthetic egoist may, at times, run into the psychological phenomenon of, what Kant calls, “boredom and amusement.”

If boredom is the result of the stagnation of the sensations of pleasure or pain, the aesthetic egoist, giving no thought to the “cultivation” of their judgements by being always already “satisfied” (I use quotation marks to denote the character of satisfaction which is “idle” in nature), is continuously thrown into a state of boredom and longing for “idle” amusement. Kant writes that “the void of sensations we perceive in ourselves arouses a horror (horror vacui) and, as it were, the presentiment of a slow death which is regarded as more painful than when fate suddenly cuts the thread of life.”100 Ironically, Kant notes, “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

98 Ibid. [7:236]
99 Ibid. [7:235]
100 Ibid. [7:233]
life about the *brevity* of life."\(^{101}\) Here we run into the question of why/how it is possible that someone could find this form of life enjoyably or satisfying at all? Unfortunately we must be content with simply raising this question for now, and suggesting that some fruitful work in aesthetics might be accomplished by forming a sort of taxonomy of enjoyment. It should be mentioned that I do not believe it justifiable, at least in Kant’s writings, to draw a strict causal connection between the aesthetic egoist, and the idly bored and amused one - the aesthetic egoist is merely more predisposed to this phenomenon for Kant (moreover, it stands to reason that an aesthetic non-egoist might find themselves just as bored, which in itself would be rather perplexing for Kant).

Having now given some detailed treatment to each form of egoism in turn, we can now ask what unifying generalizations we can make about them which might further provide some clarification? Finally, we must give some explication of Kant’s notion of “pluralism” which he defines as the opposite of egoism. Having completed this, we will then be able to pursue the hermeneutical/philosophical question of the relation between Kant’s modes of egoism taken from his *Anthropology*, and their possible bearing on his critical project.

\(^{101}\) Ibid. [7:234] Elsewhere, [7:233] Kant writes that he will be discussing how, in conjunction with boredom and amusement, “each period of time is long and life is short, or the opposite.”
V. Unifying Themes in Kant’s Forms of Egoism

As we have seen, Kant’s conception of egoism in the *Anthropology* is simultaneously brief and dense. In an effort to capture some of the most important aspects of his work, it may be helpful to point to several themes which summarize the above discussions.

First, it has come to the fore that all forms of egoism, for Kant, imply an isolating, insular tendency. Moreover, this isolation comes in primarily with respect to a person’s employment of their capacity for judgement. The logical, moral, and aesthetic egoists all rely exclusively on their own abilities in forming judgments. In other words, the egoist has no access to a kind of “meta-judgement” where one recognizes that one’s initial judgement is at odds with someone else’s, and so there is conceptual work done to make sense of this. The egoist simply accepts their own individual judgements immediately, and in doing so insulates themselves from the voice of contradiction. The issue of isolation has direct bearing on another important theme, namely that of rejecting a certain kind of touchstone in testing the truth of their judgements.

Logical egoism rejects the touchstone of theoretically critical dialogue, moral egoism rejects the touchstone of the concept of duty, and aesthetic egoism rejects the concept of aesthetically critical dialogue. Of course, the rejection of the touchstone in moral egoism is at the same time a rejection of the consideration of others as ends in themselves, and so all three touchstones bear a similarity to one another. What they have in common is that they bifurcate “individual” and “other” especially when it comes to judging about some theoretical, moral, or aesthetic issue. All forms of ego-ism assume that the *ego* can ascertain the truth alone, and thence arises the rejection of the use of touchstones. Rather
then viewing the ego as that which makes possible an important form of “communion”
with the other, the egoist assumes their own abilities sufficient to the task at hand. It
should perhaps be of no coincidence that Socrates, someone who continually asserted his
own ignorance, was also someone who was steeped in dialogue with others.

At work in the rejection of a touchstone is also the issue of rejecting, or even
acknowledging, the force of dialectic. The egoist, by limiting all judgements and ends to
themselves, misses out on the benefit of actively engaging in what appear to be a tension
of opposites. We have seen already that in the aesthetic realm, the non-egoist “good
host” recognizes that aesthetic judgements of unity and/or diversity is a complicated
matter, and so plans accordingly. The moral egoist, however, does not even give any
thought to the complication of the process of judging if one sees others as ends in
themselves as well.

Perhaps the most important connection between the modes of egoism resides in their
ultimate relation to morality. While it is obvious that moral egoism has to do with moral
action, it is perhaps less obvious with the logical and aesthetic types. In fact this point
has been clear from the beginning insofar as even choosing to employ the term “egoism”
generally conjures up a sense that something having to do with morality is being
discussed. Further, although we are postponing a discussion of Kant critical philosophy
for now, which provides the full force of the argument for the primacy of the practical,
we can still point to the moral connection in the forms egoism by contrasting them with
what Kant names as their opposite in the *Anthropology*, namely, “pluralism.” Kant
writes, “the opposite of egoism can only be pluralism, that is, the way of thinking in
which one is not concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world.”\textsuperscript{102} All forms of egoism, not just its moral mode, fail to help one recognize themselves as a part of something larger than themselves. As Holly Wilson notes, part of what this means is “actualizing the maxims that we share in common and that relate us to the communal goals of the natural predispositions, science, arts, and civilization.”\textsuperscript{103} One important reason why egoism seems to fail in this regard has to do with another summary theme between the different modes - the “atrophy” problem.

By abandoning their various touchstones the egoist makes their life both more difficult (e.g. they are more exposed to disorientation, and taking fool’s gold as real) as well as more simple (e.g. they don’t need to engage in the messy and complex task of dialogue and public judgement). The result, seen most clearly in the examples of the bored/idly amused aesthetic, is the atrophy of one’s unique capacities for the “play” of imagination, critical dialogue, re-oriented judgements, etc. However, it is important that we don’t over-generalize and claim that all forms of egoism always are, or even will lead to the bored/logically banal disposition. As we have seen above, for example, the logical egoist may sometimes be logically banal, and/or paradoxical (and I assume we could place these on a continuum for still further types). Yet, it is interesting to note, and Kant does as much, that there are some logically paradoxical persons who simply want to be

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. [7:130]
different for its own sake. While, for Kant, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in this, it too can lead to atrophy when one “contradicts generally accepted opinion” without letting it “[arouse] the mind to attention and investigation...”104 Thus Kant is quite nuanced in defining egoism, and it seems to be that although we can usually distinguish egoism by how a person approaches the task of judging, there will be many times when we can only distinguish egoism through something like practical consequences. To clarify, at least in the case of logical egoism, there is such a similarity between the logical egoist via paradox, and the mere “semblance” of egoism via paradox, that the defining feature become the extent to which the mind becomes “aroused.” This arousal can be read as a kind of awakening to a search, perhaps a kind of amazement or wonder which “drives” the person to “attention and investigation”, that is a kind of awareness and searching-after. We might tentatively conclude that some questions of egoism can only be settled in light of the extent to which a person carries with them such a drive, or spur to exploration, that is to “going beyond” their present judgements in search of some further ground of orientation.

That said, perhaps it is better to say that the modes of egoism, instead of sharing a common tendency towards atrophy, share a common tendency of idleness in judgements (which occasionally leads to atrophy). It should be clear by now that in refusing to orient themselves by means of touchstones, the egoist is both deprived of the means to go through the healthy process of disorientation-reorientation, and is at the same time always “dogmatic” in a “formal” sense (i.e. they already know that their judgement is the right

---

What is more, the always already idle egoist, by only using themselves as a touchstone for orientation (i.e. being turned "inward"), is also exposed problems of mental health, for Kant. Immediately following his discussion of egoism, Kant transitions into a discussion of “self-observation.” The connection, as Holly Wilson writes, lies in showing us that “our cognitive health depends on understanding the purpose of our cognitive power, which is to orient us toward the world, rather than toward our personal sense of reality.”

Wilson perceptively continues by noting that common sense (sensus communis), as the mark of mentally healthy people, might also make be a mark of a moral people as well. Drawing support both for this question of Wilson’s, as well as further support for our common reference to the notion of orientation and touchstones, we find Kant writing in the Anthropology (providing a lengthy quote to underscore Kant’s continued references):

The only universal characteristic of madness is the loss of common sense (sensus communis), and its replacement with logical private sense (sensus privatus)...For it is a subjectively necessary touchstone of the correctness of our judgements generally, and consequently also of the correctness of the soundness of our understanding, that we also restrain our understanding by the understanding of others, instead of isolating ourselves with our own understanding and judging publicly with out private representations...For we are thereby robbed, not of the only, but still of the greatest and most useful means of correcting our own

---

105 Wilson, op. cit., p. 99.
106 Wilson, op. cit., p. 99.

“Das einzige allgemeine Merkmal der Verrücktheit ist der Verlust des Gemeinsinnes (sensus communis), und der dagegen eintretende logische Eigensinn (sensus privatus)...Denn es ist ein subjektivnotwendiger Probierstein der Richtigkeit unseres Verstandes: daß wir diesen auch an den Verstand anderer halten, nicht aber uns mit dem unsrigen isolieren, und mit unserer Privatvorstellung doch gleichsam öffentlich urteilen...Denn man nimmt uns ja dadurch, wo nicht das einzige, doch das größte und brauchbarste Mittel, unsere eigene Gedanken zu berichtigen, welches dadurch geschieht, daß wir sie öffentlich aufstellen, um zu sehen, ob sie auch mit anderer ihrem Verstande zusammenpassen...Der, welcher sich an diesen Probierstein gar nicht kehrt, sondern es sich in den Kopf setzt, den Privatsinn, ohne, oder selbst wider den Gemeinsinn, schon für gültig anzuerkennen, ist einem Gedankenspiel hingegenegeben, wobei er nicht in einer mit anderen gemeinsamen Welt, sondern (wie im Traum) in seiner eigenen sich sieht, verführt und urteilt.”
thoughts, which happens on account of the fact that we advance them in public in order to see whether they also agree with the understanding of others... He who pays no attention at all to this touchstone, but gets it in his head to recognize private sense as already valid apart from or even in opposition to common sense, is abandoned to a play of thoughts in which he sees, acts, and judges, not in a common world, but rather in his own world (as in dreaming).

Of course, we must never forget the nuance which we elucidated earlier with regard to the oft importance of thinking in opposition to others. The point Kant is fundamentally making relates to egoism in this way - by never assuming that one has arrived at anything more than illusion, fool’s gold, “only” a dream, prior to sharing it with others, or at least recognizing the extent to which one has come to knowledge through the help of others who came before (i.e. in the case of mathematical knowledge, we can recall from above, Kant wrote that we shouldn’t pretend like we came to the knowledge in a vacuum). This is not to say that one can never have knowledge (though this seems to be the case where the super-sensible is concerned), but rather that we must recognize egoism as an obstacle in the way of the proper route to all knowledge. Perhaps one discovers that one’s judgement stands in paradox to those of the general public. At that point, as Kant has told us, the question remains open in terms of “egoism,” and can only be distinguished on the basis of the extent to which this paradox drives one to further investigation, amazement, refinement (always living with the “semblance” of egoism), and the extent to which one sits with it “idly” and thereby embarks on the road to “madness.” The most immediate need for advancing one’s assertions publicly, lies in the interesting extent to

which one, in one’s own “madness,” can be “amazed.” Here there is no clear path for distinguishing egoism.

VI. Interrupting Egoism Through Critique

In a letter to Christian Garve, Kant tells us that it was the antinomies of reason that “first aroused me from my dogmatic slumber and drove me to the critique of reason itself, in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradictions of reason with itself.”108 The antinomies interrupted Kant’s own “dogmatic slumber” by revealing to him the possibility that reason itself was sick - that the proper use of reason would lead one to contradict oneself. Acknowledging the antinomies opens up the possibility of surrendering “a healthy philosophy” to either a “skeptical hopelessness,” or a “dogmatic stubbornness, setting its mind rigidly to certain assertions without giving fair hearing to the grounds for the opposite.”109 On the one hand, failing to recognize the real possibility that the light of reason points in contradictory directions may allow one to “sleep soundly,” though in the face of the antinomies one comes to see that such slumber was “dogmatic” - narrow minded, and untested. In other words, “before” confronting the antinomies Kant claims to have been thinking within what we described above as “logical egoism” - with the specific sub-quality known as “logical obstinacy.” Being blind to the opinion’s and reasoning of others (qua “the other side of things”) while asserting one’s own beliefs as true covers that ground where logical obstinacy is a form of egoism (i.e. we must remember that the obstinate person who does truly give fair consideration to

108 Immanuel Kant, Correspondence (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 552. [12:258]
alternative possibilities is not necessarily an egoist for Kant). Yet, on the other hand, while allowing the antinomies to have their own “day in court” may interrupt such a form of egoism, it may also provoke a second layer of logical egoism in the form of “dogmatic stubbornness” - this time a kind of intentional blindness, an explicit turning away - or it may provoke a “skeptical hopelessness” which believes there is nothing left but to give up on the use of reason, a hopelessness that is equally dogmatic in its own way. The antinomies then harbor within them two dangers, both of which spells “the death of a healthy philosophy, though [skeptical hopelessness] might also be called the euthanasia of pure reason.”

Thus Kant undertakes a critique of pure reason, or as he put it in the description of scientific/scholarly egoism, to provide the second eye which is “the self-knowledge of understanding and of reason.” In doing so, Kant sees the movement of orientation to be capable of an essential resolution in a more proper reorientation.

Though the antinomies may throw us into a state of disorientation, we are capable of exposing the illusion at work within them, and thereby gain insight into how reason must reorient itself in terms of how it asks, as well as its capacity to answer, the questions “What can I know?,” “What should I do?,” “What may I hope?,” and “What is man?”

Before seeking to open up the connection between the three modes of egoism and the critical works via the antinomies in particular, it may be helpful to note generally how the connection will be explicated. In the section of his work The Contest of the Faculties titled “A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: ‘Is the Human Race Continually Improving?’” Kant alludes to the Copernican revolution as a model for dealing with what

\[110\text{Ibid., p. 460. (A407/B434)}\]
Kant notes that as regards this historical question, one can reasonably come to three different conclusions, namely that the human race is progressing, regressing, and simply “spinning in circles.” As Kant begins the task of trying to resolve this matter, he writes that “perhaps it is because we have chosen the wrong point of view from which to contemplate,” and suggests that “the planets, as seen from the earth, sometimes move backward, sometimes forward, and at other times remain motionless. But seen from the sun - the point of view of reason - they continually follow their regular paths as in the Copernican hypothesis.” Without going into the detail of Kant’s solution to this historical question, we simply want to note that this is also the “form” (i.e. the Copernican revolution) which the solution to the antinomies of reason will take, though the content of their resolution will principally rely on Kant’s distinction between appearances, and thing-in-themselves. That is to say, when it seems as though reason has of itself given rise to an antinomy, Kant attempts to look at the problem from a higher perspective of reason which does not attempt to claim that one side or the other is correct, but rather seeks to explain how it could be that an antinomy seems to have arisen at all.

However, as we have seen in the above remarks, Kant claims both that reason is the “sun” by which we can re-orient our perspective of some difficulty, e.g. the historical question, and also that faculty which itself might be in need of re-orientation. This would

---

111 Although we should keep in mind that Kant never refers to the inability of reason to reach a final conclusion on the matter as an antinomy. The fact that we can reasonably hold that the human is progressing, regressing, and “spinning in circles”, is not a fault of reason per se, but stems rather from the fact that reason cannot predict how humans will use their freedom.

be akin to saying that the sun by which we orient our lives is itself of a contradictory nature. Thankfully, Kant does not conveniently claim access to some further, even higher perspective: “It is our misfortune, however, that we are unable to adopt an absolute point of view when trying to predict free actions. For this, exalted above all human wisdom, would be the point of view of providence, which extends even to free human actions.”

Instead, in each of the three Critiques Kant notes that human beings lack such a perspective, but can nevertheless at least seek to explain how reason often falls into antinomical illusions.

This understanding, however, comes at a price. To put it another way, in order to pass through the antinomies by way of the “fire” of critique, it will be necessary that one lets the antinomies “interrupt” one’s egoism (logical, moral, aesthetic). Indeed, this emerges as one of the principal “uses” of the antinomies insofar as their resolution requires a re-orientation of the use (both speculative, and practical) of reason, a reorientation which, according to Kant, is more “modest” in the double sense of non-egoistic, and also less capable of putting forth “dogmatic” assertions. Yet, from another perspective, this re-orientation is itself closer to the truth, understood in the sense of a negative wisdom. For to refuse the movement of orientation-disorientation-reorientation may, as Kant writes, may lead one to the absurd: “Yet some thinker, otherwise not deficient in wisdom, prefer to stick firmly to their own interpretation of phenomena and to the point of view they originally adopted, even at the price of involving themselves to

---

113 Ibid., p.180. Again, it should be noted that we are principally here concerned with the theme of the Copernican revolution, and the concept of orientation, and not the specifically historical question of the essay itself.
an absurd degree in Tychonic cycles and epicycles.”

With the above remarks in place, we can now turn explicitly to the three Critiques, and their relation to the modes of egoism explored above.

VII. Critique of Pure Reason

Immanuel Kant introduces the concept of an antinomy of pure reason in the second chapter of the transcendental dialectic by writing that “here a new phenomenon of human reason shows itself, namely a wholly natural antithetic, for which one does not need to ponder or to lay artificial snares, but rather into which reason falls of itself and even unavoidably.”

Although there are several forms of dialectic at work in speculative reason (the paralogism), the antinomies are unique insofar as reason itself leads to two contradictory conclusions. Preliminarily, it seems as though reason finally comes to an irresolvable conflict with itself. Without attempting to give a direct explication of the antinomies of pure reason, which would go well beyond the scope of this paper, we can open up the connection between their “form” (i.e. roughly, their function, and use) and Kant’s concept of egoism as described above.

Immediately following this first preliminary description of the antinomies of pure reason, Kant writes that the antinomy “guards reason against the slumber of an imagined conviction, such as a merely one-sided illusion produces, but at the same time leads reason into the temptation either to surrender itself to a skeptical hopelessness or else to assume an attitude of dogmatic stubbornness, setting its mind rigidly to certain assertions

---

114 Ibid., p. 180.

without giving a fair hearing to the grounds for the opposite.”116 Paralleling the inherent philosophical doublet at work, the antinomies also produce a doubled “psychological” reaction. On the one hand, recognition of an antinomy “guards” one wakes one from the presupposition that the truth has been found. On the other hand, recognition of the antinomy, “at the same time” in Kant’s words, is an affront to reasons “desire” for complete understanding, and thereby provokes one to quickly resolve the antinomy by either a “skeptical hopelessness,” or by a return of the dogmatic slumber - this time in the form of a dogmatic “stubbornness.” However, we can also respond to the antinomies in a way which holds open an essential gap, or lacuna, in our efforts to complete the puzzle of knowledge which would finally “make sense” of those questions which we have no empirical basis for resolving. Yet, as we will see, it is the same reason which both produces the antinomies, and also incessantly demands a satisfactorily complete resolution; and this in turn helps to explain why holding open an essential gap often gives way to either a skepticism or a dogmatism.117

The antinomies of pure reason crop up by virtue of the fact that reason itself has the capacity to “free a concept of the understanding from the unavoidable limitations of a possible experience, and thus seek to extend it beyond the boundaries of the empirical, though still in connection with it.”118 Although sensible experience never gives us a completed empirical synthesis - that is to say, e.g. we never experience a complete

116 Ibid., p. 460. (A407/B434)

117 It should be kept in mind that in essence “dogmatism” and “skepticism” are both forms of dogmatism. Kant uses the terms, more or less, to distinguish between the empiricists (skepticism) and the rationalists (dogmatism) “dogmatic” pretensions to have truly resolved the antinomies.

118 Ibid., p. 460-1. (A409/B435)
totality of all appearances because there is always something “more” - “Reason demands
this in accordance with the principle: If the conditioned is given, then the whole sum of
conditions, and hence the absolutely unconditioned, is also given, through which alone
the conditioned was possible.”[119] In other words, because we are capable of dividing up,
e.g. a chair, into smaller and smaller parts, we are led to think both that we are only
limited technologically in what we can do (i.e. we could always, at least theoretically,
make a further division), and that we must at some point reach an end, a discovery of
“simples” which would give us the ultimate unconditioned ground for all the divisions we
are capable of making. The “problem” lies in the way that experience unfolds over time
qua the form of inner sense. (Kant’s transcendental idealism, and its explicit bearing on
the antinomical issue will be discussed below.) Because of this the “unconditioned” is
never given as an object - experience always, and only gives a conditioned condition.
Yet it is still perfectly “reasonable,” from one perspective of the antinomies, to search for
such a completeness, albeit only in a “problematic” sense. Kant summarizes this in
writing “now whether this completeness is sensibly possible is still a problem. Yet the
idea of this completeness still lies in reason, irrespective of the possibility or
impossibility of connecting empirical concepts to it adequately.”[120] Reason is incessant
in its orienting human cognition towards that (problematic) object which would provide
completeness and unity to the understanding. To put it another way, reason is
speculatively oriented towards the pursuit of truth qua completeness, unity, that first
unconditioned “premise”/object which grounds and conditions all others, and because of

[119] Ibid., p. 461. (A409/B436)
[120] Ibid., p. 465. (A417/B444-5)
this it demands the same pursuit/orientation from the understanding. The way in which reason orients will hopefully be made clearer in light of its quasi-reorientation (i.e. through a deepening of the concept of a “problematic” - regulatory - orientation towards completeness) which Kant posits in light of his reflection on the nature of the antinomies.

This unceasing quality of reason, as we have said, gives rise to the types of “dogmatic” assertions, as well as serves as the ground for exposing such assertions as so many sides of the antinomies. Reason, insofar as it appears to be in conflict with itself, is on trial; yet it must also serve as judge and jury. Kant writes, “transcendental reason thus permits no touchstone other than its own attempt to bring internal unification to its assertions, and this requires a free and unhindered contest of these assertions among themselves...”¹²¹ Throughout the rest of this chapter we can point to a myriad of places where, as a result of reasons slip into antinomical illusion, Kant exposes this precisely as the purpose and ability of (speculative) reason to interrupt the (logical) egoism which makes pretensions to the truth without recognizing reason’s “other side.” Yet the important question remains, how can a sick reason heal itself? In other words, how are we to understand the way that reason can simultaneously produce the antinomies, and recognize their character? The answer to this question, by way of the Kant’s transcendental idealism, i.e. the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, will also help to further clarify the reorientation of the speculative use of reason.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 469. (A425/B453)
After opening up the four antinomies, Kant describes each side’s claims as so many “glittering pretensions,” and acknowledges that the only hope for a resolution within reason itself is to re-orient the response to the antinomies in such a way that both sides “give up their proud claims,” or which would at least help to explain “the zealous heat of the one side and the cold assurance of the other, and why they hail the one party with joyful approval and are irreconcilably prejudiced against the other.”

In order to do this, Kant first shows the “interest” that both the empiricists and the rationalists take in resolving the antinomies, though in different ways. Although both have a general interest in resolving the antinomies, the rationalists try to extend the understanding to things-in-themselves, whereas the empiricists try to extend sensibility to things-in-themselves. Here we see that both sides carry within the tendency to egoistically assert their own position while disavowing that touchstone which gives one a “second eye” for seeing the “other side,” and for admitting to the limitations of one’s eye for the truth. In speaking about the skeptical/empiricist “antithesis” assertions at work in the antinomies, Kant writes that they become dogmatic when they make pretensions of being able to actively deny what lies beyond sensible experience. Both rationalism and empiricism make “the same mistake of immodesty,” and if only, for example, the empiricist would acknowledge their limitations “then his principle would be a maxim for moderating our claims, for being modest in our assertions, and at the same time for the greatest possible extension of our understanding through the teacher really prescribed for us, namely experience. For in such a case, intellectual presuppositions and faith on behalf our

122 Ibid., p. 497. (A462/B490), (465/B493), and (A465/B493)
practical concern would not be taken from us...”123 The key here is for the skeptics/empiricists to recognize that sensible experience is phenomenal in its character, and not noumenal; thereby exposing its inability to make any dogmatic claims which go beyond sensible experience. The speculative resolution of the antinomies will depend on one’s “interests,” which is why “if a human being could renounce all interests, and, indifferent to all consequences, consider the assertions of reason merely according to their grounds, then, supposing that he knows no way of escaping this dilemma except be confessing allegiance to one or the other of the conflicting doctrines, such a person would be in a state of ceaseless vacillation.”124 In other words, just as reason provides the (speculative) orientation towards completeness, so too does this “drive” create the very antinomies which, if one were capable of acknowledging in complete modesty, would have the (speculative) effect of completely disorienting a person. As Kant writes, “today it would strike him as convincing that the human will is free; tomorrow, when he considered the indissoluble chain of nature, he would side with the view that freedom is nothing but self-deception, and the everything is mere nature.”125 The “first” orientation of reason towards synthetic completeness carries within it the paradoxical seeds of its own disorientation, provided that the eruption of egoism is itself interrupted enough to expose the gap which must always be present in this orientation. If one makes “dogmatic” pretensions to the truth without acknowledging the touchstone that is the perspective of others, one will escape disorientation, yes, but one will also fail to see both

123 Ibid., p. 500. (A471/B499) and (A470/B498)
124 Ibid., p. 503. (A475/B503)
125 Ibid., p. 503. (A475/B503)
the dialectical nature of this form of speculation, and the egoism at work which makes this possible.

We have thus more-or-less revealed the nature of the motion orientation-disorientation at work in the relationship between the 1st Critique, and the concept of “egoism.” That “first” orientation of reason has led, of its own accord, to a state of disorientation - a state which, at the same time, is also the “shock” which interrupts/disrupts the eruption of (logical/scholarly/scientific) egoism. From the perspective of critical philosophy, the orientation of reason towards complete systematic unity leads to the antinomical illusion that such unity could be found in appearances, that is to say, could be anything more than a problematical concept which “gives direction” to reason, and thereby the understanding. From the perspective of the anthropological concept of “egoism,” the orientation of reason is concomitant with, tangled together with, an eruption of egoism which can only be “disrupted” through an “interruption” which “shocks” egoism out of the illusion that it has found the truth qua a determinate concept of the complete unity of all appearances. However, just because we can show this movement in both critical, and anthropological terms, does not mean that we have come any closer to resolving the relationship of the “four questions” discussed at the beginning of this paper. At this point, we have merely shown a structural parallel at work, but have not elucidated any philosophical “causal influence” of the one on another. Although it is unlikely that we can accomplish this task here, we can perhaps find a way to approach it by showing how the movement orientation-disorientation is “used” by Kant to set in
motion the experience of disorientation-reorientation in order to point the way to the
primacy of practical reason.

It is highly significant that Kant makes a distinction between the speculative
“modesty” of the empiricist which interrupts the rationalist’s dogmatism, and the
practical interest of reason which in turn interrupts the speculative disorientation: “But
now if it came to be a matter of doing or acting, then this play of merely speculative
reason would disappear like the phantom images of a dream, and he would choose his
principles merely according to practical interest.”\(^\text{126}\) However, we must postpone the
bearing this has in relation to egoism until the discussion of the *Critique of Practical
Reason* below. Thus, as it concerns the speculative interest of reason, Kant tells us that
“mere honesty requires that a reflective and inquiring being should devote certain times
solely to testing its own reason, withdrawing entirely from all partiality, and publicly
communicating his remarks to others for their judgment...”\(^\text{127}\) It should hopefully be
clear by now that this “testing” which occurs by “publicly communicating his remarks to
others for judgement” is that touchstone which is talked about in the *Anthropology*,
without which the eruption of egoism remains unchecked.

Moreover, recalling our preliminary discussion of the “four questions” found in
Kant’s lectures on logic, we can see more clearly the importance of Kant’s claim that
reason has a “calling,” a “natural inclination” to communicate one’s thoughts socially:
“This so-called logical egoism consists, then, in nothing but the presumed but often false
self-sufficiency of our understanding, existing for itself and, so to say, isolated, where

---

\(^{126}\) Ibid., p. 503. (A475/B503)

\(^{127}\) Ibid., p. 503. (A475/B503)
one believes he knows enough by himself, and believes he is infallibly correct and incorrigible in all his judgements. And we easily see that this conceited mode of thought is not only completely ridiculous but is even most contrary to real humanity.”128 While in theory, we could imagine someone with sufficient enough reasoning prowess to discover, contemplate, and dissolve both sides of the antinomies of pure reason, the person would remain a logic egoist; the reason for this is that logic egoism, as we saw above, was not decided merely by whether someone came to a right/wrong “answer,” but rather depended on the extent to which a person, consistent with the development of their personality, and humanity, recognized that it is the “touchstone” of critical dialogue which properly (re)orients the speculative use of reason. We must not lose sight of the connection which we saw Kant make above in the discussion of the scholarly/scientific egoist, as someone who lacks “popularity,” i.e, the sociability to communicate with others. In the “Vienna Logic” Kant draws an explicit connection between “popularity” and public communication. Referring to ancient Greek philosophy, Kant writes “the ancients had more popularity in their exposition because they spoke before the people,”129 which is why, in the “Jäsche Logic” we are told that “to learn true popularity, however, one must read the ancients, e.g. Cicero’s philosophical writings, the poets Horace, Virgil, etc.,...For true popularity demands a good deal of practical acquaintance with the world and with men, acquaintance with men’s concepts, taste, and inclinations, to which constant regard must be given in presentation and even in the choice of

129 Ibid., p. 256.
expressions that are fitting and adequate to popularity."  

Finally, in the same lectures, only a few pages later, Kant connects the above remarks with the other major of themes of this paper, i.e., “touchstones” and “orientation”:

An *external* mark or an *external* touchstone of truth is the comparison of our own judgements with those of others, because the subjective will not be present in all others in the same way, so that illusion can thereby be cleared up. The *incompatibility* of the judgement of others with our own is thus an external mark of error and is to be regarded as a cue to investigate our procedure in judgement, but not for that reason to reject it at once. For one can perhaps be right *about the thing* but not right *in manner*, i.e., in the exposition.

The common human understanding (*sensus communis*) is also in itself a touchstone for discovering the mistakes of the *artificial* use of the understanding. This is what it means to *orient* oneself *in thought* or in the speculative use of reason by means of the common understanding, when one uses the *common* understanding as a test for passing judgement on the correctness of the *speculative* use.  

While we have obviously here deviated from the text of the 1st Critique, it is clear that what is at issue is the same, namely the motion of orientation-disorientation-reorientation of the speculative use of reason in order to find the truth. What is more, recalling the above discussion of “logical egoism” in regard to the crucial *political* importance Kant places on the freedom of the press, and freedom of speech, we find Kant, towards the end of the 1st Critique strike a similar tone in writing of the importance of “the freedom to exhibit the thoughts and doubts which one cannot resolve oneself for public judgement without thereupon being decried as a malcontent and a dangerous citizen.”  

We might not be too far off the mark in claiming that *social* isolation is at the

---

130 Ibid., p. 556.
131 Ibid., p. 563.
same time the disorientation of reason. Thus, the picture that begins to emerge as we look at the antinomies in the 1st Critique is that the eruption of egoism also plays a kind of protective role - that is, it allows reason to stop its testing and assume that one is properly oriented towards the truth. Inversely, the picture also reveals the antinomies as that which interrupts egoism, and thereby delivers speculative reason over to an irresolvable disorientation.

At least this is the picture of the antinomies prior to the fourth section of chapter two, intriguingly titled “The transcendental problems of pure reason, insofar as they absolutely must be capable of a solution” - one can almost see the incessant demand of reason at work in the section titles alone. From here until the end of the chapter, Kant attempts to “rescue” reason from this conflict it creates for itself by introducing the distinction between phenomena/noumena which is made via transcendental idealism. The back-and-forth relationship which this solution has to the concept of egoism only continues to emerge further into the foreground as time goes on.

Kant begins his attempt at resolving the antinomies by writing “wanting to solve all problems and answer all questions would be impudent boasting and such extravagant self-conceit that one would instantly forfeit all trust.” If Kant were to end the chapter on the antinomies here one would be assured of the reason. Yet, it must be a distinction between this kind of egoism, and reason’s unrelenting pursuit of, and orientation towards, the truth qua completeness which allows Kant to follow this first sentence with the claim

---

133 [A752/B780] This claim could gain substantial anthropological support by looking at the social-psychological evidence of the “disorientation” of criminals held in solitary confinement for weeks, and months at a time.

134 Ibid., p. 503. (A476/B504)
that “nevertheless, there are sciences whose nature entails that every question occurring in them must absolutely be answerable from what one knows, because the answer must arise from the same source as the question; and there it is in no way allowed to plead unavoidable ignorance, but rather a solution can be demanded.”\textsuperscript{135} Passing by the intriguing claim that “the answer must arise from the same source as the question,” we might perhaps be surprised to find Kant taking an almost disparaging tone towards the sort of “negative wisdom” which we have grown so accustomed to expect out of his discussions in the dialectic thus far. As was said above, as the rest of this chapter progresses, we find Kant in a continual back-and-forth between the demand which reason makes, and the necessity for interrupting egoism to make this demand both clearer and even slightly malleable. In a way, we could perhaps even formulate a kind of “structural” antinomy at work in chapter two itself; namely, the thesis that “speculative modesty reveals the irreconcilable nature of the antinomies,” and the antithesis that “speculative modesty reveals the way in which the antinomies can be resolved.” Thus we have Kant claiming that “we cannot evade the obligation of giving at least a critical resolution of the questions of reason before us by lamenting the narrow limits of our reason and confessing, with the appearance of a modest self-knowledge, that it lies beyond our reason to settle [the antinomies]...”\textsuperscript{136} In other words, reason’s orientation towards the truth is not to be sacrificed based on a feigned modesty that simply “gives up” pursuing an answer. That said, we know already that the critical solution will not be one which judges in favor of one side over the other. Kant formulates this clearly in his claim that

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p. 503. (A476/B504)

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p. 506. (A481/B509)
“the dogmatic solution is not merely uncertain, but impossible. The critical solution, however, which can be completely certain, does not consider the question objectively at all, but instead asks about the foundations of the cognition in which it is grounded.” In pursuing a solution in this way, we can see a little better how Kant might be able to refrain from slipping into some form of egoism just because he claims to have found a solution to the antinomies. The key resides in the fact that Kant never considers the questions “objectively,” but seeks only to show how both sides are either wrong (in the case of the mathematical antinomies) or right (in the case of the dynamical antinomies) once one distinguishes between appearances and things-in-themselves.

Each side of the antinomies conflict with one another only so long as one does not distinguish the noumenal concept of an unconditioned condition, which could therefore never be objectified in phenomenal experience. As Kant puts it, “the antinomy of pure reason in its cosmological ideas is removed by showing that it is merely dialectical and a conflict due to an illusion arising from the fact that one has applied the idea of absolute totality, which is valid only as a condition of things in themselves, to appearances that exist only in representation, and that, if they constitute a series, exist in the successive regress but otherwise do not exist at all.” In the end, Kant claims that although we can never help the reasonable “feeling” that one side or the other must be right, we can at least gain some understanding as to why the conflict within reason must be left unresolved. As an aporia, Kant says elsewhere, the antinomies are not resolvable by untying the knot, but only made understandable by cutting out the knot entirely. That

---

137 Ibid., p. 507. (A484/B512)
138 Ibid., p. 519. (A506/B534)
said, given that the antinomies are both objectively irresolvable, yet also erupt
unavoidably out of reason, Kant is still able to consider the “utility” of the antinomies in re-orienting reason as regards its speculative and practical interests.

The principle of pure reason which demands the search for the unconditioned condition, the completed synthesis, can not be assumed to have objective, empirical import; that is to say, it cannot be the purpose of this principle to actually find an object which corresponds to the concept of completeness. Instead, Kant tells us, “the principle of pure reason we are thinking of retains its genuine validity...as a problem for the understanding, thus for the subject in initiating and continuing in accordance with the completeness of the idea, the regress in the series of conditions for a given conditioned...Thus the principle of reason is only a rule, prescribing a regress in the series of conditions for given appearances, in which regress it is never allowed to stop with an absolutely unconditioned.”

Reason’s orientation towards, and demand for the unconditioned condition serves as a rule to the understanding which says something to the effect of “you must keep looking!” Not only does reason provide the horizon in which human cognition finds its speculative orientation, it also serves as the “touchstone” which guides one by providing the rule “never stop looking.” As Kant says, the antinomies “will always deliver something useful and serviceable for the correction of our judgements,” and this is the case because of the way in which they interrupt egoism by bringing to light an inherent contradiction which must occur whenever one claims to have found an objective solution to the antinomies. Reason is legislative insofar as it

139 Ibid., p. 520. (A508/B536-509/B537)
provides an orientation via the rule which demands an unending search for absolute completeness. Kant fleshes this out further by identifying the purpose of the rule as essentially regulative, as opposed to constitutive: this rule “postulates what should be effected by us in the regress, but does not anticipate what is given in itself in the object prior to any regress. Hence I call it a regulative principle of reason...it cannot say what the object is, but only how the empirical regress is to be instituted so as to attain to the complete concept of the object.”\(^{140}\) Again, the rule of reason provides an orientation for the understanding which, in order for any honest progress to be made, must refrain from ever dogmatically asserting that one has finished the regress.

Coming back now to the concept of a touchstone, Kant tells us that the problematic/hypothetical use of reason “is therefore directed at the systematic unity of the understanding’s cognitions, which, however, is the touchstone of truth for its rules. Conversely, systematic unity (as a mere idea) is only a projected unity, which one must regard not as a given in itself, but only as a problem; this unity, however, helps to find a principle for the manifold and particular uses of the understanding, thereby guiding it even in those cases that are not given and making it coherently connected.”\(^{141}\) The antinomies reveal the character of reasons fundamental orientation towards “making sense” (complete sense) of “the manifold and particular uses of the understanding,” namely its problematic character which provides regulative rules for the search, and which themselves are tested as rules by the touchstone of “the systematic unity of understanding’s cognitions.” Though not explicitly here, it will hopefully emerge more

\(^{140}\) Ibid., p. 521. (A507/B535), and (A510/B538)

\(^{141}\) Ibid., p. 593. (A647/B675)
clearly that reason’s fundamental orientation towards complete unity is also connected to
the eruption of egoism which can be interrupted (speculatively) by the recognition of the
antinomies, which serve as a permanent mark of the essential gap that must always exist
between the concepts reason can “set free,” and the empirical restriction placed on all
objective knowledge.

To make the same point another way, we could say that reason’s orientation will
always interrupt the empirical disunity/incompleteness which we objectively encounter.
Without this interruption, Kant tells us, we would be fundamentally disoriented because it
always we who have the “job” of “making sense” of things. Kant writes, “For the law of
reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without
that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of
empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic
unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary.”142 This orientation gives rise to the
belief that one could actually attain an objective knowledge of such unity; for, logically,
Kant tells us:

One can regard every concept as a point, which, as the standpoint of an observer,
has its horizon, i.e., a multiplicity of things that can be represented and surveyed,
as it were, from it. Within this horizon a multiplicity of points must be able to be
given to infinity, each of which in turn has its narrower field of view; i.e. every
species contains subspecies in accordance with the principle of specification, and
the logical horizon consists only of smaller horizons (subspecies)...But different
horizons, i.e., genera, which are determined from just as many concepts, one can
think as drawn out into a common horizon, which one can survey collectively
from its middle point, which is the higher genus, until finally the highest genus is
the universal and true horizon, determined from the standpoint of the highest

142 Ibid., p. 595. (A651/B679)
concept and comprehending all manifoldness, as genera, species, and subspecies, under itself.\textsuperscript{143}

This lengthy quote shows us the logical egoism which occurs insofar as one thinks oneself capable of attaining such a standpoint. Of course, as we have repeatedly seen, the antinomies continue to bring down this speculative tower, and disrupt one’s pursuit of such a standpoint. But if this is the fundamental orientation of reason, then it can only be a regulative orientation which gives the rule that we are to pursue such a standpoint, but not claim to have ever found it. Kant writes that this rule of reason “without determining anything...only points the way toward systematic unity.”\textsuperscript{144} Reason provides an orientation, a touchstone, and through the antinomies, an unavoidable eruption of conflict that results in the disorientation which reminds one that the end, the “highest standpoint,” is only to be pursued but never claimed.

However, it is not just in the antinomies that we find a connection to egoism in the 1st critique. As the rest of the work progresses we find drawing strong connections between the critical project itself and the task of interrupting egoism. Kant begins the “Appendix” by noting that by confronting the antinomies, reason is led to discover that the metaphysical “tower of Babel” that was first assumed capable of being built, must now “fail from lack of material, not to mention the confusion of languages that unavoidably divided the workers over the plan and dispersed them throughout the world, leaving each to build on his own according to his own design.”\textsuperscript{145} It should not go unnoticed that Kant alludes here to the tower of Babel - that story most often associated with human

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., p. 599. (A658/B686)
\textsuperscript{144} (A668/B696)
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p. 627. (A707/B735), and (A708/B736)
egoism/hubris. Because of “humanity’s general lust for knowledge,” the discipline of negative wisdom is badly needed when transcendental reason, unlike its empirical use, is not “subjected to a continuous examination on the touchstone of experience;” and this negative wisdom is “a system of caution and self-examination out of the nature of reason and of the objects of its pure use...”\(^\text{146}\) Failing this form of theoretical modesty, Kant tells us, philosophy begins to “strut about with a dogmatic gait and to decorate itself with titles and ribbons...,” which are in truth “idle pretensions that can never succeed, but that instead countermand its aim of revealing the deceptions of a reason that misjudges its own boundaries and of bringing the self-conceit of speculation back to modest but thorough self-knowledge by means of a sufficient illumination of our concepts.”\(^\text{147}\) Yet, this is not to say that speculative modesty is the same thing as a kind of passivity, or timidity. In further elaborating on the relationship of critique to egoism, Kant writes that the dogmatic use of pure reason cannot help but “appear before the critical eye of a higher and judicial reason except with modesty, indeed with a complete renunciation of all pretensions to dogmatic authority.”\(^\text{148}\) Just as the antinomies interrupted speculative reason’s egoistic pretension to have objectified complete systematic unity, so too does the critical method in general interrupt the logical/scientific/scholarly egoism at continually at work when we assert claims dogmatically about concepts for which we have no empirical touchstone of truth.

\(^\text{146}\) Ibid., p. 628-629. (A711/B739), and (A711/B739)

\(^\text{147}\) Ibid., p. 641. (A735/B763)

\(^\text{148}\) Ibid., p. 643. (A739/B767)
This theme becomes more and more apparent throughout the “Doctrine of Method,” where, for example, we find Kant writing of a “certain dishonesty in human nature, which yet in the end, like everything else that comes from nature, must contain a tendency to good purposes, namely an inclination to hide its true dispositions and to make a show of certain assumed ones that are held to be good and creditable.”149 This is the tendency to “pretend to be better than one is and to express dispositions that one does not have,” which Kant is “sorry to perceive the very same dishonesty, misrepresentation, and hypocrisy even in the utterances of the speculative way of thinking...”150 Though Kant does not explicitly use the “anthropological” term “logical egoism” or “scholarly/scientific egoism,” he quotes almost verbatim the definition he provided for each as we showed above. Continuing, just as in the Anthropology he noted that sometimes the egoist tries to hide their egoism in public, so too in the Critique here he writes of the “private vanity” of speculative dogmatism against which “the vanity of others resists them with public approval.”151

The critical task of reason lies, in part, in interrupting egoism. However, reason itself - given its fundamental orientation - carries within it the tendency toward the mode of logical egoism, but which is capable of interrupting itself through exposing the force of the antinomies. Kant maintains this distinction by in warning that “for reason to leave just these doubts [i.e. the antinomies] standing, and to set out to recommend the conviction and confession of its ignorance, not merely as a cure for dogmatic self-conceit

149 Ibid., p. 648. (A748/B776)
150 Ibid., p. 648. (A748/B776)
151 Ibid., p. 648. (A749/B777)
but also as the way in which to end the conflict of reason with itself, is an entirely vain attempt...rather it is at best only a means for awakening it from its sweet dogmatic dreams in order to undertake a more careful examination of its condition."152 The antinomies interrupt egoism by “shocking” reason out of its dogmatic slumber. What is crucial to see is that this “shock” must be continuous, that is to say, it is no enough to interrupt egoism just once, for as Kant has told us, egoism erupts out of the “I” itself. The movement of interruption which disorients the previously egoistic orientation must be repetitive in nature. Reason is, in a way, always in need of a reorientation. Why? Because reason’s orientation is always the same, namely to demand that we search for objectively identifiable systematic unity. It is always a re-cognition that this speculative demand/rule is regulative/problematic in essence, and not constitutive, and further that the task is unending for just this reason. Reason reorients itself by disorienting itself through the antinomies. It is in this vein that Kant speaks of “skeptical polemicizing” as warranted against the dogmatist who fails to “mistrust his original objective principles” - this polemicizing being another way to “unhinge his concept and bring him to self-knowledge.”153 What is it to “unhinge” one’s concepts from objective knowledge than to reorient reason by way of disorientation? The important connection to egoism lies in the way that Kant speaks of this movement as only possible in conjunction with, or by way of, “self-knowledge;” which is to say, the recognition that one has been in a dogmatic slumber.

152 Ibid., p. 652. (A757/B785)
153 Ibid., p. 655. (A763/B791)
The speculative use of reason carries within it the eruption of logical/scientific egoism, and must pass through the fire of the critique in order to make any true gains. The very last sentence of the critique reminds us that it is by way of a critique of our own reason that we may “bring human reason to full satisfaction in that which has always, but until now vainly, occupied its lust for knowledge.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 704. (A855/B883)} The dual meaning of the word “vain,” i.e. self-conceited, as well as “pointless” or “inevitable failure” proves intriguing as well. The logical/scientific/scholarly egoism, while providing a false sense of security and dogmatic assuredness, will prove to fail us in the end - that is to say in the face of the conflict which must arise when mistake what reason hopes for (objective knowledge of complete systematic unity) with what the our finite sensible natures can provide. It is only by recognizing our “vanity” that we can cut the knot of the antinomies, lest reason remain internally sick from the logical egoism which accompanies its original orientation. Further, this should give us a clue as to how to take the step from investigating the connection between egoism and speculative reason, to investigating the connection between egoism and practical reason.

VIII. Critique of Practical Reason

The antinomies at work in theoretical reason find their resolution not by “untying” the knot of the aporia, but by unmasking the knot itself as an unavoidable illusion which arises when we fail to take into consideration the transcendental distinction between things-in-themselves, and appearances. In other words, the solution to the antinomies cannot come by trying to decide in favor for either the thesis or antithesis, but rather by
revealing, through the distinction of transcendental idealism, why both sides are in fact right/wrong. Yet, as we have tried to show, this does not preclude the important theoretical use which Kant affords the antinomy, namely, the interruption of logical egoism so as to make more clear the way to an appropriate re-orientation of the use of reason itself. We alluded above to this re-orientation of reason as the proper ordering between its speculative, and practical use, though this has been left only implicit until now so that we might be able to show the full force of the connection between the Kantian movement of orientation-disorientation-reorientation, and his description of the modes of egoism as they appear in the Anthropology. That said, as we will hopefully see, the full reorientation of reason toward its primarily practical use can only be effected once the mode of moral egoism has been interrupted. Paralleling the first critique, we will look for the “how” of this interruption/reorientation first in Kant’s description of the antinomy of practical reason.

In Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason he begins the “Dialectic” by noting that no matter what use of reason we are speaking of, i.e. speculative/theoretical or practical, there is an “unavoidable illusion” which manifests itself through a conflict of reason with itself. Here Kant notes the interesting way in which the antinomies could be said to be “the most beneficial error into which human reason could ever have fallen...”\textsuperscript{155} The reason for this is that the illusion at work in the antinomies is noticed by reason only

because it takes form of a conflict of reason with itself.\textsuperscript{156} To put it another way, how could reason notice that it had fallen into illusion if this illusion did not create a conflict within that same reason which could be felt? The illusion, i.e. mistaking appearances for things-in-themselves, happily interrupts the original orientation of reason towards complete systematic unity by pitting reason against itself (how could reason achieve complete unity if it, in the last instance, contradicts itself?). Only because of this necessary illusion - which finds its necessity in its “use value” - is reason “forced to investigate this illusion” by being driven “to search for the key to escape from this labyrinth.”\textsuperscript{157} This process is the mechanism through which the process orientation-disorientation-reorientation is set in motion. For, although reason must let go of its most fundamental orientation (complete systematic unity) because of the disorientation which must occur when we mistake appearances for things-in-themselves, this is the necessary path by which reason comes to find the “key” of escape. This escape, this “key,” is however that which “we did not seek and yet need” - reorientation.\textsuperscript{158} As we hinted above, this reorientation within reason is the emergence of the primacy of the practical use of reason. Kant tells us “when this key is found, it further discovers what we did not seek and yet need, namely a view into a higher, immutable order or things in which we already are and in which we can henceforth be directed, by determinate precepts, to carry

\textsuperscript{156} It should be noted that the nature of the antinomical illusion is different from the paralogism and ideal. Thus, we are merely claiming that we would not be capable of noticing this illusion if it did not bring reason into a conflict with itself.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., p. 226. (5:107)

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p. 226. (5:107)
on our existence in accordance with the highest vocation of reason."\(^{159}\) As we saw in the 1st Critique, part of this “key” which unexpectedly reorients us toward that place where we already are (the space of the moral) lies in the interruption of egoism. However, in the 2nd Critique, Kant now tells us that this same process must occur within the practical use of reason itself - for there are primary orientations of morality which Kant sees as actually having no moral content at all. Here, the importance of the interruption of egoism emerges as crucial for a proper moral reorientation.

Kant begins this task of interruption/reorientation by writing that practical reason “seeks the unconditioned for the practically conditioned (which rests on inclinations and natural needs), not indeed as the determining ground of the will, but even when this is given (in the moral law), it seeks the unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason, under the name of the *highest good*."\(^{160}\) To give practical determination to this idea “is the *doctrine of wisdom*, and this in turn, as a *science, is philosophy* in the sense in which the word was understood by the ancients, for whom it was a direction to the concept in which the highest good was to be placed and to the conduct by which it was acquired."\(^{161}\) Thus for Kant, even the term “philosophy” - used in this sense - should cause some interruption of egoism: “it would do not harm to discourage the self-conceit of someone who ventures to claim the title of philosopher if one holds before him, in the very definition, a standard for self-estimation that would very much lower his pretension. For, to be a *teacher of wisdom* would mean something more than to be a student who has

\(^{159}\) Ibid., p. 226. (5:108)

\(^{160}\) Ibid., p. 227. (5:108)

\(^{161}\) Ibid., p. 227. (5:108)
not yet come so far as to guide himself, and still less to guide others, with assured expectation of so high an end..." The person who claims to have found a determinate concept of the good, must be either a philosopher qua teacher of wisdom, or a person with a high degree of pretension and self-conceit. In opening up the antinomy of practical reason, we are led to see that, although the highest good is indeed the unconditioned totality which practical reason is in search of, it is necessary that we recognize the form of the moral law as the determining ground of the will, and reorient our understanding of the purpose of the search for the highest good.

Kant reveals the antinomy of practical reason by first noting that the concept of the highest good unifies the notions of virtue and happiness. However, what is the ground of this unification? For Kant, what is most important here is to recognize that whatever the nature of the connection, it will be a synthetic, as opposed to analytic. Neither the concept virtue, nor happiness, can be said to contain the other analytically. Thus the concept of the highest good cannot simply presuppose their unification. The difficulty in specifying this unification, and failure to recognize the inherently synthetic nature of any such connection, gives rise to the antinomy whereby reason asserts both that “the desire for happiness must be the motive to maxims of virtue” (the Epicurean position), and “the maxim of virtue must be the efficient cause of happiness” (the Stoic position). What is more, Kant initially tells us that both propositions are false - though we will see this is not entirely the case. For to place the ground of morality in the desire for happiness (i.e. sensible inclination. The term has absolutely no relation to the common translation of

---

162 Ibid., p. 227. (5:108)
163 Ibid., p. 231. (5:113)
eudaimonia.) is no ground of morality, but is in fact the very definition of practical egoism. To take this as our moral orientation is to be misled, and we are actually in a state of complete moral disorientation; for what is it to be disoriented than to claim, e.g., one is going to go sit on the ground in Grant Park by directing one’s movements towards the middle of Lake Michigan? Similarly, although it is not an egoistical orientation, it is also incorrect to assume with the second proposition that pursuit of virtue will necessarily lead to the satisfaction of sensible inclination, or “happiness.” This is a mistake since “any practical connection of causes and effects in the world, as a result of the determination of the will, does not depend upon the moral dispositions of the will but upon knowledge of the laws of nature and the physical ability to use them for one’s purposes.”\textsuperscript{164} In other words, just because I intend to orient myself practically in accord with the moral law does not guarantee that I will find “happiness.” The major problem that arises as a result of this antinomy is that it seems to render the concept of the highest good nonsensical as a point of orientation, and in doing so “then the moral law, which commands us to promote [the highest good], must be fantastic and directed to empty imaginary ends and must therefore in itself be false.”\textsuperscript{165} Thus, the Epicurean, and the Stoic positions are interrupted in different ways (i.e. the Epicurean by pointing out that it’s “moral” orientation is in fact always already a moral disorientation, the Stoic by noting that the \textit{synthetic} character of unification is not guaranteed.) It begins to appear as

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p. 231. (5:113)
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., p. 231. (5:114)
though any point of practical orientation will turn out to be only so many ways of being disoriented - a meaningless “chasing after the wind”. ¹⁶⁶

With this antinomy exposed, and the disorientation of practical reason in place, Kant begins the process of critically resolving the antinomies by reorienting the use of the concept of the highest good in general, and of the relation between virtue and happiness in particular. Again, as with the 1st Critique, the “key” comes by way of the transcendental idealist distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances. First Kant distinguishes between the absolute falsity of the 1st proposition of the antinomy - that orienting oneself towards happiness will produce a virtuous disposition - and the mere conditional falsity of the 2nd - that following the moral law will cause happiness. The second proposition is only false on the condition that we fail to recognize the transcendental ideality of appearances and things-in-themselves. In Kant’s words, the second proposition is false “only insofar as this disposition [the virtuous] is regarded as the form of causality in the sensible world, and consequently false only if I assume existence in the sensible world to be the only kind of existence of a rational being…” ¹⁶⁷

The basic point being made here is that the morally determined will refers to one’s existence qua “noumenon in a world of understanding,” whereas the production of happiness refers to one’s existence qua phenomenal in a world of natural causality. This, so Kant thinks, helps to resolve the antinomy of practical reason in the same general manner as the antinomies of pure (speculative) reason were resolved, namely through a

¹⁶⁶ The fact the writer of Ecclesiastes continuously laments of the “vanity” of everything, and thereby highlights the commonality of mistaking nothing-ness for something-ness offers a ripe place of help for further explicating Kant’s relationship between moral egoism and the disorientation of practical reason.
¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 232. (5:114)
reorientation of both the thesis and the antithesis with respect to the noumenal/phenomenal distinction.

What emerges out of this resolution is the continuing emphasis which Kant places on distinguishing that which determines the will from the effect which follows from such a determination. The specific worry here is that we will mistake the feeling of satisfaction which follows from the determination of the will for the ground of the determination itself. Kant is finely tuned to the various ways in which moral egoism can (re)emerge in the practical use of reason. As Kant writes, “one must also be on guard against demeaning and deforming the real genuine incentive, the law itself - as it were, by means of a false foil - by such spurious praise of the moral determining ground as incentive as would base it on feeling of particular joys (which are nevertheless only results).”\(^{168}\) Instead, we are led to see the purely negative feeling - “contentment with oneself” (Selbstzufriedenheit) - which is a product of the morally determined will and is the consciousness of “needing nothing,” “independence from the inclinations,” and is “analogous to the self-sufficiency that can be ascribed only to the supreme being.”\(^{169}\) Thus the synthetic combination of virtue, and happiness is left exposed as antinomical, but Kant has shown us that the moral determination of the will does lead synthetically to the feeling of Selbstzufriedenheit. However, prior to the feeling of Selbstzufriedenheit, must be the moral determination of the will which nevertheless occurs by way of certain “incentives.” By looking to Kant’s chapter in the “Analytic” - “On the incentives of

\(^{168}\) Ibid., p. 234. (5:117)  
\(^{169}\) Ibid., p. 235. (5:118-119)
pure practical reason” - we will be better able to understand the nature of these feelings and their relation to moral egoism.

Consistent with what we have said thus far, Kant begins this chapter by writing “what is essential to any moral worth of actions is that the moral law determine the will immediately.”\(^{170}\) In order for this to take place, an interruption of moral egoism must occur. We have seen that the resolution of the antinomy does not rule out the possibility of, what Kant calls a “subreption” or an “optical illusion” whereby we confuse what determines our will (the moral law) with its effect (the feeling of contentment). By tracing the route of this feeling to those incentives which make possible the moral determination of the will, Kant is able to show that these incentives interrupt moral egoism. In other words, with the interruption of egoism, the negative feeling of this interruption acts as the incentive produced by the moral law. Before giving this first particular feeling a name (though he notes that it is a painful one), Kant presses upon us the interruptive nature of the moral law towards egoism.

Importantly, Kant writes that “all the inclinations together (which can be brought into a tolerable system and the satisfaction of which is then called one’s happiness) constitute regard for oneself.”\(^{171}\) While there is no naturally occurring “purely altruistic inclination” (this is a contradiction in terms for Kant), to the extent that working to secure another “happiness” contributes to my own, we might claim a proper space for the term in a more restricted sense. Rather, all inclinations can be classed as either self-love

\(^{170}\) Ibid., p. 198. (5:71)

\(^{171}\) Ibid., p. 199. (5:73)
(“benevolence toward oneself”), or self-conceit (“satisfaction with oneself”).

Regarding self-love, Kant writes, “pure practical reason merely infringes upon self-love, inasmuch as it only restricts it, as natural and active in us even prior to the moral law, to the condition of agreement with this law....,” but in regard to self-conceit, pure practical reason “strikes down self-conceit altogether, since all claims to esteem for oneself that precede accord with the moral law are null and quite unwarranted because certainty of a disposition in accord with this law is the first condition of any worth of a person...”

The negative feeling produced through this interruption is then termed “humiliation:” “what in our own judgement infringes upon our self-conceit humiliates. Hence the moral law unavoidably humiliates every human being when he compares with it the sensible propensity of his nature.”

Yet, there is a positive side to this feeling as well, namely the feeling of respect which is awakened as a result of the negative feeling of humiliation.

Although it is true that Kant has not specifically used the term “egoism” here, it will suffice to show that his definition of self-love, and self-conceit provide enough evidence for assuming their compatibility. Kant writes that the “propensity to make oneself as having subjective determining grounds of choice into the objective determining ground of the will in general can be called self-love; and if self-love makes itself lawgiving and the unconditional practical principle, it can be called self-conceit.” Thus, without using the specific term “practical/moral egoism,” Kant gives us, nearly verbatim, its definition.

---

172 Ibid., (5:73)
173 Ibid., p. 199. (5:73)
174 Ibid., p. 200. (5:74)
175 Ibid., p. 200. (5:74)
found in the *Anthropology* which we cited above. However, there is an intriguing aspect of egoism found here which was more-or-less left unspecified in the *Anthropology*, namely its relation to human finitude.

Kant remarks that the divine will does not need the concept of an “incentive,” “interest,” or “maxim” to ground the determination of the will in the moral law. These concepts only apply to finite beings. Kant draws this connect explicitly in writing that these concepts “presuppose a limitation of the nature of a being, in that the subjective constitution of its choice does not of itself accord with the objective law of a practical reason; they presuppose a need to be impelled to activity by something because an internal obstacle is opposed to it. Thus they cannot be applied to the divine will.”176 This “internal obstacle” is the combination of sensibility and finitude manifested in the egoistical tendency to make one’s happiness the ground for the “moral” determination of the will. Of course, human finitude does not cause egoism, but merely acts as an obstacle to the immediate determination of the will by the moral law. Yet, with this in mind, we might be warranted in describing the eruption of egoism from the “phenomenal side” as the desire to satisfy one’s sensible/natural inclinations, and from the “noumenal side” as the recognition/understanding of one’s own finitude. For the desire to pursue sensible “happiness” is only a desire for a finite natural being. In the same way, we can see that whereas the negative incentive at work in human beings - the feeling of humiliation - corresponds to the interruption of the “sensible source” of moral egoism, the positive

---

176 Ibid., p. 204. (5:79)
incentive - respect for the (infinite) moral law - corresponds to the interruption of the
“noumenal source” of moral egoism at work in the finite human being.

The human being is thus human qua sensible, finite, rational, etc., and to remember
this is to acknowledge the place of the moral law with respect to our estimation of self-
worth. Kant writes that there is a way to be egoistical even when we are being
compassionate toward another human being, namely “when we presume with proud
conceit, like volunteers, not to trouble ourselves about the thought of duty and, as
independent of command, to want to do of our own pleasure what we think we need no
command to do. We stand under a discipline of reason, and in all our maxims must not
forget our subjection to it or withdraw anything from it or by an egotistical illusion
detract anything from the authority of the law (although our own reason gives it)...”\textsuperscript{177}

The concept of duty is able to “set limits of humility (i.e., self-knowledge) to self-conceit
as well as to self-love, both of which are ready to mistake their boundaries.”\textsuperscript{178} Finally,
the concept of duty, by interrupting moral egoism, reorients the meaning of self-worth in
a human being towards the concept of “personality”. Duty, Kant writes, is what “elevates
a human being above himself (as a part of the sensible world),” and connects to
“personality” by “awakening respect by setting before our eyes the sublimity of our
nature (in its vocation) while at the same time showing us the lack of accord of our
conduct with respect to it and thus striking down self-conceit...”\textsuperscript{179} With this

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 206 (5:82)
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., p. 209.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., p. 210. (5:87)
understanding of the incentives of practical reason in place, we can now return to the antinomy to elucidate its relation to the concept of the highest good.

Coming back specifically to the antinomy now, this interruption of moral egoism also helps to complete its resolution in regard to the concept of the highest good. The determination of the will by the moral law is “the first condition of the highest good,” and its second element, namely the attainment of proportionate happiness, is a problematic/possible necessity, but yet belongs “wholly to the supersensible relation of things and cannot be given in accordance with the laws of the sensible…” As in the 1st Critique, the nature of this problematic necessity helps to expose the reorientation of reason in regard to its speculative and practical usage.

The concept of the highest good, which cannot be objectively determine in nature, is a need of practical reason which follows from the command of the moral law to pursue, from duty, the highest good. The supersensible postulates that emerge out of the 1st Critique, referred to in the 2nd Critique as freedom, immortality, and God, have their use only through practical reason. This much was seen at the end of the 1st Critique. Here Kant is able to explain more thoroughly that the nature of this use/need is tied to the determination of the will by the moral law. Kant writes, “a need of pure practical reason is based on a duty, that of making something (the highest good) the object of my will so as to promote it with all my powers; and thus I must suppose its possibility and so too the conditions for this, namely God, freedom, and immortality, because I cannot prove these

180 Ibid., p. 236. (5:119)
by my speculative reason, although I cannot refute them." In the discussion of the 1st Critique above we noted that reason’s primordial (speculative) orientation was towards the object of complete systematic unity. The antinomies disoriented this orientation by revealing an irresolvable conflict (so long as one did not recognize the claim of transcendental idealism), and in doing so the speculative use of reason, along with its supersensible ideas were re-oriented towards reasons practical use. Now, in the 2nd Critique, practical reason itself has a primordial orientation towards the highest good, in which the supersensible ideas find their practical use. However, the antinomy of practical reason has in its own way disoriented this orientation by revealing the irresolvable conflict between happiness and virtue (again, so long as one does not recognize transcendental idealism). By the end of “Dialectic” of the 2nd Critique we begin to see the nature of the reorientation of the practical use of reason.

There is always a gap in our knowledge, something missing which, no doubt, would effect an immediate (moral) determination of our will without the need of a command, and which could be described as the complete opening of one’s (speculative) eyes to the nature of all things. Yet this gap is not to be lamented, for its absence helps to constitute the meaning of human knowledge, and human will. Because things are hidden - although we may have the knowledge of this - is the reason that we are capable of having an orientation of our will, and our reason at all. The knowledge that something is hidden from us, orients reason (speculatively) toward that hiddenness. The knowledge that following the moral law does not necessarily produce happiness, orients reason

---

181 Ibid., p. 254. (5:142)
(practically) toward that complete object of our will, the highest good. The immediate satisfaction of reason would be just as disorienting as the continuous discovery that we have fallen into an antinomical illusion; for, one could reason, with nothing missing, with no gap, there is nothing to work towards, nothing to pursue. It seems as though this is Kant’s conclusion at the end of the first part of the 2nd Critique where he writes:

When with all the effort of our reason we have only a very obscure and ambiguous view into the future; when the governor of the world allows us only to conjecture his existence and his grandeur, not to behold them or prove them clearly; when, on the one hand, the moral law within us, without promising or threatening anything with certainty, demands of us disinterested respect; and when, finally this respect alone, become active and ruling, first allows us a view in the realm of the supersensible, though only with weak glances; then there can be a truly moral disposition, devoted immediately to the moral law, and a rational creature can become worthy of the highest good in conformity with the moral worth of his person and not merely with his actions. Thus what the study of nature and of the human being teaches us sufficiently elsewhere may well be true here also: that the inscrutable wisdom by which we exist is not less worthy of veneration in what it has denied us than in what it has granted us. ¹⁸²

We have hopefully seen by now the way that Kant’s conception of both logical and moral egoism connect to his critical project, and in particular to the antinomical eruption within reason prior to its critical reorientation. However, there is still a third form of egoism, the aesthetic form, which we can connect to the 3rd Critique in order to complete our picture of the importance of egoism for Kant’s critical theory.

IX. Critique of Judgement

Recalling Howard Caygill’s comment on the term “orientation,” “if the critical philosophy is read as an Epicurean canon for distinguishing between correct and incorrect theoretical, moral and aesthetic judgements, then Kant’s entire philosophy may be read as

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 258. (5:147-148)
an exercise in the orientation of judgement.”

We have investigated the strength of this claim so far by examining the impact of the first two critiques on the movement of orientation-disorientation-reorientation, and in particular the primary role which the interruption of the modes of egoism plays in (re)orienting the subject. That said, we have more work to do then simply completing the investigation by noting how the movement occurs in the third critique. That would be akin to just adding the last piece of the puzzle by way of a final “procedural” repetition. While it is true that we must show how our theme runs its course through the final critique, it will also be necessary to show that the proper orientation of aesthetic judgement, by virtue of its “peculiarity,” has consequences for our above discussions on the first two critiques. Whereas it has perhaps appeared up until now as though the movement of orientation was primarily concerned with the uses of reason, it is in light of a final repetition qua “permutation,” that we re-discover what has in fact been at work all along, namely the orientation of judgement. For it is the ability to judge correctly (about the uses of reason) that we can involve ourselves in the process of orientation of reason at all. Again, following Caygill, the third critique “addresses what was taken for granted in the previous two critiques. They assumed that it was possible to make theoretical and practical judgements, and set about justifying the conditions for this possibility. The third critique, however, inquires into the conditions of the possibility not of discrete theoretical or practical judgements but of judgement itself.”

In other words, we are not asking whether or not we are properly oriented in

183 Caygill, op. cit., p. 311.

184 Ibid., p. 140.
our use of reason, but whether we are properly oriented (or disoriented) in our capacity to judge about such matters in the first place. To investigate this, Kant sets himself the task of explaining the nature of the power of judgement in the particularly difficult context of aesthetic judgements. Aesthetic judgements present several problems as we will see, because of the fine line one must walk so as to sufficiently distinguish a proper aesthetic judgement from its egoistic counterpart. Here, the interruption of egoism in fact threatens to leave all (aesthetic) judgements in a state of permanent disorientation.

Although the resolution of the antinomies will provide a way to “complete” (i.e., make possible) the process of reorientation, we will also be forced to note the impact which the recognition of reflective judgements has in making our reorientation permanently necessary (a reorientation that is both already here, and coming again).

In a remark immediately preceding the deduction of pure aesthetic judgements, Kant connects aesthetic judgement to the concept of egoism by noting the difficult in untangling the concept of aesthetic egoism from the peculiarities which help to define judgements of taste. Kant writes, “if, therefore, the judgement of taste must not be counted as egoistic, but necessarily, in accordance with its inner nature, i.e., of itself, not for the sake of the examples that others give of their taste, as pluralistic, if one evaluates it as one that may at the same time demand that everyone should consent to it, then it must be grounded in some sort of a priori principle (whether objective or subjective),

---

185 I realize that I am neglecting the entire second half of the third critique which deals with teleological judgements. Admittedly, this may force us to leave certain confusions and problems unresolved inasmuch as we are talking about the movement of orientation. However, because the primary task of this paper is to highlight the entanglement of the anthropological modes of egoism with the critical philosophy, we can perhaps gain some justification for our omission by recalling that there are only three modes of egoism, of which “teleological egoism” is not one - though this is perhaps a concept which could be formulated elsewhere.
which one can never arrive at by scouting about among empirical laws of the alterations of the mind...”¹⁸⁶ Judgements of taste (specifically of what is beautiful), so Kant thinks, are peculiar in that when we judge something to be beautiful we are making a claim, it seems, about the object (though we will see below that this is not quite right) - a claim which is based not on a (prior) determination of the object in accordance with a concept of the understanding (as in determinative judgements), but rather ultimately on a subjective harmony of the faculties/powers of the mind which is a feeling of pleasure. Yet, when we express this judgements in a claim about the object, we are making an implicit claim that everyone of similar mental constitution will also find the object to be beautiful. For example, when we say “this flower is beautiful,” we are claiming that the flower is such that everyone will take pleasure in its being. Kant notes this peculiarity by writing that “if one calls the object beautiful, one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone, whereas any private sensation would be decisive only for him alone and his satisfaction.”¹⁸⁷ Throughout the third critique Kant distinguishes sensible “aesthetic” judgements which are merely the (private) claim that a particular object has produced an “(dis)agreeable” feeling in oneself (e.g. I find red wine to be more agreeable than white wine, and India Pale Ales downright disagreeable when compared to a Porter style beer.) - these are judgements which do not lay claim to universal assent. Interestingly, this form of judgement is one of the few places where Kant speaks of an essential “modesty” with regard to our power of judgement: “in the


¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 101. [5:216]
case of the taste of the senses...everyone is intrinsically so modest as not even to ascribe this assent to others...”\textsuperscript{188} In contrast to sensible taste is, as we have seen, the aesthetic judgement of taste which declares something to be beautiful - a claim that the object is beautiful, and not that the object affects me in such a way that I happen find to be agreeable. In the \textit{Anthropology} Kant writes that beauty is “an invitation to the most intimate union with the object, that is, to immediate enjoyment.”\textsuperscript{189} In other words, when we say “this flower is beautiful” it is as though the flower affects us in such a way that we assume it must affect others in much the same way - the reason being that beauty is an invitation, not to some for a “private” affair, but to all for “immediate” (and public) enjoyment. What the above quote on egoism gets at, however, is Kant’s difficult intention of trying to show how the power of aesthetic judgement could make the kind of claims that it does, without slipping into egoism. It will be helpful to recall the definition of aesthetic egoism to show just how difficult the task is in the third critique.

Kant defines the aesthetic egoist in his \textit{Anthropology} as the person who “is satisfied with his own taste, even if others find his verses, paintings, music, and similar things ever so bad, and criticize or even laugh at them. He deprives himself of progress toward that which is better when he isolates himself with his own judgement; he applauds himself and seeks the touchstone of artistic beauty only in himself.”\textsuperscript{190} We should note right away that the aesthetic egoist is not easily categorized as someone who mistakes sensible judgements about the (dis)agreeable for reflective aesthetic judgements.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., p. 99. [5:214]
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., p. 139. [7:241]
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., p. 18. [7: 129-30]
about beauty. Although the person who would claim that their taste for red wine as opposed to white wine is objectively correct might be an aesthetic egoist, it is not necessarily because they have mistaken the sensibly agreeable pleasure for a pleasure in the beautiful. The key is rather that the aesthetic egoist is “satisfied with his own taste,” “isolates himself with his own judgement,” and “seeks the touchstone of artistic beauty only in himself.” However, insofar as judgements of the beautiful are subjective judgements which yet make a claim of universal necessity, Kant sets for himself the task of showing how this is different from aesthetic egoism. In other words, it is extremely important for Kant to show how aesthetic judgements of beauty can lay claim to a universal necessity a priori, while yet refraining from masquerading as determinative judgements; that is to say, while remaining indeterminate. These questions are part of what lead Kant to wonder exactly how aesthetic judgements are possible at all?

Further, here we have an interesting conflict between anthropology and transcendental philosophy. Although we can understand how aesthetic judgements slip into egoism anthropologically, we cannot understand how aesthetic judgements refrain from egoism by the same route. For example, we cannot ground aesthetic judgements in an empirical anthropology, that is to say, by distributing a survey to people.

Distinguishing between anthropology and transcendental philosophy, Kant is able to show the “logical peculiarity” at work in aesthetic judgements:

Now if this universal validity is not to be grounded on collecting votes and asking around among other people about the sort of sensations they have, but is as it were to rest on an autonomy of the subject judging about the feeling of pleasure in the given representation, i.e., on his own taste, but yet is also not to be derived from concepts, then such a judgment has - as the judgment of taste in fact does - a twofold and indeed logical peculiarity: namely, first, universal validity a priori,
yet not a logical universality in accordance with concepts, but the universality of a singular judgment; second, a necessity (which must always rest on \textit{a priori} grounds), which does not, however, depend on any \textit{a priori} grounds of proof, by means of the representation of which the approval that the judgment of taste requires of everyone could be compelled.\textsuperscript{191}

All of this leads Kant to say that aesthetic judgements are possible (setting aside for a moment the potentiality of egoism) because we can presuppose a priori in all people “the pleasure or subjective purposiveness of the representation for the relation of the cognitive faculties in the judging of a sensible object...”\textsuperscript{192} The justification for this presupposition, Kant further says, lies ultimately in, first, the ability of human being to communicate (even their feelings) to one another which is evidence of similar cognitive relations, and second, provided that the aesthetic judgement is not determined by any concepts or sensations, but only considers the pleasure taken in a singular representation.

Another way of reaching much the same conclusion is by seeing how Kant raises and solves the antinomy of taste. Kant notes that there could be no dialectical illusion regarding the merely (dis)agreeable, and the antinomy of taste specifically deals with “mutually conflicting concepts of the basis of the possibility of judgments of taste...”\textsuperscript{193} The antinomy of taste essentially calls into question the “lawfulness” and “inner possibility” of the (reflective) power of judgement in general. In what will look very similar to the discussion on the “peculiarities” of aesthetic taste, Kant raises the antinomy by stating the “1. Thesis. The judgment of taste is not based on concepts, for otherwise

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., p. 162. [5:281]

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., p. 170. [5:290], and [5:290]

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., p. 213. [5:337]
it would be possible to dispute about it (decide by means of proofs). 2. Antithesis. The judgment of taste is based on concepts, for otherwise, despite its variety, it would not even be possible to argue about it (to lay claim to the necessary assent of others to this judgment).”\footnote{Ibid., p. 215. [5:338]}

The heart of the resolution of the antinomy rests in a distinction made with respect to the term “concepts.” The thesis is deemed correct, provided by the word “concepts” we mean a determinate one - i.e., capable of serving as a “touchstone” prior to a particular aesthetic experience. However, the antithesis is also deemed correct, provided by the word “concepts” we mean an indeterminate one - i.e. incapable of providing an objective principle which could serve as a proof of the (in)correctness of our judgements, but yet providing a subjective principle which presumes, yet without determining, that there is an a priori ground of aesthetic judgements which claims universal necessary assent. Here we can ask how this antinomy, and it’s solution, impact aesthetic egoism?

The antinomy of taste helps to understand more specifically how aesthetic egoism manifests itself in judgements of taste. From one perspective, the egoist endorses the thesis to the extent that it provides a ground to retreat to by “isolating” oneself in one’s judgements. However this “isolating” is not “pure,” that is, the egoist does in fact “seek the touchstone of beauty,” but only insofar as it lies in one’s own judgements. The point here is that the aesthetic egoist closes himself off from the input of alternative judgements of taste. But this does not complete the egoistic turn in aesthetic judgements, for from another perspective the egoist also endorses the antithesis. The aesthetic egoist agrees
that the judgement of taste is based on concepts, but sees these concepts not only as
determinate qua determinable, but also as already determined already by himself. To put
it another way, the aesthetic egoist believes they have found a determinate objective
principle for judgements of taste, namely, whatever their own current taste happens to be.

To re-approach the difference between non/aesthetic egoists. Both the
non/aesthetic egoist believe that when they are moved to declare an object beautiful,
others must be moved similarly. However, the non-egoist maintains an open disposition
(be leaving the concept indeterminate) to having their judgements interrupted, whereas
the egoist does not allow the phenomenon of being interrupted to show itself. In other
words, while it is true that we can never arrive at a certainty of universal validity through
empirical anthropology (as we said above), it is the case that our claims of universal
validity can be interrupted by “empirical anthropology” qua simply acknowledging that
the touchstones of truth, the good, and beauty, occur in places outside of our current
judgements.

Moreover, the aesthetic egoist misunderstands the nature of the sensus communis.
For the egoist, the concept of a sensus communis simply re-validates what they already
knew, i.e. that their judgements are the touchstone of beauty. For Kant, however, the
sensus communis, though always indeterminate with respect to its empirical
manifestation, is the site of the communication of ourselves to one other without reliance
on a determinate concept, that is to say, it is the place where pleasure is felt in common.

We might say that the non-egoistic aesthetic judgement just is the activity of our
“desire” to realize the possibility that an object could provoke universal delight - without
ever actually claiming to have proved that a particular object is a determinate manifestation of this desire. And this helps to make sense of why we often feel saddened when another does not take pleasure in something we “were so sure” they would.

“Invited” by the beautiful object to enjoy, we are often led to think that, even if not everyone, we at least know that so-and-so will find this object beautiful as well. In our own turn “inviting” the other person to come and see what we have found, if the other is not moved in a similar way, or is disgusted, we find ourselves disappointed, “let down.” Perhaps a mark of disappointment in our friends incapacity to find the object pleasing, or perhaps as well a mark of our own frustration that we did not know our friend better, or still further, that our judgement of the beauty of the object may turn out to be no more than the fact that it exerts a merely agreeable sensation on us. Yet, perhaps even more fundamentally, it is a sadness over the fact that we will be unable to share in a communion of enjoyment between ourselves, the other, and the object. Kant himself hints at this in noting that “someone who is inclined to communicate his pleasure to others and is skilled at it...is not content with an object if he cannot feel his satisfaction in it in community with others.”

Coming back now to the aesthetic egoist, haven’t we said throughout the paper that the antinomies are precisely what interrupts the egoism? With aesthetic judgements, the phenomenon of interruption presents itself slightly differently. The antimony of taste shows us logically how the egoist resides in an antinomical illusion, but this is not enough to completely interrupt aesthetic egoism. The reason is that whereas in the first

---

195 Ibid., p. 177. [5:297]
two critiques, and modes of egoism, we were dealing with determinate judgements, and
the antinomies disrupted the orientation of the way we formed such judgements.
However, here we are dealing with reflective judgements, but the antinomy of taste only
occurs, as Kant says, with respect to “the critique of taste (not of taste itself) with regard
to its principles.”¹⁹⁶ In other words, acknowledging the findings of the antinomy of taste
might only mean that we will not be logical egoists with respect to our understanding of
the nature of aesthetic judgements, i.e., we will not dogmatically assert either the thesis or
the antithesis about judgements of taste. The question is whether this is enough to
interrupt the aesthetic egoists tendency to seek the touchstone of beauty in themselves
alone? Because judgements of beauty are reflective in nature, and not determinative, it
might be the case that what the aesthetic egoist would only finally be interrupted in their
judgements by something which reveals to them the limits of their power of reflective
judgement. While we have already hinted at some ways this occurs it will be helpful to
be more explicit at this point.

First, we mentioned above that while it is clear that empirical anthropology is
insufficient in providing a way to determine what is a universally valid object of beauty,
the judgements of others do provide an opportunity for the interruption of our own
judgements of beauty. That said, it is certainly within the aesthetic egoists capacity to
assume that all others are simply wrong when they do not find the same object to be
beautiful.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 213. [5:336]
Second, as we noted in the original discussion of aesthetic egoism in the *Anthropology*, there is often an “atrophy” problem with respect to the feeling of pleasure in the egoist. That is to say, insofar as the aesthetic egoist makes an objective determinate rule for their judgements of taste (even granted that the rule is their own present taste), they deny what Kant claims is the most pleasurable aspect of aesthetic judgements, namely the pleasure taken in the free play of the faculties. Instead of engaging the feeling of pleasure which enlivens, and animates the cognitive powers, the aesthetic egoist may become bored, and seek to simply amuse themselves with what merely “charms.” In fact, we might say that the aesthetic egoist is finally unable to distinguish between beauty, and those charms which are in the end just “smoke and mirrors.” Elsewhere, Kant seems to hint at this by distinguishing the beautiful from “all stiff regularity” which “affords no lasting entertainment, but rather...induces boredom. By contrast, that with which the imagination can play in an unstudied and purposive way is always new for us, and we are never tired of looking at it.”197 That said, the problem of letting the faculties atrophy is only a potential problem, one which does not necessarily follow from Kant’s concept of aesthetic egoism. Yet taking the time describe this possibility helps us to see one of the primary ways in which the aesthetic egoist could be interrupted. If the antinomies are what “shocks” one out of logical/scholarly/moral egoism, we can ask what is it that “shocks” the bored, merely amused person? We have good reason to look to what “moves” us, perhaps in a way we were not expecting, as that which interrupts any use of the power of (reflective) judgement, be it non-egoistic, or

197 Ibid., p. 126. [5:242-3]
egoistic. The example of the atrophy problem merely highlights the element of shock. For such an experience we will look to Kant’s concept of the sublime - though what is unexpected, and surprising, is not necessarily a pure synonym for the sublime.

We should note right away that aesthetic egoism strictly speaking only pertains to judgements of taste which is of the beautiful. Whether or not one could be an aesthetic egoist with respective to the sublime is not only doubtful, but something which Kant does not consider, and so we will also refrain from exploring this potentiality. With that said, both judgements of the beautiful, and the sublime are aesthetic reflective judgements, and an encounter with the sublime is capable of revealing to one the limitations of one’s power of judgement in general.

Departing from Deleuze, the feeling of the sublime occurs, in both its mathematical and dynamical modes, when it seems as if “the imagination were confronted with its own limit, forced to strain to its utmost, experiencing a violence which stretches it to the extremity of its power. Imagination undoubtedly has no limit as long as it is a matter of apprehending (the successive apprehension of parts). But, in so far as it has to reproduce the previous parts as it arrives at the succeeding ones, it does have a limit to its simultaneous comprehension.”198 In the center of the Australian “Red Desert” is the famous Uluru, (“Ayers Rock”) a solid rock formation nearly six miles in circumference, and over 1,000 feet high. To walk around it takes several hours, making it incomprehensible, though at all times apprehensible. The experience of an initial encounter with Uluru is, as Kant writes of St. Peter’s, a “bewilderment or sort of

198 Deleuze, op. cit., p. 50.
embarrassment...a feeling of inadequacy of his imagination for presenting the ideas of a whole, in which the imagination reaches its maximum and, in the effort to extend it, sinks back into itself...”\textsuperscript{199} Or, from the dynamical point of view, the feeling of the sublime often occurs when we inch out to the edge of a high overhanging cliff which makes a kind of fear in the subject. Yet, as Kant points out, there is in many people an odd desire to inch out to the edge of a cliff and look down. The mind, writes Kant, “feels itself moved in the representation of the sublime in nature...This movement (especially in its inception) may be compared to a vibration, i.e., to a rapidly alternating repulsion from and attraction to one and the same object. What is excessive for the imagination (to which it is driven in the apprehension of the intuition) is as it were an abyss, in which it fears to lose itself, yet for reason’s idea of the supersensible to produce such an effort of the imagination is not excessive but lawful, hence it is precisely as attractive as it was repulsive for mere sensibility.”\textsuperscript{200} It is as though we are compelled to disorient ourselves. As Kant puts it, reason pushes the imagination to realize its limitations for comprehension, for it is only by being disoriented in the face of our limitations, and inadequacies that we are, as Kant states repeatedly “awakened” to the purpose “for the whole vocation of the mind,” i.e. the primacy of the practical. We should note, however, this is not an awakening to “the false humility that finds the only way to be pleasing to the supreme being in self-contempt, in whimpering, feigned remorse and a merely passive attitude of mind - none of these have anything to do with that which can be

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{199} Kant, op. cit., p.136. [5:252]}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., p. 142. [5:258]}

counted as the beauty, let alone the sublimity, of a mentality.”^201 In the face of the sublime, the distinction between being oriented, and being disoriented breaks down. The mind cannot fully comprehend the question “where am I?” but at the same time it is awakened (sobered up) to the moral dimension of the question itself; that is to say, the mind realizes that it has always already been in the space of the moral. Or to put it another way, the feeling of the sublime is what ruptures our assumption that orientation is to purposiveness what disorientation is to contra-purposiveness.

Relating this to aesthetic egoism as a judgement of the beautiful becomes a question of how the feeling of the sublime might interrupt our judgement of taste. We can formulate this connection by drawing on Kant’s discussion of the ideal of beauty. Kant writes that although in judgements of taste “there can be no objective rule of taste that would determine what is beautiful through concepts,” it is helpful to use certain products of art as “models” or “exemplars” which signify the beautiful, though obviously not by conforming to a determinate judgement. Yet, ultimately the “highest model, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself…”^202 This is the idea(l) of the beautiful which “signifies, strictly speaking, a concept of reason…”^203 Does the idea of the ideal of the beautiful point the way to a connection with the sublime which is the presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason? Kant continues, “hence that archetype of taste, which indeed rests on reason’s indeterminate idea of a maximum,

---

201 Ibid., p. 155. [5:273]
202 Ibid., p. 116. [5:231]
203 Ibid., p. 117. [5:232]
204 Ibid., p. 117. [5:232], and [5:244]
but cannot be represented through concepts, but only in an individual presentation, would better be called the ideal of the beautiful, something that we strive to produce in ourselves even if we are not in possession of it. But it will be merely the ideal of the imagination, precisely because it does not rest on concepts but on presentation, and the faculty of presentation is the imagination.”205 We have already noted that the experience of the sublime is that which which disrupts the imaginations attempt to comprehend (mathematically) this maximum. The feeling of the sublime connects to judgements of the beautiful by interrupting any claim to have determined/cognized the ideal of the beautiful. Thus, insofar as the aesthetic egoist determines the touchstone of beauty in themselves, the feeling of the sublime signifies a disruption in one’s capabilities for determining the idea of reason.

In a final nuance/complication of the interruption of aesthetic egoism, although it might be an experience of the sublime that reveals one’s limitations in cognizing an ideal of beauty, Kant writes that recognizing the sublime may possibly presuppose a proper practical orientation of reason. Almost paradoxically, the feeling of the sublime is, as Deleuze puts it, “engendered within us in such a way that it prepares a higher finality and prepares us ourselves for the advent of the moral law,”206 and yet it is also the case that “without the development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime will appear merely repellent.”207 Yet this almost makes it seem as though the morally good person will also have the keenest aesthetic taste, which is clearly not the

205 Ibid., p. 117. [5:232]

206 Deleuze, op. cit., p. 52.

207 Kant, op. cit., p. 148. [5:265]
case. That said, it may be that Kant is simply noting that a feeling for the sublime is as fundamental as those moral feelings spoken of in the 2nd critique which Kant assumes everyone to have, namely the two-sided feeling of respect/humiliation. At any rate, although the interruption of the modes of egoism may be distinct, they all impact the movement of the orientation of subject.

X. Conclusion

With the introduction of reflective judgements, the manifestation of egoism becomes more complicated, and the difference between interrupting logical, and aesthetic egoism becomes all the greater. In the end, there is actually a sense in which every form of egoism, insofar as it is interrupted by the antinomies in particular, and the critical works in general, becomes so many modes of the logical mode. The reason for this is that the critical investigation of every form of antinomy is essentially meant to be a “scientific” investigation. Insofar as we suggested that the antinomies interrupt a particular mode of egoism, this is perhaps akin to saying that one can logically/scientifically interrupt every mode of egoism. Yet this can of course only be partly correct for we also showed that, e.g. in the case of moral egoism, the feelings of guilt, and humiliation, and in the case of aesthetic egoism, an encounter with the sublime, or the judgements of others, all function as interruptions. In other words, as critical philosophers we can try to provide a transcendental interruption of egoism, but we will also find that, as we live our lives in a more “everyday” sense we will experience many interruptions, and disruptions which call us to the movement orientation-disorientation-reorientation.
That said, we have also seen that entire critical enterprise, insofar as it can be described as an interruption of egoism(s), routinely points to the primacy of the practical. The interruption of all the modes of egoism ultimately gains its significance in light of the moral primacy which Kant ascribes as essential to the question “What is man?” With this in mind, if it is possible to interrupt every mode of egoism via the antinomies (i.e. a logical interruption) this must be seen from the perspective within which the theoretical use of reason remains in service to the practical. In other words, the point of using the antinomies to expose, and disorient the modes of egoism is not to simply help people avoid being wrong in their intellectual projects. Rather, the point is a moral one. Interrupting the modes of egoism is part of the ground for the possibility of reorienting oneself towards, and thereby using one’s freedom to pursue the highest good, the moral law, a “kingdom of ends,” etc. Additionally, we have seen how the interruption of logical egoism in the first Critique points towards, and in a way “presupposes” the primacy of the practical orientation of reason. For the reorientation of the theoretical use of reason might be impossible without reference to its practical usage.

What is more, as we saw above, the scientific “eye” is always in need of its “popular” complement, a title which Kant applies to the Anthropology in which there is no investigation of the antinomies. Thus if Kant’s critical theory is taken as isolated from his anthropological, “popular” work, we may be justified in applying the term scholarly/scientific egoism to the former. By keeping Kant’s “anthropological” concept of the modes of egoism in mind as we read the critiques, we may be doing a theoretical disservice to their a priori intentions, while yet gaining a second eye with which to more
properly orient ourselves non-egoistically within the critical enterprise. In a way then, we are interrupting an aspect of Kant’s work, but only in trying to refrain from becoming the cyclops he himself warned us against. Of course, it is not as though Kant himself did not recognize the complications involved in the relationship between anthropology, and transcendental philosophy.

The three questions we presented from Kant’s logic lectures, “What can I know?,” “What should I do?,” and “What may I hope?” - summarized, and reoriented in a three-fold movement of the single question “What is man?” - can perhaps be translated into the principal questions of “orientation” itself, namely, following Claudel, “Where am I?,” and “What time is it?” For a conversion (what else to call a reorientation?), of any kind, is the slow alteration (via the phenomenon of interruptions, disruptions, eruptions, ruptures, etc.) of one’s deepest desires; the cause of which, and the result of which are the same - a shift in how one experiences, and participates in space, and time. Yet, and more fundamentally, insofar as a question is always a question to someone (either to another, or to myself qua other), we can further interpret these two questions through the insights gained principally from the third critique by asking simply “Do you see what I see?,” “Do you hear what I hear?” And if this is finally the question of orientation-disorientation-reorientation, then its song must be the Cold War era carol by the same name (“Do You Hear What I Hear?”):

Said the night wind to the little lamb: Do you see what I see?
Way up in the sky, little lamb, do you see what I see?
A star, a star, dancing in the night,
With a tail as big as a kite.

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy: Do you hear what I hear?
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy, do you hear what I hear?  
A song, a song, high above the tree,  
With a voice as big as the sea.

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king: Do you know what I know?  
In your palace warm, mighty king, do you know what I know?  
A child, a child, shivers in the cold,  
Let us bring him silver and gold.

Said the king to the people everywhere: Listen to what I say!  
Pray for peace, people everywhere, listen to what I say!  
The child, the child, sleeping in the night.  
He will bring us goodness and light.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Foucault, Michel.  *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*.  Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008.


VITA

Giancarlo Tarantino was born and raised in Louisville, Ohio. Giancarlo attended Mount Vernon Nazarene University where he received his Bachelors of Arts in Psychology and Philosophy in 2006. From 2006 to 2008 Giancarlo worked for L’Arche in Canberra, Australia, and Cleveland, Ohio as an assistant to mentally and physically disabled adults, as well as for Siffrin, Inc. in Canton, Ohio as a case manager for adults with disabilities.

Giancarlo began his graduate work at Loyola University Chicago in 2008, earning his M.A. in philosophy in 2010. Currently, Giancarlo is pursuing a Ph.D in philosophy, also at Loyola University Chicago.