The pronouncement of the death of god is usually accredited to Nietzsche, but in fact the idea has a much longer history. As Heidegger points out, already in 1802 "Hegel named the feeling on which rests the religion of the modern period—the feeling that God himself is dead..." However, in the history of philosophy, the decisive crisis in theological value is to be found in the work of Kant. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant famously set out to "deny knowledge in order to make room for faith." Despite this intention, by demonstrating the impossibility of knowing god, Kant undermined the very faith he sought to secure. On the other hand, it is true that even in the domain of knowledge god is "resurrected" in the form of a transcendent subject. The death of god appears only as a furtive moment in the Critique, immediately covered up, as if Kant could not but draw back from the abyss opened up by the thought. The radical implications of this "critical" moment are developed only retroactively, through the interpretations of Kant given by Hölderlin and, especially, Heidegger.

For Heidegger, the question of traditional metaphysics is the question of the Being of beings, which is simultaneously the question concerning the suprasensible being of God. This is why he calls the history of metaphysics a history of "onto-theo-logy." Heidegger's book on Kant begins what he calls the "destructuring" of this history, which takes the form of creative re-interpretations of some of its major figures, with the aim of making explicit their implicit assumptions. While Kant is critiqued as a part of this tradition, Heidegger maintained that he was also the first to break with it. The break is defined by the discovery of the radical finitude of human being, which marks the death of god. Kant's critique bears upon the possibility of knowing Being in itself, the Being of god; and it is carried out from the standpoint of finitude, which he defines as a radical limitation of knowledge.

Importantly, the critique that Heidegger extracts from Kant bears not only upon the notion of god as a being outside and beyond humanity, but simultaneously upon the god-like modern subject. As Heidegger puts it in "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead:' little has changed if "the God . . . has disappeared from his authoritative position in the suprasensory world" only to be replaced by the subject, only to have the subject rise up into that authoritative position. In other words, god is resurrected


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when the subject is endowed with the same possibility of transcendence. For many modern philosophers the death of god implies precisely this new possibility of transcendence for the individual. For example, for Sartre and his followers, that god is dead means that the individual is thrown back upon his own resources, and must assume absolute responsibility for his actions. While this responsibility is a burden, it is also absolute freedom. Heidegger argues that Nietzsche understands the event similarly. One might call this the secular interpretation of the death of god. Throughout his work, Heidegger critiques the modern philosophies of the subject for their (onto)theological presuppositions; in Kantian terms, for their uncritical dogma.

Drawing on Heidegger's reading of Kant, I will argue that the critique of the dogma of onto-theology is consummated when the death god is not simply brushed aside, as part of the gesture that throws the subject back upon its own resources, but is affirmed as an absence. The hypothesis is that only when the subject maintains a relation with an element that transcends it, can it be prevented from assuming "the authoritative position." The element that transcends it must not be thought of as god, the suprasensible being of traditional thought. Rather, it must be understood as the dead god, and that means as an immanent, irreducible alterity. In other words, the dogma of onto-thealogy is overcome, not through a secular philosophy of the individual/subject, but through a Heideggerian form of negative theology.

The death of god, understood along these lines, signals a new relation between the human and the divine. Following Hölderlin, whom Heidegger encounters in his later work, it will be characterized as a mutual betrayal. Hölderlin finds the paradigm of this betrayal in Sophocles' Oedipus, in the vagabondage of this figure of abandonment. Indeed, for Hölderlin, the tragedy of Oedipus, despite being ancient, is paradigmatic of the modern subject's divisive relation to god. It anticipates the Kantian revolution. It is the modern tragedy par excellence. However, what is essential in this regard is the fact that the mutual betrayal that separates Oedipus from god is, like Heidegger's notion of difference, a relation that joins while separating.

The relation is grounded in the finitude of human being, which, in the history of philosophy, Kant was the first to discover. I will therefore begin with an elaboration of Heidegger's analysis of the Kantian discovery, an analysis that is developed within the purview of the philosophy introduced in Being and Time, before considering Oedipus, and his discordant relation to the divine.

**Radical finitude and transcendence (Heidegger's Kant)**

Traditional metaphysics divides everything into two types of being: on the one hand, contingent beings, which are

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7 Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God Is Dead."

8 In this regard, Heidegger's thought resonates with that of recent advocates of post-secularism, who claim that (for example) "we have never been secular," because of the theological presuppositions undergirding secularism. However, from Heidegger's point of view, as I will try to show, we could also say that we have never been theist, because god could never be present, except perhaps as absence.

9 The relation between Heidegger's thought and the negative theology of the ancients falls beyond the purview of this paper. I argue that Heidegger's thought leads to a negative form of theology in the sense that it is predicated on the idea of the absence of god.

determined by something external to them, and are, consequently, perishable; on the other, the original, self-determining Being (the famous *causa sui*) which exists outside of time. The latter is the Being of pure thought, which is the realm of truth; the former is sensible being, the realm of illusion. In theological terms, this is the distinction between the suprasensible realm of heaven, and the mortal world of embodied creatures. Juxtaposed to the kingdom of god, the world of 'his' creatures appears as a "vale of tears."\(^{11}\) Heidegger argues that Kant subverts this hierarchical dichotomy, by conceptualising it neither as a relation of opposition, nor of identity, but one of internal difference. Finitude proves to be this relation of difference itself. The result is that the suprasensible world disappears altogether, and this world, our world, reveals the possibility of an immanent transcendence.\(^{12}\)

Kant begins the first *Critique* by contrasting human intuition (which he also calls the sensibility) to the intuition of god (if there were a god). The latter is "intuitus originarius."\(^{13}\) It is creative, in the sense that it does not depend on anything. In contrast, finite intuition is "intuitus derivativus."\(^{14}\) It is dependent upon beings, beings which exist outside and in their own right, and from which its representations are derived. This means that there is a passivity in every human act of representation, which marks the fact that something had to be there—before that intuiting act of representation.\(^{15}\)

In other words, human intuition is contingent. It is determined within time. It was not there before; it has not always been there; and it could not be. In the language of *Being and Time*, we are "thrown" into situations that we did not create.\(^{16}\) We exist in contingent situations and are subject to change by virtue of things that affect us. This does not imply empirical determinism. It is an ontological claim, which implies that all of our representations take place in the world, in a world that provides that place for us. The world is there, given, by way of the intuition, before any act of will or cognition. Moreover, what is there, what is given, is always concretely situated. In Kant's language, what is not determined *in concreto*, which means within time, *is not at all.*

In contrast a god-like intuition, insofar as it is absolutely creative, would not be subject to things acting on it from the outside. God would not be god in the metaphysical sense if he existed in time. Kant is sceptical about the possibility of

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\(^{11}\) "God is the name for the realm of Ideas and ideals. This realm of the suprasensory has been considered since Plato, or more strictly speaking, since the late Greek and Christian interpretation of Platonic philosophy, to be the true and genuinely real world. In contrast to it the sensory world is only the world down here, the changeable, and therefore merely apparent, unreal world. The world down here is the vale of tears in contrast to the mountain of everlasting bliss in the beyond. If, as still happens in Kant, we name the sensory world the physical in the broader sense, then the suprasensory is the metaphysical world." Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God Is Dead,'" 61.

\(^{12}\) In this paper, I leave aside the question if Heidegger's reading is an accurate representation of Kant, and focus on understanding the logic of Heidegger's own ideas as they are developed through this reading. As I mentioned earlier, Heidegger's reading of Kant is an instance of what he called the "destructuring" of the history of philosophy. Although an elaboration of this concept is beyond the purview of this paper, the reader should keep in mind that Heidegger does not aim to relay, with verisimilitude, Kant's explicit formulations. Rather, he aims at a creative retrieval of a problem that (he argues) implicitly governs the *Critique*.

\(^{13}\) Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 90.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) "According to its essence, finite intuition must be solicited or affected by that which is intuitable in it." Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 18.

such an intuition. From an epistemological/ontological point of view, it is a "mere concept" (or a "metaphysical chimera"). In other words, god cannot be known.

However, the Kantian "sensibility" (or "intuition") does not correspond to what the tradition defined as the merely contingent nature of beings. It is, in its finitude, irreducibly passive. Nonetheless, being-affected is a capacity of the human being. Kant calls it a faculty, the faculty of inner sense. In other words, the sensibility is not simply a receptacle, at the mercy of whatever solicits it. Rather, this passive faculty constitutes an original openness to things. It is only insofar as we (finite, "sensible" beings) open to the world that objects can appear to us and that we can be affected by them. Heidegger writes that the sensibility, understood as the inner sense, is an original "turning toward" that first lets the being that was already there come forth and show itself. The sensibility provides the horizon—the original openness—which first enables being affected. In this way, although it is finite, the "intuitus derivatives" is "original" and in a certain (restricted) sense creative. However, we should not understand this "originality" as belonging to a subjective will that imposes an innate conceptual frame upon the world. The sensibility remains "a receptivity;" yet there is an activity proper to its passivity.

As I mentioned at the start of this section, for Heidegger, the main problem of the first Critique is the possibility of transcendence within finitude. He writes: "When unfolded the question reads: How can finite human Dasein pass beyond (transcend) the being in advance when this being is not only something it did not create itself, but something at which it must be directed in order to exist as Dasein." The answer is found within the nature of the sensibility, the passivity of which does not prevent it from being an active faculty.

The fact that the sensibility proves to be active means that reason is implicated in it. For Kant, we must recall, aside from the faculty of sense, we have the cogito. The cogito is the self-determining faculty of thought. He argues, however, that the one faculty is nothing without the other. There is no pure self-determining, self-causing reason, because our representations depend upon situations. Reason is thus mediated by the derivative intuition. On the other hand, reason is always already there along with the sensibility, because nothing can affect the self, nothing can be there before it, unless it is recognized by the self in the first place. The recognition or determination of something as something, which happens in and through human reason, is the original turning toward that—as Heidegger says—first lets the being that was already there come forth and show itself.

This co-implication of reason and the sensibility shows that affection is always self-affection. While Kant sometimes speaks of the cogito as a faculty that is separate from "the affections" of the sensibility, Heidegger insists that it is nothing other than self-affection. That the self affects itself

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17 For Kant, what is not given 'in concreto,' that is, what is not mediated by the intuition of time, is a mere thought entity. For example Descartes' notion of the cogito, from which he infers the existence of the I, the a-temporal existence of a creative subject, is only a logical category. To understand such abstractions as having a correlative existence, which is also done in metaphysical arguments for the existence of god, is what Kant calls a "transcendental illusion."

Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 92-100, 382.

18 Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, 19.

19 Ibid. 18-21.

20 Ibid. 30.

21 The notion of self-affection is developed in the chapter "Time as Pure Self-Affection and the Temporal Character of the Self." Heidegger, Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, 132-137. Kant
means that it experiences its own activity as that of an other; an other that affects it from within. In other words, the self is constituted in and through a relation to an otherness that divides it from itself. Thus, as it was for Rimbaud, for Kant the "I" is an other.\textsuperscript{22}

The unity of the self conceived in this way is a unity of difference. The self is constituted as a juncture of two heterogeneous faculties. But since the faculty of intuition constitutes the ontological link between the self and the outside world, the unity of the two faculties is simultaneously the unity of self and world.

It is by discovering a fundamental link between the finite intuition and self-determining reason that Kant is able to overcome the hierarchical oppositions of traditional metaphysics. Insofar as the human being harbours in its finitude the possibility of an active and creative relation to the very world that affects it from without, it ceases to appear as a simply passive creature (lost, as it were, "in the vale of tears"). On the other hand, insofar as reason includes an inner reference to finitude, there is no absolute, self-causing being, no being beyond time. Transcendence becomes immanent to the finite realm.

However, in order to further develop the philosophical/theological implications of finitude defined in this way, we have to turn to Heidegger's later work, where he encounters Hölderlin.

**Oedipus and the turning of the face of god ("le détournement categorique")**

The structure of self-affection brings together two heterogeneous figures. The finite self is passive, passive in its very activity. Its own activity is "always already" subject to the action of an other. This other is irreducibly different from the self and yet, in and through this difference, they are brought into relation. For the later Heidegger, this otherness within the self is, simultaneously, the otherness of god. Heidegger elaborates this paradoxical relation to god when he turns to Hölderlin. But it is Jean Beaufret who shows the connection of this later work to the earlier analysis of Kant, in his Heideggerian reading of Hölderlin's remarks on Oedipus. According to this reading, Oedipus exemplifies the modern (post-Kantian) subject's relation to god.

For Hölderlin, the tragedy of Oedipus is exceptional because it reveals the extreme divisiveness of man and God. Oedipus is the great sinner, who forsakes and is forsaken by God. Of course, the mutual betrayal of humans and gods is a common theme in Greek tragedies. However, it is as though the betrayal is introduced only in order to re-establish unity, a unity that is gained in death. Death, writes Hölderlin, is the "aorgic" and "panic" unity, the dissolution of individuality and difference in "the one-whole," which constitutes the core of Greek art.\textsuperscript{23} What makes Oedipus an exception is the fact that, even once his sin is out in the

\textsuperscript{22} It is Gilles Deleuze that makes this connection between Kant and Rimbaud, when discussing the form of time as the differential unity of the cogito and the self, in what strikes me as a Heidegger-inspired reading of Kant.

open, he does not die; the sky refuses, as Valéry would put it, "to declare itself." Oedipus, once betrayed, is made to assume his solitude, his separateness, his individual difference, and to go on in the absence of God.

Tracing Hölderlin’s references to Kant, Beaufret suggests the there is a piety in this insistence on separation (the separation of self and god) which mirrors the piety of Kant, who was "so attentive in his 'separatism' to maintain the distinction of . . . phenomena and noumena." This is the distinction of the cogito and the sensibility. What is remarkable about Oedipus, however, and about the Kantian distinction, is not simply its divisiveness, but its paradoxical nature. To put it differently, what is remarkable is the way in which, for both Kant and Sophocles, the notion of limit, as that which separates the self from god, the limit of finitude, "becomes an enigma." In reference to both Kant and Sophocles, Hölderlin wrote that the "unlimited separation" (the absolute limit) was there for an "unlimited becoming one;" and that "the unlimited becoming one of man and god [the "aorgic panic" which is the essence of Greek tragedy] purifies itself by the unlimited separation." Beaufret writes that in order to understand this enigma of the infinite separation, we must heed the fact that for Hölderlin the coupling [l'accouplement] of the human and the divine involves "the strangest mutation, which he [Hölderlin] names . . . a categorical abduction." The French word is détournement, le détournement categorique. "Abduction" may be a good choice for translation, because of the implication of violence; but it misses the many connotations of the French which are important for Beaufret: diversion, turning or looking away, mis-appropriation. Beaufret hears in this notion an echo of the Kantian "categorical" imperative. The Kantian moral law, the law of the categorical imperative, is devoid of any empirical content. Beaufret writes that the law is in fact the ban on any "intuitive representation" of god. The infinite separation of which Hölderlin speaks corresponds to the divisive relation that is constitutive of the self, the relation which separates reason from the intuition. For this relation implies that the "I" of pure reason can never be represented or experienced directly. It, that is, the self-determining ground of reason, can only be represented by way of an abduction, a diversion, an alienation, in the figure of an other. Le détournement categorique is thus a categorical withdrawal of god, in the face of the irreducible difference of the finite creature that cannot but (mis)appropriate it. But if the moral law, the ground of reason, refers to an absence, it is an absence with which the self must maintain a relation, an absence that it must bear. The law equally forbids the self to seal itself, as it were, within its own individual identity. In other words, the self is (and, from the moral point of view, ought to be) abducted in turn by the action of the absent god.

This is why for Hölderlin, Oedipus, who lives this unlimited separation, is not simply an atheist. He is "atheos," which is something very different. He maintains an

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24 Ibid.
25 This translation is mine. Here is the (almost) complete original phrase: « On ne peut s'empêcher ici de penser à nouveau à Kant et à la piété kantienne, si attentive dans son « séparatisme » à maintenir la distinction entre ce que le philosophe appelle phénomène et nomème … de sorte que ses principia domestica ne transgressent leurs limites pour aller, dans la confusion, porter atteinte à l'immaculé que doit rester le monde intelligible. » Beaufret, "Hölderlin et Sophocle," 20.
26 Ibid. 12-13.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid. 16.
essential relation with the god that abandons him. He makes this abandonment his own, which means that his very being now corresponds to something with which it cannot correspond. To assume and endure the absence of god: this is the significance of the interminable wandering to which Oedipus is consigned; the significance of his prolonged passion (suffering) and of his infinite displacement. Displacement is the very movement that links him to the missing god. It is the movement that forces him outside of himself, and brings him into relation with the irreducible alterity of the divine. This is what Hölderlin means by the "unlimited becoming one" (of man and god) – purified (of any facile or false identity) by the infinite separation.

In meditations inspired by the poetry of Hölderlin, Heidegger understands the withdrawal of god (a constant theme in Hölderlin's writing) as a form of address. The withdrawal is not nothing. In withdrawing god addresses himself to the human being. In this sense god's absence is a mode of presence. God is there as an absent presence. To put it differently, god is that which escapes the self, but the self cannot escape that which escapes it.31

The eternal diversion of the divine and the ceaseless flight of the self are two sides of the same Janus-faced event, like reason and the sensibility in the structure of self-affection. God and the self turn away from one another, yet catch a glimpse of each other in this very turning: like faces seen in profile.

What makes Oedipus a precursor to the modern (or even, as Hölderlin would have it, a quintessentially modern drama) is, to be sure, the theme of the withdrawal of god. The tragedy prefigures the modern "death of god."32 But for Hölderlin and for Heidegger the death of god is not a secular drama. It is a death that must be endured. God's absence must be internalized, in other words, such that the self remains fractured, ex-posed to an outside. Oedipus, in his vagabondage, tied to a fleeing god that eternally uproots him, is the image of the modern self. If here one might, once again, re-apply Rimbaud's poetic formula, one could say that it is in the face of god, the absent god, that the "I" becomes an other.

**god and time**

The relation between the human and the divine is ultimately to be understood in terms of time. Hölderlin writes that at the extreme limit of suffering, at the crux of the division, nothing remains, Oedipus and god are nothing, but time: "the pure conditions of time," time as a pure and empty form.33 What is at stake here is not, however, the quantitative time that we use as a measure. Rather, it is time or temporality understood as a synthesis of past, present, and future; as a relation of memory and forgetting.

Heidegger understands the being of human being in terms of time. He credits Kant as the first to discover our temporal essence. The notion of self-affection, which he extracts from Kant, implies, firstly, that we are affected by things given beforehand. It implies that we are "thrown" (in the language of Being and Time) into situations, which we, finite creatures, did not create.

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31 Heidegger has written a great deal on Hölderlin and the absence of god. But perhaps the most significant text is the monumental Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning). The term "enowning" is an attempt to translate Ereignis, which is also translated as event and appropriation. Heidegger's later thinking turns upon this notion, exploiting its rich etymology. In this text he shows the link between the enowning of Being by man and of man by Being, the event of mutual appropriation, and Hölderlin's theme of the betrayal/withdrawal of god.

Martin Heidegger, Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning), transl. Parvis Emad and Kenneth May (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999).

32 Beaufret, "Hölderlin et Sophocle," 17.

33 Ibid. 21.
However, we access these situations through the possibilities of action that we project into them. They are never given simply as "things in themselves." The situations that are given beforehand confront us as a past in which we are always already embedded. The free possibilities that we project into them confront us a future towards which the past opens (or can open). But just as situations and possibilities, in Kantian terms, the sensibility and the cogito, are not simply opposed; past and future are not juxtaposed like instants that we isolate when we try to determine the exact length of a moment. In human existence, the past is always turning into the future and the future into the past. The time of existence is an incessant process, which we fail to understand when we represent it as a succession of measured instants. The process is more circular than linear. In Being and Time, Heidegger uses an apt expression to capture the circle of time: being is always already not yet itself. In other words, being (the being of human being) is always already past or always already embedded in a past; however the past itself is always already turning into the future, since it is inseparable from the appropriation that projects it in a new direction. As the expression makes clear, the future takes precedence. However, it is inextricably linked to the past. It emerges out of the past and continually falls back into it. The future is more "original," but in the sense that it has to be perpetually retrieved from the past.

The becoming past of the future, the becoming future of the past, serves, in Heidegger's later work, as a model for thinking about the relation between the human and the divine. There is, in other words, a becoming god of man and a becoming man of god. This proposition does not imply that man becomes god or that a god-like man is constituted in and through time. God, understood on the basis of the temporality of human being, is not a figure, a person, or an eternal realm lying beyond our world. God becomes the openness of unforeseen possibility, which spreads itself out before the human being, like the vast and empty sky.

The possibility of the future does not belong to the human being. The subject does not own or master it. It is always other, other than what we expect it to be. In this sense alone is the future a future, that is, a not yet given possibility. Nonetheless, it is a possibility towards which the human being strives, and which nourishes it, by providing it with the freedom to create a new world.

From the standpoint of this philosophy of time "god" is the memory of something that has always been there, given (like a gift) beforehand. But the memory can never be accessed in itself, because it has always already been displaced by forgetting. It can never become present, except perhaps as an absence. The flip or correlative side of this absent past is the future (the not yet) towards which the forgetting of memory opens. That is to say, "god" has always been there, but only as that which is to come.

34 Heidegger contrasts the temporality of existence with the conventional conceptualization of time as a measure in Division Two, section IV and VI, of Being and Time.
36 Regarding Hölderlin's god who is "nothing but time, pure and empty time," Beaufret writes: "Il n'est plus que ce que Baudelaire nommera 'l'azur du ciel immense et rond' et Valéry 'cette immense horloge de lumière qui mesure ce qu'elle manifeste et manifeste ce qu'elle mesure'...". ["He is no longer anything but that which Baudelaire names 'the azure of the immense, round sky' and Valéry 'that immense clock of light that measures what it manifests and manifest what it measures'..."]. Beaufret, "Hölderlin et Sophocle," 21.
37 The theological philosophies of Jean-Luc Marion, who thinks of god in terms of a concept of the gift or
The Kantian revolution and the idea of 'perpetual revolution'

In conclusion, I would like to consider both the epistemological and the ethical implications of what is known as the Kantian Copernican revolution in thought. The latter is usually defined as the turn away from the object towards the subject: while traditional philosophy argued that truth resides in objects (in "things in themselves") Kant, we are told, argued that it resides within the subject, in the form of a priori schemas of thought. However, following Heidegger, I have emphasised that what is revolutionary and what is most important in Kant is the notion of radical finitude, and the death of god that comes with it. Moreover, as we have seen, Kant allows us to think of a new relation to god, which is grounded in the finitude of being.

What does it mean that the notion of god is grounded in finitude? It means that, after having shown that the traditional idea of god is a "mere concept," Kant revealed the possibility of transcendence within finite existence. The epistemological value of this lies in the fact that we have replaced a metaphysical chimera with a concept that is grounded in the nature of human existence.

This does not mean, however, that god is rationalized or reduced to an object of knowledge. Insofar as god remains hidden, "he" cannot become an object of representation. In other words, by virtue of being present as an absence, as the not yet, god is a source of mystery. God becomes an unknowable, elusive other; an agent of surprise.

Kant overcomes the dualism that the tradition established between the suprasensuous and the sensuous. Instead of opposing the two terms and subordinating the one to the other (for example, subordinating the world to god) he introduces the notion of difference. Difference is not, by any means, a weak relation. Difference brings the transcendental and the empirical, god and the self, into relation in their heterogeneity. In other words, it does not negate the differences of the related terms, or the difference of the subordinated term. Oedipus, for example, is not determined by god; nor do they confront one another as two opposed, self-determining wills. Opposition and subordination are two sides of the same coin: both fail to establish an internal accord, a communication of the heterogeneous. 38

Lastly, I would like to consider the ethical or practical implications of the Kantian revolution. With the help of Heidegger, we have extracted from Kant a radical critique of the dogma of theology. The notion of the betrayal of god has shown that, in this new relation to the divine, the human being is no longer subordinated to the will of god. But Kant's critique is also, as we have seen, a critique of the dogma of transcendent subjectivity. The self does not take the place of god; it does not become the self-determining origin of being. What prevents the self from assuming this position of authority is the memory of the absent god. By maintaining a relation with the god that escapes it, the self must not take itself as its model. Rather, it must lose its identity in the unforeseen.

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38 The idea that Kant introduces the notion of difference, in the form of a temporal fracture in the "I," in order to establish the identity of thought and being; and that this is the true sense of his Copernican revolution; is also developed by Gilles Deleuze. Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, transl. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 85-91.
The nature of the existence of the self that is constituted in relation to an absent god is aptly captured by the poetic notion of perpetual revolution. A self that is divided from itself by time, whose very interiority ("the inner sense of time") is an irreducible schism, a self that is infinitely exposed to the unforeseen, is a self that ought never to become "too old for its victories." To put it differently, to remember the absent god is to open oneself to the unforeseen, and to exist in a state of perpetual renewal.

This is the imperative that Hölderlin and Heidegger find in Kant. For Hölderlin, Kant marks a caesura in the history of the West. With the "categorical withdrawal" of god, he undermines the epistemological, ontological, and ethical basis of Western culture. It is in this sense that Kant brings about a veritable revolution. This event finds its correlate, or its dramatic expression, in the caesura that fractures Oedipus and his world. In the tragedy, the precise point at which the caesura appears is marked by the speech of Tiresias, which reveals to Oedipus the concealed truth that had haunted him since time immemorial: the betrayal of god.  

The significance of this rupture with the past, which makes of both Kant and Oedipus a révolté [rebel], lies in the fact that it creates a future life: that is, it creates a form of life defined by the openness to the future. Oedipus, who is "césuré jusqu'à lui-même" [fractured in his very being], must internalize the caesura. He must remember the death of god and remain faithful to it; and that means remaining faithful to a tortuous infidelity; it means remembering to forget. If the vagabond wandering to which Oedipus is consigned after the speech of Tiresias is paradigmatic of the life of the subject after Kant, this is because it reflects the life of a man who is endlessly torn from himself and his world. Oedipus lives the repetition of forgetting. Taking up residence beneath the horizon of the unforeseen, he lives a perpetual revolution.

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39 Tiresias is the blind prophet who informs Oedipus of the fact that he has in fact killed his own father and has been married to his mother, thereby fulfilling the god's oracle.

40 Beaufret, "Hölderlin et Sophocle," 19, 23.
41 Ibid. 25.
42 The death of god is, on the one hand, a historical event, accomplished, within philosophy, in the work of Kant and subsequently in that of Hölderlin and Heidegger (as well as that of Hegel and Nietzsche). However, just as the speech of Tiresias reveals to Oedipus something that has already taken place; Kant revealed something that had always been the case. God had never been present to man, except as an absence: a longing, a hope, a possibility. Nonetheless, the revelation constitutes a veritable revolution. For we can think this way only after Kant, Hölderlin, and Heidegger; and this thought has changed many of us, in the West, profoundly.

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