

OMNITUDO REALITATIS

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I say that just as we cannot move freely without taking hold the ground, and since we cannot take hold the ground without moving freely, so we cannot make use of reason unless we freely believe and we cannot believe unless we make use of reason.

— Franz von Baader¹

If we want to re-insert ethics into our system of thought, we will have to address the question of finality and its subject with the awareness that in a time and culture that is committed exclusively to the recognition of the physical incidence of any event, a truly ethical act will tend to go unrecognized or, at the very least, be misunderstood. A dangerous situation. For if the erasure of the ethical plane continues long and consistently enough — and this is a possibility clearly indicated by Kant at the end of a short essay entitled “The End of All Things” — then “from a moral point of view the (perverse) *end of all things* would make its entrance.”² Kant calls this, without mincing his words, the advent of the Antichrist.

But let’s go back to the argument of the essay itself, which is an exploration of the way in which the idea of a *telos*, of an end of all things, has to be thought from the point of view of reason. The first thing to note is that the question can be approached only from the point of view of ethics, that is, from the point of view of a God conceived exclusively as a necessary function of reason. This means that ethics coincides with a “religion” that addresses each and every human being as a subject of reason and therefore as a being inherently capable of distinguishing good from evil. Kant identifies this universal religion with Christianity insofar as Christianity is the religion of love, where love is the manifestation of the respect for “the law, which, as an unchangeable order that lies in the nature of things, does not leave it up even to the Creator’s will to decide whether its consequences will be thus or otherwise.”³

The problem, however, is to determine how to think about a law inherent to the end of all things, for it is evident that such a law cannot coincide with the laws that are laid down by science. Scientific laws, predicated on the delimitation of a clear field of observation, are simply

descriptions of the apparent functioning of things. In order to address the idea of a law of things themselves, it is necessary to think in terms of ends, that is, in terms of time and eternity. The dimension of the ethical can be philosophically proven to exist as a necessary law only if the idea of eternity can be shown to be an idea inherent to reason itself. In that case, a type of act can be conceived whose end is not the relative or the arbitrary, but the absolutely valid and the eternally true. It is the question of eternity that Kant's "The End of All Things" addresses:

It is a common expression, especially when speaking piously, for a dying man to say that he is *passing from time into eternity*.

In fact, this expression would mean nothing if by "eternity" one were to understand the infinite passage of time; for then man would surely never emerge from time, but would always only pass from one moment of time to another. Thus, by this expression must be meant the *end of all time* in man's uninterrupted survival, though we nonetheless mean by this duration (of his existence considered as a quantity) a quantity (*duratio noumenon*) that is utterly incomparable to time, and we surely cannot have any (but a merely negative) concept of it. This thought contains something a bit horrifying, for it leads to an abyss, from which there is no possible return for whosoever falls into it...[Y]et it also contains something appealing, for one cannot cease from returning one's frightened eyes to it...It is frightfully-*sublime*, in part because of its obscurity, by which the imagination is made more powerfully active than by bright light. Finally, it must be interwoven into universal human reason in a wonderful way, for it is found in one guise or another among all reasoning peoples in all times. Now since we follow this passage out of time into eternity (whether this idea has objective reality or not), it may, from a theoretical point of view, be considered to extend cognitive knowledge in a moral context, just as when reason itself makes this passage, we come up against the *end of all things* as a [form of] temporal being and as an object of possible experience.⁴

Why is thinking about the end of time so vital that there is no place or culture that has not addressed the question? The reason is that the thought of an end both in the sense of termination and of final meaning is a law internal to thought itself. Insofar as it is predicated on the articulation of concepts according to the principle of non-contradiction, rational thinking both takes place in time and is constitutive of time. Time, therefore, represents the very limit of thought, and by thinking time, thought attempts to go beyond itself. This is the reason why, as Kant says, the thought of the end of time is "terrible and sublime at the same time," and it can be better approached by imagination than by reason itself. In fact, to pursue the thought of the end of time means to bring about the suicide of reason. If reason must be replaced in this task by imagination, then we must conceive of a different type of imagination, namely one that does not form images, for images are still representations of thoughts. Let's say then that the end of time can be grasped neither by reason, nor by imagination, but by intuition. But how can we grasp the value of such intuition? Is it a logical intuition of the negation of the concept of time, or is it the real thing, that is, the perception of the infinite in a glimpse? In any case, the notion of an end of all things is predicated on the possibility of this intuition, and ethics can only come into being

from the idea that things have an end. Kant writes: “in the moral order of purposes, this end [of time] is at the same time the beginning of the *supersensuous* survival of these same temporal beings, consequently the beginning of their existence as beings that do not stand under conditions of time, and thus their beginning as beings whose state is such as to allow nothing other than a moral evaluation [*Bestimmung*] of their nature.”⁵ Thus, the destination of things in themselves is the accomplishment of their nature according to their own inherent law — the ultimate law — and ethics is constituted as the pursuit of this order. The question is whether or not the mind can have a view of this order by way of the intuition of infinity.

Kant addresses this problem in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and concludes that the intuition of infinity is not the direct apprehension of the order of things in themselves, but rather the moment in which reason apprehends itself as reason. Let’s backtrack and see how he comes to this conclusion. The section entitled “On the Transcendental Ideal” opens:

Every *concept* is, as regards what is not contained in this concept itself, indeterminate and subject to the principle of *determinability*: viz., that of *every two* predicates contradictorily opposed to each other only one can belong to the concept. This principle rests on the principle of contradiction, and hence is a merely logical principle that abstracts from all content of cognition and has in view nothing but the cognition’s logical form.

But every *thing* is, with regard to its possibility, subject also to the principle of *thoroughgoing determination*, whereby of *all possible* predicates of *things*, insofar as these predicates are compared with their opposites, one must belong to the thing. This principle rests not merely on the principle of contradiction. For besides considering the relation of two predicates that conflict with each other, the principle considers every thing also in relation to *possibility in its entirety*.⁶

The formation of concepts is made possible by two principles of reason. The first is the principle of non-contradiction, according to which a concept cannot be defined by two predicates that contradict each other. The second is the principle of thoroughgoing determination that defines a thing in relation to all its possible predicates because in order to cognize a thing completely we must presuppose an indeterminate number of possible attributes whose existence we must verify. At the end of this thoroughgoing determination, we will be able to say that we know the thing. Thus, as Kant points out in a note to the same section, the determinability of a concept through the principle of non-contradiction is based on the universality (*universalitas*) of the principle of the excluded middle between two opposing predicates. But the very possibility of this determinability is in turn based on the presupposition of the sum of all possible predicates of a thing, that is, on the presupposition of the thing as a set made up of an indeterminate number of attributes (*universitas*).⁷ In other words, the idea of the whole as the locus of infinity has to be posited by reason *before* the determination of the predicates that qualify a thing. Kant calls the notion of the whole “the transcendental substratum in our reason” and says that this substratum provides

the idea of the *totality of reality* — *omnitudo realitatis*. He concludes that “a transcendental *ideal* is what underlies the thoroughgoing determination found necessarily with everything that exists, and this ideal is what amounts to the supreme and complete material condition of the possibility of everything that exists — the condition to which all thinking of objects as such as regards their content must be traced back.”⁸

What is important to point out here is that the transcendental ideal — the presupposition of the notion of the whole — is not itself an object of experience, but an object of reason, that is, it is the *a priori* condition for the perception of any actual object of experience. In this sense, it is not the thing in itself, but rather what Kant calls the *noumenon*, that which provides the rational ground for the perception of the thing as we know it (*phenomenon*). The transcendental ideal is therefore the groundless ground of reason because reason does not presuppose the existence of a being that conforms to this ideal. Thus, “the ideal is for reason the archetype (*prototypon*) of all things, the things which one and all — as deficient copies (*ectypa*) — take the material for their possibility from that archetype, and which while approximating it either more or less are nonetheless always infinitely far from attaining it.”⁹ With the formulation of the transcendental ideal, Kant brings the faculty of reason to its limit and to a paradox: through the idea of totality, reason indeed founds itself, but *only as reason, not as reality*, because totality, being the infinite set of all possible attributes, cannot be an object of direct cognition without immediately nullifying the principle of the excluded middle. The notion of totality, therefore, is not a concept, but simply a regulative idea of reason. The paradox of this formulation lies in the fact that we are thereby led to think the unthinkable as unthinkable and to conclude that the ineffable is the very essence and source of reason. As a result — and to return to the original question — the intuition of infinity, according to Kant, is not the intuition of something infinitely real, that is, of God as being, or the thing in itself, but is the intuition of the *noumenon*, that is, of the infinite productivity of reason.

But how does this sit with the idea of an end of all things, which is based, Kant says, on the law inherent in things themselves? Can ethics, unlike knowledge, be based on the intuition of the thing itself? Kant excludes the possibility of accessing the realm of ends once more in the moment in which he lays down the foundations of practical reason. In the *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, he writes, “if the critique of a pure practical reason is to be complete, it must be possible at the same time to show its identity with the speculative reason in a common principle, for it can ultimately be only one and the same reason which has to be distinguished merely in its application.”¹⁰ How is this identity demonstrated? The coincidence between pure practical and speculative reason lies in the fact that man, insofar as he is a rational being, has the faculty to act according to the conception of laws, that is, the faculty to discern the functioning of the law and, as a consequence, the will to act correspondingly. In other words, for Kant, to

perceive the law means to *want* to listen to its command and implies feeling the imperative to obey it. He asks, “whence have we the conception of God as the supreme good? Simply from the *idea* of moral perfection, which reason frames *a priori*, and connects inseparably with the notion of a free-will.”¹¹ Thus, the will is free insofar as it *freely* realizes the law without objecting to it. It is evident, however, that if the law needs to *speak* (in the form of an imperative), it is because something on the other end *does not want to listen*. Moral perfection seems to be, then, something that may never take place in reality. But this does not undermine its necessity and validity from the point of view of reason because what can be conceived can and must be performed, at least in infinity. What is important to stress is that the Kantian God, from the point of view of practical reason, where it identifies with the good, does not coincide with the supreme being, but with *the thinking of it*. If the divine or holy will is the will that does not obey the categorical imperative, because *it is* the categorical imperative, still the law that the divine will articulates is a law of reason, not a law of being. Further, the moral act of identifying the good with God — that is, with the totality of the universe as substance — would be, as Kant says in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, a “transcendental subreption” because it would be mistaking the concept of a thing for the thing in itself.

But what exactly is the thing in itself? We could say that it is a terminus, a concept that indicates both itself and its beyond. On the one hand, it is simply the unity that thought must presuppose behind each concept of reason, and in this sense it is the cause of all the predicates that we attribute to the things in the world. On the other hand, it points to the material origin of all possible predicates that is completely inaccessible to reason, and therefore nothing can be said about it. The thing in itself as the origin of all possible predicates is to be thought of as God. And Kant concludes, “the supreme being remains for the merely speculative use of reason a mere *ideal* — but yet a *faultless* ideal, a concept that concludes and crowns the whole of human cognition. Although the concept’s objective reality cannot be proved by this speculative path, it also cannot be refuted by it.”¹² Just as the *phenomenon* is constituted by the *noumenon* and the thing in itself, so the idea of God appears twice, first as an ideal of reason and secondly as the ideal’s objective reality that we can neither prove nor disprove.

To recapitulate, in the Kantian system we find three orders: the *phenomenon*, what we experience sensually; the *noumenon*, that which *allows* us to think what we experience; and the thing in itself, about which absolutely nothing can be said because we always apprehend it in a mediated form, either *by experience as phenomenon*, or *intellectually as noumenon*. What Kant discounts is the idea that something of the thing in itself must enter the *phenomenon* if the order of experience is to exist at all. Kant affords a primary role to experience because he recognizes that a concept has no value unless it either derives from experience or is applicable to it. This means that at the origin of reason there is sensibility, and nothing that is not first in sensibility

can be articulated by reason. Nevertheless, for Kant experience exists as such only because of the mediation of the categories of the understanding: “the understanding can a priori never accomplish more than to anticipate the form of a possible experience as such; and since what is not appearance cannot be an object of experience, the understanding can never overstep the limits of sensibility within which alone objects are given to us.”¹³

Walter Benjamin has observed that this notion of experience is not unique to Kant, but belongs to the philosophical tradition preceding him. We can reformulate it like this: according to tradition, experience and knowledge coincide. There can be experience only if an object is isolated and turned into a concept. Since reason is the function of thinking that is in charge of the production of concepts, there is no experience without reason. Benjamin points out in relation to Kant, however, that experience (*Erfahrung*) is not the same as knowledge (*Erkenntnis*).¹⁴ What type of experience brings no knowledge of an object? Can we still call it experience? And who is experiencing what? If we continue to follow Kant’s analysis, we come to a crucial moment in the construction of experience. The understanding organizes sensibility around the transcendental ideal, that is, around the projection of totality, which allows the perception of things as units. Since what defines a unit is the fact that it can be repeated infinitely, Kant concludes that sensibility is intrinsically temporal and that the perception of things takes place *in the temporal mode of the present, which is the never-ending repetition of the instant of totality as the matrix that attracts all the predicates belonging to a thing*:

No one can explicate the concept of magnitude as such, except perhaps by saying that it is that determination of a thing whereby we can think how many times a unit is posited in it. Yet this how-many-times is based on successive repetition, and hence on time and the synthesis (of the homogeneous) in time. Reality contrasted with negation can be explicated only if one thinks of a time (as the sum of all being) that is either filled with something or empty. If from the concept of substance I omit permanence (which is an existence at all time), then *I have nothing left for this concept but the logical presentation of subject*, a presentation that I mean to realize by presenting something *that can occur only as subject (i.e., only without being a predicate of anything)*. However, not only do I not know any conditions at all under which some thing will possess this logical superiority; but we also cannot make from it anything further, and cannot draw from it the least inference. For through this explication no object whatever is determined for the use of the concept of substance, and hence *we do not know at all whether the concept in fact signifies anything whatsoever*.¹⁵

How are we to think the instant in and through which the idea of unity can be realized? Kant observes that it cannot be thought of as substance, but as a concept it signifies nothing whatsoever. We can conceive of it only as a discontinuity between sensibility and understanding, something that, Kant says, can occur only as subject because it has no attributes, and yet is the condition for all the attributes to appear. Kant calls the moment of the synthesis of the homogeneous in time “subject” because in itself it has no attributes and therefore no signification. Since it has no

attributes, it also cannot be thought of as substance, so Kant admits that he can make no more of it. But we can.

The subject as the temporal pulsation of the form of totality is what allows for the constitution of both the *noumenon* and the *phenomenon*. It is the moment of pure experience that allows the taking place of experience as knowledge of an object. In this sense, it is the moment in which *something of the thing in itself is communicated to the understanding as something that is not of the same order*. The subject is *not simply a logical moment*, as Kant seems to think, but is the moment of *pure experience without an object that cannot be itself an object of experience because it is pure pathos*. Thus, at the origin of knowledge as a product of the understanding there is a moment in which the thing in itself appears as subject, and its mode of being is not *logos* (reason as language), but *pathos*. I use the term pathos to indicate that modality of experience which, because it is not organized around an object (that is, through language), remains *unconscious* and must be understood as *pure affect* without any connotations. Moreover, the subject defined in this way coincides with time as infinity because it precedes the differentiation of past, present, and future, which is an effect of thinking. *Time is the subject*. The subject as pathos is the infinite repetition of the now, a repetition which, being prior to signification, cannot be thought as repetition either of the same or of the different, but as the recurrence of the *absolutely singular*. Absolute singularity is the pre-reflective point at which internal and external, language and experience, ego and object, past and future coincide and disappear.

The subject as pathos is thus not the same as the transcendental subject, which is simply a regulative ideal of reason, nor is it an object of reason posited by reason itself, like the Cartesian cogito. The subject as temporality does not configure itself in opposition to an object, which is not to say that the moment of the relation between subject and object does not exist. The subject in relation to an object is not the *real* subject as temporality; rather, it is an ego that is constituted by the object that it happens to address. We must therefore distinguish between the subject, which is beyond signification, and the ego, which results from the type of relation entered into with an object, and can be made an object of thought and of consciousness. It is the ego that Descartes discovered as the subject of the cogito. Kant clarifies the essence of the cogito: "I am conscious of my existence as determined in time. All time determination presupposes something *permanent* in perception. But this permanent something cannot be something within me, precisely because my existence can be determined in time only by this permanent something. Therefore perception of this permanent something is possible only through a *thing* outside me...Hence determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things that I perceive outside me."¹⁶ As a result, we can say that the ego catches itself thinking and makes itself into an object, that is, into a *res cogitans*. Moreover, because the ego as object of the cogito is formed by its relation to an object of experience, its identity is essentially unstable as it depends on the

object itself. Consequently, the operation of self-reflection with the correlative production of a *res cogitans*, although necessary, can never be fulfilled in its entirety precisely because the cogito will never be able to coincide with the unstoppable flight of ego experiences.

Let us now return to the question of the end. For Kant, the end of all things is forever external to reason, but reason can approximate it through the assumption of the notion of the totality of reality, that is, through the transcendental ideal. This means that reason is constitutively unable to enter the kingdom of ends, even though it functions as a guide in that it indicates the direction an act must take in order to be ethical. However, an absolutely ethical act is not only improbable, but also structurally impossible under the regime of practical reason, precisely because reason has no access to the law of things themselves. As a result, the law speaks to man, who hears it as a nagging imperative because his will is forever divided against itself and incapable of performing a purely ethical act untainted by considerations of personal gain. What divides the will? The will is divided by the multiplicity of egos that populate the mind. This multiplicity is not accidental, but is the necessary effect of reason as the faculty of knowledge. The nature of reason is to divide and to discriminate between objects and between ego and object, but this critical activity is always positional, that is, it is carried out within a situation and from the point of view of the ego. The critical activity of reason, therefore, can never be “pure” because it can *never* be abstracted from the situation in which it takes place. On the other hand, a description of the functioning of reason at the transcendental level, like the one carried out by Kant in the *Critique*, is possible, but only by artificially separating it from its necessary errancy, which Kant calls the *pathological*. Kant concludes not only that it is impossible to determine whether an act is truly ethical judging by its appearance alone, but also that every ethical act is in fact tainted to a degree by the pathological. Thus, the ethical dimension is not a reality or even a possibility, but simply a *regulative projection of reason*. And this is why the messiah will never come, and we will never reach the kingdom of ends. However, we can turn the tables on Kant and say that since there are acts that appear to be the result of a good will, then their authentically ethical character cannot be excluded either. *Perhaps the messiah has always already come, but we have not been looking.*

It is obvious, then, that if we want to maintain the possibility of a truly ethical act, the ethical dimension cannot be founded on the faculty of reason, because to do so would be to miss the essence of ethics. We may want to ask what it is that gives the moral law the forcefulness that characterizes it. Conscience can only derive its authority from the sense of truthfulness that it inspires. But what is the origin of the feeling of truthfulness? The answer put forward by Freud is that the insistence of the moral law is due to the sense of guilt created by the internal splitting of the ego into the superego. Thus, the authority of the law rests on a negative feeling, the feeling of guilt and shame in the event of the failed accomplishment of one’s duty.

What is the essence of feeling? It is perhaps necessary to return to Kant's notion of sensibility and experience. Experience is always experience of an object that is informed by sensibility, that is, by the senses, and organized and unified by reason. Just as there is no reading without a reader, there cannot be sensibility without the coordinative function of reason. It follows that there is no such thing as pure sensibility and that experience is structured from the very beginning by the categories of understanding and can take place only within those categories. The sense of certainty attached to the perception of an object in the world is the result of the harmony between sensibility and understanding. What, then, are feelings? Feelings are sensations of a more complex order because they refer not to the perception of things, but to *the perception of the relation of the ego to such perceptions*. Feelings indicate the reaction of the ego to the perception of an object, or in other words, *through feelings the ego perceives itself perceiving the object*. In this case, feelings are a function of reason as well, but in the sense of its *perversion*, because in the Kantian system neither the knowledge of the world, nor the knowledge of the supreme good require the assistance of feelings. Yet feelings are the necessary complement of the ego, just as the ego is the necessary complement of the object. But the dream of a pure reason is based on the fallacy of a knowledge achieved *without the ego*. This is why if we look into Kant's conception of ethics, we see that all the affections of the ego — feelings of pleasure or pain, happiness or sadness — are considered to be a resistance to the application of the moral law. Feelings are the *symptom* of an unwillingness to sacrifice the whole of oneself to the supreme good. They indicate the inclination to follow not the categorical, but the hypothetical imperative, the desire to pursue the relatively good — that which is good for a certain purpose — rather than the absolutely good, which results not only from obedience to the law, but from love of the law itself. *For Kant, love is always love for the moral law and as such it carries no specific feeling with it because it represents a complete identification with pure reason*. But we have already seen that the idea of a pure reason can be produced only through the foreclosure of the pathological. If we reintroduce the pathological into the system, the only evidence of the existence of the moral law is negative feelings, principally in the form of inadequacy and guilt, and with that the Freudian hypothesis of conscience as the voice of the superego is demonstrated. It is clear that Freud is a complement to Kant in that there is no "pure conscience," just as there is no "pure reason." Thus, we should mistrust our conscience just as much as we mistrust our pathological inclinations.

But is it accurate to say that the love of the law should carry no emotion with it? Perhaps it will be useful to analyze the meaning of emotion a bit further. We have seen that feelings are the result of a relative interpretation of the law aimed at the preservation of the ego. In this sense, feelings are always organized around an object. However, we have encountered a type of feeling that does not derive from a relation to an object. Let's return to what we said about the subject as

that which in itself has no attributes, while being the condition for the constitution of the relation between the ego and the object. We said that the lack of predicates makes the subject *unthinkable as an object* and that Kant sees it not as a real entity but simply as a logical device necessary for the production of the transcendental ideal. We also said that the subject coincides with temporality as the infinite repetition of the present as opposed to the logical progression from the past to the future. If experience is always experience of an object, then it can take place only within the frame of time as progression, and as a consequence, the existence of the subject as temporality can never be an object of experience. That which *experiences* something, then, is *always the ego, never the subject*. But this does not authorize us to conclude, with Kant, that the subject is simply a construction of reason necessary for the production of the transcendental ideal. We must instead draw a distinction between the *mind* as the center of the faculty of reason, that which, after the dimension of the pathological has been added, psychoanalysis calls the “psyche,” and the *subject* as the continuous affection of the present and of presence without which the mind — or its reverse side, the psyche — could not even begin to unfold. *The subject cannot be an object of experience because it constantly affects us as the present of our presence*. It is an affection, that is, an emotion without object that moves our will. There is no mind or psyche without a subject, and there are no feelings without pathos, without the primary affection that makes every subsequent state of mind possible, while remaining qualitatively different from them. Thus, at the very foundation of the faculty of reason we do not find the idea of totality as the transcendental substratum of reason itself, but we experience the subject as pathos, that is, as the infinite affection of presence. The limit of reason is not an anamorphosis of reason in the form of the transcendental ideal as archetype of all possible concepts. *The limit of reason is pathos and pathos is the subject of the ego and of the mind — that is, it is the subject of the faculty of reason itself.*

Let’s return to the question of the essence of the moral act. Kant contends that practical reason is anchored in the intuition of the absolute good as an ideal of reason, but the absolute good can never be reached by reason because reason is a faculty of the mind and, in the final analysis, a faculty of the ego. As such, it is multiple and inescapably compromised by the pathological. In fact, we can say that *reason is constitutively perverse — reason is always impure*. On what can a truly ethical act be based then? It can be founded only on pathos, which we must carefully distinguish from the pathological, which belongs to the domain of feelings. The pathological is an effect of reason and is precisely that which covers up and prevents the recognition of the originary affection of the subject as the immediate, non-reflective *passion* of being in the duration of the now. The pathological disguises pathos as a plain ego feeling; it erases the instant in the past or the future and it enslaves the ego to its object and the object to the ego. In such conditions, a truly moral act is inconceivable. An ethical act will have to be accomplished not in relation to the idea of the absolute good, but in relation to the subject as a state of affection that

allows the mind to perceive a sense of co-existence with all that is. This can happen only if the discriminating power of reason is circumvented. Without the presence of the subject as primary affectivity, any command of reason would have no compelling force and would be issued in vain. Reason is the *instrument* of the ethical impulse, not its origin.

It is the subject as pathos and as the presence of the present that provides the certainty of the existence of objects. In other words, the idea of an *omnitudo realitatis* could not invade our reason and our imagination unless it were anchored in an emotional, pre-pathological, pre-cognitive experience of continuity with all that is. Thus, if from the point of view of reason the idea of the whole is a heuristic device, from the point of view of the subject, it is immediately real, not in the form of the perception of an object, but as the affective undercurrent that underlies it and is obscured by it. While from the point of view of reason, love is the immediate and complete obedience to the law, from the point of view of the subject, love precedes and is therefore higher than the law, hence, the Christian teaching of God as love. However, the God that is love is not the same as the God of the Ten Commandments. The God of the Ten Commandments is the Kantian God, the God of reason and of duty, a God that is at once internal and external to reason without ever becoming real. But in the moment in which we become aware of the subject as the affection of the present, we also become aware that the divine is fundamentally pathos, not logos. Therefore, God is not, as Kant says, a concept that concludes and crowns the whole creation, but rather the fundamental affection, primordial and ever-present, a sound that accompanies every moment of life, at least for those who know how to listen.

How can we become aware of it? Nietzsche, for example, was able to see the difference between pathos and the pathological and made it the object of a fragment entitled “On Music and Words.” Here he observes that human language is constituted by two heterogeneous elements: words and their “tonal subsoil.” Words are symbols of concepts, but the tonal subsoil of language is the manifestation of sensations of pleasure or pain that accompany all other conceptions as their fundamental basis and are expressions of “*one* primal cause unfathomable to us.”¹⁷ The original sin of language is that the tonal subsoil is always captured and enslaved by the signification of words, so what seems to be an improvement in communication is in fact an impoverishment and an obfuscation of that which is communicated. Hence, the meaning and necessity of music, and secondarily, of poetry. Nietzsche writes:

[T]he Will is the object of music but not the origin of it, that is the Will in its very greatest universality, as the most original manifestation, under which is to be understood all Becoming. That, which we call *feeling*, is with regard to this Will already permeated and saturated with conscious and unconscious conceptions and is therefore no longer directly the object of music; it is unthinkable then that these feelings should be able to create music out of themselves. Take for instance the feelings of love, fear and hope: music can no longer do anything with them in a direct way, every one of them is already so filled with conceptions. On the contrary these feelings can serve to symbolise music, as the lyric poet

does who translates for himself into the simile-world of feelings that conceptually and metaphorically unapproachable realm of the Will, the proper content and object of music. The lyric poet resembles all those hearers of music who are conscious of an *effect of music on their emotions*; the distant and removed power of music appeals, with them, to an *intermediate realm* which gives to them as it were a foretaste, a symbolic preliminary conception of music proper, it appeals to the intermediate realm of the emotions.¹⁸

It is not enough to be able to hear music; one must hear the music of music, and only then does one enter the realm of the Will. Most of us, however, approach it lyrically, through words, as a kind of initiatory practice, which allows the foretaste of the originary affection. It is important to point out that the will Nietzsche describes here is similar, though not exactly the same as, the notion of the subject as pathos I have tried to articulate. For Nietzsche, will has the character of activeness that is incompatible with the subject as pathos. Nietzsche's concept of the will remains captive to the opposition he set forth in *The Birth of Tragedy* between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. If the Apollonian is the dimension of language and reason, the Dionysian is conceived as its complementary opposite in the form of an anti-rationality, or irrationality, that manifests itself in ecstatic explosions of violence and frenzy. Influenced by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche fails to see that wherever there is activeness there is also purpose, signification, and reason — there cannot be a blind will, a pure will independent from reason. Reason is the essence of the will, especially when it is a Dionysian will.

In order to think the subject as pathos, we will have to come to a clearer understanding of what passivity is. The dichotomy between the Apollonian and the Dionysian is based on the *exclusion of passivity*. Each one of the two forces — in Nietzsche's conception, reason and passion — is active with respect to the other. Only when one is subjugated by the other does it become passive, and it so happens that reason always ends up ruling over its opposite, passion. The state of passivity for Nietzsche, then, is simply the forceful suppression of the natural activeness of a force. But the subject as pathos is not a force, it is not a will, it is not a drive; it is passion in the etymological sense of affection and suffering. Passivity is the mode of being of pathos as the "enabling factor" that Heidegger calls *das Vermögen*. It is a suffering without mediation and therefore without agent or object: Pathos is Being. The only way we can think the meaning of passivity is as the affection of presence that logically precedes any dualism, including that of the Dionysian and Apollonian, and not as the opposite of activity or as the resistance of the irrational to reason. A truly ethical act, then, can neither be performed on the basis of the unleashing of the Dionysian, nor founded exclusively on the judicious articulation of the transcendental ideal of the good. Practical reason can unfold only through the disclosure of the subject as pathos in its separation from the merely pathological. Paradoxically, that which is the most active — the ethical act — becomes possible and thinkable only on the ground of the instant of absolute passivity: the instant of the revelation of the subject.

1. Franz von Baader, *Sämtliche Werke* (Aalen: Scientia, 1963), 1:344. "Ich behaupte, daß, so wie man sich nicht frei bewegen kann ohne Grund zu fassen, und wie man nicht Grund fassen kann ohne freies Bewegen, man auch seine Vernunft nicht gebrauchen kann ohne frei zu glauben, und nicht glauben kann, ohne von seiner Vernunft Gebrauch zu machen" (my translation).
2. Immanuel Kant, "The End of All Things," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 103.
3. *Ibid.*, 102.
4. *Ibid.*, 93.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Hackett: Indianapolis, 1996), 563-564.
7. See *ibid.*, 564, note 27.
8. *Ibid.*, 566-567.
9. *Ibid.*, 568.
10. Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. T. K. Abbott (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1988), 14.
11. *Ibid.*, 36.
12. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 616.
13. *Ibid.*, 311.
14. Walter Benjamin, "On Perception," in *Selected Writings: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1:96.
15. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 308; emphasis added.
16. *Ibid.*, 290.
17. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Music and Words," in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 2:31.
18. *Ibid.*, 35.

