

9 The 'Proper' Tone of Critical Philosophy

Kant and Derrida on Metaphilosophy and the Use of Religious Tropes¹

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Without a doubt, Immanuel Kant is the quintessential Enlightenment philosopher who, whilst not recoiling from subjecting it to thoroughgoing critical philosophical inquiry, was fully alert to the fact that, not least because of its social relevance, religion could not be dismissed out of hand. Of course, I am not suggesting that Kant was by any means a religious philosopher as his contemporary Friedrich H. Jacobi or Søren Kierkegaard after him were. Kant was certainly no apologist for religion. For Kant, the general perspective on religion remained unabatedly critical in the strict sense that he bestowed upon the term (what this means will become clearer in the course of this essay). Nevertheless, Reason (*Vernunft*) cannot simply elevate itself, by decree, above faith (*Glauben*) or religion. There is, moreover, a systematic reason religion *must* play a role in the practical domain. For Kant, namely, if we take religion as at least concerned with the highest good, 'reason *needs* to assume, for the sake of [. . .] a *dependent* highest good, a supreme intelligence as the highest *independent* good [. . .] in order to give objective reality to the concept of the highest good'.² Kant was thus vigilantly attentive to the complexity of the relation between faith and Reason, between philosophy and religion. This complexity is borne out by the often largely implicit assumptions underlying philosophical theories on the relation between faith and Reason. More than any other philosopher of the modern age, Kant was aware of the threat of prejudice and dogmatism, also and perhaps especially in philosophy.

The question of the relation between faith and Reason, specifically with regard to the *use* of Reason, was of central concern to Kant, already in his eloquently written early pre-critical essay *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766) and then famously in the aftermath of the Pantheism debate between Moses Mendelssohn and Jacobi, with the essay *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* (1786), but particularly after he had completed, in 1790, the trilogy of the *Critiques*, when he became involved in a fiercely fought public debate concerning the role of religion in Prussian society. This concern culminated in the publication, in 1798,

of his major politico-theological tract *The Conflict of the Faculties*, after a short period in which he was forced to remain silent about his views on religion because of the anti-Enlightenment edict issued some years earlier by Frederick William II, himself a man given to relying on spirit-seers for political policy. More specifically, the publication in 1793 of his *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* resulted in the curb, by way of an imperial rescript that Kant received in October 1794, on his freedom to speak out on religious affairs, by which Kant no longer felt obliged upon the death of Frederick in November 1797.³ However, the work on which I shall focus here is Kant's neglected metaphysical tract *Of a Recently Adopted Exalted Tone in Philosophy* (henceforth RTP),⁴ which was published in the intervening time in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* of May 1796.

I do not wish to go into the precise historical context of this minor work.⁵ Neither do I discuss its relation to Kant's other aforementioned publications on religion and religious affairs. I am primarily interested in the ways in which RTP thematises the legitimacy of speaking in an exalted, quasi-religious tone apropos of the authority of Reason as a self-legitimising capacity in philosophical speech, specifically in relation to religion. An important additional reason for taking a closer look at this text is because the late Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) took a great interest in this work of Kant's and, indeed, emphasised, rightly I think, that despite its prima facie rhetorically charged, polemical nature, this work—which might at first be taken to be merely a lampoon—is anything but insignificant in Kant's oeuvre. Derrida's *On a Recently Adopted Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy*, originally published in 1983,⁶ is an oblique commentary on Kant's RTP and aims to expose to view the alleged hidden underpinnings of Kant's polemic against exaltation or fanaticism (*Schwärmerei*)⁷ in philosophy. Derrida tries to show that Kant's appeal for tonal moderation in philosophy, for a measured speech, which should rein in exalted modes of speech, is *itself* not neutral and rather fundamentally biased against an exalted, quasi-religious manner of thought. It is evident that, as he himself notes early on in RTP, Kant is predisposed towards a more Aristotelian, academic kind of philosophy, which adopts a 'proper' tone or pitch in philosophical debate, but Derrida claims that Kant himself raises his voice precisely in lampooning exalted thinkers.⁸

Here, I am not so much interested in delineating Derrida's own grounds for criticising Kant on this score, which are concerned with the way in which what he calls 'apocalypitics' presumably accounts for the very possibility of raising a tone in any arbitrary discourse and thus also for moderating one's voice, thus revealing 'apocalypitics' as a transcendental condition of sorts of the philosophical speech mode.⁹ Rather, I am particularly interested in the extent to which Derrida's critique manifests a fundamental misapprehension of the Kantian mode of moderating critique. (I shall therefore expand on some elements of this view insofar as

this is needed for my critical assessment of Derrida's critique of Kant.) By expounding this misapprehension, Kant's own reasons for his philippic against religious or quasi-religious talk in philosophy are foregrounded, thus showing the nature of *properly* critical thought. At the same time, I shall show how Derrida underestimates the self-reflexivity, and hence *properly* critical, self-authorising mode of thinking, underlying his own oblique references to the *adieu* as a trope for quasi-transcendental intentionality towards the so-called 'Other'.

1. The Self-Legislation of Reason

Before I discuss central aspects of Kant's account in RTP and Derrida's critique of it, I shall give a very rough outline of what I take to be the Kantian critical mode of thought. One of the central planks of Kant's philosophy is the thought that there is no room for a dogmatic belief in or an appeal to a heteronomous force, ground or fact of the matter, or any exogenous or endogenous (mental) content, incentive or disposition, which would externally legitimise a theoretical concept, a judging or belief that so and so is the case, or motivate a specifically moral act. Relying on a heteronomous determination of any belief, or judging of a state of affairs, or moral act would not thereby provide an a priori demonstrable insight into the grounding relation between the putative justifying power or authority and the objective validity or moral value which is, implicitly or explicitly, assigned or attributed to it by the cognising judger or the moral agent, respectively. According to Kant, such a determination would ex hypothesi not carry necessity and would thus lack normative force for the judger or moral agent.¹⁰

For, given heteronomy, on what grounds can I be sure that the putative determining or justifying power or ground that is external to my thinking may be assigned universal epistemic validity because it is indeed the determining or justifying power or ground of the content of my belief that it is necessarily true that B is causally effected by A, say? Mutatis mutandis, how may I attribute a moral value to a particular incentive to act, which derives from a certain interest or from the striving for happiness, having at any rate a specific *end* in mind that is not exclusively based on Reason, if that same incentive might as well cause me to act immorally or at least cause me to be morally negligent?¹¹ Since no amount of appealing to a heteronomous authority or ground will provide insight into the reasons for my attributing specifically moral value or my assigning a truth value to *p* rather than to *q*, Kant considers it necessary to privilege the autonomy, or self-legislation, of our human rational capacity. This capacity to know or act purely from Reason is the sole means of determining a priori the 'causality' of both specifically moral actions and cognitive knowledge, namely the epistemic or moral *agent's own* self-causing *rational* activity—or Reason itself, to which a human being

eo ipso subjects herself by making specifically moral or epistemic claims. Only such rational *self-legislation* yields a touchstone, Kant believes, for the possibility of an adequately determinable and universally valid conception of both moral and natural causal efficacy. In this self-legislation, that is, 'the subjection of reason to no laws except *those which it gives itself*' (OT, AA 8: 145 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 16]), consists the freedom of thought or will. Self-legislation, '[t]hinking for oneself', 'means seeking the supreme touchstone of truth in oneself (i.e. in one's own reason)' (OT, AA 8: 146n. [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 18]).¹²

But in what precisely does such subjecting oneself to a law, that is, self-legislating, consist and what justifies Kant's privileging of such a strategy? In general, as Kant writes in OT,

[t]o make use of one's own reason means no more than to ask oneself, whenever one is supposed to assume something, whether one could find it feasible to make the ground or the rule on which one assumes it into a universal principle for the use of reason.

(OT, AA 8: 146n. [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 18])

We can put this idea of self-legislation differently and more concretely if we consider the fundamental assumption underlying Kant's thought that is paradigmatically expressed by the scholastic dictum *forma dat esse rei*, which in principle Kant endorses. This dictum is mentioned by Kant in RTP and is, as will become clear, also, in some sense, very dear to Derrida. The dictum means that

in the form [. . .] lies the essence of the state of affairs [*Sache*] [. . .] insofar as this essence must be known through Reason [*durch Vernunft*].

(RTP, AA 8: 404 [Kant (1999), 70], trans. emended)¹³

In other words, *if and only if* the thinking self or epistemic agent, and mutatis mutandis the moral agent, gives a certain form (*forma dat*) to what she cognises—the state of affairs or object of her interest—in accordance with the general principles of her own rationality, *then* she is able to know something essential (*esse*) about a particular state of affairs (*res*); that is, she knows it through Reason, which for Kant means to know it necessarily and universally (or a priori; cf. CPR B4). This rule expresses the 'universal principle for the use of reason' (OT, AA 8: 146n. [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 18]).

As a corollary, the form that in accordance with her rational capacity a thinker, and mutatis mutandis a moral agent, puts into, or contributes to, the *Sache* (*res*) to be determined corresponds to the essence of the thing known, *insofar as it is known*; the form of thought is thus the *known* thing's essence.¹⁴ Reason knows the form of what it cognises with

certainty and a priori, for it *itself* contributes this form, to which the known thing isomorphically corresponds. As a consequence, we as thinkers or moral agents are our *own* authors of the conditions under which we cognise things and act on maxims, respectively—we are subject to no law or cognitive constraint that we do not subject ourselves to *ourselves* or legislate for ourselves.¹⁵ Reason is self-legislative insofar as the necessary form of any cognition or moral action, or meaningful proposition, for that matter, is concerned. That means that any rational agent need not appeal, in virtue of a putative intellectual intuition, say, to heteronomous or non-rational means, be it any causal determinacy or inner dispositional force or a sheer feeling or a *sensus divinitatis*, even, for the warrant of her cognitive-determinative or moral capacity.

The justification for choosing autonomy as the determining ground of our knowledge of reality, of the *Sache*, stems purely from the a priori provability of a cognition that is grounded in such self-legislation, that is, from the possibility of explaining the thing's essence, its necessary form, in and by virtue of thought or Reason *itself*. An element of philosophical parsimony and epistemic harmony is also involved here, the latter aspect, as we shall see, being closely related to the tonality of philosophical speech. This choice for autonomy implies that the state of affairs (*Sache*) itself, apart from the manner in which I know it, is, in a manner of speaking, left for what it is (cf. CPR Bxx), involving Kant's metaphysical doctrine of idealism, which says that we can know only appearances and not things in themselves and thus giving rise to a noumenal realm grounding our specifically moral claims without these having any *theoretically provable* basis in reality.

Consequently, with regard to the issue of faith and religion and the alleged generalised epistemic function which Derrida supposes it to have (I shall come to this subsequently), a formal privileging of discursive Reason over faith conceived of as revealed (historical) faith is required. This is so because revealed faith, or any other form of non-discursive 'knowledge' dependent on exogenous sources of warrant (revelation, say), does not yield a priori provable knowledge of any arbitrary state of affairs, event or action, whether it be a case of sensible or putatively super-sensible experience. Belief in an *exogenous* cause of one's cognition or moral action, or of an allegedly super-sensible experience, for that matter, does not result in a rationally coherent, a priori hanging together of the constitutive elements that make up the cognition, experience or action. For, first, there is ex hypothesi a gap between the external warrant of the belief and the particular cognition's or action's inherently subjective thought form, in which, as claims of some kind, they are necessarily expressed. Second, any belief *content* must be able to be rationally justified in terms of such a belief necessarily taking on a certain subjective *form*, namely the way that the belief content, that is, a particular cognition, experience or action, is constrained by the subject's mode of expressing it and taking the belief content as *her* content.

Given the limitations of our discursive capacities, it is impossible to verify whether the conception of a putative transcendent or an at any rate external source or cause as the ostensible warrant of one's experience (or cognition, belief, act and so forth) veridically corresponds to the de facto subjective experience (or cognition etc.) that one self-consciously has. (Notice that a denial of the possibility of *having* an alleged super-sensible experience is not the issue here, since nobody can contest somebody else's own de facto feelings or experiences, whatever their causes;¹⁶ what is at issue is the *validity* of making a claim to having such an experience or intuition, that is, the objective validity of one's *beliefs* apropos of one's experiences or intuitions. It is nonsensical to deny someone *having* the experiences she has or the fact of those experiences.)¹⁷ Therefore, a belief in the heteronomous nature of the warrant of one's actual experience, cognition or action cannot be assented to, rationally, in the same apodictic way that one is, on the empirical level, intuitively certain to have an experience (putatively super-sensible or not). To act upon revealed faith or to philosophise through feeling¹⁸ may provide immediate certainty through sensible intuition for the person involved but, according to Kant, it will never yield philosophical certainty and hence universally and a priori insightful truth, since the putative certainty is intersubjectively incommunicable (and so not objectively valid). For Kant, communicability of one's thoughts is an intrinsic feature of the capacity for thinking itself (OT, AA 8: 144).¹⁹ If we abandon the maxim that 'reason alone can command validity for everyone' and declare ourselves as if we were liberated from the constraints of reason, 'a confusion of language must soon arise' (OT, AA 8: 145 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 17]). This will result in fanaticism (*Schwärmerei*)—where 'each one [. . .] follows his own inspiration' (OT, AA 8: 145 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 17])²⁰ and thus 'loses touch with the *sensus communis*'²¹—and eventually 'the complete subjection of reason to facts, i.e. *superstition*' (OT, AA 8: 145 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 17]).

The authority to which revealed faith, or any act based upon it, appeals lies ex hypothesi outside of itself.²² Religion, by its very definition, signals dependence on an external power or authority as its legitimating ground. Philosophically speaking, to appeal to a revealing power or authority—God or any other presumably external source—for the *justification* of one's belief(s), experience(s) or action(s) can only amount to a *petitio principii*, for one's appeal to the authority of the heteronomous source of authorisation of one's beliefs presupposes that one has always already accepted that source as primordial source of authorisation.²³ This circularity would appear to be vicious, for an unbridgeable gap remains between the warrant provided by the authority to which one appeals (the instance of authorisation) and the act of belief itself in respect of it. Nothing tells a believer, apart from the sheer acceptance on authority, that she is *justified* to believe in the authority's authorising force, even if the authority appealed to *were* indeed the ultimate warrant for one's beliefs.

This is different from the circularity of the self-legislation of Reason—at least in Kant’s internalist conception of it—because in Reason no conflict arises as to the relation between the subjective appeal to the authorising source and that source, the warrant for one’s appeal, itself as the source of authorisation. For Reason, and hence every *rational* agent employing it, appeals to *itself* and, as authorising authority, is not exogenous with respect to the appeal. Succinctly put, Reason, and hence every *rational* agent, is *self*-authorising or *self*-legitimizing. Reason provides its own authority or warrant. In Reason, an intrinsic, internal connection obtains between autonomy as warrant and justification, which is wanting in constructions of justification that appeal to heteronomy for warrantability.

In light of the previous, given the appeal to heteronomy that is characteristic of religion, an investigation of the status of philosophy vis-à-vis religion itself can therefore not non-question-beggingly be based on an inversion of the relation between philosophy and religion with respect to the authorising source of the former, so that religion would become the *terminus a quo* of analysis, as the telling title of an important recent book, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*,²⁴ suggests (in the next section, I elaborate on this peculiar strategic move).

In this context, it is interesting to observe—and this becomes clearer shortly—that in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant stipulates, in the context of an account of the discipline of Reason, that it is ‘not the state of affairs [*Sache*], but the tone [which is] in dispute [*streitig wird*]’ (CPR A744/B772, trans. mine). Neither the orthodox (read: academic) philosopher nor the believer, who appeals to a religious intuition or revelation for authorisation, is able to know the state of affairs (*res*) directly by means of a putative intellectual intuition—nobody can, so to speak, verify his representation with the *idea archetypa*.²⁵ Therefore, knowledge is a matter of the proper measure (*Maß, Mäßigung*) in which the tonal chord of any claim—which, for Kant, comes down to a certain *forma* of thought—represents the state of affairs (*Sache, res*). That is to say, measure is a matter of the proportion or *ratio* of the constituent elements of knowledge, the *ratio* in the modulation of tones, which constitutes the epistemically harmonious grasp of the state of affairs (*Sache*) that is to be known.²⁶ It is Kant’s claim that only discursive Reason can satisfy this demand of rational proportionality—whereby it should be kept in mind that the typical synthetic a priori form of a conceptual representation of an objective state of affairs is directly proportional to the discursive nature of our intellect.²⁷ What is thus fundamentally at stake is the nature of the *measure* of the tonal chord of philosophical speech. My central claim is that, all things considered, the tone of speech in philosophy, by definition, cannot be religious if, that is, one should remain, as Derrida proposes, within the critical parameters of the Kantian discourse, for the latter, unlike what Derrida proposes, stresses the self-authorising, necessarily discursive character of Reason.

2. Différance and the Apocalyptic Discourse

Derrida claims that a certain 'differentiating' mode—what he calls *différance*—that is itself not explicitly identifiable as such undermines the stability of Kant's premise that, in accordance with the earlier quoted scholastic dictum, philosophy 'beforehand demands certain forms, under which the [intuitive] material can be subsumed' (RTP, AA 8: 395, trans. mine; cf. RTP, AA 8: 404). Why is this so? And what has religion or faith got to do with this so-called structurally differentiating and derailling mode, as Derrida suggests?

Derrida appears to be saying that a distinction between, on the hand, the 'formal' and, on the other hand, the 'concrete', 'material' or the 'empirical', is not absolute or fixed but relative, for the possibility of such a distinction rests on a more originary form, what Derrida dubs a quasi-structural *différance*. As a corollary, no absolute dividing line is possible, Derrida argues, between the rationality of philosophy and its a priori forms and the so-called irrationality of religion and its historical-positive manifest forms, which are dependent on a posteriori, historically contingent, material content, that is, concrete experience. For this reason, Derrida questions the justifiability of the distinction between what Kant calls 'rational faith' and what on Kant's account is to be regarded as superstitious theophany.²⁸ To put it in language that fits the arithmetical terminology of 'ratio' or 'measure' (*Maß*) that Kant employs in RTP, Derrida would appear to argue that the distinction between, on the one hand, a scientific arithmetic and, on the other hand, a mystical, Pythagorean numerology²⁹ or a geometry based on intellectual intuition—a distinction on which, significantly, Kant insists in his apology of the 'academic' Plato against Plato the mystagogue—is not rigorous and a priori fixed.³⁰

In other words, Kant would thus not be justified to make an absolute distinction between the dictating voice of Reason (*dictamen rationis*),³¹ which Kant suggests is mathematically proportioned and hence pure,³² and the emotive resonance of the exalted voice of the non-discursive 'oracle',³³ to which belong all the tonalities of religion as well as the tones and tunings, and detunings, of the heart (*pathos*).³⁴ In Derrida's view, to privilege Reason over the irrational, 'pathological' appeal to such an oracle by virtue of an intellectual intuition would betray an arbitrary choice.³⁵ It would disregard that *both* voices, the untuned or detuned exalted one of the fanatic who calls upon his immediate intuition *and* the so-called pure voice of discursive Reason, are effectively intonations (vibrations) of the *same* differentiating and differentiable tonal range.³⁶ In some sense, the commanding voice of Reason itself (particularly in the case of morality) appeals, in the very strictness of its bidding, to a *mysterium tremens*, a fundamental secret that is no longer rationally determinable. That is to say, it summons up the 'Idea of duty' as 'the majesty of the law', on hearing of whose 'adamant [*ehernen*, iron] voice'—as,

interestingly, Kant himself asserts—‘every human being [. . .] trembles [. . .] when *inclinations*, which try to make him deaf and disobedient to this voice, arise within him’ (RTP, AA 8: 402 [Kant (1999), 68], emphasis added).³⁷

According to Derrida, then, there is thus no overriding reason whatsoever to consider, as Kant does, the authority of Reason, through its ‘adamant voice’, superior³⁸ to the call of faith or of the heart just because Reason ostensibly speaks to everyone unambiguously and in a manner that is presumably publicly and universally sanctioned. This is so, according to Derrida, since, as we have just seen, Kant considers—or so it seems—Reason itself to presuppose an apparently non-rational exogenous ground, a mystery, a secret, which she cannot subsequently determine according to its own principle of autonomous self-determination or self-legislation.³⁹ Consequently, the ground of the interpretation of the secret by, on the one hand, the fanatical speculator, the religious believer or the mystic and, on the other hand, the philosopher who is led by the principle of self-legitimation or the agent who, in conformity with the a priori rules of self-legislation, duly obeys the categorical imperative of Reason and accordingly acts from duty alone is, so Derrida argues, in all cases the same. Reason and faith would thus appear to have the same common primordial root to which they must all make an essentially ‘emotive’ appeal.⁴⁰

The secret of the voice of Reason is, on Kant’s own account, impenetrable.⁴¹ Here Reason cannot fall back on the same arsenal of discursive concepts and constitutive principles which it applies in its determinative or moral judgements, so as to uncover the secret, for this original ‘true secret’—as Kant typifies the ground of the idea of freedom⁴²—that reveals but also ‘conceals’ itself, as Kant himself admits (RTP, AA 8: 403 [Kant (1999), 68]), withstands all cognitive analysis just because, as Derrida suggests,⁴³ it is the *indeterminable ground* of thought’s determinative predications.⁴⁴ From this, Derrida believes it justified to infer that both the constative determinations of thought and the ethical maxims of moral action, on the one hand, and the idiomatic ‘rhythm’ (*Takt*) of religious-mystical consciousness, on the other hand, rest on the *same* original equivocality, namely a conflict between the *interpretation* of the secret of the supersensible and its *effective exposure*, that is, ‘the lifting of its veil’.⁴⁵ This conflict, an antinomy almost, cannot be neutralised: in Derrida’s view, every representation of the supposedly supersensible, or indeed any representation and hence any cognition or action whatsoever, is merely an *orientation* toward the most singular, that is, an *adieu* or hint (a Heideggerian *Wink*)⁴⁶ toward what is Other (*l’autre, autrui*) and is thus itself necessarily nothing but a *particular* articulation of the latter.⁴⁷ By implication, this Other cannot be revealed as such, *as* Other, on pain of contradicting the singularity of the modus of the *adieu*, as an indispensable mere *orientation* toward alterity.

The equivocality at issue thus rests on the fact that the *adieu* cannot reveal or expose *itself* (to interpretation) just because in order to do that, it would first require itself as a means of so doing, which is epistemically circular.⁴⁸ It cannot sublata—that is, *aufheben*, as in Kant's reference to the lifting of the veil of Isis (RTP, AA 8: 399)⁴⁹—its own orientating mode, not in terms of exposing it to view, let alone in terms of literally destroying it (which captures both meanings of 'apocalyptic'). Consequently, the *adieu* as a mode of the apocalyptic—being the prototypical manifestation of the equivocality at issue—must be regarded, according to Derrida, as 'the transcendental condition of each discourse, even of all experience, of each sign or trace'.⁵⁰

Despite its ostensibly Kantian roots, Kant of course throws this ingenious juggling with ambiguity or equivocality in the face of the mystagogue or hierophant, who, as Kant says, paraphrasing Schlosser's *Platos Briefe*, 'approach[es] so near the goddess of Wisdom, that one can discern the rustling of her garment' (RTP, AA 8: 399, trans. mine). The wilful ambiguity or equivocation at play here consists in the fact that, as Kant points out, at the same time 'the veil of Isis' must be thin enough so that 'one can *intimate* the goddess under this veil' but also 'thick enough so that one can make the specter into whatever one wants' (RTP, AA 8: 399 [Kant (1999), 64]).⁵¹ In Kant's view, the equivocation issues from a deliberate detuning of the tonal chord, as it were, with which any thought should—on his account at least—reasonably comply to the extent that one should conform to a publicly validated cognition of the intelligible substrate (the *Sache*), which is the intended object of thought. The intonation is detuned so that, as Kant puts it, in the multitude of voices or tones the 'heads [are incited] into exaltation' (RTP, AA 8: 399), which only leads to mystical sectarianism in philosophy.

In fact, this equivocality concerns a leap (*Übersprung*), 'a mysterious rhythm' (*mystischer Takt*), in respect of the concept of the indeterminable, beyond it 'into the unthinkable' (RTP, AA 8: 398 [Kant (1999), 62]). This leap is what characterises the fanatical thinker's speculations,⁵² for in the detuning—that is, the adoption of an exalted tone—he is supposedly able, on the one hand, to appeal to an insight that, on the other hand, he believes he need not justify in terms of a rationally insightful, let alone intersubjectively valid, harmony—the latter being the 'rhythm' of a 'measured' beat (*Takt*). The disclosure of the secret, into which the fanatic presumes to have special insight (amounting to esotericism), is announced but is at the same time with intent infinitely postponed by not *actually* illuminating it (*aufzuklären*). This results in what Kant labels the 'superior tone' of a certain type of philosophising 'in which one can do without philosophy'. Kant writes:

[The fanatic] posits true philosophy (*philosophia arcani*) in precisely the fact that he broods over an Idea in himself, which he neither can

make comprehensible nor even communicate to others, and so here poetic talent finds nourishment for itself in the pleasures of raving [*im Gefühl und Genuß zu schwärmen*].

(RTP, AA 8: 393 [Kant (1999), 56], trans. emended)⁵³

However, by what right can Kant claim, Derrida will insist, that this so-called leap (*Übersprung*), enacted by the fanatic, issues in 'surrogate cognition' and presumably effects the death or emasculation of philosophy, which alone yields 'proper knowledge' (*eigenen Erkenntnis*) (RTP, AA 8: 398)? Is the 'proper knowledge' that Kant intends not *also* merely an interpretation, a merely ectypal knowledge (cf. RTP, AA 8: 391), that is, a mere 'surrogate' (RTP, AA 8: 398) for the archetypal Platonic ideas, the ideas representing the 'proper' in the strict sense, '*die Sache selbst*'? Does Kant's own oblique, transcendental perspective on the thing in itself, by way of his doctrine of transcendental idealism, not in fact prescribe a surrogate mode of cognition of the thing in itself? How should we then properly understand 'proper' in Kant's sense?⁵⁴ Do we not indeed encounter here an equivocality to which the so-called 'proper knowledge' to which Kant aspires is subject, too?

To a certain extent, according to Derrida, religion even has primacy as regards what amounts to proper knowledge. This explains philosophy's 'turn to religion' announced by Hent de Vries,⁵⁵ the affirmation of a *religio perennis*, for a certain testimony of faith is said always to precede *all* knowledge, *each* act of thought in general. Derrida associates this testimony with a 'promise [of a] (quasi-transcendental) axiomatic performative',⁵⁶ 'an elementary faith'.⁵⁷ This testimony or 'elementary faith' goes beyond all ostensive proof or 'demonstrative Reason'.⁵⁸ In this way, the equivocal relation between Reason and religion, which according to Derrida results in their indistinguishability, their formal substitutability, appears to have been surreptitiously translated by him into the language of religion itself as the quasi-'proper' discourse, to which what Kant calls the 'Herculean labor' (RTP, AA 8: 390 [Kant (1999), 53])⁵⁹ of Reason is also subjected or from which Reason at least only first originates. The transcendental-formal substitutability of religion and Reason, which are to be sure undeniably related terms or concepts, now appears to be substituted by religion itself, as quasi-universal form. This suggests that, in the Derridean view, Reason is not just on a par with religion but in fact subordinate to it. The question then arises: how does religion function as the substitute of the transcendental, as the 'quasi-transcendental',⁶⁰ as it were, which supposedly governs the very possibility of philosophy?

The antinomial equivocality, to which I alluded previously, of a secret that must simultaneously be revealed *and* remain transcendent, intangible, is the characteristic, Derrida suggests, of apocalyptic discourses.⁶¹ It is not only the adherent of fanatical speculation, who, as Kant (RTP, AA 8: 398) indicates, hopes with much anticipation for an explication

of the secret—but, conspicuously, does not want to have it thereby exposed at the cost of it losing its seductive charm. According to Derrida, the Enlightenment itself also proves to be a discourse that strikes an apocalyptic tone, since it typically promises or announces to reveal or uncover (*apokalupto*) the secret of what philosophy proper is, without *in fact* exposing the secret, namely the thing in itself or the Absolute that is the very topic of philosophy. (This is paradigmatically demonstrated by Kant's *transcendental* critique of ontological realism, which leaves open the metaphysical possibility of perspectives on reality other than the human-discursive one. In Kant's critical perspective, one is ex hypothesi left to wonder what the real 'secret' of metaphysical, ultimate reality could be.) Consequently, Derrida believes that one should speak of a generalised detuning, of which the apocalyptic tone is not just an effect among other such religious effects. Rather, apocalypticity is itself in a certain respect the *unisono* voice, *in which* the various discourses, religion *and* philosophy, specifically Kant's progressivist transcendental philosophy, manifest themselves⁶²—which is not to say that apocalypticity is tantamount to 'one fundamental scene, one great paradigm'.⁶³ Apocalypticity is just the generalised mode in which both philosophy and religion manifest themselves as forms of progressivism in terms of offering ways to enlighten, to illuminate (*aufzuklären*), which are at the same time 'destructive' of previous attempts to do so.⁶⁴

But do Derrida's own beliefs in this regard not closely resemble an unmediated 'apotheosis' (RTP, AA 8: 390 [Kant (1999), 53]), even if no appeal is made to a special, metaphysical intuition of what is transcendent, of 'die Sache selbst'? Has Derrida perhaps created, over and above Kant's distinctions, a fourth level of 'assent' or holding-to-be-true (*Fürwahrhalten*), a kind of 'pre-sentiment' (RTP, AA 8: 397 [Kant (1999), 61]) of the quasi-transcendental?⁶⁵ What actually remains of Derrida's *critical* vigilance? Can Derrida's 'enlightened Enlightenment' by way of a formalised apocalypitics still be called Kantian? Or is Derrida perhaps a hyper-Kantian?

3. Derrida's Formalised Exaltation

At first sight, Derrida's 'hypercritical' critique of Kant appears to neglect the conditional nature of the formal distinctions underlying Kant's thought. As we have seen (Section 1), these formal distinctions are aimed at enabling a universally valid and intersubjectively obtainable insight into the matter at issue, that is, the *res* or *Sache* of philosophical enquiry ('die Sache selbst', things). It does not imply that other (non-discursive) ways of knowing regarding the same thing have no validity whatsoever, nor that religious experience as such has *no* warrant at all.⁶⁶ It also does not mean that material aspects of cognition or moral action are not at all relevant for the possibility of knowledge and morality, respectively. Of

course, Derrida insists on the quasi-*formal* nature of *différance*, almost as if it were a principle, which is made manifest by the *structural* indistinguishability, or substitutability, of formal (Kantian) knowledge and more empirical forms of knowledge. In Section 2, I referred to this as the equivocality between interpretation and revelation of the transcendent substrate, an equivocality deriving from the ambiguous meaning of the concept of ‘revelation’ or ‘apocalypitics’ itself, as suggested by the mystical trope of ‘lifting the veil of Isis’ to which Kant refers; hence Derrida’s reference to apocalypitics, which aptly expresses the equivocality that Derrida wants to expose. The structure of indistinguishability between the two terms of this relation, interpretation and revelation, is the same as with the presumed relation of substitutability between formal and empirical kinds of cognition, the latter of which ostensibly signal more concrete types of knowledge.

Suggesting a close proximity to Kant’s idea of the transcendental form of knowledge, Derrida even speaks of the ‘quasi-transcendental’,⁶⁷ or indeed apocalypitics as a ‘transcendental condition of each discourse, of experience even’ or as ‘transcendental structure’.⁶⁸ However, in Derrida’s account, the terms in the theoretical (re)construction of the state of affairs (*res*, *Sache*) would seem to be substitutable in the manner of an expressly intended infinite regress, so that the formality of *différance*, which effects this substituting mode, is not an a priori formality in the strict Kantian sense. Not a single form (*forma*), then, is isomorphically correspondent to the state of affairs (*res*, *Sache*) and so constitutive of its essence in the manner of the aforementioned scholastic dictum to which Kant adheres (see Section 1). Hence, for Derrida, no form is in principle superior to other ways of ‘formation’, formalisation or interpretation, and certainly no *a priori* form can be privileged over any merely a posteriori content (with its own *particular* forms).

Given this scepticism with respect to the possibility of distinguishing explicitly between form and material content and a fortiori in respect of a standardisation of a given formalisation as *the* a priori form, the epistemological question arises about the extent to which Derrida is actually justified to give credence to his own thesis—if it may be so called—of *différance*. What is the epistemic warrant for this meta-epistemic trust? Can it be belief (faith) or the performative testimony itself, which is said to accompany every theoretical formalisation or enunciation and is one among many concrete manifestations of the so-called apocalyptic discourse, as Derrida contends, which provides this warrant? Does this not constitute a *petitio principii* in that he presupposes what he first means to establish as the quasi-epistemological ground of all thetic knowledge?

If the authorising force of *différance*, the apocalyptic tone in terms of a promise or threat even, as Derrida characterises it, possibly manifests itself in arbitrary psychological-empirical motivations, the emotive force of the ‘rhetoric of astonishment’⁶⁹ or perhaps a mystical feeling, then

this authority can equally, and wholly justifiably, be ignored or rejected as having no jurisdiction beyond any individual's personal experience. Nothing indicates that we should, in virtue of the *de jure* force of a reasonable demonstration, take Derrida's invocations seriously and not cast him off as just another fanatic. To put it otherwise, on the basis of which authority should we be vigilant (a trope of apocalypics),⁷⁰ as Derrida urges us to be, and what forces us to feel bound by this authority, when it must be observed that the quasi-transcendental structure of apocalypticity has possibly *destructive* as well as constructive consequences? Can such vigilance, for which the *adieu* is a trope, really be the *same* as the apocalyptic equivocality itself (constructive *and* destructive)? That is to say, should the credence lent to the apocalyptic authority, manifest in one's vigilance, not be seen as solely *positive* in nature, an 'original yes' (*oui originaire*), as Derrida himself asserts,⁷¹ a yes that is *not* simultaneously a no? On the other hand, does Derrida perhaps try to exploit the indisputable equivocality of modern critique—and, by implication, of the notion of 'vigilance'—which is by nature destructive as well as constructive, by playing off the critical (Kantian) perspective *against itself*? (Notice again that, in an important sense, the Kantian philosophy 'destroyed', in a manner of speaking, the possibility of nominalist, realist or naturalist takes on reality, on the *Sache*, so that affirmatively subscribing to the Kantian perspective *ipso facto* means negating, or 'destructing', other ways of looking at reality. The metaphilosophical implication of the critical philosophy is 'construction through destruction', as it were.)⁷² But how does Derrida justify this well-nigh dialectical strategy?

The central question, therefore, is: how can Derrida legitimate the claim regarding the acceptability or even the truthfulness of an 'elementary faith' as a fundamentally apocalyptic tone, by which *all* discourses, philosophical and religious, are typified, without succumbing to a *circulus in probando*? On what, ultimately, does the persuasiveness of his claims rest so that we cannot but accede to their epistemic authority? To argue that Kant himself would be guilty of circular reasoning in that he acknowledges Reason as the sole legitimating authority is not pertinent, for, as noted, Kant formulates, wholly consistently, the justification of Reason as the ground of knowledge *in the terms of Reason itself*. Kantian rational justification boils down to Reason's *self*-justification or *self*-authorisation. The burden of proof lies therefore entirely with Derrida, who, although clearly being engaged in reasoning himself (in whatever way one takes it), paradoxically appeals to a different non-identical (that is, non-self) source of legitimation, a warrant that is not thought or Reason itself but is somehow principally external to it. By persistently forsaking the principle of identity as the quintessential principle of any thought, including his own, that is to say, by denying the identical *form* of thought itself as not only the necessary but also the sufficient ground of objectively valid cognition,⁷³ Derrida effectively repudiates the existence of

a ground that would substantiate self-reflexively, in virtue of reasoning itself, his thesis of *différance*. The act of seeking authority whilst making pronouncements of some kind and the very authorising instance seem to come apart in Derrida's reasoning. On the face of it, Derrida's thinking thus appears to be precisely *non*-self-reflexive to the extent that he rejects the idea of self-legislative, autonomous thought as sufficient for the grounding of possible knowledge.

The rub is, of course, that, according to Derrida, the characteristic mark of *différance* is precisely that there is no such substantiating ground to be revealed internally, from within thought itself, that is, self-reflexively, whilst *différance* is *also* not specifically *external* to thought (in terms of a putative exogenous content or entity to which one can appeal for warrant, a 'mythical given' of sorts). By calling attention to the intrinsic ambiguity of the apocalyptic discourse, Derrida highlights the heteronomous quasi-ground that he alleges is effective from *within* self-legislating thought itself. In this way, Derrida believes to have pinpointed an inherent structure that cannot be located externally nor sublated internally or indeed 'unveiled' by Reason by virtue of the internal process of its self-legitimation—for, given the nature of apocalyptic *apophansis*, it cannot literally be unveiled, exposed to view, as it would then effectively be nullified. Consequently, Derrida does not feel obliged to internally justify his claim about *différance* in the terms of a self-authorising rationality, for that would *ex hypothesi* undermine the very purport of his reasoning concerning the irrefutable equivocality underlying all self-authorising discourse. Paradoxically, however, this structural aspect of *différance* would appear to reinforce formally the semblance of a typical Kantian transcendentality. I come back to this later.

Certainly, one could rejoin that, first, Derrida is not at all interested in a philosophical legitimation of his assertions or in philosophical or meta-philosophical issues concerning circularity, and, second, that to reorganise Derrida's pronouncements in the terms of Kantian logic is entirely misplaced, itself tantamount to begging Derrida's primary question. His locutions would be purely evocative or perlocutionary and would, quasi-formally, as a performative event, rather precede and thus go beyond the formal requirement of justification.⁷⁴ Such an originary event of faith or testimony which precedes all rational discourse and hence appears to indicate a messianic structure, a 'messianicity'⁷⁵, is, as Derrida writes, 'not justifiable in the logic of what it will have opened up'.⁷⁶ Reason, as Derrida writes with reference to Montaigne and Pascal, must simply acknowledge 'an irrecusable [. . .] "mystical basis of authority [*fondement mystique de l'autorité*]"',⁷⁷

However, by shirking the philosophical demand of a legitimation of one's assertions, Derrida would appear to speak precisely in 'the tone of a lord who is so lofty as to be exempted from the burden of proving the title of his property' (RTP, AA 8: 395 [Kant (1999), 58]). Forswearing the

need for a self-legitimizing internalist justification of one's claims makes Derrida a quintessentially religious or 'fanatical' thinker, at least from a Kantian perspective. Consequently, his contentions would appear to carry little philosophical weight. At the very most, they might have a heuristic value. What I am tempted to call Derrida's 'formalised exaltation' (*Schwärmerei*) in regard to the relation of the philosophical and religious discourses seems a classic case of an amphiboly of concepts. By means of this, he effects the *coup d'état* of religious or quasi-religious consciousness in philosophy, even if it is stipulated to amount to nothing but a mere orientation toward alterity—epitomised by the trope of the *adieu*. It is telling that in the context of an account of the *adieu*, De Vries⁷⁸ talks about a *sacrificium intellectus*. But De Vries's programmatically announced 'turn to religion' would effectively appear to imply, as Kant puts it, 'a vaulting leap (*salto mortale*) beyond concepts into the unthinkable, [hinting at] a capacity to grasp what evades every concept, an expectation of secrets or, rather, a suspense-ridden tendering of secrets [*Hinbaltung mit*] that is actually the mistuning of heads into exaltation' (RTP, AA 8: 398 [Kant (1999), 62]).⁷⁹ Thus, Kant's criticisms against the fanatic, who complains about academic philosophy, seem equally pertinent in the case of the Derridean 'sophist', who shuns philosophy's obligatory formalisms. Kant writes:

The disparaging way of denouncing *formulations* in our knowledge (which is indeed the principal activity of philosophy) as pedantry under the name of 'form-giving manufacture' confirms the suspicion of a secret intention: in fact to ban all philosophy under the shop-sign of philosophy, and to act superior as the victor over philosophy.

(RTP, AA 8: 404 [Kant (1999), 69])

Must we therefore denounce Derrida's ideas about the *adieu*, being one of the tropes of *différance*, as non-sensical 'fanaticism' intent on unequivocally banning academic philosophy, intent on completely exposing it and putting it to an end full stop 'under the shop-sign of philosophy'?

4. The Self-Consistency of Différance

One might want to argue that Derrida's intonation is more in line with a contemporary mode of thinking in continental philosophy, which is wary of the kind of formalised approach, characteristic of Kant's thought, to the thinking subject and its a priori activity and to philosophy in general. It remains a problem, however, that Derrida systematically substitutes the semantics of his argument, or its narrative content, for its operative structure without thereby accounting for the undeniably reflexive mode of the substitution itself, as I pointed out previously. Derrida seems insufficiently aware, purposely or not, of the meta-philosophical implications

of his own reasoning. In this way, the tonality of the philosophical discourse that Derrida engages is consistently but nonetheless entirely *ad hoc*, disturbed by the introduction of a (non-philosophical) dissonance. Yet Derrida's tone of voice threatens to evaporate (*flatus vocis*) into a mode of merely describing hints at supposed implicit structures without making, or willing to make, them explicit for thought. Therefore, an orthodoxly Kantian ascesis in regard to such arbitrary tonal *Verstimmungen*, which are directed at disturbing the critical ear or hearing, is called for.⁸⁰ The ascetic intonation of Kant's analysis reveals a choice for rational measure and clarity, which *ex hypothesi* implies a certain moderation.⁸¹ This tonal moderation seems wanting in Derrida, notwithstanding his painstaking dissection of the diverse timbres of philosophy.

On the other hand, however, Derrida's mode of thought seems in fact rather highly consistent with *its own* semantic content, namely the *adieu* or religion as the supposed (quasi-)ground of philosophy (the 'mystical basis' of philosophical 'authority'). Derrida's thought *modus* is, in other words, paradoxically extremely *self-consistent*. It manifests its own *particular* self-reflexivity. As I argued previously, Derrida keeps the ambiguity underlying the relation of the terms of argumentation or narration, form and content, firmly in place in that he consistently substitutes *that which* is being structured by rational thought, either descriptively or formal-logically, for what threatens to coagulate in terms of a formal thought structure (the form *in* which something is expressed or enunciated). By virtue of his 'method' of suspicion, Derrida sees to it that content prevails consistently and persistently over form. This is thrown into relief by pointing up the 'essentially' religious feature of such an ambiguous mode of reasoning. In contrast to philosophy, religious speech is essentially elliptical. It is *conceptually* necessary to speak of the essence of religion in such an oblique way so as to begin comprehending its fundamental alterity—as Derrida aptly writes: 'Just as its name [sc. religion] indicates, one must [. . .] talk about the essence of religion with a certain religio-sity [*religio-sité*]'.⁸² For Derrida, to talk about *différance* as the ground of philosophy, then, means to speak 'elliptically' or 'obliquely' of philosophy's origin, as if speaking religiously, in the tone of an apocalyptic modality.

But what would it mean to speak 'elliptically' or religiously of the ground of philosophy, to speak of *philosophy* 'with a certain religiosity'? One cannot speak of it in this way, that is, 'elliptically' or 'religiously', just by going about producing neat syllogisms or analysing concepts, even if that is what one normally does as a philosopher. The elliptic mode that Derrida has in mind, a certain reserve (*retenue*) apropos of a presumed coagulated formality in philosophical speech, is probably precisely that which typifies religion.⁸³ In this respect, namely in *objectively positing the object* of its investigation, that is, religion as the equivocality of the *adieu*, equivocality *as* religion—which in its turn presumably articulates the

ground of philosophy itself—Derrida's *mode* of thinking is, in an important respect, conspicuously similar to Kant's rational model of reflection, for which the form of the understanding provides the necessary structure to the thing to be cognised (in conformity with the principle *forma dat esse rei*), so that a correspondence between subject and object, thought form and semantic content, becomes clear. That is to say, the mode of irreducible substitutability, *différance*, necessarily substitutes *itself ad infinitum*, that is, the *adieu* as a trope of *différance*, as object of description or analysis as well as mode of description or analysis. In this way, the structure of the *adieu* isomorphically maps onto the alterity to which it is oriented in the same way that the form of Kant's transcendental subject isomorphically maps onto the object of cognition that it intends.

To a certain extent, Derrida's thinking articulates an infinitely repeated infinite judgement similar to the mode of negative or apophatic theology (not-*p*, not-*q*, not-*s* etc.).⁸⁴ Put differently, negation—being one of the categories of quality, as the quintessential feature of objective determination, which in its turn results in a 'limitation' of the infinite sphere of possible experience by means of infinite judgement—is infinitised or infinitely negated, consistently *aufgehoben*, to put it in Hegelian language (recall the earlier mentioned lifting of the veil of Isis). One discerns that by means of the mode of consistent self-substitution, through infinite negation, Derrida enacts a certain mimesis of the self-legitimation of Reason. That is, Derrida mimics Kant's thesis that subject and object qua their objective-unitary form exhibit a reciprocal and self-referential unity (paradigmatically expressed by the dictum *forma dat esse rei*), which shores up discursive thought's self-legitimation and constitutes the possibility of thought and experience. How so? In Derrida's manner of thinking, the positing of the structural directedness, or the *adieu* toward what is different (alterity), is reciprocal to the *manner* in which, whilst consistently differentiating and with a certain reserve (*retenue*), the 'object' of his thought—that is, the differentiating orientation of the *adieu* itself—is posited. This mimicry of transcendental philosophy, of its self-legitimizing mode, is *différance*. *Différance* structurally 'corresponds' to the religious way of imaging the Absolute, or 'die Sache selbst', namely taking up the position of the *adieu*, which does not determine or attempt to determine the Absolute formal-logically, descriptively or in any other positively determinate sense but is fundamentally and consistently 'merely' oriented towards it, as if it is the 'vehicle' of religious thought (cf. A341/B399). The *adieu* is quintessentially 'mere' orientation—which is expressed by the literal meaning of *adieu*, which expresses a direction, namely *à dieu*.

5. Derrida's Hyper-Kantianism

Notwithstanding the fundamental differences between Kant and Derrida insofar as the formal reflection upon the terms in the reflexive relation

is concerned (Reason/faith-religion, rational/irrational, harmony/dissonance and so forth), and notwithstanding the serious epistemological problems issuing from Derrida's stance, we may say that there is a strong resemblance in the way that both Derrida and Kant aim at a certain consistency whilst expounding the matter (*Sache*) under consideration, a consistency that is true to the nature of the object of their respective enquiries—for Kant, it is the object of possible experience; for Derrida, the object of enquiry is the *adieu*, or *différance*. True, Kant strives for systematic harmony from within the perspective of rational reflection, since he believes that an internal justification of the means of argumentation will secure the tonal purity of the debate. Derrida, on the other hand, would not shy away from stirring things up by effecting a tonal disturbance, creating a dissonance, in order to refocus our minds, that is, to draw our attention again to the fundamental issues at stake—this refocusing reflects the characteristic apocalyptic attitude of watchfulness or vigilance to which Jesus of Nazareth exhorts his disciples.⁸⁵

Such an approach ties in with the structural directedness, in Derrida's thinking, to the 'most singular', time and time again. Derrida thus attempts to think formally about the singular without letting thought get bogged down in formal, let alone a priori, structures. Nevertheless, to the extent that Derrida, in the act of describing or narrating the *adieu*, strives for a certain systematicity that is appropriate to the matter at hand and thereby reveals a rational coherence in that *specific* intentional sense, which shows a self-reflexiveness between the subject and object of description, between form and content (namely to consistently think 'singularly' about the 'singular'), one may say that Derrida is heir to the legacy of Kantian thought. The prima facie arbitrary tonal disturbance—to consistently 'singularise' what threatens to become too formalised or generalised—serves a rational goal; indeed, it aims, as Derrida asserts, at an 'enlightenment of the Enlightenment'.

As a result, one might even be inclined to argue that Derrida remains closer to the state of affairs, the *Sache*, more than Kant, who consistently thinks from the perspective of a certain old-fashioned structuring formality, distanced from the concrete object. Derrida's approach is one of a more intimate focus. In a way, Derrida is a hyper-Kantian to the extent that he takes absolutely seriously, and thus repeats, Kant's 'zur Sache Selbst!' (RTP, AA 8: 390). With the measure (*Maß*) and rhythm (*Takt*) of the *adieu*, it is no longer the acceptance on authority—either God's voice or, indeed, the 'adamant' voice of Reason pure and simple—but unremitting vigilance which supersedes all measure in the self-critique of pure Reason precisely in moderation, by not presenting the truth as if it were an observable, eternal fact, not even qua formal transcendental structure. Vigilance, then, is the quasi-reflective form of tonal moderation par excellence, of hyper-moderation, by consistently keeping one's focus on the concrete, the singular, on what is presently before us. Consequently,

speaking religiously in Derrida's sense does not mean to put forward religious, speculative claims whilst speaking in an exalted tone but rather discloses a critical circumspection in regard to the legitimacy of any kind of claim, philosophical or other, with respect to concrete, lived reality and the experience of concrete particulars.

Just as between the movements of a string quartet the musicians must retune their instruments, the tuning of Reason should never be taken for granted as if it were tuned once and for all. Reason, in all of its various manifestations, will always need to be fine-tuned, to be enlightened, as it were. Just as with the playing of a string quartet a detuning or mistuning (*Verstimmung*) of the tones—which is generated due to the materiality of the instruments⁸⁶—will inevitably occur when the strings of the instruments are stroked (vibrations cause a slackening of the strings), sensibility has an ineradicable negative influence on the purity of the discursive intellect which is tempted to go astray by indulging in transcendent claims (cf. A294–6/B350–2). This ineluctable historical or natural necessity is shown by the given fact alone of the occurrence, in the history of philosophy, of fanatic dilettantes who 'act the philosopher' (RTP, AA 8: 403 [Kant (1999), 69]), one of whom one might at first blush be inclined to claim is Derrida.⁸⁷

However, one should take heed that the watchfulness that is expressed by the *adieu* presupposes rather than quasi-grounds the Kantian formal starting-point of the transcendental reflective subject. Therefore, such vigilance needs to show respect indeed for the unmistakable and 'adamant' voice of Kant. In contrast to what Derrida will have us believe, the critical philosophy and thus Reason itself, and not the thesis of structural *différance*, let alone religion, stipulates the parameters of watchfulness—notice that Kant himself uses the same religious trope by speaking, in RTP, of an 'ever-vigilant critique' (RTP, AA 8: 404 [Kant (2002), 443]).⁸⁸ In fact, even to speak of the *adieu*, as a structural mode of orientation, is intelligible only on that condition. The detuning that occurs during the performance of the movements of a string quartet does not contradict the purity of tone, which—as is apparent while the players, before actually starting the piece, are still tuning their instruments—is the exemplary standard for playing in tune.

Primacy must thus be accorded to the formality of the understanding, of Reason, and not to religion or apocalypics, as Derrida suggests; for, as I argued previously, the form in which Derrida states his views regarding the *adieu* or *différance* cannot escape its own self-referentiality or self-reflexiveness and so is therefore unmistakably a thought *form* that articulates a particular claim, a form of which one is necessarily self-aware as a thinker, even if only implicitly or elliptically—this reflexive form is adverbial, so to speak, to any philosophically articulable or articulated claim and should be able to be brought to light in a philosophical analysis.⁸⁹ Derrida's philosophy of *différance*, as a necessary

quasi-religious, apocalyptic speech form, is by the same token a reflexive form of self-legitimising thought which does not, or at least not merely, rest on a heteronomous authority of elementary faith. Rather, it necessarily gives *itself*, reflexively, a form in virtue of which, precisely in making pronouncements about the *adieu*, it thus is witness, even if only implicitly through an elliptic performative gesture or by means of mimesis, of the *self*-authorisation of autonomous thought—namely, of its *own* thought.

All in all, Derrida might still be said to be a Kantian, just because he adopts and then slightly tilts a Kantian mode of thinking by way of an oblique perspective on Kant's own paradigmatic *intentio obliqua*, that is, by consistently looking for the form in which the object of investigation must necessarily be thought, which means, in the case of philosophy's *other*, religion, or what religion is said to express uniquely, *le tout autre* as such, to look for a form that is *ex hypothesi* not articulable in the formal language of philosophy and must be thought elliptically.

Notes

- 1 This essay, the earliest draft of which dates right back to the very early noughties, when I was pursuing my Ph.D. at Warwick University, is dedicated to the memory of Gary Banham (1965–2013), who besides being a staunch Kantian had a keen interest in Derrida. I would like to thank Johan de Jong, Giuseppe Motta and Jacco Verburgt for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay. I also thank my fellow Warwickian Tom Bailey for commenting on a very early draft, in particular on the parts that deal with Kant's moral philosophy. Special thanks are due to Robert Clewis for his extremely helpful remarks on the penultimate draft of this article, especially regarding the proper translation of Kant's technical term *Schwärmerei*. Christian Onof read and commented on the penultimate draft, for which thanks, as always.
- 2 OT, AA 8: 139 ('What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?', in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George DiGiovanni [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001—henceforth, 'What Does It Mean?'], 7–18, 12). All citations of Kant's works are from the *Akademische Ausgabe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1900–) by means of the abbreviation AA followed by the respective volume and page numbers. The *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited from the original A and B editions. Other abbreviations of Kant's works used in this paper are:

Corr	=	<i>Correspondence</i>
CPJ	=	<i>Critique of the Power of Judgement</i>
CPR	=	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
CPrR	=	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
DDS	=	<i>Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics</i>
EMH	=	<i>Essay on the Maladies of the Head</i>
GMM	=	<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
OT	=	<i>What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?</i>
PPP	=	<i>Proclamation of the Imminent Conclusion of a Treaty of Perpetual Peace in Philosophy</i>
Obs	=	<i>Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime</i>
Religion	=	<i>Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i>
RTP	=	<i>On a Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy</i>

- 3 For an extensive and illuminating account of the history leading up to this injunction, see B. Stangneth, 'Einleitung', in Kant, *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, ed. Bettina Stangneth (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003), ix–lxi. Interestingly, Stangneth's introduction partly debunks certain persistent myths about Kant's own position in this affair. See also Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 361ff., 378ff.
- 4 The essay is variably translated as *On a Recently Prominent Tone of Superiority in Philosophy*. The original German title is *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*. Unless otherwise indicated, for quotations I make use of the translation of Kant's text in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy. Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 51–81; whenever reference is made to Kant's text contained in Fenves' edition, I refer to Kant (1999). Occasionally, I use Kant (2002) to refer to the translation in the Cambridge edition by Peter Heath in Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, ed. and trans. Henry Allison et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 431–445. Page references are to the volume and page numbers of Kant's original text as it is published in the *Akademische Ausgabe*, followed by the page numbers in the 1999 edition by Fenves.
- 5 See for this, for example, Kant (2002), 427–428 and especially Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 72–75.
- 6 The title of the French original is *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie*, first published with Galilée in 1983. The text of the original English translation of this work by John Leavey Jr. can be found in Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 117–171. I shall, however, cite the French original (Jacques Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* [Paris: Galilée, 1983]—henceforth, *D'un ton apocalyptique*) and, when quoting, give my own translations from it.
- 7 *Schwärmerei* is generally best translated as 'fanaticism'. However, Fenves (*Raising the Tone of Philosophy*) translates it consistently as 'exaltation', which I think is appropriate and sometimes perhaps even preferable given the main theme of RTP, namely the critique of a superior tone in philosophy. The term 'fanaticism' lacks the connotation of 'prominence' or 'superiority' that is the object of critique in RTP. The Cambridge translation consistently uses the term 'enthusiasm' for '*Schwärmerei*', which in its archaic English sense does indeed appear to refer to fanaticism, namely meaning 'extravagant religious emotion' (see the OED). However, in light of Kant's distinction between fanaticism and enthusiasm in *Obs* (AA 2: 251n.), it seems appropriate not to use the latter term as a translation for *Schwärmerei* in the context of RTP. See also the observations made by Stephen Palmquist on Kant's use of the term *Schwärmerei* in Stephen Palmquist, 'Kant's Lectures on Philosophical Theology', in *Reading Kant's Lectures*, ed. Robert Clewis (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 365–390, 384–385n. Thanks to Robert Clewis for discussion on this topic.
- 8 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 393, 406n.
- 9 I should also note that to the extent that I discuss Derrida's own thought, I do not make an effort to distinguish between earlier and later phases of his work. I take Derrida's oeuvre to be a continuous body of work conveying a central idea across the various guises in which Derrida expresses it. Whereas, for example, such an idiosyncratically Derridean concept as *différance* might be taken to specifically refer to Derrida's early thought, I employ all such concepts as though they applied to his thought in general.

- 10 If we relate this directly to an appeal to a heterogeneous warrant for one's belief in the existence of a super-sensible object, God, say, Kant is clear that Reason 'deserves the right to speak *first* in matters concerning supersensible objects such as the existence of God and the future world'. If this is disputed, 'then a wide gate is opened to all enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*], superstition and even to atheism' (OT, AA 8: 143 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 15]). Compare also a passage a bit earlier in OT, where Kant writes: 'The *concept* of God and even the conviction of his *existence* can be met with only in reason, and it cannot first come to us either through inspiration or through tidings communicated to us, however great the authority behind them. [. . .] [I]n order to judge whether what appears to me, what works internally or externally on my feelings, is God, I would have to hold it up to my rational concept of God and test it accordingly. [. . .] [N]o one can *first* be convinced of the existence of a highest being through any intuition; rational faith must come first, and then certain appearances or disclosures could at most provide the occasion for investigating whether we are warranted in taking what speaks or presents itself to us to be a Deity, and thus serve to confirm that faith according to these findings' (OT, AA 8: 142–3 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 14–15]). For Kant, any appeal to or basic belief in an exogenous source of one's experience or representations must be preceded by an endogenous *rational* justification.
- 11 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 395n.
- 12 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 402.
- 13 When Kant uses the term '*Sache*', he almost always means the really existing thing (*de re*). I translate this by 'state of affairs', which, although somewhat ungainly, is closer to the original meaning of the word '*res*'; more importantly, I want to avoid confusion with the Kantian terms '*Ding*', '*Gegenstand*' and '*Objekt*'. However, sometimes I use the term '*Sache*' as designating 'thing in itself'.
- 14 Cf. CPR Bxii and Bxviii.
- 15 For a paradigmatic description of the aspect of self-legislation in Kant's moral philosophy, see especially GMM, AA 4: 431.
- 16 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 395.
- 17 Kant argues, in the context of his critique of exaltation or fanaticism in philosophy, that if I could make it credible that my feelings are not 'merely subjectively *in me* but can be demanded of everyone and is therefore held to be objectively valid', I would 'have a great advantage over those who must first justify themselves before they are allowed to celebrate the truth of their assertions'. Kant sarcastically adds: 'Long live philosophy drawn from feelings, a philosophy that leads us directly to the things themselves!' (RTP, AA 8: 395 [Kant (1999), 58]). The question thus is not that one can or cannot have feelings that putatively provide insight not otherwise to be won. What Kant disputes is that such feelings can have objective validity and be epistemically relevant.
- 18 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 401.
- 19 Kant writes here: '[H]ow much and how correctly would we *think* if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thoughts, and who communicate theirs to us! [. . .] [If an] external power [. . .] wrenches away people's freedom publicly to *communicate* their thoughts, [it] also takes from them the freedom to *think*' (Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 16). Cf. RTP, AA 8: 389.
- 20 On exaltation or fanaticism, see also *Obs*, AA 2: 251, esp. 251n; EMH, AA 2: 267; DDS, AA 2: 348, 365; CPJ, AA 5: 275 and OT, AA 8: 145.
- 21 Gregory Johnson, 'The Tree of Melancholy. Kant on Philosophy and Enthusiasm', in *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Chris L. Firestone

- and Stephen Palmquist (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 43–61, 55.
- 22 Notice, however, that, for Kant, revealed faith requires rational faith. Kant writes: '[R]ational faith [. . .] must also be taken as the ground of every other faith, and *even of every revelation*' (OT, AA 8: 142 [Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 14], emphasis added).
 - 23 Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Vernunft und Offenbarung', in *Stichworte. Kritische Modelle 2* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1969), 20–28, 25.
 - 24 I refer to Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
 - 25 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 391.
 - 26 Compare the exposition in RTP, AA 8: 392–393, where Kant discerns a conspicuous connection between mathematical ratios, music (tonality, harmony) and the principle of autonomy and self-determination in Pythagoras. This will be explored further in Section 5.
 - 27 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 391, where Kant suggests that Plato espoused a proto-Critical theory of the synthetic a priori. I cannot here expand on the precise nature of Kant's synthetic a priori or Plato's supposed precursor notion of it. For more general reflections on the reference to Plato in RTP, see Rüdiger Bubner, 'Platon—Der Vater aller Schwärmerei. Zu Kants Aufsatz "Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie"', in *Antike Themen und ihre moderne Verwandlung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 80–93.
 - 28 Regarding the distinction that Kant makes between theophany and theophany, see RTP, AA 8: 401n. In his *Religion* book, Kant differentiates rational faith (*Vernunftglauben*) from revealed historical faith (*Offenbarungsglauben*) (*Religion*, AA 6: 163). Of course, revealed historical faith is not to be conflated with superstitious theophany for Kant; historical faith has a positive role to play, whereas superstitious theophany certainly has no such role. Although historical-positive aspects of religion cannot be privileged over rational faith, Kant is certainly not simply dismissive of historical religion, as Derrida might be taken to suggest. However, the *privileging* of historical faith over rational faith would indeed result in false worship or superstition. Notice that Kant's concept of (pure) rational faith is already introduced in OT, AA 8: 141 (Kant, 'What Does It Mean', 13–14), where it is defined as a belief 'grounded on no data other than those contained in *pure* reason'. Rational belief or faith 'can never be transformed into knowledge by any natural data of reason or experience, because here the ground of holding true is merely subjective, namely a necessary need of reason [. . .] to *presuppose* the existence of a highest being, but not to demonstrate it'.
 - 29 RTP, AA: 392–393.
 - 30 Cf. Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 41.
 - 31 RTP, AA 8: 401–402.
 - 32 In the first *Critique*, Kant speaks, in the context of pointing out the impossibility of a physico-theological proof of God's existence, of a 'measured and modest tone [*Ton der Mäßigung und Bescheidenheit*]' (Kant, CPR A624/B652; cf. A749/B777). Kant employs the same terms in RTP, AA 8: 403. The voice of Reason is pure, but that does not mean that philosophy is toneless or even atonal, as Derrida (*D'un ton apocalyptique*, 18) seems to suggest by pointing to philosophy's 'neutrality' of tone. Also, De Vries (*Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, 369–370, 380) believes, wrongly, that philosophy is atonal or tone-neutral. Purity of tone is not tonelessness; rather, it signals tonal moderation.
 - 33 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 390. Kant also speaks of the 'oracle of reason' for that matter (RTP, AA 8: 393).

- 34 Cf. Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 34–35.
- 35 Kant clearly dismisses intellectual intuition as a legitimate mode of cognition. However, he takes issue with the typical reproach that the formalism of the critical philosophy, its reliance on discursivity, would imply an ‘arbitrary *form-giving* undertaken by design, or even *machine-made* [plan- oder fabrikenmäßig [. . .] *einggerichtete willkürliche Formgebung*]’ (RTP, AA 8: 404 [Kant (2002), 444]). The discursivity of the understanding requires that, in contrast to ‘intellectual intuition [which] would immediately present the object and grasp it all at once’, ‘a great amount of labor [is expended] to analyze its concept and then combine them again according to principles [. . .] and [. . .] many difficult steps [must be climbed] in order to make progress in knowledge’ (RTP, AA 8: 389 [Kant (1999), 51], trans. emended). There is at any rate nothing arbitrary about the discursive nature of philosophy or indeed about Kant’s reason for privileging discursive cognition over intellectual intuition, since the latter is an impossible form of cognition for human beings.
- 36 Cf. Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 70: ‘a pure differential vibration.’
- 37 Cf. Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 35–37. See also Kant, *Religion*, AA 6: 87.
- 38 Reason must ‘outweigh [*überwiegen*] [. . .] all [these inclinations]’, as Kant puts it (RTP, AA 8:402 [Kant (1999), 68]).
- 39 Cf. RTP, AA 8: 395 and especially RTP, AA 8: 403, where Kant, significantly, identifies the mystery as *freedom*.
- 40 See also Derrida, *Foi et savoir* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000), 46, 89. Although Kant would seem to admit as much regarding an essential emotional involvement in the last section of his treatise, when he offers his opponents a truce (RTP, AA 8: 405), Derrida’s portrayal of course rests on a false representation of Kant’s position. For Kant says emphatically that the amazement at the sublimity and impenetrability of the secret of freedom, that is, the feeling engendered from ideas (RTP, AA 8: 403), does not *precede* moral legitimation, so as to provide it a ground; feeling rather lends weight *ex post facto* to the obedience which the law of Reason calls forth in virtue of itself. That is to say, feeling *accompanies* the law. The secret can be felt only after ‘long development of concepts of the understanding and carefully tested principles’, that is, ‘only through work’ (RTP, AA 8: 403 [Kant (1999), 69]). Feeling is not the ground of knowledge (which would imply mysticism), but by means of clear knowledge our knowledge is increased, ‘which has an effect on (moral) feeling’ (RTP, AA 8: 403, trans. mine; cf. *Religion*, AA 6: 114). See also OT, AA 8: 139–40n., where Kant writes regarding ‘the *felt* need of reason’ to postulate a subjective maxim in order to orient oneself in speculative thinking (i.e., in the super-sensible domain): ‘Reason does not feel; it has insight into its lack and through the *drive* for cognition it effects the feeling of a need. It is the same way with moral feeling, which does not cause any moral law, for this arises wholly from reason; rather, it is caused or effected by moral laws, hence by reason, because the active yet free will needs determinate grounds’ (‘What Does It Mean’, 12). In other words, feeling is not primary and neither precedes nor grounds Reason but is rather an *effect* of Reason. Nevertheless, it appears that Kant acknowledges that Reason itself has a ‘drive’ (cf. RTP, AA 8: 404: ‘[. . .] zum Übersinnlichen, wozu uns die Vernunft unwiderstehlich *treibt*’; emphasis added), and this at least remains mysterious. I think Derrida wants to highlight *this* inexplicably mysterious element in Reason’s own motivating *drive* for knowledge.
- 41 See RTP, AA 8: 403.
- 42 In fact, ‘freedom constitutes the secret itself’ (RTP, AA 8: 403 [Kant (1999), 68]).

- 43 Derrida, *Foi et Savoir*, 46, 89.
- 44 See per contra the passage where Kant distinguishes strictly between, on the one hand, a mystical instance, namely 'merely hearing and enjoying the oracle in oneself' (Kant, RTP, AA 8: 390, trans. mine) and basing one's cognition on it (RTP, AA 8: 403), for which no discursive concepts are needed and, on the other hand, 'the secret, which can be felt only after long development of the concepts of the understanding, and of carefully tested principles, that is to say, solely through work' (RTP, AA 8: 403 [Kant (1999) 69], trans. emended).
- 45 Cf. Kant's reference to the 'veil of Isis' in RTP, AA 8: 399. See further below.
- 46 See, for example, De Vries, 'Theotopographies: Nancy, Hölderlin, Heidegger', *Modern Language Notes* 109 (1994), 445–477. On the notion of the *adieu* see De Vries, *Religion and Violence. Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 178–187.
- 47 For Kant's account of Reason's 'orientation', see 'What Does It Mean'.
- 48 Cf. CPR B404/A346 in regard to the circle concerning an attempted determination of the 'I think' as an object sui generis. The similarity here between the nature of the *adieu* and Kant's 'I think' as an incontrovertible necessary condition of, and thus adverbial to, experience is significant. This will be explored in the subsequent sections.
- 49 Cf. CPJ, AA 5: 316n.
- 50 Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 77.
- 51 I forego an analysis of the interesting psychoanalytic allusions that Derrida makes in the context of this illustration of Kant's and also in reference to Kant's remarks concerning an alleged *Entmannung der Vernunft* (see Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 45–49).
- 52 Cf. *Obs*, AA 2: 251.
- 53 I thank Robert Clewis for suggesting an alternative translation.
- 54 Cf. Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 16, 49–50, 64.
- 55 De Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*.
- 56 Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 97.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 68; cf. *ibid.*, 31, 44–45, 48–49, 66, 91, 96. Compare what Kant says about the use of the word 'faith' in a theoretical context (see RTP, AA 8: 396n.). Derrida hints at what Kant calls '*Fürwahrhalten*' (CPR A820ff./B848ff.), which should, however, not be equated with the practical objectively-real '*Glauben*' in the super-sensible let alone a revelatory faith (*Offenbarungsglauben*).
- 58 Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 52.
- 59 See also RTP, AA 8: 389, 393.
- 60 Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 97.
- 61 Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 67ff.
- 62 See Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 67–68. See also *ibid.*, 57–58, 77–78. Notice that Kant's critical thought, too, is in an important sense an announcement of the *end* of all dogmatic metaphysics, just as apocalyptic discourses announce the end of the old system of things and the arrival of a new order.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 64 Significantly, the French equivalent for 'Enlightenment' (*Aufklärung*) is the plural *les lumières*, suggesting that there are more than one Enlightenment.
- 65 Cf. Kant, RTP, AA 8: 396–397. See also again CPR A820ff./B848ff.
- 66 Derrida's (*D'un ton apocalyptique*, 82–83) criticism that everything that is detuned (*tout ce qui détonne*) or is eo ipso not admitting of general debate (*collocution général*) is by definition regarded by Kant as obscurantist or mystical and therefore without *any* validity rests, I believe, on a non sequitur. Kant's diatribe against obscurantism in thinking is rather directed at the

- claim made by mystagogues that their manner of speaking *amounts to philosophy*, to philosophy *proper*, and what is more, that it is the only true *directly* provable kind of philosophy (cf. Kant, RTP, AA 8: 390, 395). It is this claim, for which all legitimation is wanting, that is criticised by Kant. It is furthermore noticeable that Kant acknowledges—for example, in a letter of March 1790 to L. E. Borowski concerning the increasing tendency to fanaticism (*Schwärmerei*)—that an ‘[e]laborate refutation’ of this ‘humbug’ is to no avail and would be ‘beneath the dignity of reason’ (*Corr*, AA 11: 142–143 [Kant, *Correspondence*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 338]). It is striking that Kant more or less seems resigned to the fact that nothing much can be done against this obscurantism other than ‘grant space for disorganization, so long as it pleases them [viz., the ‘animal magnetizers’; D.S.] and others who are easily fooled’ (*Corr*, AA 11: 142 [Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 108]).
- 67 Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 97.
- 68 Derrida, *D’un ton apocalyptique*, 77–78.
- 69 Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 7–8.
- 70 See the *locus classicus* of the notion of Christian ‘vigilance’ in Matthew, 24:42.
- 71 Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 72.
- 72 Compare the important notion of *Destruktion* of traditional metaphysics in Heidegger’s thought, which might thus be regarded as one of the quintessentially Kantian traits of the Heideggerian philosophy.
- 73 For Kant, this identical form is the original-synthetic unity of apperception, or transcendental self-consciousness, which constitutes the possibility of having an objective unity of representations that is correspondent to the object of experience (see CPR B131–137). This identical form of self-consciousness is the same as the form that, according to the earlier mentioned scholastic dictum, constitutes the essence of an object. Any thought that I have about something is a thought that is accompanied by an act of apperception, that is, of an awareness that I’m the one having that thought. See further Dennis Schulting, *Kant’s Radical Subjectivism. Perspectives on the Transcendental Deduction* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), chs. 3–4.
- 74 See Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 32.
- 75 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 77 *Ibid.* It is striking that Derrida speaks of spontaneity in this context. Herein, Derrida links his notion of ‘messianicity’ as performative event to the traditional notion of a ground that is itself ungrounded, a self-causing cause, an automaton. Contrary to Kant, however, Derrida interprets this spontaneity or automaton not in terms of rational self-activity, but he associates it with an antecedent unique capacity, which distributes itself ‘machine-like’ (automatically) in the various discourses (cf. Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 46), reminiscent of what Kant labels the mere relative spontaneity of a ‘turnspit’ (CPrR, AA 5: 97).
- 78 De Vries, *Religion and Violence*, 178.
- 79 Fenves fittingly translates ‘*Hinhaltung mit*’ as ‘suspense-ridden tendering of’. Indeed, the *Duden. Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch* (1989) gives as one of the meanings of ‘*hinhalten*’ ‘durch irreführendes Vertrösten (immer weiter) darauf warten lassen!’
- 80 Cf. Adorno, ‘Vernunft und Offenbarung’, 28.
- 81 The ascesis that I allude to here is hinted at by Kant himself in response to a criticism by Schiller of Kant’s characterisation of the concept of obligation in rigorist terms, which, presumably, ‘carries with it the frame of mind of a Carthusian’ (*Religion*, AA 6:23n. [Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of*

Mere Reason, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George DiGiovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57–215, 72]). In this response to Schiller's critique of Kant's rigorist view of duty, for which Schiller wants to substitute grace, Kant asserts that 'Hercules becomes Musagetes only after subduing monsters, a labor at which those good sisters shrink back in fear and trembling' (*Religion*, AA 6:23n. [Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, 72]), just as he pits 'the Herculean labor' of rigorous philosophy against the immediate intuition of fanatical modes of thinking in RTP, AA 8: 390 (Kant [1999], 53).

82 Derrida, *Foi et savoir*, 38

83 See *ibid.*, 61.

84 The relation of Derrida's thought to negative or apophatic theology has been amply elucidated in the literature. See, for example, John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997); De Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, and De Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), in particular the Appendix.

85 See again Matthew, 24:42–44.

86 Cf. Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique*, 34.

87 Cf. *ibid.*, 24 and RTP, AA 8: 389. The pure meaning of philosophy is never guaranteed against a detuning or a false tone. In this respect, one should heed the fact that the peace treaty that Kant proposes in philosophy, aimed at a 'mutual understanding' among the opposing parties, can 'at least be announced as near its conclusion' (PPP, AA 8: 421 [trans. Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 92]), but it cannot be expected to have already been concluded. This would seem to indicate a messianic tone in Kant's philosophy if ever there was one.

88 This phrase is wrongly (and unforgivably, given the topic) translated by Fenves (*Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 70) as 'an ever increasing critique', presumably reading '*wachsenden*' for '*wachsamen*'.

89 This adverbial reflexivity is paradigmatically expressed by Kant's principle of apperception, which states that the 'I think' must be able to accompany all my representations (CPR, B131). See Schulting, 'Apperception, Self-Consciousness and Self-Knowledge in Kant', in *The Palgrave Kant Handbook*, ed. Matthew Altman (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 139–161.