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CHAPTER 10

The Metaphysics of Powers in Kant and Hegel

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10.1. Introduction: Revisiting the Metaphysics of Modern (German) Idealism

Idealism in general is often thought to have a special problem with impotence, as manifest in the common criticism that mere ideas (intentions, dreams) are not sufficient to get anything real or substantive done—in short, they have no power on their own. This is because idealism itself is often (implicitly or explicitly) associated with the naïve metaphysical view that, at bottom, *only ideas* or mental phenomena ("appearances") really exist, where these are understood as something akin to the passing states of mind we are familiar with in our daily experience.

Many have found this sort of view to be a non-starter, with only a tenuous claim on being a coherent position, let alone a plausible one.

For one thing, it has seemed obvious to many (think: G. E. Moore) that things like hands and tables and chairs really exist, and yet idealism would seem to remove everything that we seem to experience as *substantial* or permanent from the world—yes, hands, tables, and chairs, but also mountains, and even persons, including our own selves, and the minds for which there are such ideas—leaving only flimsy ephemeral phantoms in their place. The self-application to oneself has been thought to be especially problematic in relation to questions about what kind of being it is that "has" or "contains" the ideas present in our experience, if somehow this idea-haver or -container, too, is supposed to be just another idea. Besides substantiality, there are also serious worries about *causality* in relation to ideas, both in relation to their origin (cause of their existence), but also in relation to causes of the changes that seem obviously to pertain to sequences of ideas that we ourselves undergo in our experience, when, e.g., the rock that we kick causes our feeling of its resistance (think: Samuel Johnson). Mere ideas do not seem to have sufficient *power* even to create further ideas in us, or bring about the changes within them, let alone power to be responsible for all else that happens in the universe.

This naïve sort of idealism, and its attendant problematic aspects, has often been associated especially with George Berkeley, insofar as his major works, including his 1710 *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*,[1] famously present a battery of arguments against the existence of merely corporeal matter, despite what our ideas (appearances) might seem to suggest. On closer look, however, it is hard to see how even Berkeley should be thought to hold anything as "naïve" as the above sort of position. Most importantly, Berkeley's own writings are saturated with the affirmation of the existence of further things *besides ideas*—most notably, an "active being" or "substance" which Berkeley calls "mind, soul, spirit," over and above the ideas that

1 George Berkeley, *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Dublin: Rhames, 1710) (hereafter P).

might be had by such a being (compare, e.g., P §2). Not only is spirit identified as something distinct from ideas, as that which "has" them; spirit is also said to be active in relation to ideas themselves, both in the action of "perceiving ideas" with its "understanding," but also in the action of "producing or otherwise operating" with ideas via its "will" (P §27), including being "the cause of ideas" (cf. P §26). What is more, Berkeley also affirms the existence of one "eternal spirit" whose understanding has all possible ideas (P §6), and whose will is actually what "constitutes the laws of nature" (P §32). In short, though he famously criticizes the view that what we call "body" refers to some further kind of non-spiritual, merely "material" substance, which might also be said to possess active causal powers, Berkeley gives no indication whatsoever that this reduces *all* substances and causes to just more ideas. "Mind, soul, spirit" is a causally active substance in its own right, metaphysically distinct from any and all ideas, not at all to be thought of as just another idea or a collection of ideas (Humean "bundle").[2]

In this respect, Berkeley's idealism might thus in fact be better characterized as a form of spiritualism, one more closely akin to that of Leibniz's, in his 1714 *Monadology*.[3] Here Leibniz presents an ontology according to which the only substances which exist are those with at least powers of representation ("perception" (§14)) and also powers to bring about changes in representation (what Leibniz calls "appetition" (§15)). Hence, though everything that exists has an element of psychicality, as in Berkeley, these substances and their powers exist as something over and above whatever perceptions and appetitions they might contain or effect.[4]

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2 Compare Lisa Downing, "George Berkeley," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2011 Edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/berkeley.

3 Citations are to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *G. W. Leibniz's* Monadology: *An Edition for Students,* ed. N. Rescher (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991).

4 Compare McDonough's chapter in this volume.

The distinction between a metaphysics of mere (and seemingly impotent) ideas and a more sophisticated idealism incorporating at least spiritual powers (as in Berkeley and Leibniz) is worth keeping in mind as we try, in this chapter, to chart out the history of the metaphysics of powers, beyond Leibniz into what has come to be known as classical German idealism—i.e., the period running roughly from Kant's "transcendental" idealism up through Hegel's "absolute" idealism. Like Berkeley, Kant's views, especially, are often assimilated to either a naïve dogmatic idealism, according to which only "appearances" exist, or at least to a skeptical idealism, according to which only appearances can be *known* to exist.[5] Nevertheless, as we will see below, like Leibniz himself, and like Leibniz-Wolffians—such as Alexander Baumgarten, the author of the textbook Kant used in his metaphysics lectures (cf. Section 10.2)—there is a clear respect in which Kant, too, upholds a straightforwardly realist metaphysics of powers and substances as well, as things that exist over and above ideas, appearances, representations, etc. For Kant builds his own "Critical" philosophy, and the entirety of his 1781 masterwork, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, around a set of presuppositions about the human mind and the "powers [*Kräfte*]" that it possesses, with the mind itself belonging to the human "soul [*Seele*]," which Kant too characterizes as a "substance" (cf. Section 10.3). What is more, Kant, too, takes the soul, the mind, and mental powers to be metaphysically distinct from the various kinds of representations that these powers are associated with, insofar as representations are thought to be "products" or "effects" of these powers, and "properties" or "states" possessed by the soul as substance. In fact, Kant goes beyond

5 Compare Hans Vaihinger, *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1892); Colin Turbayne, "Kant's Refutation of Dogmatic Idealism," *Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1955): 225–44; Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Analytic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Margaret Wilson, "Kant and the 'Dogmatic Idealism of Berkeley,'" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 9 (1971): 459–75; Henry Allison, "Kant's Critique of Berkeley," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 (1973): 43–63; Efraín Lazos, *Disonancias de la Crítica: Variaciones sobre cuatro temas kantianos* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2014). For Kant's own more nuanced characterization of Berkeley's idealism as affirming specifically that "only thinking beings exist," compare 4:288.

the preceding "material" idealism by ascribing "physical" powers (and substantiality) to bodies as well as spirits. Finally, Kant also ultimately joins Berkeley and Leibniz in affirming the existence of the divine spirit that is in possession of cognitive, volitional, and productive powers (omniscience, omnibenevolence, omnipotence)—and hence something likewise absolutely distinct from any mere idea or representation that might be had "in" any mind (including God's own).

In addition to helping clarify Kant's views on power, shifting the discussion clearly away from naïve idealism also promises to open up an often neglected line of continuity running between not just these earlier idealist views and Kant's but also to those of Kant's most well-known idealist successor, Hegel (cf. Section 10.4). As we will also see below, Hegel, too, maintains a broadly traditional understanding of the analytical content of the concept of power in its most general ("ontological") sense, one which is quite close to that specified in the *metaphysica generalis* contained in the so-called "textbooks" on metaphysics (like Baumgarten's) from the period. Hegel is also committed to a recognizably classical conception of the specific kinds of powers that pertain to three specific kinds of being—bodies (corporeal substance), souls, and the divine being—that are recognized by the tradition as the proper domains of the main branches of *metaphysica specialis* (cosmology, psychology, theology). Finally, despite his own commitments to a version of idealism, Hegel, too, accepts the reality of powers, over and against any mere representations or psychical phenomena—and accepts powers not just as aspects of nature and human spirit, but as a genuine feature of "absolute" spirit as well—indeed, of everything "actual."

What will emerge, by the end, is thus a revised conception of the metaphysics of powers within modern German idealism, according to which these idealisms are all committed to the existence of powers over and above any representations (ideas) of them. Even so, along the way we will also be concerned to point to a key respect in which these philosophers might still be thought not only to accord *some* power to

ideas themselves, but to affirm the overarching effectiveness of a very specific idea in relation to guiding the most absolute power there is—namely, omniscience qua idea contained in the divine understanding, which guides divine omnipotence itself, which would seem to imply, in Hegel's terms, that everything actual is the realization of this "absolute idea."

10.2. Powers in the Pre-Kantian Context: Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*

According to the "textbook" Leibnizian account of the metaphysics of powers, as given in Alexander Baumgarten's *Metaphysica*[6] —a text that Kant himself used as the basis for his own lectures on metaphysics—metaphysics itself is "the science of the primary principles of human cognition" (M §1). The most basic part ("the basic science") of metaphysics itself is *ontology*, which is "science of the most general predicates of entities" (M §4). These are predicates which apply to entities regardless of their type. As we learn from the handbook for Baumgarten's logic lectures,[7] Baumgarten takes the basic types of entities to divide as follows: there is necessary being, or the divine, as opposed to contingent being, or the world and all that is in it; and then within this world, there is corporeal being, as opposed to spiritual being, with the latter including human being (AL §37). The predicates investigated in ontology, then, will apply universally to all of these kinds of being.

Insofar as the initial discussion of "power [*vis*; *Kraft*]" takes place within ontology (*metaphysica universalis*), it is therefore not meant to be limited to any particular kind of being. Baumgarten begins his ontology discussing individual predicates that are universally applicable to all entities (e.g., <possible>, <entity>, <one>, <true>), before turning to pairs of predicates which are universally applicable

6 Alexander Baumgarten, *Metaphysica,* 7th ed. (Halle: Hemmerde, 1779) (hereafter M).

7 Alexander Baumgarten, *Acroasis logica,* 2nd ed. (Halle: Hemmerde, 1773) (hereafter AL).

"disjunctively" (e.g., <necessary> vs. <contingent>, <singular> vs. <universal>, <whole> vs. <part>). The predicate of power is introduced among this second group, on the heels of the disjunctive distinction between <substance> and <accident>. Baumgarten understands this distinction as follows: "An entity is either not able to exist except as a determination of another (in another), or it is so able. The former is an *accident* . . . the latter is a *substance* (an entity subsisting per se . . .)" (M §191). Whenever accidents inhere in a substance, Baumgarten takes there to be "a reason [*ratio*] for the inherence," and it is this "reason" which is said to be "*power* in the broad sense" (M §197); it is also aligned with the traditional terms "*efficacia*, *energeia*, *activitas*." In the more "strict or narrow sense," however, "power" is said to be a "reason" which is "sufficient" for the inherence of an accident (M §197). In the latter, narrow sense, Baumgarten thinks that substance is always the reason, and hence always the power itself (M §198).

The concept of power is then used to articulate a whole host of further concepts, including that of "state," "change" of state, "action," and "faculty" (M §205 et seq.). When the power belongs to that substance whose accidents (states) are changing, then the relevant substance is said to "act"; when the power is in another substance, then the substance is said to "suffer or undergo" the change; the changes of state themselves are called "*action* [*actio*; *actus*; *operatio*; *Handlung*]" and "*passion*," according to whether the change occurs in a substance "by its own power" or "by an alien power" (M §210). The power to bring about changes not just in one's own substance ("immanently") but in another substance ("transiently") is associated with having an "influence [*influx*; *Einfluss*]" over that other substance (M §211).

According to Baumgarten, "all existing substances act," from which he infers that all existing substances "have the possibility of acting, or a *faculty* [*facultas*; *Vermögen*] (active potential or power)"; likewise, those substances which actually undergo or suffer therefore "have the possibility of undergoing [*patiendi*], i.e., a passive potential or capacity [*capacitas*]," which Baumgarten calls "*receptivity* [*receptivitas*;

Fähigkeit, Empfänglichkeit]" (M §216). This further distinction also leads Baumgarten to acknowledge the possibility of faculties and capacities which do not ever actually result in actions or passions, and then to distinguish these from those which do actually result in action and passion. Cases of the latter involve "*power in the stricter sense*," as that which is the (successful) "complement" to a faculty "to action," "i.e., that which is added to the faculty so that the action exists" (M §220). When a substance has a principle internal to itself that is sufficient for action in this sense, the action itself is said to be "spontaneous" (M §704). A substance's being "sufficient for actualizing something" beyond itself, as a result of its action, entails not just that the substance has "power" but that it has "potency [*potentia*; *Gewalt*]" (M §832).

As one would expect, given its standing as an ontological predicate, power (along with the predicates it is used to define) is then seen to apply throughout the rest of the *Metaphysica* to every specific kind of being—i.e., to both divine and worldly entities, and then to both corporeal and spiritual beings in this world, including to the souls of human beings. In the case of beings in the world, its "nature" is said to consist in a complex of inner determinations which serve as the "principles" for its accidents and its changes, with these including "faculties, receptivities, and powers" (M §430). The nature of a body has powers, e.g., for "movement" and "inertia" (M §431). So too do psychical beings, with Baumgarten following Leibniz in taking the most elementary sort to be "monads," which have a "power for representation" (M §400). Our own human soul is one such substance, something Baumgarten takes to be demonstrable as follows: "I think, my soul is changed; therefore thoughts are accidents of my soul, therefore my soul is power [*anima mea est vis*]" (M §505), and because "thoughts are representations," "my soul is therefore a power of representing" (M §506). Our own soul, however, has powers for more than merely representing, since we do not just represent (have "perceptions"), but have both "conscious perceptions" which represent the world with "clarity" (M §401), and also "distinct" perceptions, which indicates that our

soul has a "faculty for distinctly cognizing [*cognoscendi*], i.e., an understanding [*intellectus*]"—such that our own substance is called "spirit [*spiritus*; *Geist*]" rather than mere soul (M §402). In addition to having the power of representation, each monad also "strives to produce perceptions," which shows that it has a "power of soul" which "determines towards producing certain perceptions," an act that Baumgarten calls "desire [*appetitio*; *Begierde*]," which in turn implies the possession of "a faculty of desiring" (M §663). When combined with reason, this faculty is called "the will [*voluntas*; *Willen*]," and the result of the power is called "volition" (M §690). When the powers of the soul are sufficient to bring about changes not just in itself but in "physical" reality, the relevant change is said to be "in my potency" (M §708).

Finally, because the "most perfect" being, God, not only exists, and is a substance, but has in itself the "sufficient reason" for all of its perfections, "power in the strict sense" also pertains to God (M §830); in fact, God "has maximum power" (M 831). More specifically, God does not only have "sufficient power for actualizing *something*," e.g., its own accidents or perfections, but has "sufficient power for actualizing *everything*," which implies that in addition to power, spontaneity, and "potency," God has "*omni*potence [*omnipotentia*; *Allgewaltigkeit*]" (M §832; my italics). Yet this absolute power is not blindly productive, but is instead productive in accordance with the divine perfection of intellect as well, according to its possession of "the science of all things," i.e., "omniscience" (M §889).

10.3. Powers in Kant's Idealism

Despite his various differences with the Leibnizians concerning the power of human reason and the nature of our sensory representations, Kant nevertheless continues to accept that beyond representations, there genuinely are powers—and with them, faculties, etc.—not least in the soul (viz. reason itself), but also in corporeal nature, and ultimately in the divine being as well. The language of "power or force

[*Kraft*]" is used, for example, throughout Kant's central discussions of corporeal nature, perhaps most obviously in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. Indeed, it is taken for granted that physical "causes" in nature in general are to be ascribed to "powers" (4:487).[8] The whole second chapter on "dynamics" is set forth as the doctrine of the "powers" possessed by matter (corporeal substance), such as "impenetrability," or the power to resist or "repulse" motion, and the power to "attract" or "draw" motion (4:496, 498), the pair of which are described as the two "fundamental powers" possessed by matter (4:508–9). And the same terminology can be found in the discussions of corporeal nature elsewhere in the Critical writings (cf. B67, B798, 4:321).

Concerning the soul, Kant's commitment to powers is perhaps even more evident: the whole first *Critique* itself, for example, is framed in the A-edition preface as the "critique of the faculty of reason in general" (Axii), which is later described as "the power of reason" (A382). The Transcendental Analytic is described likewise as "dealing with the pure understanding itself, concerning its possibility and the powers of cognition on which it rests" (Axvi), and which is likewise, along with reason, described as a "power" itself (B574; B790). The first page of the Transcendental Aesthetic tells us that "the capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects is called sensibility" (B33)—i.e., in Baumgarten's terms, a capacity for "undergoing" or "suffering" the action of a power external to itself. And Kant analyzes "sensation," too, in just these terms, defining it as "the effect of an object on our capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it" (B34). In fact, once we are keyed into it, the

8 Kant's works will be cited in the standard way: according to the Academy Edition (*Kants gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin [Berlin: Reimer, 1901–]) volume number and pagination, except in the case of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which will be cited according to the first (A-) or second (B-) edition pagination. All translations are drawn from the Cambridge Edition (*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. P. Guyer and A. Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991–]), with occasional silent alterations by the author.

presence of Baumgarten's terminology in relation to the soul or mind is as obvious as it is pervasive throughout the first *Critique* and the rest of Kant's Critical writings.[9]

Perhaps even more importantly for our purposes, however, is that when we turn to Kant's most influential formulations of his "transcendental" idealism, we find that the terminology associated with power also forms the core context within which Kant gives the canonical articulation of the doctrine itself. Kant's idealism consists in the thesis that the space and time which are involved in our sensory representations (intuitions), along with the "appearances" that belong within this space and time, are all "ideal" in that they "cannot exist in themselves, but only in us" (B59), because they are ultimately "nothing but representations and they cannot exist at all outside our mind" (B520). What the full import of such a claim is, is a matter of ongoing controversy that we must leave to one side.[10] What is of interest to us here, first of all, is Kant's explication of this claim as one about the "form" of the effect of an act of some power on one of our own powers. For Kant claims that the space and time which are present in our sensible representations (intuitions) are "ideal" *because* they are merely the "constant *form* of this *receptivity* which we call sensibility" (B43, my italics; B59). Or as Kant also puts it: space and time are each something "which has its seat merely in the subject as its formal constitution for being affected by objects" (B41). Space and time are "ideal" because they exist only as the specific relation that obtains between some affecting power (as cause) and its "effect" on our receptivity (sensation); their whole

9 For additional references to powers of mind, cf. B169, B270, B799, cf. 4:368; for powers of soul, cf. B416n, B428; power of representation, B51, A104, B130, B322, cf. 4:288, 337, 342; power(s) of cognition at B118, A119, B286, B317–19, B325; power of reason, 8:416.

10 For overviews of these debates, see Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Lucy Allais, *Manifest Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Nicholas Stang, "Kant's Transcendental Idealism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016 Edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/kant-transcendental-idealism; for a reading that (like the one developed here) draws key parallels between Kant's idealism and Leibniz's phenomenalism, compare Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

being is exhausted by providing the standing "form" in us in which such effects (representations) are "ordered" (B34).

Hence, not only do we find the continuing presence of the Leibnizian vocabulary of power in Kant's Critical philosophy, but we find it doing crucial work in Kant's presentation of the core commitments of his signature version of idealism. What is more, further textual analysis shows that in Kant's hands the terminology itself continues to retain the core of its significance. One key piece of evidence in this regard is the extant transcripts made by students of Kant's lectures on metaphysics, since these lectures took Baumgarten's text itself as their basis. Strikingly, though Kant does make several important, albeit quite specific, corrective remarks concerning Baumgarten's account of <power> and the related concepts, Kant's overarching treatment of this portion of his metaphysics is otherwise quite friendly. The single main point that Kant thinks Baumgarten failed to appreciate is that power is not identical with substance, but is instead something that substance "has" or "possesses"; Kant makes this criticism of Baumgarten's formulations (noted above) in several of the extant transcripts (cf. 28:261; 29:771; 28:672). As Kant sees it, power is essentially a "relation" itself, rather than fundamentally a relatum, as the substance itself would seem to be. Of a piece with this correction is Kant's thesis in the *Critique* itself and elsewhere that the concept of power should be seen as a "predicable," that is "derived," not from the concepts of substance and accident, but from the concepts of "cause and effect" (cf. 4:258).[11]

Even so, after taking into account this specific modification, it is evident that Kant otherwise means to carry over the remainder of the analytical connections between precisely those concepts that Baumgarten grouped together around <power>, including the specific interrelations that Baumgarten had drawn out between "power" and "action,"

11 In this respect Kant's views on the priority of substance to power would thus seem to put him closer to more recent positions on the necessity of there being some sort of "categorical" ground distinct from power for there to be power (disposition, ability, etc.) in the first place.

"passion," "faculty," "receptivity," etc., within ontology or *metaphysica generalis* (29:772–73; 29:822–23).[12] And as we have already begun to anticipate, Kant also follows Baumgarten in upholding the application of all of these abstract ontological concepts in the concrete domains of corporeal nature (cosmology) and the soul (psychology). As we will see in a moment, Kant also follows Baumgarten in extending <power> to the divine being as the object of theology as well.

To be sure, at the level of even more specific detail, Kant disagrees with Baumgarten (and the "Leibniz-Wolffians") in important ways on the precise characterization of the specific powers of the soul, and of body as well. Concerning the soul, Kant rejects the thesis embraced by some Leibnizians that all of the powers of the soul could be somehow derived from one single "fundamental power" (à la Wolff's fundamental "power of representation"), since Kant means to uphold at least two sorts of distinctions in kind among our mental powers: first, the distinction in kind within the powers that pertain to cognition, between the "receptivity" of sensibility and the "spontaneity" of our understanding (cf. B75); and then more generally, the distinction in kind between the collective powers of cognition themselves, on the one hand, and the "faculty for desire" and that of "the feeling of pleasure and displeasure" on the other, such that none of these three can be "derived" from the other or from some further "common ground" (cf. 5:177; 28:267; 29:877–78).[13]

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12 Kant infers, for example, that because power is a causal relation, so too are its specific manifestations as "action" and "passion or suffering" are also to be grouped under the category of causality (B108; cf. B249–50). Indeed, in one of the passages in which Kant puts forward what is, at root, a diverging conception of the relation between power and substance, he draws no explicit attention to this fact and instead tells the reader that his own systematic organization of these elementary concepts could be arrived at by simply "taking in hand the ontological textbooks" (B108). A similar point is made in the *Prolegomena*, where Kant affirms the value in existing presentations which articulate the constituent marks of the elementary concepts in metaphysics, by giving a series of analytical judgments or propositions which "try to approach the definition of those concepts" (4:273).

13 Compare Julian Wuerth, *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), Chapter 6.

Concerning the powers of corporeal nature, one main difference is that Kant wants to accept, against some of the Leibnizians, the real existence of the material substance that we intuit by means of our "outer sense," and even offers an official "refutation" of this "material idealism" in the first Critique itself (cf. B274f). Early on in his career, Kant was already drawn to the in-between possibility of a genuinely "physical monadology," according to which there would be real physical causal interaction ("influx") between monads external to one another (and so "transient" across bodies). This was already to reject the Leibnizian account of mutual change, which restricted a body's (monad's) own power to the merely "immanent" causality of the succession of its internal states, which the Leibnizians then took to be coordinated ahead of time, in a "harmonious" way, by divine means, with the internal states of other monads in the same world. By the Critical period, Kant more directly upholds the existence of "physical influx," in line with the demands of Newtonian physics.[14]

Despite these divergences, however, in the precise specification of powers in matter and in the soul, Kant otherwise continues to accept that the same universal-ontological category of <power> (and the related concepts of <substance>, <faculty>, etc.) must be in play in the articulation of the analytical content of the basic concepts of these two domains (<body>, <soul>). The same is true, finally, of Kant's understanding of the divine being. In both his lectures on theology and in his treatment of the concept of the divine being in the Transcendental Dialectic, we can see Kant retaining the traditional understanding of <God> as including <power>, both as to <faculty>, qua understanding and will (cf. 28:1000–1001, 1059), but also as to real causal efficaciousness in a reality external to itself—i.e., what Baumgarten had called "potency" above (cf. M §832), insofar as Kant, too, accepts the

14 Compare Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chapter 2 and 291f.

traditional thought that <God> will contain <omnipotence> as well (28:1004, 1045).

Having established significant continuities in Kant's understanding of the basic concept of power in ontology, and its role in setting out the subject matters of *metaphysica specialis*, we can now more precisely identify the points of departure concerning the epistemology of power that are entailed by Kant's "critique" of the traditional methodology of metaphysics itself. A first point concerns Kant's insistence that we distinguish two different kinds of questions pertaining to metaphysics: on the one hand, the question of what is contained "in" the *concepts* of the "universal predicates" explored within ontology and those of the regional predicates explored in *metaphysica specialis*, i.e., the question of what contents we in fact *think* "in" these concepts; and on the other, the question of "with what right" (*quid juris*) do we take ourselves to *cognize* any real or existing *objects* with or through these concepts, i.e., the question of the objective validity of these concepts, of whether the predicates ("marks") we represent through these concepts actually obtain as features of really existing things. In the terms foregrounded in the first *Critique*'s Introduction, and at the outset of the *Prolegomena*, Kant separates the question of the "definition" ("exposition," "elucidation") of these concepts via *analytical* judgments, from the question of the possibility of *synthetic* judgment involving these concepts, which, if demonstrably true, would "amplify" our cognition (cf. B11–18).

The second question in particular is pressing for Baumgarten, insofar as he takes metaphysics to be concerned not just with these concepts as possible contents of *thought*, but with establishing the most universal "principles" of *cognition* (M §1). Kant's shift of focus to the question of *quid juris* was famously initiated by reading Hume (though already anticipated by Tetens in the decade prior to the first *Critique*)[15] and readily extends not just to <cause> and <substance> but also to

15 Compare Johann Tetens, *Über die allgemeine speculative Philosophie* (Bützow: Berger and Boeder, 1775).

<power> and all of the related ontological concepts. As Kant sees it, adequately addressing this question involves two separate steps. The first comes from Kant's acceptance of Hume's more preliminary challenge that we provide a demonstration that the concepts in question do not arise in us due merely to illusions created by our imagination, but have a more legitimate "birthplace." In response, Kant offers what he calls a "metaphysical deduction" of our concepts of the universal predicates of ontology ("categories") from acts of "judgment" by our *understanding*, rather than our imagination (cf. B159). In the case of the relational category of <cause-effect> (and hence <power>), Kant points to the act of judging about the "hypothetical" relation of "ground and consequence" (cf. B98; B105–9).

The second step comes from Kant's acceptance of Hume's skepticism concerning the objective validity of all of these concepts, a skepticism which impugns the standing of metaphysics as a *science*, i.e., system of *cognitions* of objects from principles, rather than as something more like a lexicon, or a series of definitions of concepts for mere *thinking*. In response, Kant attempts, first, to give an a priori demonstration of the objective validity ("transcendental deduction") of the categories of the understanding, at least in relation to all possible objects of our senses (intuitions) (cf. B129–59) and also all possible objects of our experiences (cf. B159–69). In relation to <power> in particular, Kant points to the universal and necessary temporal features of the objects of our senses, as providing an objective correlate that gives sensible "significance" to the concept of this relation (cf. B185). For one, concepts pertaining to <power> are used to give significance to the concept <reality>, insofar as this latter concept can be used to recognize the presence of the effect of a power in sensibility (i.e., sensation) as "a being (in time)" (B182). The concept <power> itself (as a species of <cause-effect>) can be used to recognize the relation of something's universally and necessarily following in time after something else, i.e., "succession" in accordance with a rule (B183).

Again, how exactly Kant arrives at these "deductions," along with their ultimate import, continues to be a matter of intense debate.[16] The core point of interest for our purposes, however, is Kant's ultimate commitment to the objective validity of the concept <power> itself. For if, e.g., certain principles concerning power (the "Analogies" of the understanding in the first *Critique*; the principles concerning "force" [as "Kraft" is also translated] in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*) are genuinely demonstrated to have objective validity with respect to the objects of experience, then it would seem to follow that these principles are true of these objects. Yet since Kant accepts that truth entails a "correspondence [*Übereinstimmung*]" between the relevant concept (proposition) and its object (state of affairs) (cf. B83), it would also seem to follow that he thinks there genuinely *are* powers in these objects (i.e., the objects of both outer and inner experience—i.e., in both bodies and in the soul itself). This is so, even if the only manner in which we can cognize these powers is in terms of features of their appearances "in" us.

Once we expand our view to include not just our faculty of cognition but our faculty of desire, Kant thinks we find evidence (in the immediate consciousness we have of the moral law) that our own will (as the "power" of practical reason) enjoys the further feature of being autonomous ("free") with respect to the law of its causality (cf. 5:30f.). And Kant thinks this "fact" itself gives us sufficient grounds for "rational belief"—by which Kant means: "subjectively" sufficient grounds for "holding-for-true," even if not amounting to "knowledge [*Wissen*]," which would require that the grounds be "objectively" sufficient as well (cf. B850)—belief in the reality of still further types of powers that lie beyond the possible objects of our experience. For one thing, it gives us sufficient grounds for the belief that our own power of reason can have an effective causality in nature (cf. 5:4; 5:133; compare

16 For the deduction of the categories, see Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Deduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Baumgarten's conception of "potency" in relation to the physical world in Section 10.2 above), which is something that Kant thinks (cf. 3rd Antinomy) we cannot demonstrate to be really possible on merely theoretical grounds. Secondly, it also gives sufficient grounds for the belief that there exists a divine being with sufficient power (in fact, omnipotence) to bring about the "complete highest good" in accordance with the moral law (cf. 5:124). Since believing consists in holding the relevant propositions to be true, here again we are taking (even if not cognizing) the concept of <power> to be valid of still more objects, even though they lie beyond experience. In this further respect, then, Kant should also be seen to be a realist concerning powers, since here again the concept of these powers is itself the concept of something which is not essentially another representation, and he takes it to be rational to believe (hold-true) that these powers (and not just our representations of them) actually exist.

10.4. Powers in Hegel's Idealism

One of the key questions taken up by the post-Kantians was whether a new, higher form of idealism is ultimately entailed by the commitment to the reality of divine power. For since this omnipotence is here conjoined with omniscience (and omnibenevolence), the exercise of this power (in the creation and governance of the world) would seem to itself be grounded in an "idea" pre-existing in the divine understanding, in order for the divine exercise of power to consist in an act of wisdom rather than something blind or akin to mere fate. Perhaps more so than any of the other German Idealists, Hegel's system, in particular, is oriented around working through the consequences of the absolute priority of the divine idea to the actual world—as well as taking up the further question of the relation of the divine idea to divine being (spirit) itself—in order to articulate an even more "absolute" idealism. This focus on the divine, and in particular, on the divine as containing "the truth," is signaled in the very first section of his

1817–30 *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*: "philosophy initially shares its objects with religion. Both have *the truth* for their object, and indeed the truth in the highest sense—in the sense that *God* is the truth, and God *alone* is the truth" (§1; cf. §8).[17]

In its first appearance in the presentation of ontological categories, however, Hegel's account of power shares much in common with his predecessors. As with the Leibnizians before him, Hegel, too, first introduces the concept of power as one of the universal "determinations" of thought which have equally valid application across material nature, human souls, and the divine being as well. The doctrine of the universal determinations of thought in general is presented in the first part of the *Encyclopedia* (entitled "the Science of Logic"; EL); their application or realization in material nature is presented in the second part ("the Philosophy of Nature"; EN); the third part ("the Philosophy of Spirit [*Geist*]"; EG) takes up their realization in the human soul, in human society and history, and ultimately in "absolute spirit" itself.

Hegel's treatment of "power [*Kraft*]" in his Logic also follows Baumgarten in that the exposition of power is given only after (and in terms of) a series of more elementary predicates—preceded, first, by an understanding of the predicates which pertain to something merely "in itself," such as "quality" (e.g., "being," "nothing," "becoming"; EL §86 et seq.), and predicates of "quantity" (e.g., "magnitude," "degree"; EL §99 et seq.). Hegel sides with Kant, however, in maintaining that our understanding of <power> must also be preceded by certain elementary predicates which are instead "relative," in the sense that they determine something as being involved in a kind of relation, such as that of being "identical" with, or "different" from, something, or that

17 Besides the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Hegel's works will be cited according to the volume number and pagination in the Suhrkamp edition (*Werke in 20 Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. Michel [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971]), except in the case of the *Encyclopedia*, where reference is to the section number. All translations are drawn from the Cambridge edition, *The Cambridge Hegel Translations*, ed. M. Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009–) (again with occasional silent alterations by the author).

of being the "ground [*Grund*]" of something. Hegel takes these "relative" predicates to pertain to a kind of being that is itself relational (EL §112), or as he puts it, being which includes a "reflection" in itself between two moments (EL §114). From these simple "determinations of reflection," Hegel develops the further concept of the unity of the reflection-relation with its relata, or the concept of being a "thing [*Ding*]" in this specific sense of being that which "has" the relation and the relevant relata in itself (EL §125). Still, the relation ("reflection") and the relevant relata themselves are thought of, at this point, not just per se or in relation to one another, but as what is "had" by the thing, and so "different" from it—despite also being "identical" with the thing which "has" them, insofar as what it is to be this thing is to have just these moments. In this further determination, Hegel thinks we have arrived at the concept of a still higher "relation," between the "essence [*Wesen*]" of the thing, as the "ground" of its having just these moments, and its "appearance" (EL §131), as to its having one or another of its moments. Among these more specific kinds of "relations" pertaining to things and their essences, we find, first, that of being a "whole" thing in relation to its "parts" (EL §135), and then, secondly, that of the "power [*Kraft*]" ("force") pertaining to the thing, in relation to its "expression [*Äusserung*]" (EL §136).

Hegel diverges from Kant, however, in taking <power> itself to be more elementary than the concepts of the relations of substantiality and causality. In fact, the concept of power itself is what first allows for the specification even of the concept of the relational distinction between the "inner [*Inneres*]" and the "outer [*Äusseres*]," in terms of the directions of "movement of power" (viz. its "expression") with respect to the thing in question (EL §137). It also eventually allows for the specification of the difference between "actuality" ("outer" expressions of the powers of things; powers in exercise) and possibility (the "inner" essence of thing as to its powers pre-exercise) (EL §§142–43), as well as the concept of "activity" (EL §148). These lead to the still higher concept of the relation of powers, their possibility and actuality, and their

activity, back to one "identical" thing—now designated not merely as a thing, or a thing with an essence, but specifically as a "substance"—as somehow also being the "totality" of these moments, considered as "revealing itself" in and through them (EL §150). When a substance is determined as having powers sufficient for acting (revealing itself in its "expressions"), the substance has not merely power but "might [*Macht*]" (EL §151). From here Hegel introduces the relation between cause and effect (EL §153), and eventually contrasts a substance which is determined by a power outside of itself, as "un-self-sufficient," from a substance which does this determining, which is said to have "potency" over this thing, which is now an "object" relative to it (EL §196).

While Hegel thus positions the most general analysis of power within a very similar conceptual neighborhood, so to speak, as Baumgarten and Kant before him, there are several noteworthy differences in the specifics of Hegel's account, even at the level of mere ontology. Like Kant, Hegel means to distinguish power from a substance that would have it, but whereas Kant seems to take the concept of power to itself already imply not just that the thing in question is specifically a substance, but also that the relevant grounding-relation is that of cause and effect, Hegel sees the most elementary concept of power as more abstract—indeed, as generic enough to pertain to anything that can be considered as a "ground" (Baumgarten: "ratio") for something else, independently of whether that thing is a substance, or whether the grounding in question is causality in particular. In fact, Hegel's conception seems to be more abstract than Baumgarten's as well, insofar as for Hegel there does not seem to be a presupposition that what is grounded by a power is a "change" of state in particular, or even a making "actual," or that the "expressing" of power happens only in "acts"; rather, it is the concepts of <actuality> and <activity> themselves which require further determinations beyond <power> for their exposition.[18]

18 In the earlier *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PG), Hegel had set out "law [*Gesetz*]" as the concept of that which "unifies" a power ("force") with its "expression" (cf. PG §148; EG §422). In the *Encyclopedia*

Moving beyond the merely logical (universal) sense of <power> and related concepts, how does Hegel take these general predicates to be concretely manifest in material nature, in the human soul and society, and then in absolute spirit? Concerning the corporeal world, Hegel agrees with Kant that "what is universal in nature" includes "forces [*Kräfte*], laws, genera," and that these belong together "not as a mere aggregate, but arranged in orders and classes as an organized being [*Organization*]" (EN §246). Even so, he is critical of what he sees as Kant's failure, in his mechanics, to provide a unified account of the powers of matter, specifically the attractive and repulsive forces in bodies. While Hegel accepts the basic idea that "matter" has "repulsion" as a "moment of negativity," as well as a moment of unifying or coming together, as "attraction" (EN §262), he thinks that this does not yet capture what "orients" these powers themselves, and how they form a real unity, in a field or system of forces. This is something that is provided only by reference to "gravity," which infuses these powers with a "striving" as toward a "middle-point"; having not (as Hegel sees it) sufficiently appreciated this deeper interrelation, Kant was misled to conclude, from their mutual irreducibility to each other, that the attractive and repulsive powers must simply be "taken up as in fixed opposition to one another" (EN §262 Note). Hegel thinks this same kind of failure is repeated (within the history of natural science and natural philosophy) with respect to the more specific level of qualitatively differentiated kinds of matter (air, fire, water, earth), and the more determinate kinds of forces and expressions of forces that are seen to obtain therein (sound, warmth; magnetism, electricity, chemical transformations; cf. EN §§272–336).[19] This in turn threatens to make incomprehensible how more straightforwardly "organized" beings ("organisms")

Logic, by contrast, <law> does not show up officially, though the relation of power and its expression is one of "positing [*setzen*]" and "being posited [*Gesetztsein*]" (cf. EL §136).

19 Compare John Burbidge, *Real Process: How Logic and Chemistry Combine in Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005).

such as plants and especially animals could belong to the same nature in the first place (cf. EN §§337–76).[20]

When we turn to the initial manifestation of power in the domain of psychology, Hegel again clearly agrees with the tradition, that powers are universally present as constitutive of what it means to be a soul. Yet he also makes a similar criticism of the traditional doctrine of the powers of the soul, and offers a similar proposal for a corrective:

> The ordinary method of psychology is to state, in a narrative fashion, what spirit or the soul *is*, what *happens* to it, what it *does*. The soul is presupposed as a ready-made subject, in which such determinations come to light only as *expressions* [*Äusserungen*], from which we are supposed to learn what it *is*—what sort of faculties and powers [*Vermögen und Kräfte*] it possesses in itself. (EG §387 Note; cf. EG §378)

Against this, Hegel points us to our "self-feeling" that the powers of the soul are all oriented in a specific direction, due to their belonging in a "*living* unity"—a feeling which itself challenges psychology to resist the "fragmentation" of the soul into "different *faculties*, *forces*, or, what comes to the same thing, *activities*, represented as distinct, self-standing over and against each other" (EG §379).

Hegel returns to this point later in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, having just completed discussing many of the traditional faculties and powers within the human mind (sensation, consciousness, self-consciousness, reason), to now take up the question of what it is that functions akin to gravity in the case of the soul itself, as a point of ultimate orientation ("purpose [*Zweck*]") for this living unity of these powers. Perhaps surprisingly, here Hegel names "the concept" and its "liberation" as the

20 Compare James Kreines, *Reason in the World: Hegel's Metaphysics and Its Philosophical Appeal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Sebastian Rand, "Hegel's Philosophy of Nature," in *Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 384–406.

ultimate point of orientation of spirit in general, and insists, furthermore, that this goal must be brought into view in order to achieve a truly "rational" comprehension of these powers themselves:

> if the activities of spirit are regarded only as *expressions*, as forces in general . . . then no ultimate purpose [*Endzweck*] is available. The ultimate purpose can only be *the concept itself* [*der Begriff selbst*; my italics] . . . to achieve and to grasp itself, to liberate [*befreien*] itself *to its own self*. In this way, the so-called faculties of spirit in their distinctness from each other are to be seen only as stages [*Stufen*] of this liberation. And this alone is to be regarded as the *rational* way of considering spirit and its various activities. (EG §442)

What, then, is "the concept"? In fact, "the concept" is something Hegel had already begun to articulate previously in the *Logic*, with the first part treating "the concept in itself," the second treating "the being for itself of the concept," and the third treating "the having returned back into itself of the concept" (EL §83). While one might assume that Hegel means to join Kant in viewing "the concept" at issue in a "Logic" as some sort of general representation that belongs to a human understanding (as the faculty for thinking through concepts), in Hegel's separate, much larger multi-volume work, *The Science of Logic*, first published 1812–16, he makes it quite clear that, within his own system, the subject matter of logic is something much grander:

> Logic is to be grasped as . . . the realm of pure thought. This realm is the truth itself, as it is in and for itself, without a veil. It can therefore be said that this content is the exposition [*Darstellung*] of God, as he is in his eternal essence, before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit.[21]

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21 Georg Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Erster Band: Die objective Logik* (Nürnberg: Schrag, 1812), xiii.

What Hegel means by "the concept" itself, as it is treated in logic, is something on the order of the idea had eternally in the divine intellect that provides the blueprint for the "creation" of everything outside of God. What logic is engaged in articulating is thus the most universal "determinations" of the divine thinking, according to which what exists is brought into being; logic itself concludes by presenting "the idea of absolute cognition."[22]

To be sure, what has been presented in the *Logic* is only "this idea as logical," and in this respect, logic considers the idea only "enclosed within pure thought," and is therefore only "the science of the divine concept"[23]—rather than the divine in all of its actuality (as really existing "spirit"). Nevertheless, the subsequent sciences of nature and of spirit must be seen as nothing other than sciences of the process of the "realization" of this same concept or idea: first, simply as to there being something existent "outside" of this concept, as the (merely) *objective* correlate of the idea, as mere "nature"; and then as "spirit," or the more complete active realization of the concept when ("created") reality itself includes the *subjectivity* implicit in the concept (i.e., that the concept belongs to an act of a divine subject thinking).[24] Mere nature is this concept or idea, albeit only "in the form of otherness," as "external to itself" (EN §247). In fact, though it is ultimately seen as an "effect" of the (divine) concept, nature only very imperfectly expresses this specific form of the causal relation (from concept to actuality), in the form of elementary teleological organization among plants. By itself, nature is characterized by an "impotence [*Ohnmacht*]" to fully realize all of the aspects of the divine idea, insofar as nature attains, on its own, only to the simplest forms of subjectivity (EN §250). On its own, nature can never attain to that form which includes the power

22 Georg Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweiter Band: Die subjective Logik* (Nürnberg: Schrag, 1816), 399.

23 Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweiter Band*, 399.

24 Compare Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweiter Band*, 399–400.

of thinking "for itself," or within "consciousness," which is distinctive of "spirit." But even these latter spirits will only realize the divine idea partially, since the idea in the divine intellect also has its own (divine, infinite) self as its object, insofar as it comprehends itself. The final step for philosophy, then, is to comprehend how the divine ("absolute") idea is absolutely realizing *itself*, in and through nature and finite spirit. When it completes this realization, however, it does so as something not identical to either of these, but rather as a fully *absolute spirit*—even if as an actuality which is now nevertheless in real "community [*Gemeinde*]" with nature and finite spirit, since these now exist (cf. EG §554), and so, in contrast to the situation prior to their "creation," when they existed only "in" idea. This characterization of all of reality as the progressive movement from the divine concept or absolute idea to absolute spirit, is expressed in the concluding section of the *Encyclopedia*:

> it is the concept, the nature of the subject-matter, that moves forward and develops, and this movement is equally the activity of cognizing [*Tätigkeit des Erkennens*]. The eternal Idea, the Idea that is in and for itself, eternally remains active [*betätigt*], engenders and enjoys itself as absolute spirit. (EG §577)

Bracketing the question of what this absolute self-realization of "the concept" might actually look like more concretely,[25] what is crucial for our own purposes is the simpler point that concepts associated with <power> are seen to have applicability all the way through until the very end of the *Encyclopedia*, i.e., to what is absolute. This is so, even if power itself is not *absolute* in any sense, and even if <power> is not itself an "absolute" concept. The concept of power all by itself is not an

25 Hegel thinks that the historical-cultural existence of art, religion, and ultimately philosophy itself stand as "shapes" which "reveal," in differing ways, the real existence of the self-comprehension of absolute spirit (cf. EG §556–77); compare Paul Redding, "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2015 Edition, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/hegel/, §3.2.3.

absolute concept in the sense of being intelligible without reference to any other concept; as we have seen, it presupposes a whole series of earlier predicates for its articulation. Nor does it, by itself, "contain" or otherwise render intelligible all the other determinations in logic (let alone in the rest of the system). And, correlatively, for power itself to exist in reality, many other determinations must also be realized. For all of these reasons, <power> on its own—or even a predicate like <omnipotence>—cannot be suitable for the *absolute* characterization of "the absolute" (as is evidenced, e.g., in Hegel's criticisms of Herder's claim that "God is force" (EL §136)). Nevertheless, it would seem to be equally true that, in Hegel's system, the actuality of nature and finite spirit, and even of absolute spirit itself, consists in the actualization of the absolute idea, such that everything in existence—absolute spirit included—is the expression of the absolute power (omnipotence) in relation to the absolute idea itself (omniscience).[26]

10.5. Conclusion

Despite first appearances, then, the idealist traditions in modern German philosophy are uniform in their commitment to the real existence of powers, over and above any mere representations (ideas) of them. We saw this to be so in the context of Leibnizian monadology (§§10.1–2), and also in Kant's transcendental idealism (§10.3), and now, finally, even in Hegel's "absolute" idealism (§10.4). Yet while none of these idealists subscribe to what we described above as "naïve" idealism, all of them embrace a conception of actuality according to which the

26 It is a much debated topic whether Hegel's idealism should be given so "metaphysical" an interpretation, as in Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), or whether something less metaphysically substantive would suffice, as in Klaus Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non Metaphysical View," in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (New York, NY: Anchor, 1972), 101–24, and especially Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For some initial criticism of non-metaphysical approaches, see Kreines, *Reason in the World*.

ultimate ground of reality or actuality is not merely power, but rather power guided by an idea—more specifically, omnipotence guided by omniscience—such that the point or goal of actuality is, in Hegel's terms, the realization of "the concept" in and by absolute spirit. In this respect, the modern German idealists do seem to accord (at least in one key respect) a kind of priority to the power of the ideal over the (merely) real after all.