Summary of the monograph

World and Freedom. Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology

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The Transformative Condition of Critique. Introduction

If Kant's critical project is revolutionary, it is primarily because of its immanent character: Kant's critique of reason is a critique carried out by reason itself[1]. The immanent operation underlying transcendental philosophy therefore reveals it not only as a radical critique of transcendent determination – the exemplary structure of classical metaphysics and onto(theo-)logy, but also as a radical attempt to self-constitute and autonomously motivate a philosophical system – an attempt to create a philosophical system that posits itself, through the articulation of a complex conceptual network, by itself and in itself, a form of desirable universality, or *world*. In other words, the critical project is not only an exploration but also a *creation* of a condition: it is a conceptual *ontogony*. Philosophy becomes philosophical *world-making* by conceptual means. From this perspective, the stakes of transcendental philosophy are crucial for any post-critical ontological project. After the critical rupture, the old metaphysics is impossible. The old ontology is impossible as well.

It is therefore crucial for the project of a new ontology to carry Kant's critical task to completion. The radical turn of critique, and critique as radical turn, must entail not only a reflexive return upon its own condition, but also its own reversal: not just a return of the condition to itself, but a reversal *within* itself. The conceptual operation implicit in the two-component subtitle of this book sees precisely this enigmatic overturning: the relation *transcendental philosophy – modal ontology* must be read as a dynamic, transformative relation. The radicalization of critique means conceiving of the

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[1] In this respect I agree with Gilles Deleuze, who in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy* introduces Kant's critique in the following way: "Kant is the first philosopher who understood critique as having to be total and positive *as* critique. Total because "nothing must escape it"; positive, affirmative, because it can not restrict the power of knowing without releasing other previously neglected powers. (…) Kant's genius, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* was to conceive of an immanent critique. Critique must not be a critique of reason by feeling, by experiencing or by any kind of external instance. And what is criticised is no longer external to reason". (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Translated by Hugh Tomlinson, London: Continuum Books, 1983 [1962])

condition as a transformative transformation of the condition. Therefore, in accord with the immanent radicalization of critique, *the condition* – or conditions – will no longer be understood as merely cognitive conditions, but as conditions of the production of the condition itself. Depending on one's philosophical vocabulary, the syntagm *conditions of the production of condition* could be phrased as the *production of truth*, the *laying down of being*, the *creation of a* (possible or necessary) *world*.

The task of this book, then, is the immanent transformation of the study of the condition of possibility into the constitution of a necessary condition, or in other words, the active rethinking of transcendental philosophy as a modal ontology.

Why the world? Why freedom? Why Kant?

The initial question of *World and Freedom. Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology* is the question of freedom. This question is inseparable from the question of the world, the question of *what is*, with which philosophy itself begins. The claim that the question of the world is inseparable from the question of freedom is not only the central task but also the starting assumption of this book: the world is impossible except as freedom. The title *World and Freedom* could therefore also be read as *World-Freedom*.

The initial question of the book could be unfolded through a series of inquiries. Is freedom a condition of existence, or is it its horizon? Is this horizon utopian? If freedom is a condition of existence, how can we ever know it? How could this condition be distinguished from the background "noise" of existence? How is freedom *experienced*? If, on the contrary, freedom is the opposite of the *non-necessary* condition of existence, necessity, if it is therefore only an (utopian) horizon, how is its imagining even possible? Can we even *imagine* it? Is it therefore possible to *aspire* to this horizon? Is it possible that it has practical consequences? And is it possible for an aspiration, a movement, to have no practical consequences on its initial situation? But if freedom is a necessary condition, is freedom a necessity? If it is a necessity, is it freedom? Is freedom a free choice, or a destiny?

The question of freedom, posed as it stands before us, is structurally defined by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Moreover: transcendental philosophy represents the most radical attempt to think freedom ontologically. The return to Kant pursued here is therefore not so much a matter of choice as of necessity. The task of this book, however, is to recast this necessity as freedom. And so to meet the requirement of freedom by affirming it beyond its initial condition. This is why the question of freedom is posed, according to Kant's radical philosophical turn, not as a question about the *nature of* freedom – not just as the question "What is freedom?" – but as a question about the condition – or conditions – of freedom's possibility: how is freedom possible? What is the condition of possibility of freedom?

In this sense, the critique of freedom as a modal category must be carried out by means of the modal categories themselves. Freedom is thought as a condition, but freedom is the very condition of thought. This apparent aporia of thought-freedom is in fact constitutive – this thesis is one of the starting points of this book. The aporia of thought-freedom is the constitutive aporia of an immanent critique: the latter must be sustained to the end, lest it return to its initial conditions. Instead of becoming tautological, it must make a breakthrough – a leap to a new form, or to a new level of complexity-intensity.

I call this breakthrough *supercritique* [*surcritique*]. *Supercritique* means returning the condition to itself. Or thinking the condition as over-turning.

Freedom is a horizon, and the horizon is all-embracing: it is not "in front" or "behind," "above" or "below"; it is simultaneous and all-embracing. Therefore, the condition cannot but also be the ultimate goal. But the condition as an ultimate, *counter-purpose* means the transformation of the condition itself, and therefore the transformation of the initial question. Posing a practical philosophical problem is not posing a question awaiting an answer, but a task. The task is not to answer a question, but to transform the conditions of its posing. The answer is only possible as an answer to another question. A problem is a transformation of a condition that is still unknown.

Structure and Horizons

The first concrete task of the book is not only and not so much the exhaustive treatment of the notion of transcendental freedom in Kant as a historical-philosophical problem, that is, as a problem with its own genealogy, context and specific *modus operandi*, as its mobilization into the experimental working modus of the hypothetical ontological valence of the notion. In other words, it is not a question of abandoning a historical perspective, but of radicalizing the immanent conceptual dynamics, allowing for the supervening transformation of questions and concepts decisive for re-opening the possibility of ontology today.

The horizon of the book – the idea of freedom, necessarily places the problem of causality – the bone of contention for contemporary post-critical ontologies – at the centre of the study. The unfolding of the problematic, in turn, necessitated the foregrounding of the central methodological core related to modal categories in a distinct section, from which in turn the exploration of the central tension between the conditions of possible experience and the genesis of actual experience was moved to the exploration of the central stakes for the transcendental turn: the *question of the real*. The structure of the study thus centers around three intersecting axes, which at the same time 'plug' into one another like concentric circles or parabolic 'arches': the problem of causality, through which the relation between freedom and necessity unfolds; the problem of modality, or the relation between the possible and the real, constituting the modal ground of the relation between freedom and necessity; the problem of the relation between the experiential and the transcendental, and through it the transition from regulative to constitutive dimension, a problem through which the

conceptual vector returns, crossing the problematic of finality, but on a new level, to the horizon of the idea of freedom.

The first axis thus circularly connects the book's first chapter, "Kant's rupture: aporetic or synthetic causality?", with the final sixth chapter, "Transcendental Realism and Ontogony, or the Inverted Imagination. Kant, Maimon, Deleuze," while the second and third axes delineate the lines of force linking respectively the problematics of the chapters situated between the two poles. The three axes therefore correspond to the three modalities of the book: hypothetical, thetical and hyperthetical. The described axial symmetry therefore has the task of maintaining the 'arch' through which hypercritical mobilization allows to open the ontological horizon. If Chapters One and Six are symmetrically focused on the central problem of freedom, Chapters Two ("Transcendental and Modal") and Three ("Existence vs. Substance: Toward an Ontology of Existence") deploy the modus of hypothetics and metacritique, respectively, by exploring the modal organization of the First Critique. The ridge of metacritique runs along the border of Chapter Four ("The Reality of the Possible") and Chapter Five ("Transcendental Philosophy and the Experience of the Real. Solomon Maimon's Metacritical Experience"), devoted to the question of the Real; these two chapters switch the modus, making a transition from the Real to the Sur-Real – that is, in the direction of a transcendental *superrealism*. This is the starting point of supercritique, respectively thetics, heading towards the horizon of modal ontology. Thus, the first three chapters mobilise the *supercritical* possibility of transcendental philosophy, while the next three chapters experiment with its ontological valences. This watershed also determines the provisional division of the corpus of *World and Freedom* into two main parts: "Causality, Necessity, Freedom, or Freedom in Spite of Everything" and "What is Real? Transcendental Philosophy and Ontology". The first part of the book examines the hypothetical modal foundations of transcendental philosophy, seeking to mobilize them *supercritically* towards an ontology of the necessary world, hereby opening up the horizon of its second part.

Immanent or Historical Hermeneutics? Metacritical Epistemology

World and Freedom. Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology is not a book *on* Kant; it is a book *through* Kant, a book *with* Kant. Hence, the book is not a philosophical-historical study in the traditional sense; but what does "traditional sense" mean in terms of a strong idea of the history of philosophy? This book aims to propose an original methodology for the study of Kant's philosophy, the task of which is to overcome the epistemological problem that the history of philosophy inevitably faces when dealing with a particular philosophical system, or rather with a particular philosophical text proposing a 'system' or 'doctrine': what is its meaning? Or rather, what is the order of the meaning generated by it? Does it have an autonomous meaning distinct from the contextual one? Does the philosophical text autonomously or contextually produce meanings? Or perhaps its meaning is the result of a complex interweaving of immanent relations and correlations external to the text? But in that case, what is the relation of one to the other? Are they continuous or discontinuous? Can contextual relations and tensions modify and even invert the meaning of a philosophi-

cal text? But is this overturning not its very *meaning*? Should there be limits and controls on inter-pretations – do they need to be institutionally regulated?

To summarize, we can describe the dynamics of the history of philosophy, and of the history of the sciences and epistemology more generally, since the middle and second half of the last century, as a contest between two principled approaches aimed at answering the questions thus posed. I will conventionally define the two opposing positions as *autonomist* and *heteronomist*, and their repre-sentatives as 'autonomists' and 'heteronomists'. The autonomist position supports the idea of an autonomous genesis and organization of the meaning of the philosophical text, which must be in-vestigated systematically and immanently on the text itself – on the "philosophical work": the task of this approach is to reconstruct the meaning of the philosophical thesis or system and only at a second stage to search for its relation to other philosophical systems and external reality. In contrast, the heteronomous position conceives of the philosophical text as an open field of interactions and collision of meaning tendencies – of conceptual prisms and systems of signification external to the text, of ideological orders and worldviews that condition its organization beyond autonomous indi-vidual intention and control of meaning generation. The heteronomic position is related to the mid-century trends of new historicism in epistemology and the history of the sciences that emerged after World War II, first and foremost in France.

Ideogenetic Operation and Supercritical Turn. Methodological Vector

This book proposes a *supercritical* reading of Kant's critical project. On the one hand, it is sup-posed to follow the logic of the system: to represent its internal coherence adequately but also inter-pretively, that is, to be a kind of *immanent* material-hermeneutic reading (in the sense of the *materi-al hermeneutics* of Peter Szondi and Jean Bollack). At the same time, the reading has the task of mobilizing the *supercritical* valence of the "text-object". This would mean to mobilize its "deep" logic, to catalyze the grounds that are present in the system of the three Critiques. Therefore, the stakes of the present study are twofold: a double-acting stakes, or an initial double stakes, whose dimensions act according to a single, even syncopated, measure. On the one hand, the stake is *metacritical insofar* as it amounts to an attempt to infer non-actualized semantic valences of Kant's system that presumably remain within the realm of its *liminal* validity – an inference whose condi-tion is, after all, to expand the system to the hypothetical limit of its semantic potentiality and, therefore, plausibility. On the other hand, the stakes are *supercritical*: they mobilize and intensify the critical axis thus hypothetically exceeding the realm of the Kantian transcendental philosophy's presumed semantic validity. In this respect, the second part of the study also constitutes an experi-mental laboratory for testing the validity and the operational potential of concepts central to the project of modal ontology – first and foremost, the modal categories of possibility, desire and ne-cessity, the categories of real and/or actual (modal categories according to Kant's scheme), the op-positions between *possible* and *actual* as well as between *contingent* and *necessary*, the central ideas of causality and finality swirling around these modal constellation, and ultimately the idea of

freedom. In this respect, Kant's Critique is not only a ground, but also a dynamic structural material; at the same time, and above all, *in spite of* everything, a necessary horizon. *A necessary* horizon insofar as, according to the conviction that constitutes the indissoluble point of the metacritical and supercritical perspective, Kant's philosophy posits the requirement in which modal ontology *must* stand: *freedom in spite of everything*. Therefore, the experimental hypothesis of this essay, the hypothesis concerning the possibility of reworking transcendental philosophy as an approach to modal ontology, has a *thetical* action in itself .

Following this requirement, the attempt at an immanently mobilizing reading of transcendental philosophy, primarily of the notion of transcendental freedom as an ontological concept, unfolds within the horizon and according to the requirement of *modal ontology*. As a philosophical project, but also as a philosophical methodology, the modal ontology – whose attitude is presented in detail in the Introduction of the book – is based on the principles of the linguistic thesis and, respectively, structural-semantic theory, known as *theory of ideogenesis.* The theory of linguistic ideogenesis or *semantogenesis* consists of the original reworking of Gustave Guillaume's operative linguistics [*linguistique opérationnelle*] proposed by the Bulgarian linguists Krassimir Mantchev and Christo Todorov – it represents a radically immanentist dynamic model of the semantic articulation that offers immanent means for the study of the internal dynamics of language. In philosophical terms it could be seen as systematic attempt to semantically formalize the tradition of the "Aristotelian Left" (in Ernst Bloch's terms) – the philosophical tendency that we could hypothetically trace from Aristotle, through Avicenna, Averroes, Bruno and Spinoza, to Goethe, Schelling, Novalis, Nietzsche, Bergson and Guillaume, and according to the hypothesis to be developed here – to Immanuel Kant. The Kantian revolution, based on the immanence of the critical operation, has an unexpected but direct structural relation to the ideogenetic model. The reflexivity of the critical operation implies in turn the separation – or production – of the positions of subject and object in the very core of the *critical* operation, in the strong etymological sense of the term. Thus the *critical operation* corresponds to the initial ideogenetic operation according to the ideogenetic theory: the formation of the semantic structure of the existential verb *to be* and the progressive exteriorization of its semantic matter.

Thus, on the basis of the proposed operational hypothesis, the book suggests the peculiar double experimentation with Kant's concepts through the prism of ideogenetic theory and the related philosophical and linguistic perspectives, and conversely, the experimentation with their conceptual forms through Kant's philosophy. In other words, it will not be a matter of applying a descriptive and analytic *metalanguage* to a *language-object*, in this case the text of the First Critique; Kant's philosophy will not be reduced to a language-object. Rather, this attempt is driven by the desire to think transcendental philosophy in terms of its foundational concept, the concept of freedom. For this reason, in spite of the imperative self-imposed requirement to use the complex toolkit of Kant's system faithfully to the *intention of the work*, as well as to grasp its mode of action, I will inevitably also arrive at an attempt to immanently mobilize it in the direction of its switch into *a supercritical* mode – a mode which, according to my initial hypothesis, is conditioned by the critical project'

premises, but which is not made explicit as an explicit new phase (as its "doctrinal" extension, according to Kant's own term). Therefore, although committing to the requirement of transcendental philosophy, I will necessarily have to transgress – even, transcend – its own dogmatic self-regulation. If I refer to Kant's elegant attempt in the Preface to the first edition of the First Critique to neutralize the prior accusation of vagueness (*some books would have been much clearer if they had not wanted to be so clear*, AXIX), I can rephrase it this way: *this book would give the impression of being much truer to its object if it considered it as an object rather than a co-subject*. Hence, I do not set out here to produce a metalanguage, or, by the same epistemological cut, to produce a language-object; my aim is, on the contrary, in accordance with the axiom of the immanent action of modal ontology, that the language-object itself be emancipated as a *language-subject*. Such move could foster a genuine supercritical transformation, by unleashing the potentiality of its subjective immanent will, the *will of the work*, *voluntas operis*[2].

The conceptual-experimental drive of the study is thus to try to bring several central Kantian concepts to their limit in order to illuminate (super)critically the conditions of their possibility. That is, to examine them not only according to their apparent – yet deceptive in its obviousness – embedded *narrative* finality, but also according to their latent agency, with their immanent potential to achieve more than their complex obviousness: their transcendental exegesis. To explore not only the limit of their possibility, but to force the limit; moreover, to try to imagine possibility beyond the limit: another possibility beyond the limit of possibility.

The book's modal orientation affirms a *necessary* possibility – the possibility of necessity as the unconditional necessity of freedom. The turn in the direction of apodictic modality undoubtedly seems not only illegitimate but also, in the highest degree, problematic in the perspective of ontologies of potentiality. And so it must be. For, in sharp contrast to ontologies of potentiality, it is argued here that an apodictic modality, a modality of necessity, is *necessary* for an ontology of existence grounded in the idea of freedom.

We have never thought necessity immanently, that is, modally: it has always been secondary to the hypostasis of essence. Unconditional necessity has always been a predicate of absolute transcendent essence – *actus purus, ens realissimum* – or of almighty fate, even if hypostatized as deterministic mechanics, as the omnipotence of blind chance (which ultimately takes radical skepticism to mystical occasionalism) or the almightiness of organics – of impulses, behaviors, the inverted archetypes of the unconscious. But the modal immanence of necessity signifies the necessity of existence itself, of *existence as freedom*: that is, the necessity of the possibility of absolute beginning and abiding in it despite the chimera of transcendent essence. Freedom signifies a condition that is given in order to endure alone, without any transcendent guarantee. The ethos of finitude is the limitless ethos of freedom.

The modal reversal proposed here is therefore a reversal in the direction of *necessary action*, the action that makes the reduction of potentiality impossible, rejecting its hypostasis as substance in

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[2] Francisco Suarez has employed this term with a completely different sense in his *Operis de religione*.

the first place. At the same time, it is also a turn in the direction of the third element of Aristotle's reduced to dichotomy modal-ontological trinomy, namely *ἐντελέχεια* – entelechy, the necessary term complementary to the *δύναμις – ἐνέργεια* pair; a term without which the latter would be enclosed in ontological tautology; a term which I have taken the liberty of conveying, on the basis of an experimental interpretation of Aristotle's notion, as *persistence*. Kant's unexpected relation between freedom and necessity, on which the transcendental transition from theoretical to practical philosophy rests according to the reading proposed in the book, is also the deep ground of the attempt to relate transcendental philosophy to the supercritical project of modal ontology. The transition made along the line of *World and Freedom*, the transition from the hypothetical to the hyperthetical dimension, is meant to motivate the modal turn by catalyzing its internal grounds in the critical corpus itself. The linguistic model of ideogenesis plays a key catalytic role in this regard, providing an opportunity for the conceptual rethinking of Kant's possible experience in relation to the notion efexistence and, respectively, the fundamental modal categories of the existential order – possibility, desire and necessity. The described complex modal transition, representing essentially a modal-ontological reversal, conditions the idea of the necessity of freedom, respectively of freedom as a necessary condition of existence. It also makes inevitable the complex structure of the study: the parabolic structure of conceptual arches inscribed in one another.

Modal Ontology. Genealogy and Polemic Context

Freedom could not be thought ontologically without presupposing a philosophical theory of the subject. At the same time, we could not think freedom in relation to the subject without presupposing an ontological horizon. But this *pre-supposing* presupposes itself an overturning, a critical rethinking of both the idea of subject itself and the idea of ontology, of the *science of what is*. In this way, the opposition between the question referred to being and that referred to existence would be obliterated in the form of an ontology of existence – an ontology whose possibility is the necessity of the order of freedom. The task of the book is therefore not so much to overcome the conceptual order of transcendental philosophy – of concepts such as cause, causality or finality – as to recast them in a new, more complex and intensive conceptual order. The supercritical breakthrough, overturning the initial condition as a horizon, represents the transformation of transcendental philosophy into a modal ontology. Hence: *modal ontology*.

The program for modal ontology unfolds from my PhD thesis, *The Narrative System in Dostoevsky's Late Novels* (1998), to my most recent books, *The New Athanor* (2019), *Freedom in spite of Everything* (2021), and *Persister* (forthcoming). It was articulated in my Paris-Sofia Seminar (2001-2003) at the International College of Philosophy (CIPh) and in the program I directed, *Metamorphoses of Community. Towards a Modal Ontology* at the Paris institution (International College of Philosophy, Paris, 2004-2010), to which my books from this period are related, especially *The Unimaginable* (2003), *The Body-Metamorphosis* (2007), *L'altération du monde* (2009); new revised edition in Japanese, 2020), *La métamorphose et l'instant – La désorganisation de la vie* (2009), as well as in the issue of the journal. *Rue Descartes* « La métamorphose » (2009), including the study "Metamorphosis and the Event" and the conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy, *Metamorphosis, the World*.

Modal ontology has its own genealogy, and is the subject of other published or forthcoming studies. As a philosophical project, but also as a philosophical methodology, modal ontology represents an attempt to remobilize the philosophical lineage that I describe with Bloch's term "Aristotelian Left," extending its scope. In my perspective, this philosophical tendency originated with Aristotle and his distant inspirations Anaximander and Heraclitus, passing through its radical medieval interpreters, among whom Averroes and Duns Scotus are particularly significant for the line of modal ontology, through Bruno, Spinoza, Schelling and Novalis, to reach Bergson, the operational linguistics of Guillaume and Krassimir Mantchev, Matheron and Deleuze[3]. The metatheoretical effort on the the line of dynamic ontology has at the same time allowed me to make manifest the conceptual resources of the modal analysis of narrative structures in ontological perspective, and thus to focus the perspective in question at the frontier of the new millennium. Broadly speaking, modal ontology

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[3] It is noteworthy that recently, in 2015, Giorgio Agamben published in his book *The Use of Bodies* a chapter entitled 'Towards a Modal Ontology', a title that repeats ten years later that of my program at the International College of Philosophy, using the concept in a similar perspective (see Giorgio Agamben, *L'usage des corps,* Paris, Seuil, 2015). I will discuss the detailed connections between my project and Agamben's proposed original perspective in a separate essay.

is based on the following thesis: the existence of the existent or existence *as the* existent could only be grasped through the modes or *modalities* through which it is expressed or manifested. If existence is the condition of expression, it always transcends itself, it *steps through* or *beyond* (literal translation of *ex-sistere, ek-stasis*: *over-stepping* or *out-stepping*) its own condition – it is *out-stepping, ek-stasis* in every act of expression. Modal ontology thus affirms the principle of *ontological individuation.* Based on the complex notion of existence it elaborates, modal ontology aims to contribute to overcoming the millennial forgetting or reduction of existence.

Following this radical assumptions, *World and Freedom* has two main polemical stakes with respect to contemporary debate. On the one hand, it propels a counterattack against the attack of neo-Humean 'speculative' ontologies on the idea of causality. *World and Freedom* takes up the critique of the notion of causality, but not just to reduce it to a subjective intellectualization that would turn Kant into a caricature of the secondary school representations of Newton. Therefore, by refusing to project the necessary critique of causality onto transcendental philosophy, we would be supercritically confronting this notion. This would mean reading Kant not alongside Newton but with René Thom and Ilya Prigogine; thus we would arrive at the introduction of the experimental concepts of *counterfinality* and *metacausality*. On the other hand, it is a counterattack on the 'modal front', parrying the attack on the idea of necessity. Necessity is not conceived here as the necessity of essence, that is, of potentiality substantiated as power. Necessity is the unconditional condition according to which the idea of freedom is possible only as a synthetic concept *involving* justice. Obviously, this counterattack unfolds on the front of the ontology of potentiality. Following Kant's critique of a voluntaristic idea of freedom in the *Critique of Practical Reason, World and Freedom* proposes a metacritique of ontologies of potentiality as empty and untenable insofar as they lack an internal regulative principle that allows the overcoming of the presupposed condition: namely, the principle of the *necessary* world.

If the conception of freedom as an ontological condition or as subjective efficacy is the limit to which modern philosophy reaches, it must not be paralyzed at this limit, but on the contrary, through a transformative catastrophe, it must move beyond it into the modality of *hyperthetics*, that is, of transformative action – of the action that transforms the condition as efficacy: to move into the modality of ontological or *ontogonic action*.

Supercritique and Modal Ontology

The book engages with Kant's concept of "critique" at the height of his own requirement. In the first place, this means that it takes into account the intense semantic potential of the term, revived and reworked by Kant on the basis of its graceful etymology. In addition to the term *critique* in the modern sense (the successor of *kritikē tekhnē*, 'the art of critique'), the word had an important meaning in legal discourse in ancient Greece. Before *critique* in the modern sense, ἡ κριτική meant more generally 'the faculty of judging.' (In the Kantian sense, we might even say *the faculty of judgment*, which would also lead us to the hypothesis of the reflexive character of the Third Critique: in this perspective, the title *Kritik der Urteilskraft* could be read as *Critique of Critique*.) The word κριτική itself derives from the verb κρίνω – 'divide', 'separate', 'distinguish', 'judge', 'interpret', 'decide', from which the word *krisis, κρίσις* (literally 'separation', 'division'; 'discord'; 'decision'; 'judgment', 'verdict') is derived. The term κριτική, along with other derivatives of κρίνω such as κριτής ('judge'; 'interpreter') and κριτήριον ('sign'; 'judgment', 'verdict'), occupies an important place in Greek legal terminology. The verb κρίνω itself, in turn, probably refers to the Proto-Indo-European root **krei-,* meaning 'to sieve,' and hence 'divide,' 'distinguish.'

Supercritique is therefore first and foremost critique. It is a critique in the strong sense of the word insofar as it attempts to radicalize the valences of Kant's concepts and theses even by turning them against their conventional conception; but it continues to explore the conditions of effectiveness of the conceptual order of transcendental philosophy without questioning the critical order itself. In other words, if it radicalizes the problem of causality, for example, the supercritical position has the task of *sharpening*, of *dynamizing* the concepts – the symptoms, the tensions – but it does not attempt to take down an overall conceptual order. That would be the task of the *thetic* modus of *modal ontology*.

Thus, the concept of *supercritique*, setting the perspective of the book and linking it to the horizon of the project for *modal ontology*, is used in a threefold sense. Even more precisely put, the synthetic meaning of the term *supercritique* is derived from three conventionally distinguishable aspects, respectively tasks, that define the structure of the work (*conventionally* distinguishable insofar as their simultaneous operation forms the synthetic task and methodological possibility of the book). The first of these tasks is the radicalization of Kant's concept of *critique* itself, whose initial radicality is blunted by its reductive doxic historicization. The reductive interpretations of both Kant's opponents and followers, perhaps even in the lifetime of the Königsberg thinker, have progressively reduced the notion of *critique*, and by extension the project of transcendental philosophy, to that which the critical project was precisely directed against: dogmatic philosophy. Transcendental philosophy has been reduced to transcendental dogmatism.

1. The radicalization of Kant's concept, that is, the revelation of its radical immanent *supercritical* potential, leads above all to the claim that critique is ontology *itself.* This claim, which illumi-

nates the structure of the title of this book, is based on Kant's often misunderstood or overlooked theses, which, even if they do not place the concept of ontology at the heart of the conceptual dynamic core of critique, provide unambiguous clues for interpreting critique as an ontological project. I will call *hypothetical* this first aspect of the use of the term 'supercritique', respectively the first task of the book – conceiving it as a *remobilization* of the hypothetical radical potential of Kant's concept of critique. Its unfolding leads necessarily to the second aspect, respectively task, of the concept; this second aspect I have defined above as the *thetical*.

2. If the first dimension of the notion of *supercritique* represents a catalyzing mobilization of the supercritical potential of critique, the second dimension represents a hypothesis *about* critique itself.

The hypothesis concerns the *modal* structure of the critical project. It is the following: being driven by the modality of necessity, the critique transcends its own condition. If in the First Critique the critical project operates alone in a *hypothetical modality*, that is, it investigates the conditions of knowledge, in the Second Critique and the *Metaphysics of Morals* the critical project, moving on to the investigation of the higher faculty of desire, respectively of practical reason, makes the transition to *a thetical modality*. This transition is literally a *leap*; it presupposes a qualitatively transformative 'expansion': metaphysics – the supersensible – needs a leap. Insofar as the unconditioned is not derivable from progression (which is in fact regress to infinity, apparently analytic at its core – *absolutely unattainable in the ascending series of conditions*), its realm is reachable through the transformative work on the condition that interrupts its own conditioning. This means, however, that in the realm of conditioning we must posit the possibility of a parallel order, or to put it more precisely, of a spontaneous beginning, in Kant's term, of a *spontaneous causality* – a *causality of freedom*. Indeed, after its transcendental-modal reworking, ontotheological transcendental unconditionality is now *immanent* unconditionality. The name Kant gives to this immanent unconditionality is *freedom*.

The critical project thus arrives at the *categorical* imperative, that is, at categorical statements and prescriptions – *maxims* according to Kant's term, which, even if they have a regulative character, already transcend the purely hypothetical use of the term critique. In this sense, *critique transcends itself*. It involves an immanent excessive element that allows it to transcend its hypothetical modality. The restrictive condition, therefore, acts as the possibility of the *expansive*, synthetic use that it is critical inquiry that discovers at the heart of the condition. Critique thus functions reflexively, that is, *metacritically, in its* own right, allowing its own transcendence, in other words, *supercritique*. We are obviously dealing with a radical hypothesis on Kant's idea of critique. However, its task is not to overinterpret the concept of critique, but to further the *supercritical* modality of critique. The second meaning of supercritique would thus be defined as *thetic*. Its semantic *maximum* is the *ontological mode* of critique.

We can describe supercritique as a critical self-excess, tasked precisely with overcoming the critical rupture. At the same time, it manifests the *constructive* potential of the critical project, which also acquires a supercritical, productive character: a productive synthesis of the transcendent, based

not so much on the transition between modal domains ('faculties') as on the *breakthrough* or *leap* between their 'disjunctively' distinct spheres. These transformative forces are precisely the *faculties* (which Kant divides into 'lower' and 'higher': it is the latter that underlie the transcendental possibility of reason).

One of the central metacritical problems that we will raise in the course of our analysis, a problem that also stands at the center of the first significant 'allied' critique of the transcendental project, that of Solomon Maimon, has to do with the heterogeneous origin of the faculties of the spirit. The cognitive faculty in particular has two separate, irreducible sources, namely intuition and reason. My hypothesis is that the assumption of their initial heterogeneity necessitates the crucial role of *the third* – that is, the necessity of a synthetic operation – in the structure of Kant's project. (Or perhaps, a more extreme suggestion, the reverse: the necessity of synthesis necessitates the heterogeneity of origin?) In any case, that is how the *third one* appears. *The third* is not a mediator, but a transformer, a *relay*. It is the supercritical breakthrough, both breakthrough and transformation, between the derived critical faculties-conditions of the mind. The third is always in 'between.' But it is not just a mediator, it is not a mean; it is a *measure*. That is to say, it is the measure by which critique *measures itself* – according to the etymology of the verb κρίνω – and thus actually achieves supercritique, that is, transcends itself: it reaches the modality of necessity, accomplishing the apodictic, thetic turn. And so the *crisis* of critique leads to the *supercritical* – that is, to the new *thetic* modus, the modus of the necessary world, where the hypothetical critical ontology becomes a *thetic ontology*, an ontology of necessity.

Modal-ontological regulations are perceived as an immanent implicit and in this sense a kind of unconscious structure of the critical project. We could try to describe their operation with Kant's expression *hidden art* describing the operation of transcendental schematism. Like transcendental schematism, this 'third' making the 'leap' between the two autonomous sources of knowledge, sensation and reason, the modal-ontological 'third' in turn makes a breakthrough, a leap, or acts as a relay between the 'modalities' of critique corresponding to the respective modal sphere of each of their constituent *faculties*. *Modal ontology* in this sense is the hidden *secret art* that operates in the depths of the critical project unconsciously, that is, it is a kind of imaginative faculty of critique itself. And so modalities, their *modo-ontological* texture, are, so to speak, the very imaginative faculty of critique. They are *the* imagination of critique that we stimulate, mobilize *productively* in terms of its *constitutive* order. This constitutive order, however, must not be the illegitimate "fantastic" order that is rejected by Kant, but a *hyperthetic* order that transcends it according to the demand of supercritique.

3. Thus, the third dimension of the term *supercritique* is the *hyperthetic* dimension. Here, the concept of supercritique is already presumably functioning in an order of magnitude beyond Kantian or Kantian critique or supercritique. This *supervening* use of the concept of 'supercritique' has a critical role – in the Kantian sense of the term – in the economy of the philosophical project proposed as the horizon of the supercritical operation: it is the latter that is charged with the task of

clearing the field and the tools necessary to the *thetical* work to come on the *ontology of the necessary world.* The ontology of the necessary world – the hypothesis or *hyperthesis* that sets the horizon of this research – must delineate the horizon of ontological work: the work on *modal ontology.*

Thus, illegitimate from the point of view of Kant's regulative idea, the hyperthetic *constitutive* order places Kant's *regulative ontology* at the level of an immanentist ontology, that is, an ontology concerning matter itself. Here the Copernican turn becomes a *Prigoginean turn*, that is, a turn in the direction of dissipative systems theory and chaos theory, questioning the idea of universal natural laws driving the Copernican-Newtonian revolution. *Supercritique* is a kind of *thermodynamics* of critique: a theory in which the old laws do not operate and at the same time the level of natural causality is *modalized* as spontaneity, that is, it takes on a creative or subjective character, giving rise to the *new revolution* and, respectively, the *new alliance* (in the formula of Prigogine and Stengers' seminal book from 1979, *La nouvelle alliance* [*Order out of Chaos*, 1984]). Thanks to the reduction of the ontological question to a modal question, the essence of Kant's turn in the direction of the investigation of the conditions of knowledge, Prigogine's turn in turn recasts, according to the requirement of irreversibility, the modal question as a synthetic modal-ontological question. Put differently, the question of *what is* is reworked into the modal question of *how*, put in an *ontopoietic* perspective: *how does* the world become world? *How is the world made world?* Lest we attribute to the regulative idea of an absolutely necessary being a constitutive character, the hyperthetical modality of the book poses the question of the transcendental as the immanence of the world.

Thus the pro-ontological transcendental critique of modal ontology – the *ontology of the necessary world* – brings the transcendental operation into the realm of the *absolutely necessary*, which – a fundamental axiom of modal ontology – is nothing other than existence itself. The third modality of the book is therefore radically experimental; it is realized according to the requirement of philosophical *hyperthetics*. Of course, the *hyperthetical* dimension of criticique only opens up a horizon. In this sense, it is prolegomenal: it leads to a subsequent, precisely *thetical* book. To evoke again Kant's programmatic statement, as set out in the Preface to the first edition of the Critique, I might describe it as a future *metaphysics of nature*. For now, however, I prefer the phrase *ontology of the necessary world* or *ontology of future nature* to point to the supposed, *necessary* turn in the direction of the necessary world, the world of the future.