The Transcendental Critique of Philosophical Thought and the Foundations of the Philosophical Community of Thought in the West

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Abstract

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I

The recent crisis in philosophy is before all else to be understood as a crisis in the foundations of philosophical thought as such.

Before this crisis, the philosophical community of thought in the West was rooted in the common starting point in the so-called rational human nature.
In spite of the variegated diversity of philosophical schools, this common point of departure had made a continuous development of philosophical thought possible, starting in antiquity, via medieval Scholasticism, to modern humanistic philosophy since the Renaissance. The antithetic tendencies of the Christian religion over against the foundations of pagan philosophy had gradually been eliminated by the scheme of nature and grace, especially in medieval Scholasticism. This scheme either was elaborated in the line of the Thomistic synthesis (“nature” as autonomous phase before “grace”) or led, in the sharply dualistic line of late Scholasticism’s nominalism, to a complete separation of philosophy from Christian religion. This dualistic nominalism prepared the ground for modern humanistic philosophy. From the outset, the scheme of nature and grace had introduced a dialectical ground motive in Christian thinking, because the “nature” of created reality was here conceived not in the sense of the biblical idea of creation but rather in the sense of the Aristotelian doctrine of physis, in which reason was regarded as the essence of human nature. Unbreakably connected with this conception of human nature was the conception of the Deity as absolute Reason, as well as the conception of the cosmos as rational teleologically ordered system of “essential forms.”

By contrast, the biblical doctrine of physis disclosed the “heart,” in the sense of the religious root of existence, as the center of human existence, while its doctrine of God’s absolute creational sovereignty was irreconcilable with a rationalization of creation’s order, which would in the end make human reason its standard. Therefore, the attempts at synthesis between the Christian and the pagan doctrine of physis could not succeed: they radically contradict each other.

There was in reality no tension between the biblical conception of the nature of creation and the grace in Christ Jesus, but only a tension between the biblical and the pagan conception of nature.

Nevertheless, modern humanistic philosophy, maintaining as its starting point the rationality of human nature, introduced a wholly new dialectical ground motive that can only be understood from a gradual radical secularization of the scheme of nature and grace. The Christian doctrine of the freedom in Christ was secularized to become a new personality ideal of free autonomous self-determination. The humanistic philosophers continued to take reason for the center of human nature, but by so doing, the Christian conception of the Creator’s sovereignty was secularized as well. After mathematical natural science had appointed itself as sovereign controller of “nature,” the motive of creation was introduced into mathematical thinking. With this, the conception of nature assumes a wholly new, natural-scientific meaning. The personality ideal evokes a new science ideal: the natural-scientific method of thought
becomes the sovereign personality’s scepter to rule over “nature.” However, this new science ideal conceals a constant threat to the personality ideal, which had itself evoked this science ideal. The sovereignty of natural-scientific thought does not tolerate a principle by which the causal natural-scientific way of thinking would be limited.

The science ideal has an inherent tendency toward continuity; when it is carried through, it leaves no room anywhere in reality for an autonomous freedom of human personality. Conversely, the personality ideal harbors its own continuity tendency: it wants to regard the whole of reality as a revelation of the freedom principle—a tendency bound to clash with the science ideal as soon as the “trace of freedom” was uncovered in “nature.”

This dialectical ground motive explains the entire development of modern humanistic philosophy. Initially, starting with Descartes, the science ideal was dominant, until Rousseau and Kant gave priority to the personality ideal. It also guaranteed a close “dialectical” unity between the squarely opposed schools ranging from naturalism to idealism.

The dualistic demarcation line between “nature” and “freedom” assumed by Kant is crossed in German freedom idealism. Here, the entire cosmos, including “nature,” is conceived as the dialectical development of the freedom idea, in which “natural necessity” is dialectically cancelled out.

In the meantime, while idealism was still booming, the rise of historicism started to reveal a dangerous factor for the philosophical community of thought in the West: the irrationalistic doctrine of the “national spirit.” The “Germanistic assault” on the supremacy of the Roman ius gentium as ratio scripta had already the distinct tendency to replace “rational human nature” as eternal source of natural law, equal for all human beings, by the historically determined national character, which does not recognize any other source of culture than the completely individual historical national character. As long as this nationalistic tendency was restrained by historicism, the “Historical school” readily made a compromise with the doctrine of the universal rational human nature, which was revised by idealism in an anti-individualistic suprapersonal sense. But when, after a renewed advance of the science ideal, Darwinism and Marxism make themselves felt in philosophical thought, historicism is deprived of this restraint. The doctrine of the “rational human nature” staggers under the blows inflicted on it. Nietzsche and Kierkegaard ring the death knell for German idealism. A modern anti-idealistic historicism by which all previous foundations of philosophy become problematic makes its appearance, and because it gives up an idea that had hitherto united the development of Western culture, the lingering danger to the philosophical community of thought is all the more acute.
This universal crisis becomes especially tragic in light of the recent catastrophe in European history. Indeed, it calls for a renewed radical reflection on the foundations of philosophical thinking. This has become an urgent necessity. The philosophical community of thought between the variegated diversity of diverging schools in the West may not be lost because, if only viewed from a temporal perspective, it is based on a cultural community in which we have been ascribed our place by an Authority that is higher than human arbitrariness.

But this community of thought requires a better foundation than the traditional “rational human nature.” Especially the starting point in the self-sufficiency and autonomy of theoretical thought can no longer be maintained as an unproblematic axiom.

Therefore, the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, since 1926 in development at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, has in its prolegomena entered on a genuinely transcendental critique of philosophical thinking as such. By doing so, it raised the following hitherto neglected question: “How is philosophy itself, as theoretical thought, possible?”

In raising this question, it does not expect the various schools to abandon their own starting point as long as they are not inwardly convinced of its incorrectness. On the contrary, in view of the exclusivistic tendencies of the various schools, because each one claims its own starting point to be the criterion of science, the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea wants to induce a deeper critical reflection on the necessary presuppositions of theoretical philosophical thought as such. If in light of this transcendental critique it appears that the starting point of philosophy is indeed supratheoretical, then a sharp critical distinction is required between the theoretical and the supratheoretical presuppositions. Otherwise, the theoretical discussion between the schools will be a priori impossible, because the supratheoretical presupposition contained in one’s starting point will be imposed as an alleged purely theoretical axiom.

By neglecting this transcendental criticism of philosophical thinking, the previous period, even in its “critical” transcendental idealism, had become dogmatic.

So, the criterion of dogmatism in philosophy is not that philosophers start from supratheoretical prejudices, for, as will appear, this is done by all schools without exception. But a prejudgment is dogmatic when the thinker does not recognize its true character and a supratheoretical a priori passes for

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1 By a “transcendental critique” we mean an investigation into the necessary presuppositions of philosophical thought.
a purely theoretical one. This dogmatism is immediately recognizable by the attempt to eliminate an essentially transcendental basic problem of philosophy by an axiomatic power maxim and to withdraw in this way the foundations of one's philosophy from transcendental criticism.

Such dogmatism necessarily leads to scientific exclusivism in philosophy. For the sake of a genuine correction of the philosophical community of thought and for the sake of science itself, it should be stamped out from philosophical practice.

The transcendental criticism meant here has nothing to do with such attempts as made by Rickert, Dilthey, and Jaspers to bridge the radical differences between life- and worldviews at least theoretically by a purely theoretical “Weltanschauungslehre” or by a “Psychologie der Weltanschauungen.” These attempts, too, remain downright dogmatic insofar as they hold on to the dogma of freedom from prejudice of theoretical thought as such. In so doing, they did not make the possibility of philosophical thought into a genuine transcendental basic problem of philosophy.

Nor has this transcendental criticism anything to do with a relativization of the Truth. Rather, it directs the reproach of truth relativization at the adherents of the dogma of the autonomy of thought, who present their dogma as the criterion of science but who themselves relativize the Truth so that it becomes an alleged “purely theoretical” thinking.

The Truth is not relative. Rather, in its absolute character, it cannot be found in a purely theoretical way but only by a supratheoretical choice of position in the center of existence. Such choice determines the direction of theoretical thinking and is the necessary condition for its possibility.

II

How should this transcendental criticism be performed if it is to avoid the obstacle of theoretical dogmatism with its inherent danger of scientific exclusivism?

In the first place, critical reflection about the nature and the structure of theoretical thinking is again necessary. Great confusion on this point was caused by an opposition that was presented to philosophy as a dilemma and that dominated all philosophy of the previous period (except neo-Thomism): “pure theory” versus “practical normative preaching of lifeview and worldview.” Behind this dilemma, the dialectical ground motive of humanistic philosophy, which we explained in the first part of this lecture, can easily be detected.
But in light of the transcendental critique, this immediately shows the inner problematics in the idea of “pure theory.”

For this idea only makes sense in its dialectical relation with the idea of the autonomous freedom of human personality—in a deeper sense, it is determined by it. How then, can this idea contain a purely theoretical postulate?

The question whether philosophical thought is possible as purely theoretical thinking can only be answered by an investigation of the nature and structure itself of theoretical thought. For this purpose, we first of all have to recognize the difference between the theoretical and the pretheoretical, naive attitude of thought.

The theoretical attitude of thought is characterized by its oppositional nature; it is bound to the Gegenstand-relation. This theoretical Gegenstand-relation is not in the least given in experience. It is a product of theoretical analysis of the full temporal empirical reality in which the aspects of given reality are theoretically abstracted and opposed to one another.

These aspects are called modal aspects of reality in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, because they do not pertain to the concrete what of reality but only to the how (the modal sense) of a particular side of reality. Provisionally, we can now discern fourteen such modal aspects, namely, the aspect of quantity (number), the aspect of spatial extension, the aspect of motion, the aspect of organic life, the aspect of feeling (called the psychical aspect), the logical analytical aspect, the aspect of historical development, the (language) aspect of symbolic meaning, the aspect of social discourse, the economic aspect, the jural aspect, the moral aspect, and the faith aspect.

All these aspects of temporal reality have constant ontic modal structures over time within which the concrete things, events, and so forth function in variable ways and which, as its modal structures, make passing reality possible by forming its a priori ontic foundation.

In naive, pretheoretical experience, these modal aspects are never set apart; they are only grasped in continuous, unbreakable coherence of meaning within the structures of individual totalities, such as things, concrete events, actions, and societal associations (family, state, church, school, business enterprise, etc. etc.)

Within these structures of individual totalities (or individuality structures of reality), the modal aspects are grouped in typical ways so as to form an individual totality coherence, which, as a typical whole, overlarches the aspects.

2 A warning in advance is in place here against the usual abstract conception of empirical reality, which is oriented toward the natural sciences.

3 “Ontic” refers to that which is founded in the order of reality itself, not in our theory about it.
These individuality structures too are constant law-like frames of regularity that lie, in an *ontic a priori* sense, *at the base* of variable empirical reality. These structures *imply* the structures of the modal aspects. In naive experience, temporal reality *gives* itself only in these typical individuality structures.

In this attitude of experience we are, therefore, not *explicitly* conscious of the modal aspects but only *implicitly*.

In naive experience, no *theoretical distance* yawns between number, space, motion, organic life, and so forth. All these aspects are experienced *together*, in an essential *systatic*4 coherence within the totality structures of concrete things, events, and so on.

This is the reason why the theoretical separation between the normative aspects, in which reality is subject to rules of *what ought to be*, and the nonnormative aspects, studied by natural science, is entirely foreign to naive experience.

By contrast, in the *theoretical*, scientific attitude of thought, logical analysis is primarily directed toward the aspects themselves.

These are theoretically *set apart* by this analysis in a theoretical *discontinuity* and abstracted from the given continuing systatic coherence. It is this which gives rise to the typical theoretical *Gegenstand-relation* between the *logical analytical* activity of theoretical thought and the *nonlogical* modal aspects opposed to it. Only from this opposition does the *theoretical problem* arise. There is no theoretical problem but in the *distance* of theoretical thinking toward its “Gegenstand.”

The *special sciences* are not directed in the Gegenstand-relation toward the *foundational structures* of the modal aspects but toward the *variable material functions* of empirical reality within these structures. But the problem of the *structural, a priori* Gegenstand is implied in the problem of the *material, variable* “Gegenstand.” This problem of the structural Gegenstand is explicitly evoked by philosophical thought and subjected to a critical investigation by the following critical question: “How is special science possible?”

However, both in its *structural* and in its *material* character, the Gegenstand-relation remains fundamentally restricted to the process of theoretical thought and knowledge. As such, the “Gegenstand” is not real, but a *theoretical abstraction*.

Naive thought has no “Gegenstand,” because its logic remains completely *merged within* the given *ontic*, ongoing coherence of the aspects—it is completely devoid of any *opposition*.

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4 “Systatic” is the opposite of “synthetic.” It means “*given in coherence,*” while the “synthesis” is a subjective connection between the parts that were theoretically set apart.
But the concrete *subject-object relation* is completely familiar to naive experience. In this experiential attitude, everybody can distinguish between the subjective sensory perception and the object at which it is directed, as well as between subjective thought and the objective logical characteristics of a thing. Likewise, the subject of a right of ownership is distinct from the objective thing to which the right refers, just as the subjective lingual meaning is distinct from the objective sign (a word, for example, or a signal) by which something is symbolically indicated. Also, naive experience is continuously prepared to correct itself, for example, when it appears that its subjective perception was distorted by a subjective error. It is also prepared to accept this correction from *science*, on the condition that science does not enforce a theoretical abstraction for *full reality*.

This concrete subject-object relation is *structural* for naive experience. This is to say that the *object* functions of reality (sensory, logical, aesthetic, etc.) are naively always grasped in *unbreakable* relation to *possible*—not *individual*—subjective activity within the aspects concerned. For example, the objective color of a rose is not understood in relation to the individual perception of A or B but rather in relation to every *possible* subjective perception. For this reason, the separation of experience in a “subjective consciousness in itself” and an “objective reality in itself” (apart from possible consciousness!) is absolutely at odds with naive experience. Such a separation, which is inherently contradictory anyway, is manifestly *theoretical* in origin. But naive experience is not a so-called uncritical *theory* about reality but the natural attitude of consciousness *within* reality. It is a *given*, not a *theory* with which one can disagree.

The dogma of the autonomy and the self-sufficiency of theoretical thinking has led epistemology astray into the identification of the Gegenstand-relation with the subject-object relation of naive experience.

The “Gegenstand-relation” was taken as a *given* to start from. This led to the theoretization of naive experience, with the result that the *transcendental basic problem* was overlooked that is implied in the Gegenstand-relation and can be formulated as follows: “*What is in this relation abstracted from the integral (naive) experience of reality and how is this abstraction possible?***

Because this problem was neglected, the transcendental problem in the *theoretical synthesis*\(^5\) was not correctly dealt with either.

*Within* the Gegenstand-relation, the modal diversity of meaning between the logical aspect and the theoretically abstracted nonlogical aspects cannot be bridged. Rather, the *antithesis* remains.

\(^5\) Cf. note 4.
But the theoretical synthesis does presuppose this bridging: it comprises the problem of the theoretical totality. So, this is a transcendental basic question of philosophical thought as such: From which standpoint can the aspects that were in the structural theoretical Gegenstand-relation set apart and in opposition to each other be united in the theoretical vision of totality? In the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, this basic problem is referred to as the transcendental problem of philosophy’s Archimedean point.

The Archimedean point of philosophy must transcend the modal diversity of the aspects that are opposed to each other in the Gegenstand-relation. It should rise above this diversity. A genuinely critical consideration of the synthesis problem can never allow a nonlogical aspect to be reduced to the logical one.

The Archimedean point of philosophy can only be discovered in the way of critical self-reflection. The selfhood is the individual concentration point of all modal aspects of temporal human existence. Here, all these aspects have their deeper unity and identity.

But the thinking self, the individual concentration point, cannot yet be the Archimedean point itself. For it must have a supraindividual character, since it must be the concentration point not only of individual human existence but of the entire temporal cosmos in its diversity of modal aspects. Yet the individual thinking self must participate in this supraindividual concentration point, because it must be able to choose its individual position within it. On the scriptural Christian standpoint, no other Archimedean point is possible than the religious root community of the human race, which fell away from God in its first head, Adam, but was restored in communion with God in its second Head, Christ Jesus, and in which the individual self is incorporated. Indeed, the meaning of the entire temporal cosmos is concentrated in this religious root community. Both the fall into sin and the redemption in Christ Jesus have not just an individual but a cosmic meaning, because the religious root of the entire cosmos was corrupted in the fall, while redemption is the posing of a new religious root over against the old one.

It goes without saying that on the humanistic standpoint, the Archimedean point cannot be sought here. Yet even for humanistic philosophy, it remains necessary to choose its Archimedean point in such a way that the individual thinking self can assume its individual position within it.

This is why the so-called critical transcendental philosophy started with Kant on the road of critical self-reflection in philosophical thinking. But it held on to the dogmatic prejudice that the starting point of philosophy can only be immanent in theoretical thinking itself. This was required by the dogma of the autonomy and the self-sufficiency of theoretical thinking in its own sphere.
Therefore, in the philosophy of the cosmonic idea, this standpoint is called the *immanence standpoint*, and all philosophy issuing from it is called *immanence philosophy*, as opposed to the religious transcendence standpoint of genuinely Christian philosophy.

“Critical” immanence philosophy seeks its Archimedean point in what it calls the “transcendental cogito,” the “I think.” It considers this the necessary condition for all thinking directed toward a “Gegenstand.”

But this “I think” conceals the transcendental basic problem concerning the relation between theoretical thinking and the *I-ness* of thinking. “Critical” immanence philosophy was of the opinion that it could prove that the “I-ness,” as genuine concentration point of theoretical thinking, could have no other than a generally valid, so-called *transcendental logical* character. For this purpose, it started from a sharp distinction between the individual, “empirical,” so-called physical psychical “I-ness” and the so-called transcendental “pure ego,” the transcendental subject of thought. The latter was supposed to be characterized as the (immanently logical) *subjective pole of thought*, stripped of all individuality, over against which all of experiential reality, including the “empirical ego,” would be its counterpole as its Gegenstand. By contrast, the “pure ego” could never become a “Gegenstand,” because it was supposed to be a “generally valid presupposition” of all opposing thought. It was held that this “transcendental ego” could be discovered only in so-called reflexive or transcendental thought, not in opposing thought.6

Nevertheless, this so-called “transcendental logical ego” is unable to get beyond the Gegenstand-relation. It is itself a theoretical abstraction, a product of opposing thought, for it only has meaning as supposedly existing in relation to the Gegenstand of thought.

However, the ego is the concentration point of the entire human individual temporal existence (including its function of theoretical thinking). As such, therefore, it necessarily *transcends* the theoretical Gegenstand-relation, because it is a *presuppositum* of all theoretical abstraction. Hence, it cannot itself be a theoretical abstraction.

The theoretical synthesis does not originate from a theoretical abstraction but from the thinking *I-ness*, which as such *transcends* the Gegenstand-relation. It is not “thinking” that can “reflexively” turn inward; rather, the *ego, which does the thinking*, should in critical self-reflection direct its thinking toward the individual center from which this thinking originates. Nor can the

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6 Transcendental thought is “thinking about thinking,” in which thought is not directed toward a material “Gegenstand” but turns inward to itself and accounts for its own spontaneous activity.
 ego be the so-called “physical psychical subject,” which in its turn would be the “Gegenstand” of the “transcendental subject of thought.” This so-called “empirical ego” is in fact a theoretical abstraction. The real self is not a “Gegenstand” of theoretical thought, and neither is full temporal reality.

On this point, too, the so-called critical transcendental philosophy has dogmatically neglected the transcendental basic problem concerning the Gegenstand-relation in that it proclaimed full temporal reality to be the “Gegenstand” of the transcendental logical subject. This relation was taken as given, while in fact it is a problem.

The choice of the Archimedean point in the transcendental logical subject of thought is based on an absolutization of logical subjectivity in its transcendental structure, and an “absolutization” is never purely theoretical but basically religious.

Insofar as critical transcendental philosophy starts from the immanence standpoint, it eliminates the transcendental basic problem of the Archimedean point by a dogmatic power maxim.

But it makes a second dogmatic mistake in that it neglects the ontic a priori structure of theoretical thought. We found that theoretical thinking can only turn the modal aspects into “Gegenstand” by abstracting them from the systatically given, continuing meaning coherence among the aspects. However, theoretical abstraction of course cannot cancel this coherence in reality. Theoretical abstraction is only possible within the continuing ontic coherence of the aspect structures: this continuing coherence is an ontic presuppositum of abstraction and, thus, also of the theoretical Gegenstand-relation.

Only in this way is it possible that I direct theoretical thinking toward its own modal structure. As such, this structure does not have a synthetic epistemological but a systatic ontic character, and therefore remains within the cosmic coherence of the modal aspects. But as soon as theoretical thought is directed toward its own structure, this structure is theoretically abstracted and made into a “Gegenstand.”

This, however, is only possible within the ontic, systatic structure of logical thinking in its cosmic coherence with all other modal aspects of reality.

Just like philosophy’s Archimedean point, the cosmic meaning coherence of the aspects remains a presuppositum of theoretical thinking. As such, it is the necessary condition that makes theoretical thought possible, and as such it can never be made into a “Gegenstand.”

It is not possible to form a theoretical concept of these presupposita as such. Only in a transcendental idea can we, while thinking theoretically, via

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7 Cf. note 3.
critical self-reflection, direct our thought toward its ontic presupposita and give a critical account of them. This idea itself remains in its content merely subjectively a priori and is devoid of all guarantee of universal validity. In truth, universal validity only pertains to the ontic structure of theoretical thinking. This structure is the foundational law frame within which alone this thinking is possible. But the dogma of the autonomy of “reason” forces critical immanence philosophy to raise the thinking subject into the position of lawgiver. In this way, the subjective a priori was stamped with “universal validity,” while in truth, this only pertains to the structural law of thinking.

Kant’s transcendental categories and forms of perception were in truth only subjective synthetical a prioris (presuppositions), themselves determined by transcendental ideas concerning the Archimedean point and the mutual coherence of the modal aspects. But these ideas were nowhere considered in light of the transcendental critique. Yet the universally valid structure of philosophical thinking does require a transcendental idea of philosophy’s Archimedean point and of the meaning coherence of the aspects, since it is the subjective foundation of all possible philosophy. But the way in which this idea is conceived remains subjective: it is dependent upon a subjective choice of position in the center of existence, which is essentially a religious choice. Far from confirming the dogma of the self-sufficiency and the autonomy of theoretical thought, the transcendental idea is, on the contrary, the theoretical expression of its self-insufficiency and supratheoretical determination.

In the end, these two transcendental ideas are unbreakably related to a third one, namely, the idea of the Origin, or Archè. The cosmic, ontic meaning coherence of the aspects that are set apart in the Gegenstand-relation points beyond itself to the Archimedean point, in which the modal diversity of meaning is concentrated. Likewise, the Archimedean point, from which the theoretically opposed modal aspects are grasped in the view of meaning totality, points beyond itself to the Origin of all meaning, which is indeed self-sufficient and absolute and which gives to the process of theoretical thinking its firm foundation. The Archè motive is the oldest motive in philosophical thinking. In connection with the motive of critical self-reflection, it only assumed a deeper meaning.

Without an idea of the Origin, no matter how it is conceived, philosophy is not possible, because without a firm foundation, the entire process of thought would become meaningless. Self-consciousness is unbreakably related to consciousness of the Origin. Only with the “Origin” is theoretical thinking set at rest, because theoretical questioning beyond the Origin is meaningless.
The so-called logic of Origin of the Marburg neo-Kantian school starts from a *purely logical* Origin of the entire theoretical process of knowledge. It thereby raises the process of “pure thought” itself to the level of Archè. Hermann Cohen wrote: “Wir fangen mit dem reinen Denken an.”\(^8\) However, this transcendental logical idea of origin is unbreakably connected with Cohen’s idea of the Archimedean point and of the continuing meaning coherence of the aspects.

Moreover, it is handled in a completely *dogmatic* sense because it is passed off as a *purely theoretical* presupposition—in other words, because it is not subjected to a transcendental critique of thought.

However, that philosophical thinking is not possible without an idea of *Origin* is in fact a *universally valid state of affairs* grounded in the *unselfsufficient, ontic structure of theoretical thought itself*.

So, because of the structure of theoretical thought itself, the process of transcendental critique has to occur via three unbreakably related stages. In the first place, the theoretical Gegenstand-relation has to become a transcendental problem in the following question: What is in this relation abstracted from the integral experience of reality? This is theoretically accounted for by the transcendental critique in its idea of the meaning coherence and the mutual relation of the aspects set apart in the Gegenstand-relation.

But the transcendental basic problem of the theoretical synthesis necessarily implies the question about the Archimedean point of philosophy, in which the thinking selfhood chooses its position in order to be able to grasp the theoretically opposed modal aspects of reality in the *theoretical view of totality*.

This is theoretically accounted for by the transcendental critique in its idea of the deeper root unity and meaning totality of the opposed aspects. This implies an idea of the individual concentration point of thought, an idea of the self. But in this stage, the process of transcendental criticism can find no rest either. The tendency toward the Origin, which is innate in the entire temporal reality of experience in virtue of its self-insufficiency and which also comes to expression in the ontic structure of theoretical thought, is as religious fullness concentrated in the individual and supraindividual concentration point of theoretical thought. So, the transcendental idea of the Archimedean point implies a transcendental idea of the Origin, the Archè, which alone, as its firm ground, gives *meaning* to the process of thought.

These three transcendental ideas, in their unbreakable coherence, are synthetically summed up in the *transcendental basic idea* of philosophy, which in the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea is called “law idea.”

\(^8\) “We start with pure thinking.”—Trans.
So, in virtue of the universally valid ontic structure of theoretical thought, every possible philosophy has such a law idea for its foundation. However, in the dogmatic mode of thought, this basic idea is not placed in light of the transcendental critique but treated as an alleged purely theoretical axiom.

The transcendental basic idea itself remains of a theoretical nature. But its content is necessarily determined by a supratheoretical religious choice of position in the center of human existence.

A genuine transcendental critique of philosophy requires that the critical reflection on this transcendental basic idea precedes the entire philosophical process of thought as its ὑπόθεσις.

That Kant's transcendental doctrine of ideas is only the formal tailpiece of his epistemology and that his Critique of Pure Reason nowhere shows the foundational significance of the transcendental ideas is most evident proof of the dogmatic attitude of this critique, although again and again a deeper insight of the great philosopher from Königsberg shines through, especially in his doctrine of the antinomies. Nevertheless, the whole of “Transcendental Aesthetic” and “Logic,” as well as Kant’s conception of the a priori synthesis in its entirety, is determined by a transcendental basic idea that also lies at the base of the purely methodological explanation of the function of the transcendental ideas, but is never considered in light of the transcendental critique of philosophical thought. Kant's transcendental basic idea has an overtly dualistic character, which comes to expression in the entire scheme of form and matter, and also in the chapter about schematism with its unreconciled dualism between categories of thought and forms of sensory perception. On the one hand, the Archimedean point is chosen in the transcendental subject of thought, but Kant nevertheless refuses to also reduce the “forms of perception” to a transcendental logical Origin and totality of meaning.

This was in no way a lack of critical theoretical consistency in Kant's system, which could have been corrected in a purely theoretical manner. Rather, it can only be explained by Kant's dualistic choice of position with regard to the dialectical ground motive of all humanistic philosophy, which is, at bottom, of religious character.

In Kant's basic conception, it was necessary to limit the validity of the understanding to sensibility in order to erect a barrier against the continuity tendency of the science ideal and to guarantee an inviolable sphere for the personality ideal, which comes to theoretical expression in the “practical” idea of autonomous freedom.

It is not possible to do theoretical justice to Kant without regarding his dualistic basic idea in light of the transcendental critique of thought.
Every philosophical system should in this way be checked by its own transcendental basic idea. For even though this basic idea has only regulative, directive significance for the immanent process of theoretical investigation, precisely this regulative function has foundational significance for the entire way of posing a philosophical problem and for the way in which its solution shall be searched for.

It is undeniable that if the transcendental critique of philosophy is conceived in the way described here, the theoretical community of thought between the various schools is maintained, even between those that have radically different starting points. This is due to the fact that this critique is indeed based on the universally valid ontic structure of philosophical thinking, rather than on a merely subjective presupposition.

Its primary result is that the philosophical schools that have a continuous tendency toward “scientific exclusivism” and philosophical sectarianism because of the modern immanence standpoint are forced to engage in real critical contact of thought. And this on equal terms.

The ex cathedra tone will then yield to a sincere attempt to really approach one another critically within the limits of a genuinely theoretical discussion, even though it will be unavoidable that one most sharply rejects the other’s supratheoretical starting point and transcendental basic idea in full religious dedication to the struggle for the Truth. Only religious insight into the radical antithesis between the foundations of Christian and non-Christian thought will be able to establish a genuine scientific tolerance within the limits of theoretical thought, because—on the basis of a sharp distinction between theoretical and supratheoretical presuppositions—every attempt to raise some supratheoretical starting point to the level of criterion of scholarliness will be fundamentally rejected.

But once the genuinely critical contact of thought between the philosophical schools has been restored, this contact should lead to mutual enrichment and clarification of insight. Once the illusion of some kind of theoretical monopoly of this or that starting point in philosophy has been abandoned, it will no longer be possible to maintain the arrogant attitude of thought that deems an examination of the results of a philosophy with a different attitude “not profitable.” Instead, the attempt will be made to enrich one’s own thinking with these insights—not in shallow “eclecticism,” of course, but rather in critical consideration of them from one’s own standpoint under the test of reality.
Modern philosophy often gives the impression of completely isolated efforts in the various schools. But just as in the special sciences, it will then no longer be possible to tolerate the ignorance of each other’s labor in one’s own problem investigation.

For example, in Kantian or phenomenological circles, one should no longer present the outdated misconception of naive experience as some kind of “naive realism” without at least having made the effort to seriously take notice of the fundamental criticism of this misconception, for example, by Scheler and by the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea.

Similarly, the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea has continuously profited from philosophical insights obtained on the immanence standpoint.

This restoration of the critical thought contact between the schools should already come to expression in the method of reviewing philosophical texts. It won’t do to dismiss a philosophical account based on another starting point without critically testing its conceptions by its own basic idea, on the one hand, and without considering whether it contains perhaps valuable insights that had not yet occurred to oneself, on the other hand.

Above all, every genuine transcendental critique of a philosophical system should at the same time become self-criticism. The monological form of criticism should be changed into a dialogical one; criticism should assume the form of a philosophical dialogue in which the criticized thinker can take part on the basis of equality.

Another defect can in this way also be terminated for good. I mean the covering up by a Christian banner of a philosophical argument that by its coherence betrays its origin in a non-Christian starting point. That which in its deepest starting point really belongs together will be recognized by the transcendental critique of philosophy as inherently connected, even if its foundations conceal a dialectical ground motive, which I showed to be the case in modern humanistic philosophy.

But that which is radically opposed in starting point can by no artificial attempt at synthesis or mediation be joined into a peaceful union.

At this point, Christian thought is in need of critical purification without respect of persons, for the sake of the Christian standpoint and that of immanence philosophy, as well as for the sake of philosophy as a theoretical discipline. This is not about a revolutionary assault of disrespectful “younger ones” on a respectable, centuries-old “tradition.” What is at stake is simply the Truth and a clear way of thinking.

And it is only the Truth that can “set us free”—also in philosophy.