Contents

Editorial

Articles
Addendum XXIII of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*: Edmund Husserl (translated from the German by Niall Keane) 6

Biology, The Empathic Science: Husserl’s Addendum XXIII of *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*: Darian Meacham 10

How Nature comes to be Thought: Schelling’s Paradox and the Problem of Location: Iain Hamilton Grant 25

The Call of Philosophy: Joseph Cohen 45

Schopenhauer on the Will as Drive of my Libidinal Body and as Natural Force of Material Bodies: Rudolf Bernet (translated from French by Sarah Allen) 59

Flesh Made Paint: Nicolas de Warren 78

Book Reviews
Maurice Merleau-Ponty (eds Emmanuel de Saint Aubert and Stefan Kristensen): *Le Monde Sensible et le Monde de l'Expression*, by Lovisa Håkansson 105

Ted Toadvine: *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature*, by Trevor Perri 110
STARTING FROM NATURE

The impetus for this issue first arose at the inaugural conference of the Irish Phenomenological Circle, hosted by University College Dublin in June of 2011. The theme of that conference was the intertwining of the ideas of Nature, History and Freedom in the thought of the French Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Prior to and for this inaugural meeting, we (the editors) had produced a (unofficial) translation of a short text by Merleau-Ponty, “La Nature, ou le monde du silence” (“Nature or the World of Silence”), which was published in French in 2008. It is from this short text that this special issue draws its title: “Starting From Nature”. In this text Merleau-Ponty writes: “Nature does not interest us for itself as a universal explanatory principle, but rather as an index of what in things resists the operations of free subjectivity and as a concrete entry point into the ontological problem.” If one takes as the starting point of philosophical reflection the operations of subjectivity (Husserl) or freedom (Sartre) then the problem is effaced in advance; Nature is thus treated only under the rubric of a correlate of subjective operations or what is there for freedom to exercise its control over. As Merleau-Ponty writes: “From the perspective of subjectivity or of freedom, all conceivable being is in front me, as what I have to be (in the mode of acceptance or refusal).” But these approaches miss the “primordial being against which all reflection institutes itself” or the very fact that subjectivity is always already an “intervention in the world”. Here the French phenomenologist seems to be telling us that subjectivity emerges in and from nature. The challenge is to find a way to allow subjectivity to think what exceeds its grasp, and to think its own emergence in this originary horizon. Thus a philosophy of the subject (phenomenology) is already a philosophy of nature, and a philosophy of nature that does not try to account for how nature thinks itself (consciousness) has also missed the point of its investigation. As such, philosophy must ‘start from nature’. As Merleau-Ponty writes in the above mentioned short text: “Every positing of a Nature implies a subjectivity and even an historic intersubjectivity. This does not make it such that the sense of natural being is exhausted by its symbolic transcriptions, that there is nothing to think before these transcriptions.”

In the discussions that emerged both at and following the meeting in Dublin, it became clear to us that it would be of great interest to examine the theme of “starting from nature” not only in Merleau-Ponty’s thought but also his
predecessors and influences, particularly within the German Idealist tradition. That is what this issue sets out to accomplish. It is obvious that Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* looms large here. Merleau-Ponty makes reference to his thought in calling for a restoration of the true traits of the “veiled idol” [*idol voilée*] that is Nature. And while it is precisely Husserl’s philosophy of the subject that Merleau-Ponty sets out to undermine, it is also of course in Husserl’s own “unthought” and unpublished works that Merleau-Ponty locates the resources to do so, if only Husserl would commit to undermining the foundations of his own project (the absolute ground in and of transcendental subjectivity and transcendental sense-bestowal) as Merleau-Ponty knows he wants to! The text of Husserl’s that we present here, *Beilage* XXIII of the *Krisis* (in English translation for the first time), is a wonderful example of just what is meant by this. In his discussion of biology in its relation to transcendental phenomenology, Husserl seems to oscillate and himself be tempted to actually do what Merleau-Ponty rather over-enthusiastically claims is happening in this text: a reformulation, on the basis of the empathic science of biology, of the transcendental itself, from subjective sense-bestowal to natural sense-formation. Husserl truly travels to the limits of his own phenomenology here, or perhaps to phenomenology *per se*, but in the end returns to the ground of constituting subjectivity. Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of the will also deeply puts into question the sovereignty of human subjectivity in the face of the complex of forces from which it arises: the natural principle of an anonymous, unconscious and irrational life-drive. For Schopenhauer, it is the subordination of intentional subjectivity to natural forces that also shows the kinship of the subject to “material bodies”.

Thus the articles presented in this special issue of the JBSP address how precisely we are meant to understand or speak about the concept of ‘nature’ ‘starting from nature’, and indeed whether philosophy can successfully address the self-examination and self-understanding of nature by nature. The contributions in this issue reflect a broad spectrum of philosophical interests when it comes to the issue of starting from nature, from within nature. However, any reader of the articles contained in this issue – which I will introduce below but ultimately let speak for themselves – will see how widely and deeply the problem of nature reaches across all of the major areas in the history of philosophy and remains a compelling problem today. The question of nature, putting nature into question by allowing nature to put itself into question and to make sense of itself, is no longer limited to the discussion of nature as the domain of the not I, i.e. to objective necessity or inhuman nature, but rather an inclusive ontological interpretation of nature in terms of a creative living organism which makes sense of itself and its surroundings as an open field of nature. This issue takes inspiration from Merleau-Ponty’s indefatigable reappraisal of the centrality of nature to philosophy, his attempt to close the
gap between native and philosophy, and his continual attempt to find a precedent for this in Husserl’s late writings. It is from Husserl’s own unthought, from the necessary incompleteness of thinking, that Merleau-Ponty draws the inspiration (and perhaps the courage) to claim that his philosophy hinges on the “Becoming-nature of man which is the becoming-man of nature” (VI, 185)

In How Nature Comes to be Thought. Schelling’s Paradox and the Problem of Location, Iain Hamilton Grant argues that the claim nature is thinkable entails a paradox, insofar as the thinking of nature can only occur within a nature amongst the capacities of which are thinking. He argues that from this paradox the question of the location of thought entails a negotiation of what is and is not thought in the thought of nature. But the thinking of nature entails precisely the exceeding of location, insofar as the particularity of any solution to “the nature of nature” undercuts the claim of any thought to have as its subject nature itself. Drawing on problems in topology, morphology and on logical solutions for the problem of thinking nature from a location formed within it, Grant argues that the problem of the thinking of nature from within it articulates a field theory made true or false by fields themselves.

In The Call of Philosophy, Joseph Cohen argues that the philosophical tradition has always defined the philosopher as the respondent to the call of reason, and thus as that precise being who seeks to define the human being as capable of correcting what Fichte called the “fault” of nature in the rational realization of a “spiritual unity” expressed through its humanity and, as such, another orientation must be proposed. In this sense, by referring to Schelling’s Essay on Human Freedom, Cohen attempts to think the call of philosophy as a resolute “turn” towards what is not simply rational or irrational, but rather unthinkable. This means that to think would mean to orient thinking towards that which is always and already beyond the economy of the thinkable and the conditions of possibility of experience.

Rudolf Bernet’s contribution, Schopenhauer on the Will as Drive of my Libidinal Body and as Natural Force of Material Bodies, claims that the twofold experience we have of bodily movement – as an object among other objects and as an organ of our will – gives phenomenological evidence to Schopenhauer’s metaphysical thesis concerning the identity of will and representation. There are, however, Bernet claims, diverse modalities of bodily “movements”. These can be either voluntary or involuntary; they can also lend themselves to an intimate experience in terms of either an inner perception of willful “acts” or sensations of pleasure and pain related to possibly unconscious desires. Formulated in Freudian language, Bernet argues that the unconscious will-drive expresses itself under the double form of representations and affects which belong to a body that is simultaneously governed by the principle of reality and the principle of pleasure. Paying special attention to Schopenhauer’s
metaphysical, anthropological and cosmological views, Bernet shows how this pessimistic philosophy of a nihilistic will remains indebted to Leibniz’s optimistic rationalism, and how it anticipates the Freudian conception of a death drive.

In *Flesh Made Paint* Nicolas de Warren examines Merleau-Ponty’s *Eye and Mind* and its delirious portrait of painting. In his contribution, de Warren examines Merleau-Ponty’s principle claim that painting is a fundamental form of thinking by focusing on three different ways in which this insight becomes articulated in *Eye and Mind*: with reference to Merleau-Ponty’s ontological project in *The Visible and the Invisible*; with reference to the idea that painting is a form of thinking and the relationship between philosophy and art; with reference to the medium specificity of thinking in painting. De Warren further examines the changing relationship between phenomenology and painting in the evolution of Merleau-Ponty’s writings and suggests that *Eye and Mind* poses the question of philosophy to art. In addition, de Warren argues that the phenomenological reduction and theory of essences becomes perfected in modernist painting, and demonstrates this claim through an analysis of Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of modernist aesthetics and Cézanne’s paintings.

Lastly, we are deeply grateful to all of the contributors to this volume and are honoured to bring together such a fine collection of articles. We are delighted to act as guest editors and would like to thank the editor of the journal, Ullrich Haase, for giving us the opportunity to prepare this issue.

Niall Keane and Darian Meacham
University of Limerick and University of the West of England

**Reference**

1. Our English translation of this text remains unpublished.
ADDENDUM XXIII OF THE CRISIS OF EUROPEAN SCIENCES AND TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY\textsuperscript{1,2}
EDMUND HUSSERL
(Translated from the German by Niall Keane)

For the human being biology is essentially guided by its humanity, which is experienceable in a truly original manner; there alone life is given in an original way and in the most authentic manner through the self-understanding of the biological dimension. Such is the guiding thread for all biology, and for all the variant forms of empathy (Einfühlung), only through which the animal can have sense. But this subjective element also guides everything in the world that we call organic life, and which however does not receive its life from an anima that is analogically understandable, thus it does not receive it from egoity (Ichlichkeit). But what are those variant forms (Abwandlungsformen) that ultimately lead back to an ego and to myself, the inquirer here, as an originary mode? Only from here does the concept of organism draw its ultimate sense, and similarly the construction of organisms out of partial organisms (Teilorganismen), which do not function freely and independently for themselves, but rather as simple and necessary elements of construction.\textsuperscript{3}

In its naïve method, practiced like a techne (Kunstmaßig), biology mirrors the intentional intermingling (das intentionale Ineinander) behind the externality of biological research according to ontogenesis and phylogenesis and behind the research concerning specific classes and species of animals. In their great generalities eidetic laws announce themselves, biology hides an ontology in itself, an ontology which is not based on intuitive givenness and which is even less analogous to the ontology of nature; that is, of the mathematics of nature: as an ontology that is completed in advance and that can be known in its completion.

Indeed biology – like any positive science – is also a naive science and “artwork” (Kunstwerk), the latter understood as a superior analogue to craftwork.\textsuperscript{4} Its superiority lies in the fact that it carries within itself a hidden sense (verschlossenen Sinn), the true and authentic sense of being, which biology believes it can develop thanks to the art of science, while in fact never being able to attain it. However, unlike mathematics, biology, in particular, could never become, as a concrete theory in the lifeworld, as a descriptive science, such a pure work of art, so completely rootless, entirely freed from naive evidence, from the sources of intuition (Quellen der Anschauung). Its admirable constructions are not constructions that rise up
dizzily to the sky – through countless stages and levels – like those of mathematics, though the totality of this science is a massive accomplishment of scientific operations.

Biology’s proximity to the sources of evidence (Quellen der Evidenz) grants it such a proximity to the depths of the things themselves (Tiefen der Sachen), that its access to transcendental philosophy should be the easiest and with it the access to the true a priori to which the world of living beings refers, in its greatest and most constant generalities which cannot be captured without question in their a priori nature (as unconditionally universal and necessary). What it discovers, through the universal and systematic opening of outwardly visible generalities, which are systematically connected in their sense, always produces new transcendental questions. Hence, it seems to me that biology, which is apparently inferior to mathematics and physics and that for so long has been considered almost pityingly by physicalism, as a preliminary phase, incomplete and purely descriptive with regard to the subsequent physicalistic “explanation”, has always been able to remain closer to philosophy and to true knowledge. This is mainly because it has never been threatened by the wonderful symbolic arts of the “logical” construction of its truth and its theories. These arts made physics and mathematics into an astonishing miracle of actual accomplishment, but also, as with all miracles – into something incomprehensible. The physicalistic prejudice could only disturb it insofar as the problems and investigations of a physicalist order, which it contains within certain limits, were overestimated and the descriptive element, which is essential to it, was, by many biologists, not given priority.

In truth, description is, for biology, the only proper and essential form of work within pure objectivity, and as such it is naively guided by an ontological generality that has not yet been disclosed. Therefore, it has no explanatory task other than that demanded by the transcendental or, if you will, the transcendental-psychological approach to the lifeworld and its constitution. It would hence attain the degree of explanation in the sense of an understanding based on ultimate sources of evidence. The ‘explanation’ of the physicist, on the contrary, ‘knows’ what it knows of the world in an incomprehensibility that is severed from all true knowledge. The centuries following Descartes were blinded by the miraculous work of mathematics. It is here that a genuine method of reduction to the sources of understanding (Verständnisquellen) is required. The very nature of mathematics and physics makes it much harder for them, incomparably more difficult, to break free from the principles of the symbolic-technical art with which they conduct their experiments, an art that connects intuition and symbolic practice, and to see the need to question-back (Rückfrage) to transcendental sense-bestowal (transzendentalen Sinngebung).
Biology is concrete and genuine psychophysics. It has everywhere and necessarily a universal task, and is only apparently at a disadvantage when compared to physics, which extends to astronomical infinity and reaches laws that aim to arrive (even though hypothetically) at a sense (Sinn) of unconditional generality. Biology only appears to be limited to our small and insignificant world, and as anthropology, to this negligible creature called the human being. In returning to the ultimate sources of evidence, from which the world in general draws its sense and being as meaningful for us, what it signifies, and to all the imaginable essential necessities that emerge, it seems that biology is not a contingent science for the insignificant world, like Germany’s zoology, the botany of the Baden plantworld. Rather, a general biology has the same worldly generality (Weltallgemeinheit) as physics. Every sense that a biology of Venus could have, which we ought to speak of as a possibility, is thanks to the original sense formation (ursprünglichen Sinnbildung) of our lifeworld and moreover to the theoretical elaboration of this sense formation through biology. Admittedly, this universal task gives it an infinite horizon, which, articulated into further horizons, does not assign it, as a conceivable aim, comprehensive knowledge of laws, reaching from here into infinity, in the same sense [as in physics]. Yet on the other hand, biology is not purely formal like mathematics and physics; it does not refer to the merely abstract structure of the world. In fact, biology, as genuinely universal biology, embraces the entire concrete world, and thus implicitly physics too, and in the examination of correlations it becomes a completely universal philosophy.

References
1. June 1936
2. We (the translator and editors) are grateful to the Husserl Archives, Institute of Philosophy, University of Leuven, and Springer for the permission to publish this translation; thanks also to Dr Thomas Vongehr of the Husserl Archives, University of Leuven and Dr Julia Jansen of University College Cork for their invaluable help in commenting on earlier drafts of the translation.
3. Naturally one always has a biological a-priori starting point from the human being: here we have the a-priori of the body’s instincts, originary drives (Urtriebe), which bring to fruition (eating, mating, etc.) the a-priori itself. Of course, this holds for animals, to the extent that animality is actually experienced through empathy. Thus we have a generative a-priori. Beyond the structure of animal environment, in which every animal has the ‘social’ horizon of its species – in the world of dogs, the horizon is an open multiplicity of dogs in the interconnections possible for dogs (im möglichem Hunde-Konnex). This a-priori is anticipated as a hypothesis within the hypothesis ‘other animal’, while it is not directly experienceable as animal, and even more so in the case of plants. Of course, one has with animals the structure of the world of other animals (tierische Mitwelt) – not only the species, but instead the understanding of other animals and of the sociality of their species – and the counter-structure (Gegenstruktur) of the non-animal world, things (Dinge), etc. Thus one already has the beginnings of a real, and not altogether paltry, animal ontology from the inside and the outside. Yet what one has lies in an infinite horizon as of an unknown ontology (unbekannte Ontologie) prefigured in its infinity. See Teleology.
4. Husserl uses the term *Handwerk* here, meaning a craft or trade, e.g. carpentry – translator’s note.
5. The term *Rückfrage*, meaning a questioning-back or regressive inquiry appears frequently in the *Krisis* text as a key component of genetic-historical phenomenological method. *Rückfrage* is a tracing back, so to speak, of the genesis or development of sense, e.g. ideal objects, to the transcendental sense-bestowing activities of the constituting ego – translator’s note.
Thanks to Niall Keane’s careful translation, English-speaking readers of Husserl have a first chance to read this important appendix to the *Krisis* text, omitted from the original English translation of 1970. The translation of *Beilage* XXIII also offers a rare glimpse at a dimension of Husserl’s late thought that seldom gets seen in English, but which nonetheless left an important legacy in the development of phenomenology. This is particularly the case with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but also, perhaps more indirectly, the phenomenological biology of Hans Jonas and contemporary work in the field of neurophenomenology and philosophy of mind (I am thinking here of Evan Thompson’s *Mind in Life*). While Thompson’s work draws explicitly on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Jonas, he does not (to my knowledge) anywhere mention Husserl’s few writings on biology. I will briefly return to Jonas and Thompson later to argue that one of the central insights that Thompson draws from Jonas: “life can only be known by life”, is already very much present in Husserl’s thought as presented in this appendix. Though these few pages offer only some hints at what Husserl thought the relation between biology and phenomenology might be, and beyond that what light the relation between biological life and consciousness or sense-bestowal (*Sinngebungen*) might shed on more general ontological problems, they present an interesting set of issues that continue to be of relevance today in several areas of philosophy (phenomenology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of life, philosophy of biology, philosophy of nature).

The significance of this and other unpublished texts on biology and nature from Husserl’s late period certainly was not lost on Merleau-Ponty. To paraphrase the French phenomenologist, it is in these late, unpublished writings (the unpublished *Beilagen*, notes and manuscripts some of which Merleau-Ponty was able to consult at the Husserl Archives as early as 1939, including *Ideas II*) that Husserl provides some of the resources for putting the absolute being of the transcendental subject into question and with it the assertion that its constituting activities would be the ground of all phenomenology. But all of this is done from within the limits of phenomenology and indeed from within the framework of transcendental idealism and its emphasis on the sense-bestowing activities of the ego. It is this possibility of going beyond egocentric...
transcendental idealism, what Merleau-Ponty calls bringing into contact with one another the “realist-causal order” and the “idealist-constituting” one, that led the French phenomenologist to translate (into French) Beilage XXIII in the preparation of his 1958-59 course La philosophie aujourd’hui, where he read (or at least, according to his notes, planned to) the appendix with his students. It is clear that he saw Husserl’s late and ‘embarrassing’ (at least from the perspective of phenomenological transcendental idealism grounded in the absoluteness of the constituting subject) writings as offering vital clues, hints and resources towards the aim of his (Merleau-Ponty’s) final project: “Unconcealment of a type of being other than the one where what we call ‘matter,’ ‘spirit,’ and reason reside. We are in contact with this type of being through our science and our private and public lives. But it does not have official existence: our ‘philosophical’ thought remains spiritualist, materialist, rationalist or irrationalist, idealist or realist […]” In his preparatory course notes, Merleau-Ponty writes in direct reference to Beilage XXIII: “The transcendental is no longer consciousness, constituting everything. It is also the reciprocity: everything that comes to consciousness in man; man as a microcosm. […] Thus biology, insofar as it speaks of life, necessarily speaks of the incarnation of consciousness, of the first empathy [Einfühlung] through which our body becomes Leib, while the other bodies become for us ‘other bodies’, and for example, the animals, animals.”

It is worthwhile to note that Husserl wrote other Beilagen on biology and phenomenology, significantly text Nr. 27 of Husserliana XXIX on species and species’ worlds, which are closely linked to Beilage XXIII, and particularly to the second footnote that Husserl adds to the Beilage. For Merleau-Ponty’s part, in addition to the reading of Beilage XXIII that he carries out in his course notes from 1958-59, there is also a clear relation between Husserl’s later thought, or the “unthought” of Husserl’s late period, and the phenomenological-biological studies that Merleau-Ponty discusses in his Nature lectures of 1959-60 (with reference to Jakob von Uexküll, Konrad Lorenz, E.S. Russell, and Adolf Portmann as well as Raymond Ruyer). According to Dr Thomas Vongehr of the Husserl Archives, Leuven, an affinity between Husserl’s work and the biologists of his time, notably Hans Driesch, is not surprising. Husserl and Driesch shared a mutual interest in and respect for one another’s work, and from their correspondences (held by the Husserl Archives) we know that Driesch sent copies of his work to Husserl.

Another name that was most likely on Husserl’s mind when he wrote these paragraphs in 1936 (probably while on Summer holiday) is that of Heidegger. It could be argued that the Krisis text was written in part as a response to Heidegger’s break in Being and Time from Husserl and from Husserlian phenomenological method. While seeking, contra criticisms leveled by Heidegger, to re-establish his rigorous method of epoché and reduction in the
overall system of transcendental phenomenology that he reintroduces in the *Krisis*, Husserl also takes on some of Heidegger’s vocabulary, for example, the frequent use of the term Dasein in the *Krisis*. He also sought to address some of the issues that Heidegger had taken up about ten years earlier, one of those being the relation between biology and phenomenology. This was of course not the first time that Husserl had addressed the relation between phenomenology and the natural sciences, but biology here warrants special consideration precisely due to its alleged (by Husserl) proximity to transcendental phenomenology and in particular its close proximity to the original source of all scientific evidence, the lifeworld. While Heidegger, in §10 of *Being and Time*, situates biology (as well as psychology and anthropology) as derivative in relation to the analytic of Dasein, Husserl seeks to position biology as founded in transcendental phenomenology (like all the sciences) and as the special science closest to philosophy (transcendental phenomenology) due to its proximity to the lifeworld *qua* original source of all evidence, its reliance on variant forms of empathy to proceed, and even a sort of in-built phenomenological *Rückfrage*, giving it the clearest path amongst the natural sciences back to its grounds in the lifeworld and transcendental sense-bestowal. It is for these reasons that, of all the sciences, biology seems, according to Husserl, better able to avert falling into the kind of *Crisis* that is inherent to mathematical physics. We will return to the relation between biology and the concept of *Crisis* below. Despite Husserl’s more positive assessment of biology’s relation to philosophy, it is certainly worth juxtaposing Husserl’s analysis with Heidegger’s remarks in §10 of *Being and Time*. Heidegger writes:

Nor can we compensate for the absence of ontological foundations by taking anthropology and psychology and building them into the framework of a general biology. In the order which any possible comprehension and interpretation must follow, biology as a “science of life” is founded upon the ontology of Dasein. Life, in its own right, is a kind of Being; but essentially it is accessible only in Dasein. The ontology of life is accomplished by way of a privative interpretation; it determines what must be the case if there can be anything like mere-aliveness. Life is not a mere Being-present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein. In turn, Dasein is never to be defined ontologically by regarding it as life (in an ontologically indefinite manner) plus something else.

In suggesting that anthropology, psychology, and biology all fail to give an unequivocal and ontologically adequate answer to the question about the kind of Being which belongs to those entities which we ourselves are, we are not passing judgment on the positive work of these disciplines.12

We can see how differently Merleau-Ponty read Husserl’s understanding of biology (from Heidegger’s understanding of biology), as reforming the transcendental and providing a path into the question of the incarnation of consciousness. Heidegger would no doubt reply that by keeping the focus on transcendental consciousness even a phenomenological biology misses the question of Dasein’s Being and remains on an ontic level. Heidegger is perhaps more generous towards biology in his 1929 lectures on *The Fundamental
Concepts of Metaphysics, but he still rebukes von Uexküll for confounding the meaning of the word Welt in referring to animal Umwelten, when Welt is only proper to Dasein, animals being welterm or poor in world.\textsuperscript{13} As we can see from the first sentences of Beilage XXIII, Husserl’s position seems rather closer to von Uexküll’s. There is not an incompossibility between human and animal experience, both must be thought as variants of transcendental sense-formation (Sinnbildung) that can be, at least to some extent shared; the possibility of biology relies upon it.

I now wish to turn to the text of Husserl’s Beilage and try to situate it in relation to themes that will be familiar to readers of Husserl, specifically the Krisis text, and offer some signposts for further investigation. These signposts must come with a warning. Beilage XXIII was edited and placed into Husserliana VI nearly sixty ago (1954) by Walter Biemel. As I mentioned above, the text does not stand alone but should be considered in its relation to the other writings and Beilagen of the same period, some of which are published in Husserliana VI, and others which were not published until Husserliana XXIX in 1993. All editors engage in an act of interpretation with the choice, placement and transcribing of texts, Dr Vongehr has indicated that the edited German text published in 1954 contains some potentially misleading phrases vis-à-vis Husserl’s shorthand original.\textsuperscript{14} Niall Keane has followed Dr Vongehr’s suggestions where possible. If editing the text in its original language and translating it into English are already interpretative acts, then reading it certainly is. As is clear from what is written above, I am to an extent reading this text through the lens of Merleau-Ponty’s own reading of it. This may indeed be a productive approach, I think it is, but it is by no means a hermetically or hermeneutically sealed one with regard to Husserl’s initial intentions.

Biemel indicates that the text is an appendix to §65 of the Krisis (“Testing the legitimacy of an empirically grounded dualism by familiarizing oneself with the factual procedure of the psychologist and the physiologist”), but the subject matter seems to bring it closer to §66 (“The world of common experience: its set of regional types and the possible universal abstractions within it: ‘nature’ as correlate of a universal abstraction; the problem of ‘complementary abstractions.’”).\textsuperscript{15} In §66, Husserl situates biology, without saying so explicitly, as a regional ontology, delimited in its scope of objects by a “regional type” (C 227). “In life”, Husserl remarks, it is regional types that “determine praxis”. Here Husserl makes several distinctions pertaining to the field of biology. These regional type distinctions “become explicit with essential necessity through a method of inquiry into essences”. The broadest of these distinctions is between living and non-living things, living things can be then further divided into those living “not merely according to drives, but also constantly through ego-acts” (animals) and those “living only according to drives (such as plants)” (227). Against these regional types, human beings
stand out (for us), as all other animals and presumably living things “have their ontic meaning only in comparison to them” (227). The “for us” is perhaps more relevant here than in other phenomenological discussions where it is taken as a given.

In the footnote on the first page of Beilage XXIII Husserl comes close to engaging in a kind of animal phenomenology or general ontology of animal lifeworlds, wherein it becomes apparent that for members of other species, dogs being the example he uses, it is seemingly first of all against a horizon of other species members and a species’ world (e.g. other dogs and the dog-world), that sense formation occurs for animals (including humans). For us, this uncovering of other species’ worlds, only acquires its meaning against the background of the human lifeworld, which is our originary source of species-specific evidence and sense-formation. The givenness, or what givenness there is, of the intra-species world of dogs, for example, has its originary source of evidence in our own personal and species-specific lifeworld experience, and is as such an accomplishment of transcendental sense-bestowal (transzendentalen Sinngebungen). This is precisely what Husserl tells us in the first line of Beilage XXIII: “for the human being, biology is essentially guided by its humanity, which is experiencable in a truly original manner; there alone life is given in an original way and in the most authentic manner through the self-understanding of the biological dimension.” How do we get from our humanity to the sense of an animal? In much the same manner as we get to our humanity (species-world) from a much narrower scope of concrete intersubjective relations in the first place, namely through empathy. Husserl tells us that biology as a science is founded upon “variant forms of empathy” (die Abwandlungsformen der Einfühlung).

This is perhaps the most radical claim in the text and it comes in the first lines. Biology is the science of the sense of the regional type, living things. The sense of other classes of living things (than ourselves), i.e. animals, plants, and perhaps other types of living organisms, is attained through a variation of empathy, which is also the basis for all intra-species human communication. Empathy proceeds by way of the givenness of the motivational structures of another body (a Körper which is bestowed with the sense Leib). Another way of putting this would be to say that there is a givenness of the sense-formation (Sinnbildung) of and for the other ego. The givenness of the other’s more and less individuated structures of motivation is made possible through what Husserl calls an “analogous apperception”. The analogy that is formed is between my own body’s self-givenness as both Körper (physical body-object) and Leib (lived-body) on the one hand, and another Körper on the other hand. Therein occurs an “apperceptive sense-transfer” from my own lived body to the Körper of the other, endowing it with the sense of a Leib. Husserl uses the term Urstiftung (primary or originary institution) to describe this sense transfer.
The transfer of sense is motivated by what we might call signs of similar (ähnlich) life that we perceive in the encounter with the other (although Husserl here calls into question just how similar those signs have to be). The index of life is in my own experience and self-perception of myself as Leib or living body. Although Husserl calls this analogizing, he is careful to point out that the transfer of sense from my own lived-body to that of the other is not a judgment or active cognition. In this sense it is both immediate and mediate. Immediate in that the transfer occurs on the level of passivity and without the mediation of an active (present-to-consciousness) cognition, but mediate in that the life of the other is given mediate through the expressiveness of the body (the Körper cum Leib) and is thus given in a manner distinct from my own.  

In Ideas II, Husserl talks about a kind of sensitizing of our empathic capacities such that we can come to better understand the motivational structures of another (here he means human person) as both generally similar to our own and distinct in the sense of individuated from a more general style of being motivated (or sense-forming) in a typical manner: typical to the form of our bodies, our cultural background, and at a more general level species-typicality. Husserl writes in Ideas II: “The universal typicality of Corporeality is a presupposition for empathy, and by empathy and Ego-analogon is apprehended”, in Beilage XXIII Husserl seems to have changed his position with regard to this second claim, (Ideas II 284). That this empathic refinement can be expanded to encompass, in a general sense, those other ensouled animals whose acts are egoic is perhaps not that difficult to understand. Humans share with animals a lower egoic stratum of “pure” animality (Ideas II 289). That Husserl puts pure in scare quotes indicates that he is aware of the problems associated with arriving at the human by simply piling reason on top of animality – as is the case with other humans, even with ourselves, this tracing of motivational pathways of sense-formation will never be without its blind spots and lacunae.

If we go back to Beilage XXIII, Husserl seems to understand biology in a manner not unlike the way he understands the phenomenological or intentional psychology (or character analysis) that he describes in Ideas II, i.e. it is largely to do with the identification and genetic analysis of typical forms of sense formation or sense bestowal. In this way, he seems to share the understanding of biology that Jakob von Uexküll promoted in his 1926 Theoretical Biology. Biology is about understanding the patterns and types of sense formation in the reciprocal relations between the organism and its Umwelt or surrounding world; therein lies the sense of the organsim. This understanding cannot but have its start in the understanding that we gain of our own forms of sense-formation in relation to other human beings and our human world, of which animals and animal worlds are variants for us. Thus the methodology that we use to study them is a variant of the (phenomenological) methodology that we use to study
sense formation in our human world. This is what Husserl means in the footnote that he places at the end of the first paragraph (note b), when he writes: “Naturally one always has a biological a-priori starting from the human being: here we have the a-priori of the body’s instincts, originary drives (*Urtriebe*), which bring to fruition (eating, mating, etc.) the a-priori itself. Of course this holds for animals to the extent that animality is actually experienced through empathy. Thus we have a generative a-priori.” Generative here should be understood to mean genetic or historic and generative in the sense of formative of sense. Thus the generative a-priori gives us the history of sense-development and the conditions for the development of sense in such and such a species-specific individuated manner.

The generative a-priori is what makes possible the comprehensibility of the “structure of animal environment” and the individuated species specific “social horizons” of animals (humans included): “[I]n the world of dogs, the horizon is an open multiplicity of dogs and the interconnections possible for dogs.” The world of dogs of course also contains other non-dog animals and the “counter-structure” of the “non animal world, things, etc”, but all of this is formed according to the generative biological a-priori. The same of course holds for humans as well as dogs, all human acts of *Sinnbildung* occur against a horizon of humanity: an open multiplicity of humans and the scope of interconnections possible for humans. This horizon of humanity is passive or unthematic prior to reflection, but it is ever-present in all human activity. Our empathic contact with ensouled animals or ones that live through ego-acts as we do must proceed along the same lines as our empathic relations with other humans. This means that it proceeds according to the expressive nature of animal bodies. Just as human-to-human empathy proceeds by following a kind of curve from individual to general (the horizon of humanity) and back to individual as we follow the corporeally manifest pathways of another ego’s structures of sense-formation, so too does empathy with animals proceed. The difference of course lies in the givenness of all other human typicality and idiosyncrasy being against a background of the horizon of humanity. Animal typicality is also manifest against the horizon of humanity, but the horizon of the animal-world which is manifest as a variant of the human world intercedes, so to speak, between the horizon of humanity and the typical forms of sense-formation within the horizons of these species’ worlds.

Yet the full scope of Husserl’s claim is more radical than this. The subjective element through which animal life is given to us also “guides everything in the world that we call organic life, but which does not receive its life from an *anima* that is analogically understandable, thus it does not receive it from egoity (*Ichlichkeit*)”. To be clear as to what Husserl seems to be saying let us rephrase: those life forms that are not egoic (plants and others) do not have a soul (consciousness) that is analogically understandable to us the way that another
human’s is or seemingly a dog’s (for example). The egoic analogy in these cases is established on the basis of the expressive nature of the other being’s behaviour. And yet, these non-egoic organisms are nonetheless guided by a subjective element. This seems like a rather un-Husserlian thing to say. There seem to be two ways of interpreting this statement. First, the givenness of all life appears according to an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic bias because of our rootedness in the human lifeworld. Second, non-egoic life (plants and other lower organisms) is guided by the same generative a-priori of life as egoic life, despite their typicality not being analogous in the same manner. For this reason the “variant forms of empathy” still lead back to my egoic life and my lifeworld as an original mode. I favour the second interpretation. Husserl clearly states that this subjective element does guide all organic life, not that it appears due to bias. This finding also leads Husserl to say, “biology hides an ontology within itself”. I think that we can take this to mean that biology hides the generative a-priori of sense-formation: “biology hides an ontology in itself, an ontology which is not based on intuitive givenness and which is even less analogous to the ontology of nature; that is of the mathematics of nature: as an ontology that is completed in advance and that can be known in its completeness.” Empathy here seems to break its egoic boundaries of intuitive givenness and take on an ontological significance. This is precisely what leads Husserl to make the most radical claim of the text in the fifth paragraph: “[Biology] has no other explanatory task than that demanded by the transcendental, or if you will the transcendental-psychological approach to the lifeworld and its constitution.”

The task of biology is to disclose the transcendental a-priori of sense-formation beyond the constituting activities of the ego. This does not necessarily conflict with Husserl’s claim in the first paragraph that the variant forms of empathy lead back to my own ego as an originary mode. It is fully possible that tracing back, via the Rückfrage, the constitutive genesis of my own egoic life, which still stands as a sort of milestone in the investigation, leads to a strata of sense-formation beyond or below, so to speak, the transcendental sense-bestowal of the ego.

But Husserl equivocates and at the end of the same paragraph, he seems to bring biology back within the scope of the transcendental ego and egoic sense-bestowal (Sinngebungen) rather than an ontological principle of sense-formation (Sinnbildungen). He writes: “The very nature of mathematics and physics makes it much harder for them [than biology], incomparably more difficult, to beak free from the principles of the symbolic-technical art with which they conduct their experiments, an art that connects intuition and symbolic practice, and to see the need to question back (Rückfrage) to transcendental sense-bestowal” Merleau-Ponty remarks disappointedly on Husserl’s seeming retreat: “All of this, this philosophical dimension of the Umwelt (or of the Lebenswelt),—of the world and of the mind before their
correlative idealizations,—is really different from an idealism: it is the
‘constitutive genesis’ which is first and in relation to which idealities are
constituted. And yet in the end Husserl presents it again within the frame of
constitution as ‘Sinngebung’. 

Yet it is certainly worth mentioning that Husserl’s remarks in Beilage XXIII,
even if ultimately presented within the frame of Sinngebung, do seem to
anticipate developments in the phenomenological biology of figures like Hans
Jonas and Evan Thompson. One of Jonas’s central claims in both The
Phenomenon of Life: Towards a Philosophical Biology (1966) and the later
Mortality and Morality: The Search for the Good after Auschwitz (1996) is that
life can only be known by life; it takes a living being to recognize another being
as alive. Jonas’s main argument in this regard is that a disembodied pure
mathematical intellect (Laplace’s divine mathematician) would not recognize
the autonomy and transcendence of the organism in its relations with its
Umwelt, but only see a set of processes. It takes a being that has experienced
life on the basis of its own embodied and “subjective” being to recognize it in
another being. In Mind and Life (2009), Evan Thompson takes up Jonas’s
insight and places it in the context of life as autopoietic selfhood, asking:
“Would autopoietic selfhood be disclosable from some disembodied, objective
standpoint? Or, rather, are we able to cognize this form of existence because it
resembles the form of our own bodily selfhood and subjectivity which we know
firsthand?” But this insight, expressed phenomenologically, already seems
very much present in Husserl’s insistence that biology be considered an
empathic science, and as such that it takes as its starting point the primal
institution of the sense of my own living body.

Another point shared by Husserl and Jonas (and Thompson) is the
“subjective” nature of all life. This is a delicate point and should not be
misconstrued. Neither Husserl nor Jonas is suggesting that all living beings
have a full blown subjective life. This is why Husserl insists on the distinction
between organisms that “receive [their] lives from an anima” or egoity and
those that are egoless but nonetheless guided by a “subjective element”. What
does it mean then for all life to have a subjective element if not as egoic? Jonas
is clearer on this point. The recognition of life or of a living organism involves
the recognition of a boundary between the organism and its surrounding world.
For the living organism, “‘world’ is there from the very beginning: a horizon
opened up by the transcendence of need” (the organism must put the worldly
matter at its disposal to use in order to metabolise and survive). In this
transcendence towards the world to meet its needs, the organism exhibits self-
concern and with it some glimmer of subjectivity “in nuce”. Thompson
compares this to the Spinozist idea of conatus, “life’s concern to exist or to
carry on being”. This makes all life “egocentric” if not “egoic”. As Jonas puts
it, “its self-concern bridges the qualitative break with the rest of things by modes
of selective relationship,” what we could read, as Thompson does, as a primitive form of intentionality.

Husserl gets bolder still. Following the claim that the concept of organism draws its ultimate sense from the ego of the inquirer as an originary mode, he goes on to state that this also applies to the “construction of organisms out of partial organisms (Teilorganismen), which do not function freely and independently for themselves, but rather as simple and necessary elements of construction”. What exactly Husserl means by partial organisms is not clear, as he does not elaborate on the point. He seems to have in mind colony organisms like bacteria, fungus, moulds or other forms, and it is likely that Husserl was familiar with the term Teilorganism from Driesch. What is curious is Husserl’s indication that each partial organism is neither independent nor free, this in itself is unremarkable, but the implication that the colony organism constructed out of partial organisms is free, at least in some sense, does seem an important claim to make. By default it also seems to transfer whatever sense of freedom we are dealing with here to both egoic and non-egoic animals. This is again a precursor to what we find thirty years later in Hans Jonas. Jonas rejects a Kantian account whereby products of nature (including us) are not free, and only by way of our participation in the sphere of practical reason do we become free beings, capable of obeying the moral law. Rather Jonas wants to situate freedom in nature. Thus Jonas’s account bears the signs of a non-reductive physicalist monism that situates freedom, or at least its kernel, in the fact of metabolism itself. As Jonas writes in the opening pages of The Phenomenon of Life: “[I]f mind is prefigured in the organic from the beginning, then freedom is. And indeed our contention is that even metabolism, the basic level of all organic existence, exhibits it.” This is not the place to go into the details of Jonas’s fascinating analysis, suffice to say that it is the autonomy of form with respect to matter, which is manifest in the process of metabolism and in the transcendence of the organism towards the world, wherein freedom lies, albeit always a needful freedom and precarious oscillation between being (life) and non-being (death). What is interesting for our purposes here is merely to note that Husserl also seems to attribute a sense of freedom to the whole domain of life, egoic and non-egoic, although not to partial organisms independent of larger complexes or constructed organisms that they form.

In what has been said so far, we have scarcely touched upon the theme of the crisis of the sciences and biology’s rather privileged role vis-à-vis the lifeworld, i.e. the ultimate source of evidence of all the sciences. Yet, biology’s position as “closer to philosophy and to true knowledge”, i.e. what makes it the producer of the “new transcendental questions” that were discussed above has everything to do with its closeness to the lifeworld and following from that, a kind of insulation from the crises which grip the purely physicalist sciences, and those of pure symbolic abstraction, mathematics. From the physicalist perspective,
biology (or at least the biology Husserl has in mind) remains an “almost pitiable” science of lifeworldly signs and meaning. As Merleau-Ponty remarks, “there is no biology which is simply physical”\textsuperscript{29}, and from a physicalist perspective this has meant “always incomplete” and so a preliminary phase on the way to a complete “phyicalistic explanation”.\textsuperscript{30} But from a phenomenological viewpoint this is precisely its salvation.

A note should be added first about the theme of crisis. Let us say that there are crises and then there are Crises. All sciences (not least phenomenology itself) are naturally, so to speak, prone to crisis, i.e. an estrangement from the original source of evidence, the lifeworld, and recourse to a purely formalized functionality. When phenomenology becomes a mere exercise of technical terms and the relations between them it has fallen into crisis.\textsuperscript{31} The same holds for any science. A science in crisis is “rootless”, freed from “naive evidence”, and from the “sources of intuition”, or at least on its way to being so.\textsuperscript{32} The big Crisis occurs not with this formalization, which cannot but happen to some extent, but with an inability of the science to address it itself. When Husserl speaks of a Crisis in mathematics or physics it is because they have become “pure works of art” referring only to themselves and no longer able to trace the genesis of their meaning structures back to the lifeworld as the source of all originary evidence: “The very nature of mathematics and physics makes it harder for them, incomparably more difficult, to break free from the principles of the symbolic-technical art with which they conduct their experience, an art that connects intuition to symbolic practice, and to see the need to question back (\textit{Rückfrage}) to transcendental sense-bestowal (\textit{transzendentalen Sinnegebungen}).” In the \textit{Krisis} text, this is precisely where phenomenology steps in to aid the sciences by tracing their “logical constructions” back to their origins in the lifeworld. It is not at all that Husserl objects to the technique of the sciences, so long as they engage simultaneously in a rigorous \textit{Rückfrage} so that they may retain their relevance to lifeworldly praxis and values.

Biology, by contrast, is able to avoid, or at least is better at avoiding, this fall into crisis because it never takes leave of the lifeworld, it is a “concrete theory of the lifeworld”.\textsuperscript{33} Husserl insists that its “proximity to the sources of evidence grants it a proximity to the depth of the things themselves”. What Husserl means by this is that biology is a descriptive science of the lifeworld, it describes a specific region of the lifeworld. And, by remaining lifeworldly in this sense, biology presents a much easier path into the \textit{Rückfrage} of a lifeworld ontology and eventually transcendental sense bestowal. For example, Driesch’s findings concerning embryology, which refuted both preformation and mosaic theories of embryology, entailed actual physical intervention into sea-urchin embryos and then observation of the results.\textsuperscript{34} The ultimate task for biology is thus not different from that of Husserl’s generative phenomenology: the universal study of sense-formation in the lifeworld. In this sense, biology is not dissimilar to
anthropology, but merely the science of a broader region. But Husserl goes further than this. Biology is not just a lifeworldly descriptive science, he writes: “In fact, biology as genuinely universal biology, embraces the entire concrete world, and thus implicitly physics too, and in the examination of correlations it becomes a completely universal philosophy.” It seems that biology does not only share the same goal as generative phenomenology, but takes its place beside it as queen of the sciences. How is this the case? In the final paragraph of the *Beilage* Husserl refers to biology as a concrete and genuine “psychophysics”. Psychophysics generally refers to the study of the relations between physical stimuli and the perceptions they give rise to or affect. It seems difficult to understand what else Husserl could mean here besides a science of the relation between the realist-causal order and the idealist-constituting one, while still holding onto the ground of the sense-bestowing ego. Just as Husserl refers, in *Ideas II*, to the body as the legitimate naturalization of consciousness, biology here seems to be the science of that naturalization. Biologystudy of the emergence of sense in nature—the generative a-priori. It seems all the more tricky then to maintain a ground of transcendental sense-bestowal (*transzendentalen Sinnegebungen*), but Husserl does his best to maintain this “nearly ‘crazy paradox’”. Nonetheless, elevating biology to these heights, essentially placing it on a par with transcendental phenomenology, is what allows Husserl to make the claim that biology is not a science contingent to the conditions of life on our humble planet: “Biology only appears to be limited to our small and insignificant world, [...] Rather a general biology has the same worldly generality as physics.” As the lifeworld is always the source of meaning, biology on Venus will be the same as biology on Earth, both will draw their sense from the same generative a-priori. This also importantly reminds us that the transcendental is not necessarily human. It is the lifeworld that will form the ultimate source of sense, whether the biologist is human or extraterrestrial. A biology of Venus would always in the end refer to our own earthly lifeworld upon which we make observations and perform concrete experiments. For the alien biologist, the lifeworld may be someplace different but it is a lifeworld all the same. What a “genuine universal biology” demonstrates is that the a priori of life is universal. But what a genuine Rückfrage of biology shows is that all sense can be traced back to the sense-bestowal of a transcendental ego.

I have intended this short introduction to be programmatic. Husserl’s reflections on the relation between biology and phenomenology have been placed in a context, but I have also tried to show how Husserl may have anticipated developments in the field of phenomenological biology. Most importantly, I think, I have tried to show where Husserl’s own analyses, in texts such as these, might offer the resources to go beyond the boundaries of Husserl’s own thought, namely the sense-bestowal of the transcendental ego
and towards an ontology of sense formation that is ultimately not grounded in the transcendental ego, but in a movement and development of sense that precedes the ego and from which the constituting ego emerges. One theme has gone unmentioned here; indeed its mention in *Beilage XXIII* is restricted to two words at the end of the footnote: “see teleology”. An exploration of this theme in its relation to Husserl’s thinking on biology in its relation to phenomenology would take us further into the untranslated depth of Husserl’s *Nachlass*, a path that we should surely travel.

University of the West of England

References


5. It is not clear whether Merleau-Ponty was able to consult the sheets, written in Husserl’s idiosyncratic version of Gabelsberger shorthand (Stephane Strasser did not transcribe these pages until 1943) that were to become *Beilage XXIII* when he visited the Husserl Archives in 1939. According to H.L. van Breda, during Merleau-Ponty’s visit to Leuven in April 1939 he consulted Eugen Fink’s transcription of §28-73 of the *Krisis* text. It is possible that he examined the additional untranscribed shorthand sheets with Fink’s aid, although there is no apparent record that he saw the appendix prior to its publication in 1954. See, H.L. van Breda, “Merleau-Ponty at the Husserl Archives in Leuven” in *Merleau-Ponty, Texts and Dialogues on Philosophy, Politics, and Culture*, eds. H.J. Silverman and J.B. Barry, Jr., Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1992, pp. 150-161.


7. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Notes de cours au Collège de France 1959-1961*, ed. S. Ménasé, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 383 – 388, see also pp. 88-91. Merleau-Ponty broke the appendix up into five sections, which he then prepared individual commentary on, interspersed with notes to himself to read the section he was commenting on.

8. Ibid. p. 37 (my translation).

9. Ibid. p. 89 (my translation); the notion that the idea of the (natural) incarnation of consciousness is already present in Husserl’s work is what leads Merleau-Ponty to write elsewhere “Doesn’t [Husserl’s] own analysis really obligate [us] to consider constituting subjectivity as an eminent case of idealisation?” (Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p.76).

11. See, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature, cours du Collège de France*, ed. D Séglard, Paris: Editions d’ Seuil, 1995, specifically the second course 1957-58. The lack of reference in Merleau-Ponty’s *Nature* lectures to what is now text Nr. 27 of *Husserliana XXIX*, suggests that he did not have access to the text when he visited the Husserl archives in 1939 or at any time before 1958. He did have access to the K III (Krisis-Gruppe) of manuscripts, in which this text is contained, at the Centre for Husserl Archives that had been established in 1957 at the Sorbonne, from June 1959 until the end of 1960. See, van Breda, “Merleau-Ponty at the Husserl Archives”, p. 160.


14. Biemel also chose himself where on the original sheets, upon which Husserl had written in stenography, to begin the transcription of the Beilage. There is text on the sheet that does not belong to another section. Thus Biemel appears to have omitted some of the text. A retranscription of the original sheets would be needed to gauge the significance of this, although Dr Vongehr has indicated that Biemel’s decision was likely the appropriate one as the omitted material did not deal as explicitly with biology as the sections that made it into the edition.

15. There does not seem to be an indication from Husserl that this Beilage should be attached to §65, it appears to have been the decision of Biemel.

16. We can compare this in its similarity with and distinctness from what Heidegger says above.

17. “For the human being, biology is essentially guided by its humanity, which is experienceable in a truly authentic manner; there alone life is given in an original way and in the most authentic manner through the self-understanding of the biological dimension. Such is the guiding thread for all biology and for all the variant forms of empathy” (my emphasis).

18. See the fifth of Husserl’s *Cartesian Mediations* for the full account of his theory of intersubjectivity and the “analogizing apperception” as an “Urstiftung” in particular.

19. “Personal life manifests a typicality and each personal life manifests a different one […] We capture the development of a person if we reconstruct the course of his life and make it intuitive in such a way that the entirety of his development as a man becomes comprehensible in an experiential manner […] ‘In an experiential way’ means that it occurs there as it does in human life in general”, Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second book: Studies In the Phenomenology of Constitution*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989, p. 284-85 [hereafter *Ideas II*].


22. For the divine mathematician, “the life process will then present itself as a series of events on the part of those persisting units of general substance: they are the real agents, moving—each for causal reasons of their own—through given configurations. One such configuration would be the organism. Just as the wave is nothing but the morphological sum of the successive entry of new units into the total movement, which thanks to it moves forward, so too the organism could be regarded as an integral function of metabolism instead of metabolism being seen as a function of the organism. All the features of a self-related autonomous entity will ultimately appear as merely phenomenal, i.e., fictitious.

   “Would we, as is usually the case, grant that this result of strictly physical analysis is truer than our naively sensuous view of the object? Definitely not in this case” (Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, pp. 64-65).


31. On this point, see, Heidegger: “Like every other scientific method, phenomenological method grows and changes due to the progress made precisely with its help into the subjects under investigation. Scientific method is never a technique. As soon as it becomes one it has fallen away from its own proper nature.” Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 21.
32. “The ‘explanation’ of the physicist, on the contrary, ‘knows’ what it knows of the world in an incomprehensibility that is severed from all true knowledge”, see Beilage XXIII, paragraph 5.
33. It would be interesting to know how Husserl would react to the mathematical biology pioneered by people like Alan Turing and René Thom. Or the dynamic systems theory employed by the enactive approach of Thompson. Turing’s foundational studies in morphology (see, Alan M. Turing, “The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis”. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 237 (1952): 37–72), were influential in paving the way for approaches like that of Alain Prochiantz, who seeks to defend a romantic conception of nature against the positivism of the contemporary biological sciences (see, Alain Prochiantz, *Les Anatomies de la Pensée, à quoi pensent les calmar?*, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1997, p. 70). This is a question for another time.
34. Driesch split embryonic cells after their first division with the hypothesis that each half would now form the corresponding half of the organism, instead he found that each cell developed into a complete sea urchin.
35. “The ‘legitimate’ naturalisation of consciousness consists in the fact that Body and soul form a genuine experiential unity and that in virtue of this unity, the psychic obtains its position in space and time” (*Ideas II* 176).
HOW NATURE COMES TO BE THOUGHT:  
SCHELLING’S PARADOX AND THE PROBLEM OF LOCATION  
IAIN HAMILTON GRANT

As for me, I rather think Nature first produced the things to its own liking and then created human reason.¹

In his Predication and Genesis,² Wolfram Hogrebe reconstructs Schelling’s Ages of the World³ along the lines of a theory of predication, while asking, with Schelling, how it is that predication or judgment comes about. In one sense, therefore, the work asks, ‘how does reasoning arise in nature?’ In another, it affirms that “the world lies caught in the nets of reason; but the question is: how did it come to be in these nets?”⁴ A philosophy of nature, in that it seeks precisely to embrace nature in reason or affirms that nature cannot – since “nature is incognizable” is a cognition – be considered a priori insusceptible to all cognitive strategies without begging the question, can neither avoid therefore the problem of the identity of nature in thought with nature before thought.

While the first question posits that reasoning is contained in nature and the second, conversely, that nature is contained in reasoning, and since the two contradict one another, one can only be true if the other is false.⁵ With Schelling, however, I will argue first, that both are true and second, that it is because reasoning occurs in nature that nature comes to be contained in reason and that it is the reverse of this order that is importantly false. Otherwise, either reasoning, if it occurred in a world, could not reason about nature or it could only catch nature in its nets if that reasoning were other than the world in which it occurs.

It is precisely because thinking starts in nature from the actuality of which thought is part that a philosophy of nature must oppose the idea that nature is identical with its concept. What identity there might be cannot therefore be consequent on the conceiving, but consists in what we might call the common root of their emergence, or the containment of the concept in the nature prior to its being conceived. Ontological identity therefore entails essential difference. Yet the opposition cannot be simple unless a line can be drawn, either from within the concept or from within nature, beyond which lies the one and before which the other. If such a line is drawn in a medium, let us say for example in reason, then while it may consistently be drawn, the consequence is that nature and the concept lose exactly what is specific to each, i.e. any predicates other than being opposed to one another. The philosophy of nature therefore opposes the idea that nature is to be identified with its concept in two ways. Firstly, in the sense that just as no chain of reasoning terminates in
Being, nor is ‘existence’ sufficiently discriminating to be predicated informatively of any one subject, because it is predicatable of all possible subjects, so neither is nature the result or consequence of reasoning, nor a discriminative predicate in any judgment. Secondly, a philosophy of nature opposes the identity of nature and its concept not insofar as it seeks a demarcation line between them but insofar as any concept of nature that has nature as its subject must acknowledge its partiality. This is because the judgment that nature is thus and so is itself an expression of the nature in which that judgment arises, and to this extent is consequent upon a nature that leaves the concept naturally porous, so to speak, towards its underside, towards what is not it. In other words, the difference between nature and concept is not a difference between nature and one or several concepts of nature, but between it and the concept as such regardless of its content. Concepts are consequent upon the nature of which they are, qua concepts, late expressions. If this is accepted, then while a philosophy of nature opposes the idea that nature is to be identified with its concept, it also affirms the identity of nature and concept without which the concept would not be at all. The identity of nature and the concept lies therefore at the level of the ultimate subject of any proposition whatever, but does not in consequence conclude an identity of nature and the concept from the concept. The subject of a proposition is ultimate, that is, to the extent to which its predicates never supplant that subject’s primacy with respect to the judgments made upon it.

It is not that we may therefore affirm that nature is that which exceeds the concept or the totality of conceptual possibilities, since nature only is nature to precisely the extent that it is thus ‘exceeded’ not only by the concept but by any of its consequents, from planets to bacteria. It is rather that inherent in the relation between nature and concept, or, since this ‘relation’ is too imprecise, in the concept of nature itself, there is an irreversible asymmetry which means, for the concept of nature, that the nature embraced in the concept is nature insofar as the concept can embrace nothing else, and is not nature insofar as it is from it that the concept arises. The philosophy of nature therefore requires a conceiving of nature that extends more than it contains, and it is in this that its nature lies.

1. From Nature to (Nature and Logic)

The problem of whether reason is in nature or nature in reason arises because there is reason and reason has content. But reason arises because there is nature. What is inside and what is outside reason and/or nature is therefore a local problem in the sense that it is consequent upon one thing being consequent upon another. According to Gilles Châtelet, the problem of inside/outside is a “reducibly local tension from which ontology unfolds”. Ontology unfolds from this tension because a judgment concerning being arises in consequence of a
prior partition of being, separating it into the being antecedent to the judgment and the being consequent upon it. A proposition therefore minimally introduces a locality, a position into what, according to the hypothesis, was without one. The being consequent upon the judgment is accordingly not identical to the being antecedent to it, since a logical space has now formed in which the subject of the proposition is a creature of that proposition. The primary division of being effected by the judgment is insuperably its multiplication. What the judgment cannot articulate without self-contradiction therefore is that despite its operation, being remains unsundered, since even this claim augments the partitions it expressly denies, albeit, for the same reason, not of the same subject.

Yet it is clearly true that being does not for its part exclude the judgment made upon it, that (according to a further judgment) being now contains that judgment or is expressed as it. It is precisely the problem therefore of articulating the inside and the outside of the terms of the judgment – what is contained in the subject and in the predicate, on the one hand, and what contains them, on the other – that the judgment itself introduces as a problem of position, and it is in this sense a local problem, albeit subject in principle to non-finite iteration. Because the subject of any judgment, even if it treats of a judgment antecedent to it, entails the production of a new position, it cannot be said that there is one ultimate subject or substrate of judgment that is divided with each judgment upon it.

Nor can we conclude from this that locality is insuperable to any outside on the grounds that it first articulates this and is subject to iterative operations; rather it is the positive emergence of locality that, as we have seen, iteratively distributes an antecedent and a consequent of the logical space articulated in the judgment. Judgment accordingly multiplies positions in localities, such that being is only said in many ways, one of which being that, for example, being is univocal. What then happens between being and its expression?

If before answering this question we now consider the problem of locality in terms of the philosophy of nature, the implication is clear: what ‘nature’ remains that could furnish the ultimate subject of all judgments? Yet just because no two judgments may have the same subjects it does not follow that a single judgment may not have as its subject precisely an ultimate subject that underlies all judgments. What it does mean is that such a subject must itself be consequent upon any such ultimate subject to which it refers, and so is not identical with that subject. Just as the problem of locality highlights the production of position or emergence, along with all the boundary formations this entails, so too the production of such an ultimate subject is consequent upon the emergence of locality where none was. Thus while an environing nature is not itself at risk of elimination by being judged, the concept of such a nature is importantly distinct from the ultimate subject with which it might seek to claim identity simply
because its consequent nature entails, if there is a judgment at all, that it emerges as one precisely by being consequent upon an antecedent in which judgment was not included.

While it may seem as if this successfully eliminates the possibility of access to a nature beyond the concept, such that the only nature conceiving beings can conceive is a conceptual one, we must recall the second part of Hogrebe’s question, which asks how nature comes to be caught in reason, not whether it is. The question is reiterated in On the History of Modern Philosophy (1836-7), with an important addition:

The whole world lies, so to speak, in the nets of the understanding or of reason, but the question is how exactly it got into those nets, since there is obviously something other and something more than mere reason in the world.\(^8\)

The difficulty here is clearly expressed: it is the whole world (WW) that reason captures and there is more than reason in the world (W). But if W contains “more” than WW, then either reason, being part of W, does not for that reason contain WW and the statement simply contradicts itself, or the wholeness of the world is an artefact of the reason that contains it, so that the “whole world” is less than the world, an abstraction from it, perhaps. Now Schelling’s “how” question is asked in two registers: the first asks what the WW that is in reason is; the second asks by what means the WW that is in reason got there. Taking these questions in order, it is clear that, since the option of taking the whole world in reason and reason to be in the world to form a contradiction is effectively ruled out by the formulation’s concision on the one hand and the fact of its exact repetition after a decade and a half on the other, WW must be considered an artefact, and the assumption will be that if it is an artefact, then it is one of reason, i.e. simply a concept.\(^9\) Yet this presupposes an answer to the question, which appears at first sight to concern the passage from nature to reason, namely, that there is no transition from W to WW, since W is not, and WW is, such an artefact. In other words, neither are we to learn of how it comes to be either that this transition arises or, if it does not, then by what means the entire situation is to be logically reconstructed; nor of how, if this is not the case and the transition does take place, the reason from which WW arises itself arises.

The second register of the question therefore arises by countering the assumption that the produced nature of WW entails that it is an artefact of reason. We have already noted the manner in which the emergence of a judgment constitutes the multiplication of the subject of that judgment. Accordingly, that the world is to be qualified as “whole” entails that it is the subject of a judgment: “the world is whole” or “this is the whole world in the concept”. But it also indicates that such a “whole” world is so only if its locality is denied so that its antecedent is eliminated, in which case its wholeness would be a consequence of the elimination of its production, which is contradictory. To reinstate this latter therefore demonstrates that WW is by the entainment of
antecedence and consequence, and this reinstatement occurs precisely in the second register of the question. If, that is, $W \rightarrow WW$ occurs, it is because the predicate “is whole” is consequent upon what is antecedent to the judgment in the event that the judgment occurs. In other words, it is not that $W$ becomes $WW$, but rather that $WW$ arises after $W$, and that this process is precisely the process by which reasoning comes to be in the world: by being after it. The world as it is, that is, is not whole except in consequence of a judgment, such that its conceiving is precisely that means by which the concept $WW$ arises, and augments the $W$ in which it does so. In consequence of the judgment that it is, and of this judgment being itself consequent, the world that is more than reason is so precisely in the sense that (a) the world does indeed acquire more than itself insofar as the judgment “the world is whole” is not included in the world so judged and so is not whole without it; and (b) if it is not whole without consequents, this is because the world is not whole but is more than what is judged in the judgment since it is precisely what it is that does the judging, that is judged, and that antecedes judging as such. In other words, because it is by nature that the judgment is consequent upon what it is that the judgment concerns, judgment precisely exhibits the process of nature insofar as nature is creation, or that which is not what it is unless emergence occurs. $WW$ is not derived from the partition of nature so much as from its multiplication, nature’s augmentation by the dimension of the concept. The truth of reason, so to speak, that the subject of the proposition is not logically identical with, or the same thing as, the referent of that proposition, coincides with the truth of fact that the nature there is has as one of its consequences the making of judgments within it. It is the consequent nature of the consequent that makes the antecedent necessarily insurmountable by it. It is, as Schelling says, “unprethinkable being [unvordenkliches Seyn]”:

> [O]ne must certainly call Being [...] unprethinkable, antecedent to all thinking. [...] One could also say that what is antecedent to thinking is without a concept, inconceivable. But philosophy makes what is a priori inconceivable a posteriori into something conceivable. 10

Here the involution implicit in the thinking of the world is made explicit: conceiving entails the transformation of what is not conceived, which conceiving always entails a consequent entainment, an “unprethinkable”. But so too is the realism of the account. The contradiction of the world thought whole within a world of which thought is part appears as such due to the logical insuperability of the reference to a nature within which both occur, but only in one direction at a time. It is only if thinking about nature always involves more nature than can be thought that nature is in fact being thought.

This is why something’s being conceived is not identical to its containment. That something is conceived does entail that something is contained in the conceiving; but this does not mean that what is antecedent to the conceiving is conceived or contained in the conceiving. There are two reasons for this. Firstly,
there is more to the thing thought than its being thought, or, there is more than reason in the world. Secondly, the conceiving is a consequent in that world, as we have seen. Accordingly, what it is that is thought extains its being-thought just when its being-thought contains that extainment as extaining precisely its being-thought. Neither does containment ‘denature’ extainment, so to speak, or reduce it to a dimension of the contained; nor does extainment make containment impossible. Transposed back to the question of what it is that is conceived in the conceiving and how it is that this conceived is related to what is antecedent to the conceiving, it is now clear why it is neither false (a) that what is conceived is contained in the conceiving nor (b) that what it is that is conceived in the conceiving is not what is conceived, or why it is that the whole world is caught in the nets of reason and that reason is part of the world.

This is because, as Kauffman states, extainers are “entities open to interaction and distinguishing the space that they are not”. In other words, the containment of containment must contain extainment if something is to be contained at all, or containment does not self-contain without iteration (C₁ → C₂), and the iteration presupposes the extainment of the container by the contained. A cube, for instance, may be contained within a cube just when the contained cube extains its container, since otherwise, a cube would not be in another and there would only be one cube. Similarly, the extainment of extainment extains containment since this is precisely what extainment is. The extainment of the containing cube by the contained does reduce the extained space to the content of the difference of the two cubes, since extainment is operative on both sides of the container. Extainment continues following its interruption by containment and articulates the outward trajectory against which the container’s outer surface is turned. So conceived, extainers do not contain but rather extain containers. In the extainer/container contrastive pair, in other words, there would be no negative and positive space. Rather, all parts of space are actors. The interaction between them, in other words, is importantly not linear, as the one involves the other in the production of boundaries, such that complex forms like knots are themselves neighbourhoods formed of iterations of this couple. Moreover, as a logic of form in general, it is indifferent to the domain it spatialises or is, as Châtelet puts it, it is “autospatiality”. In other words, this is the localisation process that effects any entity whatever, the only constraint being therefore that its universality ensures that it neither begins nor ends in a form of all forms or in a featureless universe. It is because the All is precisely not local, precisely non-extaining, that, according to Roland Omnès, it is a “basic tenet of science” that it investigates “an isolated part of the world by itself”. How then is the question, “What is the nature of nature?” to be answered? How, from the “reducibly local tension from which all ontology unfolds”, can there be derived “the possibility of capturing the power enveloping a field”? How, again, can “the whole world” be conceived?
2. The Essence of the Central Phenomenon

If the whole world does indeed come to lie in the nets of reason, but if it is not of another nature than the reason that arises in the world, it is importantly not false that the whole world is indeed contained in reason, as a multiplication or ‘potentiation’ of the world as that world in which reason arises. Yet the whole world is not only thinkable, but also, since the localisation of this ‘whole world’ is consequent upon its being a consequent, in the sequences of antecedence and consequence necessitated if there is emergence in nature at all, its being thought is precisely a consequence of the nature so thought. That there is such emergence is locally exemplified in the fact of conceiving. The “whole world” is therefore involved in the sequence of creation over which that world does not wholly extend. That is, the whole world is thinkable on condition that it is thought precisely as a midpoint of itself, as within the world and therefore as entailing entailment.

Yet this account carries with it the risk that thinking nature is wholly extained from the nature being thought. That is to say, that thought as such is overly localised within the world in which it takes place. The resultant “near ontology” restricts thought to what is local to it, rather than situating it in the world. Two examples will make the point clear. The first stems from Novalis’ account of nature, and the second, from Schelling’s account of the relation between localisation and dimensionalisation. The two examples will coincide in what the latter calls, following Bacon, a “central phenomenon”.19

One of Novalis’ fragments asks, “What is the nature of nature?”. This question is immediately preceded by another: “Where is the primal germ, the type of the entirety of nature, to be found?” From this may be distinguished a reflective or transcendental question of nature’s nature from an empirical question of the Urkeim, the “primal germ”, and the problem of its discovery.21 If it is to be discovered, the question stipulates, it must lie somewhere. Insofar as it a germ, however, it is the nature of nature insofar as generation issues from it. Yet since in nature “everything is a seed-corn” that generates, no primal germ of the whole may be discovered. Since any candidate form must minimally therefore be four- rather than three-dimensional, the investigation of primal forms cannot be pursued in space alone. Yet precisely because the primal is primal with respect to nature as such, the “metaphysics of nature” deals with “nature before it becomes nature”.23 From this, Novalis formulates a rule of nature’s primacy as much as for primals in nature: “Nature goes from a priori ad posterius – at least for us.” This transcendental addendum to the characterisation of the nature of nature introduces a curvature around the concept, reducing its neighbourhood not only to what the concept is near to, but isolating it against what it is not. Yet it does not stipulate only but rather at least for us, that is, it states that what is prior is so because it is “more knowable in relation to us”.25 This “near ontology” stipulates that as far as our knowing
extends, nature goes from *prius* to *posterius*, from antecedent to consequent or from Nature 1 to Nature 2 (N¹→N²). And Novalis has already provided some reasons for this: the search, namely, for the primal germ of nature reveals nature as a plenitude of germs, none of which are primal but all of which generate. If empirical natural science therefore orients its inquiry with respect to nature’s primal, then “we look everywhere for the unconditioned [das Unbedingte] but only ever find things [Dinge]”. In the empirical investigation of nature, the things that we find are never indices of autochthony, of spontaneity, but always of an “adaptation, transformation, dissolution of the divine and human into unbound [unbändige] forces”. It is precisely by way of the sensuous inquiry into first things or *Ursachen*, the “striving for grounding [Streben nach Ergründung]”, that firsts turn out to sever things from the security of their emergence and pull “the organs of thought” back into the depths. Accordingly, the curvature to which antecedent and consequent are subject in the cognition of nature does not close around phenomena, but smears things back to the unfathomable vortices of their emergence – “at least for us”. If “philosophy is grounded in the striving for the thought of the ground” – an *absolute* ground that must be, on Manfred Frank’s reading, “impossible” – the ground Novalis introduces before thought, by means of the thought of nature, does not remain prior to thought precisely because the ground sought is consequent upon the antecedent-*but-ongoing* self-grounding of philosophy. This situation is precisely insurmountable despite and because of the endless striving for grounds in which, Novalis claims, philosophy consists.

Novalis’ near ontology apparently settles two dimensions of extaintment around the concept. The first isolates the field of the concept itself, such that no judgment made concerning nature can be made elsewhere than in and for that field. Thought is set within an interiority constituted by its extaintment of what is not thought. The judgment, in other words, turns in its own circle and never strays from its neighbourhood. Yet as, according to Châtelet, Schelling knew, “thought is not in every case encapsulated in a brain[;] it could be everywhere… outside”. We will see the sense of this in what follows. The second, which establishes the first, is the “unfathomable ground” in the approach to which the judgment disintegrates, as do its objects. The attempt to ground concepts in things in response to the question of what is prior to them leads to the smearing of things and concepts alike into indiscrete states. The conceptual descent into the underworld of the concept leads neither to grounds nor to objects, but seeks to collapse the difference N¹→N², or antecedent and consequent even when the antecedent of the thought of N¹ is N¹→N². In consequence, the conceptual field – thought itself – can only be “ascendental” and futural: the question “what is the nature of nature?” takes its answer, formally, from the N² that is its product. Thus, of the two dimensions of extaintment in the concept’s neighbourhood, the one marks the ascent to consequence from N¹ and is secured by the other, the
dimension of depth or of antecedence. The difference between $N^1 \rightarrow N^2$ issues from the fact that if $N^1 = N^2$, no process is described. The process is moreover precisely transcendental insofar as it is not “descendental”. That is, even if it is concluded that in $N^1 \rightarrow N^2$, $N^1$ is the initial presentation of nature in thought, the thinking of $N^1$ entails that $N^1 \rightarrow N^2$ is reiterated because the thinking of $N^1$ is only occurrent as $N^1 \rightarrow N^2$: otherwise, $N^1$ cannot be thought. Thus the domain of the concept secured against that of nature by the concept of nature itself, because the apparent two dimensions of extainment turn out to be one: from nature to thought the passage is irreversible such that thought cannot think the nature prior to it. In consequence, the formula describes the operation Aristotle called “metabasis eis allo genos”, as performed on a nature that will turn out never not to have been a thought-nature, but which preserves as its possible future, like Parmenides’ way of opinion, the descent into chaos consequent upon its reflexively disabling reversal. To pursue this line is to secure a philosophy of nature that resituable the latter within the former alone, or to contain the “whole world” in reason precisely insofar as that is the only world there is for conceiving. As Schelling argues, this is the essential transcendental operation:

$$\ldots$$ if the world (under which Kant always understood only material nature, extended in space) is to be enclosed within limits, a positive cause is required, a cause that lies outside it, since it contains no ground of limitation. Now in so far as knowledge of this positive cause is lacking, the proposition that affirms finitude can only be grounded by the refutation of its opposite, and this too (the refutation of non-finitude) cannot occur by reference to a true cause of finitude and must accept the aid of a metabasis eis allo genos, a transfer into an entirely alien field, by calling on time. The world cannot be [known to be] unlimited because there is insufficient time to effect a complete synthesis, which is why Kant silently presupposes what is only later expressly stated, namely, that the world consists in our presentation \{Vorstellung\} and can only exist as a whole in a complete synthesis produced by us.34

The Novalis-problem, which we can now see concerns more than simply Novalis’ account of nature, turns around the localisation of thought within its own neighbourhood. In other words, there are no judgments that do not have judgments as their objects. The “whole world” so judged is simply therefore the totality of self-consistent judgments – the “space of reasons” or the “totality of facts”, depending on one’s inclination. That thought is not so localised is imperative therefore, if a philosophy of nature that does not reduce the latter to a dimension of the former is to be possible.

A beginning in this direction can be made by considering Schelling’s account, in lecture 19 of his last work, \textit{Presentation of Pure Rational Philosophy}, of Aristotle’s theory of dimensionalisation insofar as this is considered from the point of view of animal motion. Two problems remain importantly identified in Novalis’ philosophy of nature: firstly, that imposed by the \textit{law of succession} that it institutes with regard to thought (if the thought of nature is always $N^1 \rightarrow N^2$, then how is $N^1$ thinkable?), and secondly, the
problem of the location or topic of thought with regard to nature’s primals. We will concentrate firstly on the second problem.

Having discussed the near-ontological problem of “intelligible matter”, which stems from on the one hand the universality of matter for any materialist philosophy of nature and, on the other, from consequences this has for the predictability or identity criteria of matter itself, Schelling moves on to discuss the local behaviour of a material body par excellence, i.e., the animal.

Schelling maintains from the outset that, as regards inorganic bodies, dimensions are derivative of their situation with respect to organic beings: what is above and below, for instance, is determined on the basis of the relation of what is so described by that being which judges them so, whether expressly or by action. Yet the problem of the ground of dimensionality or, as we have been discussing the problem, the emergence of locality, derives its necessity from the articulation of what Schelling had long since called the “categories of the dynamic process”, i.e. electricity, magnetism and chemism, that is from material processes rather than the situation of their recording or reference to another, cognizing being in which there first arises “the whole idea” (SW XI, 436). There is therefore a tension between the animal and the magnet, since a magnet arises only when opposing poles (north and south, positive and negative) are combined in a single material. Disregarding for the moment the question of the ultimate ground of dimensionality or localisation, Schelling’s account of the emergence of dimensionality begins with the demonstration that the dimension of height is the principle of those of length and breadth. An animal located on a plane and whose head is therefore above that plane to a particular degree, is first in a position to determine its length and breadth, and with the latter, to determine right and left. Yet the determinability of these dimensions remains consequent upon a determination of height contingent upon the height actually instanced in the situation. It is not then from the “whole idea” that dimensionality stems, but from the situation from which the “whole idea” may be actualized. It follows that ideation and the dimensionality of relative motion emerge from a body in a particular situation relative to others. Moving from discussing On the Progression of Animals to On the Heavens, Schelling demonstrates the outward sweep of the problem of the ground of dimensionality, such that its ultimate reference is no longer the body in a situation, but rather the proton hypokeimenon, the “primary subject” not insofar as this is a conscious subject able therefore to articulate the dimensions in which she is involved, but insofar as it is that in reference to which dimensionality is articulated. Moreover, each set of dimensions is subject to a certain asymmetry. It is “against nature”, Schelling cites Aristotle as claiming, that a bird flies backwards, such that dimensions are themselves articulated according to certain relatively invariant forms of motion, against which motions are themselves rearticulated.
There are three reasons why Schelling’s examination of the ground of dimensionality begins with the animal body. The first is that the dimensions of its motions do not react on pre-given dimensions, but on dimensions issuing from animal motions and the dimensionalizing operations of their bodies (in the bird, forward parts or eyes and sternum, rear parts tail; upper and lower parts, or wings and feet, etc.), which remain constant in their motions, despite changes in direction, or in relation to the dimensions of before and behind, for example, as described in its initial path. It is, in other words, not because animals are the only things capable of dimensionalisation, but because the latter emerges only through the actions of things, that the animal is the starting point of this analysis. Secondly, the direction of emergence as issuing from the more to the less complex demonstrates that localisation is a dynamic rather than a static process, since the form of a thing remains constant just when extainment is extained in its description, when it is reducibly therefore containment. But in such a case, nothing distinguishes form from ground, to which extent it can contain nothing, since nothing differentiates container from contained. Thirdly, from the animal body and throughout what Schelling calls the “serial transformation of organic beings”, which stands “in direct proportion to the separation and actual differentiation of dimensions” (SW XI 436), there descends the dimension of the inorganic and ascends that of thought. The two coincide in the “proton hypokeimenon”, in what is absolutely under, or an ultimate subject riven only between being the content of thinking when thought thinks what is, on the one hand, and what thinking, insofar as it thinks, does not contain because it is consequent upon it, on the other.

The “ground of dimensionality” can only be thought consequently upon dimensionality, or, in other words, dimensionality is emergent, if it is at all, from what is not dimensional. This does not mean that there are no dimensions prior to their thought, but that there are none prior to the operation of dimensions such that only such a thought is capable of thinking the emergence of dimensionality from non-dimensionality as such. If this has not taken place, then dimensionality is either completely and entirely given and never re-articulated by the movements or progression of bodies of whatever nature, or there is no dimensionality at all. Moreover, since thought is that dimension of motion that causes the problem of the ground of dimensionality to be a problem, it is clear that thought is amongst the dimensions of the motions of bodies, or better, is precisely the totality of motions of which bodies are capable, i.e. the articulation of dimensionality itself.

Throughout his career, Schelling returned again and again to the magnet as a “central phenomenon” (SW XI, 445). What it is that makes a central phenomenon may be explained with reference to how Schelling progressively presents it.

It assumes its first striking role in Schelling’s Presentation of my System of Philosophy, where it appears as the diagram relating indifference, or the being
indifferent to all that is, to the poles of its differentiation, or the specific differences in being introduced by things of all kinds. It is presented in the 1801 *System* thus:\(^4^2\)

\[
\begin{align*}
A^+ &= B \\
A &= A^0 \\
A &= B^- \\
\end{align*}
\]

While Hegel, in his account of Schelling’s philosophy in the *Differenzschrift*, makes great play of the coincidence of its poles, Schelling has a quite different understanding of it, namely, that since the poles are opposed, there are no inherent limits in the potentiation of either. In other words, the power of a pole is relative only to its difference from indifference \((A=A^0)\), such that between them no finite magnitude of powers stand. The point is made explicit when Schelling writes that “the empirical magnet”, which the diagram represents, “must be regarded as the indifference-point of the universal magnet [*Totalmagnet*]” (SW IV, 156, *Rupture* 171). The powers expressible within the universal magnet are infinite or subject only to their total insofar as the empirical magnet is precisely its indifference point. If the powers are limited only by their difference from indifference and operate in entirely opposed directions, rather than one \((A^+=B)\) limiting the other \((A=B^-)\), the magnet augments the number of infinites rather than limiting them.\(^4^3\) It is into the context of this total magnet that empirical magnets are “involved”. On the one hand, the “total magnet” extends the empirical magnet throughout all nature from which the empirical magnet is contracted in the first place. On the other, the conceiving of the total magnet augments the magnet’s function in the direction of multiplying the thought of the powers contained in it.

It is this *involution* of the empirical into the universal that makes a phenomenon central for Schelling. Accordingly, when in an 1832 lecture on ‘Faraday’s most recent discovery’, he returns to magnetic phenomena, as central, for reasons best articulated by him:

The moment a body takes on magnetic properties, it becomes, not only across its whole surface but, by a more deeply penetrating force, even throughout its entire interiority and in every point of its extension, a double essence [*ein Doppelsassen*], as it were, in which, without excluding one another, two – how are we to name them? We cannot say “two bodies”, but two *spirits* [*Geister*] or, if it seems more comprehensible, two *powers* [*Potenzen*], regardless of their opposition, or indeed precisely because of it, like two simultaneously born and raised twin brothers, sustain one another in such a form as, when in one direction one appears dominant, by a kind of mute compact, the other emerges as predominant in the opposite direction. This is the state into which a solid, electrically conducting body is set when placed within the closed pile; indeed, even this state is transitory and, when the pile is opened, disappears again. Thus the ever-extending galvanic chain has also taken magnetism into itself, and explicates itself as that *central phenomenon* that Bacon\(^4^4\) wanted and predicted, and that, as closing all three forms in itself, can no longer be named according to one of them. (SW XI, 445-6)

Again, the passage begins from a body, one to whose extaint-containment relations magnetism shows itself indifferent insofar as it is both a superficial and a penetrating force. In consequence, the body is transposed between the two
powers proper to magnetism, the negative and the positive or the north and the south poles of the magnet, but also between body and spirit. What Schelling has in mind here is the effects of the Voltaic Pile on “ponderable matter”, that is, a body possessing substance and weight, or gravitation: as Humphrey Davy’s “conduction experiments” had shown, the operation of the Pile or battery transposed ponderable matters – not only alkalis, acids and gases, but earths and even metals – from one pole to another, regardless of obstacles. The Pile thus “spiritualizes” in that everything ponderable, everything somatic or material, is transformed in it into a “play of forces” (SW XI, 441). The contentious term ‘spirit’ designates not simply what is other than body, but arises through the operation of the Pile as the releasing of the operative modes proper to powers themselves from the limited action repertoire a body presents. Spirit designates therefore active powers, which at the same time integrates those operations associated with mind into nature’s processes more generally. The point is neither that these processes should therefore be subject to anthropomorphism, nor that physics can be losslessly transformed into poetry, but rather that thought is amongst the powers involved in a central phenomenon insofar as the powers articulated by the experiment materialise the antitheses it involves just as the antithesis spiritualises bodies. Schelling’s point here is that thought does not arise in consequence of a thinker, but in consequence of what it is that is thought. The thought involved therefore pursues precisely that integration of the “entire dynamic process of nature” (SW XI, 443) – that is, electricity, magnetism and chemism – into the galvanic chain that extends beyond that central phenomenon.

The experimental series that Schelling’s lecture narrates and that culminates in the confirmation of the electromagnetic field starts, as will the Presentation of Pure Rational Philosophy, with the connective tissue of animals. By applying current to these, Galvani had demonstrated the involvement of electrical phenomena in organic movement, whereafter Volta showed these to be merely incidental within a theory of nature in general. Davy followed this by demonstrating that chemical and metallic bodies followed physical rather than material laws – that is, that their composition is not exhausted by ponderable matter, but belongs rather to the domain of the co-articulation of forces – while Ørsted demonstrated that this larger domain was electromagnetic, such that magnetism could be derived from electricity. Faraday finally completes this series by demonstrating the reverse also true, that is, that electrical effects can be derived from magnetic phenomena. Electromagnetism thus opens the way for a unity of the sciences because it demonstrates the universality of its process throughout nature, a universality that impels its conceiving.

Thus the “centrality” of the phenomenon does not describe its locality in a specific domain of nature, nor does it situate it with regard to a given theory, but is central precisely to the extent that it contains bodies, in this instance, in
electromagnetic phenomena, which are in turn contained in the thinking of this series of containings, which containing is again contained in the “universal categories of the process of nature” (SW XI, 444). As we have seen, however, a contained is contained just when it extains its container, while the process itself extains these containments to the extent that it is not reducible to its containings. “The empirical magnet is the indifference point of the total magnet” (SW IV, 156; Rupture 171) because magnetism is such when it exceeds what it acts in and forms. Likewise, a phenomenon is centralising when it entails reconceiving nature as involving thought in those processes that exceed it in the direction of particulars, on the one hand, and in that of the extaining processes within and outside them.

The emergent dimensionality of magnetic motions is thus not linear, halting at the mere opposition of its poles, but rather constitutes a “double essence”. This follows Schelling’s account of essence or Wesen, in the Freedom essay, as “actually self-dividing into its two operative modes”. One of its operative modes is the “ground of existence” of the essence. As such a ground, it is not in but extains essence, because “nothing individual has the ground of its existence in itself”. It is because the ground of finite being lies always outside it that essence is (at least) double-essence, or entails that only in its second operative mode is it essence proper, i.e. merely what is, but which in consequence doubles again into ground and essence. Essence – what is – contains what is and its ground, but ground extains essence in turn, without which nothing would be. Thus an essent emerges because it depends on what is not it. An untidy or “indiscrete” ground issues therefore in and from the functions of essence, or those functions, more simply stated, in which the emergence of something consists. This function follows precisely from the dynamics evidenced in nature, its “identity with spirit” entailing that the same doubling is found in logic and creation: that a consequent is precisely consequent upon its antecedent, on which it depends but with which it cannot, if it is genuinely consequent, be identical.

That what is self-divides or doubles is precisely evident in the opening and closing of the Voltaic Pile: the properties a body has when placed in the closed battery are distributed between the poles, a distribution which, when the battery is opened again, disappears. If therefore the dynamic process is universal in the manner experimentation suggests, then everything that is undergoes this electromagnetic doubling, in which, as we see from the battery in its open state, the phenomenon of ponderability, of material or somatic being, also consists.

The problem therefore of the “ground of dimensionality” (SW XI, 435) is resolved by a central phenomenon to the extent that the dimensions a phenomenon articulates centralize that phenomenon in a field the dimensions of which extend to the “ultimate subject”. That, in other words, there is a ground prior to electromagnetic operations is shown by successive experiments to be
precisely false: grounds are themselves consequent upon the articulations of the field from which they issue. The thinking of this field, in that the phenomenon around which it centres and from which it issues is itself central to the extent that it is in turn centred in the process from which that field issues, is that dimension of the field from which the ground of what exists first arises as other than that field. The thinking of the central phenomenon therefore thinks the process of nature that extends beyond the phenomenon under consideration. This is why the causal histories of objects must necessarily exceed the production of those objects insofar as the farther back that history reaches, the less discretely a cause will be responsible for the particular effect.\(^50\)

3. From Electromagnetism to Field Ontology

For what I mean by matter is precisely the ultimate underlying subject, common to all the things of Nature, presupposed as their substantial and not accidental constituent.

(Aristotle, Physics 192a32-4)

Aristotle’s account of matter conflates logical and physical grounds or subjects, as what “ultimately underlie” not only all natural substances or concrete wholes, but also as what is presupposed in all judgment. As a result, matter is irreducible to the ponderable ‘stuff-ness’ of things since it is necessarily involved, as the ultimate logical subject, in all judgments. Equally prior to the accidents expressive of natural particulars and presupposed in judgments whose ultimate subject it thereby furnishes, matter is expressive mass. As a result, the explication of what is contained in the logical subject extends exactly as far as do the substantial accidents of nature. On this account, neither is reason consequent upon nature nor nature upon reason, since the two inhere in a single subject. Even if it is objected that the logical subject merely presupposes the matter underlying nature’s capacity for accidents and, as such, does not constitute an identity, it remains the case that what is presupposed in all judgment cannot be other than the matter underlying the things of nature, so that what grounds the judgment and what grounds nature’s accidents is the same.

Yet if matter consists in the identity of the logical and natural subject, the relation between substance and accident, like that between subject and predicate, is one of containment, such that Nature is the explication of what is contained in its subject. In this sense, the Aristotelian theory of matter is that the logical subject contains precisely what is explicated in nature’s accidents. In asking how the world comes to be caught in the reason the world contains in turn, I follow Schelling in disputing three things in this formulation. Firstly, that the logical subject contains, explicitly or implicitly, everything that nature expresses; secondly, that what underlies nature and what is thought in the judgment are identical, and thirdly, that matter is prior and fundamental.

By contrast, I have argued that nature is what it is insofar as it is asymmetrically prior to the thought of nature, not insofar as it is thought. When
therefore nature is thought, it is so consequently upon the nature that is. Due to
the asymmetry of the relation, when the consequent character of the thought of
nature conceives, by this means, precisely the nature that thought is not insofar
as nature is being thought, it does so consequently. In other words, the nature
that is thought does not issue from the thought of it; rather the thinking of that
nature has the character it has precisely insofar as nature is the ground of which
its being thought is the consequent.

Yet what is antecedent is not for that reason ground. Grounding is operative
only where there are consequents, so that the conclusion that ground is itself
consequent upon consequents rather than prior to them seems inescapable. If
grounds arise in this way, their arising seems to entail a degree of circularity that
undercuts the asymmetry of the relation, rendering ground and consequent co-
dependent. Just as Schelling argues a phenomenon is central when it involves
what exceeds it – when, for instance, the Voltaic Pile is demonstrated to localize
or centralize the electromagnetic field that hosts it – a consequent is consequent
just when it extains its ground, on the one hand, and when it is nevertheless
dependent on that from which it arises, on the other. If it is not the case what
just because X is antecedent that it is ground, nevertheless any candidate ground
is such only when it is the ground of consequents. It is not ground that is
consequent upon its consequent therefore, but the co-dependency of ground and
consequent that is consequent upon it. The circle must therefore be thought as
the extainer of the ground upon which that circle is consequent when this
extainment is thought in the consequent. In other words, ground is antecedent
regardless of the quantity of its iterations in thought or in the concept, since
these too exist, and as such have the ground of their existence outside
themselves.

Nature imposes on thought precisely this regimen if it is nature at all, that is
to say, that actuality within which thinking starts as a part of it. The thinking of
nature therefore involves precisely the introduction of locality within it such that,
in this locality, extainment is also thought. No thought of nature is a thought of nature therefore that does not include what is outside the thought itself. Yet the same is true of any phenomenon. A phenomenon is central,
Schelling argues, just when it involves what exceeds it, when its empirical
character – that is, its particularity – is involved into constituents that, while
they belong to that phenomenon, are not reducible to it. A ground is a ground
not therefore when it “underlies”, when it is hypokeimenon or “ultimate subject”,
but precisely when it is extained in the existent, both as antecedent to and as hosting that existent. It is not the case, therefore, that in philosophy,
nature is “leveraged” into thought (against what would it be thus leveraged?),
but rather that thought recovers its locality with respect the existents it extains
and nevertheless conceives, although not without that conceiving extaining in
turn. It is therefore because the identity of thought and nature is stipulated by
nature that thought occupies the consequent pole in the articulation of any phenomenon, giving in turn position, locality or *topos* to thought with respect to what is. Thinking this is precisely not to do “near” or “parochial”, but rather *field* ontology.

Conceiving ground as antecedent of consequent and yet not as ultimately underlying is itself consequent upon the beginnings of field-theoretical ontology Schelling describes in his account of the history of electromagnetic experiments. That *central* is precisely not *fundamental* is a lesson learned from the earth: ground, hard crust, is local, and dissolves into magma at the planetary core, and in turn into the magnetic field that maintains the contrary motion of the core with respect to the mantle, on the one hand, and maintains the atmosphere, on the other. The containing field that hosts the earth therefore is its ground precisely insofar as it exceeds it, on the one hand, and into which therefore planetary behaviours extend. Phenomena are central therefore when the behavioural repertoires of existents augment the actions that antecede them, just as thought is centred or located precisely when it extains the grounds it nevertheless thinks.

This is how nature lies caught in reason; not insofar as it is self-contained, but precisely because it is self-extaining. *Field ontology* is iterative, therefore, not because this is a consequence of thinking, but because *there are fields*.

University of the West of England

References
1. Galileo, *Dialogues on the Two Chief World-Systems*, Dialogue II.
5. This “would indeed be contradictory”, writes Schelling; but he resolves the contradiction not by demonstrating one false but both true: “it is not because there is thinking that there is being, but rather because there is being that there is thinking”, *Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, SW XIII, 161n, tr. Bruce Matthews, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007, p. 203n. The same line of reasoning, augmented, also appears in SW XI, 587.
consequence, the fields of extaintment are mutually *indiscrete*, such that overlaps and shared distributions are contained in its concept. It is by extaintment therefore that the concept gains its discrete character or, as Kauffman suggests, it is due to the recursion of extaintment on itself that containment arises as the extained of the extained. On the discrete and the indiscrete, see Wolfram Hogreve, *Metaphysik und Manik*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992, ch. IV, esp. pp. 116-7.

9. This is, moreover, the basis of Schelling’s criticism of Hegel in his *History of Modern Philosophy*, from where the above citation is taken. See SW X, 126-164; *History*, pp. 134-163.
13. In Kauffman’s formalisation: Let $E = ><$ and $C = <>$; then $EE = >< ><> = >C<$ and $CC = <> <> = <E>$. See Biologic, p. 95.
14. For examples, see *L’enchantement*, pp. 77-79.
15. See *L’enchantement*, p. 78, where Châtelet notes the application of this topological function in quantum field theory.
17. *L’enchantement*, pp. 87, 161, respectively.

42


25. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 72a7: “prior and more knowable in relation to us”. The point is repeated in the *Physics* (184a24-6) where Aristotle distinguishes between abstracta that may only consequently be cognizable and the concrete whole that is “more readily cognizable by the senses”.


28. Novalis, *Sais*, 41-3; **Werke**, 105: “The effort to fathom [Streben na ch Ergründung] the giant mechanism is in itself a move towards the abyss [ein Zug in die Tiefe], an incipient vertigo [beginnender Schwindel]” which ends with the “destruction of the organs of thought”.


32. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 75b9, “transfer to another field”.

33. This prefigures Peter Rohs excellent project, in *Feld-Zeit-Ich*, Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1996, pp. 6, 17, which conjoins a “field-theoretical transcendental philosophy” with a “field theory of nature” by means of a theory of time, freedom and the subject which, insofar as physics does not account for these latter, entails its essential incompleteness.

34. SW X, 340, *Exhibition of the Process of Nature*.

35. Schelling summarizes the problem of intelligible matter at the outset of lecture 19, SW XI, 433. It is matter, “because it assumes all determinations without itself being determinable, and intelligible because these determinations are determinations of pure thought.” Nevertheless, abstract space remains both “intelligible, but also material”, so that the determinations of pure thought, while they do not coincide with the determination of matter, are nevertheless themselves material.

36. This nomenclature is explicit, for example, in the 1800 *Universal Deduction of the Dynamic Process*, SW IV, 1-79.


38. “The crab is the only animal that moves not forwards but obliquely” because “its eyes can move themselves obliquely”. Aristotle, *Progression*, 712b16, 20.

39. Schelling, SW XI, 435-6, puts the point simply: “we call ‘right’ what corresponds to our left, ‘before’ what is opposite to what is behind us, ‘behind’ what is turned away from us, without there being such distinctions in the objects themselves; for if we turn around, what is right becomes left, and what was behind becomes in front of us.”

40. SW XI, 442: “This ‘under’ is therefore one with that so-called prime matter that is the *primum subjectum* (proton hypokeimenon) that serially grounds and is concealed in everything corporeal, one with what is relatively nothing or that which does not have being [eins mit jenem relativen nichts oder nicht-Seyenden] from which everything becomes, with the contingency from which everything that has become from it acquires the character of the past; it is at any rate difficult to conceive precisely because it can be conceived only as the starting point, but is therefore not inconceivable, for something is inconceivable only if it is regarded as being an original, whereas for us it is something conceived, because it is derivative or consequent.”

41. SW XI, 435. The magnet returns in Schelling’s last work, the *Presentation of Pure Rational Philosophy*, XI, 435.

43. It is in this sense that Carl August Eschenmayer’s Experiment in the A Priori Derivation of Magnetic Phenomena, Tübingen: Heerbrandt, 1st edn. 1795, 40, passim, provides the prototype of Schelling’s diagram. Following Châtelet’s reconstruction in Enjeux, 138, it reads:

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1^+ & \leftrightarrow & \rightarrow & 1^- \\
1^\infty & 1^3 & 1^2 & 1^1 & 1^{-1} & 1^{-2} & 1^{-3} & 1^{-\infty} \\
\end{array}
\]

Here, the symbol “\(\leftrightarrow\)” indicates (a) the location of the empirical magnet and (b) the derivation of the total magnet from a pre-magnetic field. Eschenmayer’s Versuch takes this as the unconditioned form of dynamics in general, before proceeding to deduce the categories of Kant’s philosophy of nature from that unconditioned form. Schelling’s excitement at Eschenmayer’s work is evident in his 1797 Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature, SW II, 313-4n, trans. E.E. Harris and P. Heath, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 249.

44. Schelling’s reference to Bacon is to the experimentum crucis, which is crucial not merely in deciding between (at least two) theories, as Karl Popper puts it in Conjectures and Refutations, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 112, but insofar as it constitutes an enfolding of the empirical into the theoretical, or of nature into reason.

45. Now called ‘electron-transfer’ experiments.

46. “Spirit neither has being nor does not have being. It only has being in relationship to what is Being to it. It does not have being in itself.” SW VIII, 264; Ages of the World, trans. J.M. Wirth, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, p. 46.

47. SW VII, 409, “the One essence divides itself in actuality into its two operative modes, in one of which there is only the ground of existence, and in the other only essence [daß Eine Wesen in seinen zwei Wirkungsweisen sich wirklich in zwei Wesen scheidet, daß in dem einen bloß Grund zur Existenz, in dem andern bloß Wesen ist]”. Neither Gutmann’s nor Love and Schmidt’s translations capture the recursive characterization of Wesen, all the more important given the centrality of the latter to the late philosophy’s distinction between the ‘what’ and the ‘that’ of being.

48. SW IV, 430, Rupture 155. The Inquiries contains an extended discussion of the “law of the ground” according to which finite being is “necessarily in another” (SW VII, 340), so that an individual is “something that has become, only through another” (SW VII, 346).

49. SW VII, 333. This claim, common throughout Schelling’s nature and identity philosophy up to and including the Freedom essay, becomes progressively more complex, so that in the Faraday lecture, Schelling argues that the actions of the Voltaic Pile demonstrate that ponderable matter is reducible to forces, that is, to what is “ecstatic or spiritualizing in the Pile” (SW XI, 441), i.e. “spirits or powers” (SW XI, 445).

50. Werner Heisenberg, Physics and Philosophy, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989, pp. 49-50: “We know the forces in the atomic nucleus that are responsible for the emission of the a-particle. But… if we wanted to know why the a-particle was emitted at that particular time we would have to know the microscopic structure of the whole world including ourselves, and that is impossible.”

THE CALL OF PHILOSOPHY
JOSEPH COHEN

“Who are the philosophers?” This question needs to be posed, he famously claimed in the Second Introduction to the Science of Knowledge. Not surprisingly, Fichte asserts that a philosopher ought not to be defined by a title, received from a faculty of philosophy, or by his scholarly publications. The philosopher is rather, for Fichte, a man who begins his task of thinking from the idea of Humanity. In this sense, the philosopher is a believer in the experience of the Idea whence the Humanity of mankind is constituted and, as the Grundlage des Naturrechts\(^1\) indicate, is to be understood as the relation between rational beings unified by the social contract within a rational State. The task of the philosopher is thus clear and stipulated: to assure and maintain the foundation of thinking in and as the element which legitimizes the recognition of rational beings. And, for Fichte, this task is essentially dialectical: it engages the “destruction” of all metaphysical presuppositions that obstruct the rational comprehension of what ought to be the “natural state” of man. The philosophical duty is, in this manner, to elevate the “natural state” of man to what it ought to signify for man. By this manner of inscribing the practical “ought” in the “status naturalis” of man, Fichte entirely identifies the naturality of man with belonging to a rational State. And furthermore, the philosopher establishes the need to extract mankind from the natural in order to situate man where the historical possibility of deploying itself as an ethical being, which invariably signifies itself as the recognition of man by man, is opened – that is as intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity constitutes the foundation of every possible “social contract” which thereby receives its value from a higher instance than its actual realization. And the philosopher is the guardian of this higher instance. That is, the guardian of the Reign of Ends by which the rational State is the means capable of realizing the “spiritual unity” expressed as “culture” and through which, as Fichte states it in the Vocation of Man\(^2\), the “fault” (Fehler) committed by nature can be corrected.

The question however remains, albeit inflected: is the philosopher the guardian of the rational possibility of grounding or founding the Idea of Humanity? That is, is the philosopher the keeper of the possible, of the ground or foundation which asserts itself by and through the possibility it may or can claim by appealing to the “ought” for Man? “Who are the philosophers?” – the question marked for Fichte in which manner and by which token can Man keep and safekeep the identity of its rational universality – may call onto an entirely other thought than that which it claimed to situate itself in itself the rational duty of the practical subject. If so, and if the question may be posed, what will
this other thought itself call onto? In order to approach this question – which we will deploy from Schelling’s philosophy, most particularly from the 1809 Essay – we must retrace the question of Ground in the history of metaphysics.

To think from the place where the Ground deploys itself, such is the task of what we have come to call by the name of Metaphysics. From this deployment the fundamental question of metaphysics announces itself in all of its simplicity and breadth: what is the entity as such? What constitutes the Being of the entity as such? What in the entity is? Or again, what is the foundation on which the entity founds itself in its totality?

We know that these questions, formulated as such, found their resolution in the most rigorous manner as early as Aristotle who proposed in Metaphysics Gamma the following: the entity is firstly as foundation. Hence, the history of metaphysics is that modality by which the ground or the foundation is revealed. The history of metaphysics is thus the history in which a ground or a foundation is searched for, investigated as such – a ground or a foundation capable of furnishing a basis, a seat, a stable centre from which the entity can appear. In this sense, the history of metaphysics coordinates two directions in one simultaneous grasp: it seeks and investigates the ultimate foundation, that which is at the bottom of all manifestation or the hypo-keimenon and it seeks and investigates that towards which the totality of the entity remains suspended, the principle or the arkhé, that in which the entity can find its just measure. Hence, and furthermore, the history of metaphysics engages two impulses: the one of revealing that which is at the foundation of all that is, that which forms the suppositum of all that appears, and that of revealing what holds the totality of what is present according to the principle Law of causality. The essence of metaphysics dictates itself hence as the foundation capable of holding, of sustaining, of entertaining the totality of the entity by maintaining this totality in conformity with the Law of a universal principle of reason.

In inheriting the primary question in direction of the foundation of the entity – the question as we said above was explicated by Aristotle and to which the Philosopher formulated the first element capable of receiving it, the hypokeimenon, it is to Modernity which the task was given to reengage this questioning by marking the necessity of establishing a supreme position of foundation from which each entity could subsequently posit itself, fix itself and grasp itself. It is to Descartes that the history of metaphysics imparted the responsibility of inaugurating the “modern moment” by consecrating the entirety of philosophical thought to the Archimedean establishment of this foundation. This “modern moment” is characterized by the re-conduction of the entity in its totality to the ego, which is determined by its act of self-reflexion in the inaugural act of the cogitatio. In truth, it is by sojourning in the wandering of doubt that the ego seizes itself as res cogitans and by that same movement, discovers the basis of a “firm land”, to paraphrase Hegel. Within the indubitable
act of thinking oneself by oneself, the ego recognizes that it constitutes the absolute foundation in which the entity composes itself. In this sense, it is through the *ego cogito me cogitare* that subjectivity inherits the privileged condition that furnishes Man with its proper substantiality: that of being the seat to which the totality of the entity adjoins and upholds itself.

Hence we understand the word *Subjectum*, after Descartes, as *ego cogito* and consequently as *ego sum* and thus as the measure by which is explicated the foundation where all entities maintain themselves. The *subjectum* acquires here its proper and most rigorous definition in that it reveals the determination of the essence of beings. For the subject receives here the very character of being, this character which reveals itself as the self-reflexion of the *ego* as “thinking being”. And where the “thinking subject” becomes the proper determination of being, it reveals the rapport, the difference, or the distinction – the dualism thus – between that which it is and that which it is not, between itself as “representing subject” and the other than itself, the “represented” or the “object”.

It is precisely at this point that we are able to hear the resonance of Fichte. In integrating at once the Cartesian determination of the *ego* and the breakthrough, which we owe to Kant, of the subject as freedom, Fichte seizes the ego both in the Cartesian optic of the “representing subject” as well as in the “autonomy” which gives itself the Law of its own action. For the Self is itself in itself and thus is only effectively with itself and close to itself in that it is the originary act of a self-positing. That is, as freedom. The being of the ego is thus entirely founded on itself by and through the self-positing activity of freedom that is proper to it. Hence, according to Fichte, the totality of the entities comprehends itself from the position of freedom, and thus all entities receive their determinations from the freedom enacted by the ego. Which means: the freedom of the Self, or the Self as freedom, is the totality of the entity and inversely the non-Self is only that which the freedom of the Self opposes to itself only to better affirm itself in and for itself. The privilege of the Self is here elevated to its highest effectivity: in giving itself freely the ground from which it establishes the totality of the entity, it accomplishes itself in its essence as “foundational proposition” or as “founding position”. Explaining thus the absolute circularity of the *Selbstbegrundung* – this search for the foundation which can only perfect itself in the originary activity proper to the Self – as the movement or the modality of determining itself by giving itself the ground of its free self-positing. Such is the fundamental lesson we here retain from Fichte: the substantial being of the Self, precisely in that it constitutes its ownmost subjectivity, is always and already determined in its ground by the pure activity of its free self-positing. This signifies that the Self is freedom and thus that the Self as freedom is the substantial whole of the entity.
1. The free self-positing activity of the subject as “force” and “power”

The “metaphysics of subjectivity”, to take Heidegger’s characterization, ought not to be conceived here as if it had reached its end. In many ways, this history is only beginning at this point of identification between freedom, the Self and the entity. In this sense the “history of the metaphysics” of subjectivity begins at this unconditional and absolute point, which has made of the subject, through and by the self-positing act which it inaugurates in and through its freedom, the substrate of the totality of the entity. And it is precisely this beginning point that Schelling, notably in On the I as Principle of Philosophy, will revive. It is a revival which will be entirely oriented by the elaboration of the free self-positing activity of the subject as “force” and “power”. It is “force” and “power” which will become the very modality proper to the self-reflexive rapport of the subject to itself. And thus it is through these concepts – “force” and “power” – that Schelling will engage a deepening of the line of thought inaugurated by Descartes, and prolonged by Kant and Fichte, which affirmed that substantiality is grasped as the self-positing activity of the subject’s freedom. In truth, Schelling calls for subjectivity to be entirely rethought against the horizon of a “force” or a “power” whose property is always to activate itself in its reiteration. This means: substantiality is the self-realisation of the subject by itself understood as the “self-power” of itself. Of course, the point which must be grasped in this radicalisation of the subject as “force” and “power” is the dismantling of the Kantian distinction between Practical freedom and Transcendental freedom and consequently, the dissolution of the Kantian articulation of the moral law as the ratio cognoscendi of freedom and freedom as the ratio essendi of the moral law. And thus, Schelling is engaged in situating, at the heart of the subject, an absoluteness of freedom which steps far beyond the Kantian limitation and furthermore renders secondary the moral law by effectively subjugating it to a supreme law proper to the absolute Ego whose sole expression will no longer be that of an obligation, but rather of a free reflexive self-positing defined as “equality with itself in itself” and whose “originary form” is always and already that of Identity. The step beyond Kant will, in this manner, be accomplished. It is beyond Fichte also – which only signifies that the Kantian and Fichtean theses will have been here accomplished. “The essence of the Self is freedom”, states Schelling in ‘On the I as Principle of Philosophy’ which means: the self posits itself immediately by and through its ownmost self-power (Selbstmacht) and thus posits itself as self before any other determination can be had or instituted. In this sense, where Kant underlined at once the factuality of Practical Reason and the inconceivability of freedom which we may only access indirectly, we are now, with Schelling, liberating the very possibility of an “intellectual intuition” understood as “intuition of absolute freedom”. An “intuition of absolute freedom” which intuits, as it is stated in the Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism,
a Self not simply as a “pure will” by and through which its self-determination posits itself and exists for itself but also, as an “absolute free will”, as a Self firstly and fundamentally “will of originary will”.

However, and we will have understood it, “force” and “power” are not here to be thought as exterior properties of the Self. Rather, the Self in itself is entirely force and power of itself. Its essence is “force” and “power” of itself and for itself. Schelling insists repeatedly and underlines it continuously: it is only within this power of itself, this “self-power” (Selbstmacht) that the Self is subjectum. Or again, the Self is subjectum where this Selbstmacht explicates, accentuates and deploys what had appeared as simple “free self-positing”. In this sense, the Self is “free self-positing” only if we grasp that it is presupposed by a “power-to-be”. In effect, if the Self is the principle of philosophy, the being whose privilege it is to question in the direction of the entity in its totality, it is only because, firstly, entirely and absolutely it is an act of self-rapport which is self-foundation as “power to be its being”. Such is the deployment of the Schellingian resolution of the “metaphysics of subjectivity” in a “metaphysics of will”: the subject, before it is self-positing as freedom, is power to be its being. This is precisely what Schelling specifies: the subject, as Grundlage, is “subject of being”. It is here important to underline this shift. The proposition “subject of being” signifies that the subject is already thought as that which is pre-worked and inhabited by a potentiality more originary than the self-determination of its free activity. In this sense, what is occurring in this shift from the “metaphysics of subjectivity” to the “metaphysics of will” is not only the accomplishment of our comprehension of the subject, a comprehension inaugurated by Descartes. But more profoundly – as Heidegger signified in his commentary on Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom – a possibility of thinking towards what in the subject acts as the background of the subject is opened. That is, here Schelling is elaborating a break beyond the “metaphysics of subjectivity” into that which exposes the subject to what in the subject itself remains as yet unthought by the subject: its existentiality.

For, according to Schelling, what appears and reveals itself from the “metaphysics of subjectivity” and what will constitute the need for a break beyond it is its essential insufficiency. Subjectivity remains incapable of accomplishing the enterprise of self-founding or self-positing it was held to have realised since Descartes. In this sense, subjectivity remains radically confronted with its own failure and discovers its own impotence, its deficiency. Why? Because the subject, understood as the ground in its self-positing free act, is in fact, for Schelling, dissimulating a pre-force which although it is in itself, in the Self and as the Self, is not entirely reducible to the Self. This symbolizes for Schelling the necessity of a radical “turning point” in the history of the “metaphysics of subjectivity”. This “turning point” deploys not a foundation in the sense of reason but rather in the sense of an inapparent
Thus the task of revealing and detecting the “ab-grund”, the “without-ground” from which the foundation of this privileged entity whose task is to question in direction of the totality of entities is here engaged. This returning of the metaphysics of subjectivity on itself beyond itself stems from one line which is of course a central quote in the Essay on the Essence of Human Freedom: “There is no other being than will. Will is the primordial being (Ursein).”

2. The originary contraction of ground

What are we to understand by this phrase? Firstly, it is being itself, as will, which grants the entities their foundation. This means the following: it is always in the background of the will that the ground of the entity is properly fundamental. Hence, at the heart of every entity the movement of will is logged, since it is in and within the “wilful modality of being” that the substantiality of the entity is constituted. In this sense, what Schelling is enunciating here (and what had a profound resonance for Heidegger), is that being as will is the foundation of the entity. This thesis however must be carefully explicated. For, there is a tension or scission, soon to be a disjointment, insinuated here. Because, Schelling states, will, insofar as it is the primordial Being, is at once and simultaneously will of itself and will of the ground. This means: will is will of itself as foundation or ground. Hence, it is because will always wills itself that the ground never ceases by that very token to deepen itself, to dig in and within itself, to excavate itself in and within itself. This is what we must thus describe as a movement of introversion of will in itself and thus of “originary contraction” proper to ground itself. “Originary contraction” also signifies a retraction of itself in itself, furthering itself in itself beyond itself. As if the “primordial being” as will would give itself as foundation only according to the movement of the excavation of the foundation or through the modality of an introversion, contraction and retraction of the ground in itself. Hence, Being is at its foundation in and within a “will of will”, perpetually engaged towards a ground whose grounding is and will always be excavating itself as “ab-grund”. Thus, the thesis that we quoted, “the primordial being is will”, cannot be posed unilaterally. Rather its unilaterality is always and already double, always in perpetual differentiation that Schelling will call a “dis-cessio”, from the latin prefix dis (separation, and by extension, negation) and cedere (to cede or to concede), of and in being itself. An ontological “dis-cessio” signifying thus the doubleness of a will always engaged in the necessity of a ground where this engagement never ceases to open, in the ground, an “ab-grund”. In this sense, the determination of the ground is always and already presupposed by an undetermined ab-grund. An estranged and disquieted “dialectic of ground” is thus logged here, in and within being – a dialectic which however abandons its essential concept and
empties out of itself the movement of its reappropriation. Schelling’s “dialectic of the ground” proliferates otherwise than within the contours defined by Hegelian speculation. It explicates itself in and as a becoming which perpetually reiterates an irreappropriable ab-grund beyond the ground within the ground. A becoming thus which never ceases to reflect the foundation by supplying it, supplementing it, which would also and at the same time, mark its permanent excess whilst suspending and thus voiding the very possibility of its speculative comprehension. This singular situation is precisely what Schelling calls thaumazein (recalling the Greek word) that opens thinking to a renewed interrogation: that precisely of the essence of human freedom.

The Essay on the Essence of Human Freedom seeks to apprehend freedom as human, that is, to also liberate the possibility of thinking the effectiveness of good and evil. This investigation will, of course, not be dissociable from a historisation of freedom, understood thus as freedom for good and evil, and which requires, in fact commands, its ownmost temporality capable of opening towards a decision disposed to project a “superior history” (Höhere Geschichte) whose radicality involves the renewal of, and thus the return to, the “narratives” which in principle are never reducible to conceptual analysis, those “narratives” of the creation and the fall. In other words, Schelling opens up, in the Essay, the very possibility for thinking to think beyond what is thought and towards what projects thinking beyond that which is, as such, reducible to the rational appropriation by thought. To elaborate such an opening, in the framework of a historical narrative, which reverts thinking back to its first irreducible principles which are as such irreappropriable to conceptual analysis means, for the Schelling of the Essay and certainly evermore so for the Schelling of the different versions of the Weltalter, to question in the direction of the very will of God, defined as pure freedom beyond being, in order to explicate both the “decision of creation” and the “situation of Man” or of finitude in the design of this decision. Why does God decide to create space and time, that is, to retract one’s self in order to open the place of a created world? And, what is the role, the stance, the standpoint of man, the creature, in this process of creation?

3. The arche-event

This superior point of view on the process of creation remains necessary for Schelling in order to think the deployment of history, that is, to comprehend the movement of human freedom within the general regime of historicity. In other words, Schelling sets out to think both the decision of creation and the befallen situation of Man in this decision. That is, he requires a return to the event from where the “superior history” stems, its ultimate root thus in the fact of its fall or befall outside of itself. For Schelling, this event or this fact of the fall or befall outside of itself is originary. This means that history, in its emergence, must in effect be envisaged as an entirely new opening, that is, as a new world
which presumes that man freely undermined and unsettled its very basis. Schelling states it quite unambiguously: without this originary event of a coming out of the movement of creation, there would never be or have been anything like history. This is why the first step of man outside of creation is the actual and true arche-event, which in itself renders possible the succession and the sequence of other events, the proliferation of history itself.

What is profoundly radical in Schelling’s questioning here and precisely where this questioning frees up a novelty in the reflection on human freedom is that this arche-event, this step outside creation, makes it possible to think together the universal necessity of evil and the fundamental thesis that evil always and already remains the choice proper to man. In this sense, right after having marked that “the undeniable actuality of evil, at least as a general opposite, leaves no room to doubt that it was necessary for the revelation of God”, it is not surprising to see Schelling state that “Man is placed on that summit where he has in himself the source of self-movement toward good or evil in equal portions: the bond of principles in him is not a necessary but rather a free one.”9 And it is thus ultimately the indetermination of the bond of principles within man, which explains the very possibility of evil: “evil as such could only arise in creatures in so far as light and darkness or both principles can be unified in a severable manner only in them.”10 The very possibility of evil is only a possibility for man and man alone. Only the creature, man, reveals evil as such, since, ultimately, as Schelling remarked in the Essay, the ground, this foundational insistence which works in all that is, including in God, can never be evil in itself. The ground is in effect present in God even if it is in God that which is not God: it is the other of God in God, insofar as God is essentially grasped and apprehended as Spirit, or, as Love:

God as spirit (the eternal bond of both) is the purest love: there can never be a will to evil in love just as little as in the ideal principle. But God himself requires a ground so that he can exist; but only a ground that is not outside but inside him and has in itself a nature which, although belonging to him, is yet also different from him. The will of love and the will of the ground are two different wills, of which each exists for itself; but the will of love cannot withstand the will of the ground, nor abolish it because it would then have to oppose itself. For the ground must be active so that love may exist, and it must be active independently of love so that love may really exist.11

This means that to the solitude of God as Spirit or Love there responds a solitude of man, which is precisely the seat of freedom, that is, that of being always and already undecidably divided, torn, severed, situated thus in the middle point where between nature and God man is both paradoxically and indifferently both natural and divine and thus always independent from one and the other. It is thus through freedom befalling on man alone that the double postulation of good and evil, the “power for good and evil”, is also revealed in man, and furthermore that this double postulation is essential for man. And it is important to see that, for Schelling, one can never separate or isolate one of
the terms of this double oppositional and correlative postulation. It is precisely, as we have just sketched it, because man is that “un-decided being” between nature and God, that he is also and at the same time the central creature, that is the creature which encompasses in itself – without speculatively reconciling them – the two different and correlative ontological instances of ground and existence. Man is in himself the “two centres”: This elevation of the very deepest centres into light occurs in no creatures visible to us except in man. “In man there is the whole power of the dark principle and at the same time the whole strength of the light there is the deepest abyss and the loftiest sky or both centra.”

Hence, to show the specificity of human freedom understood in its essence as *existing* freedom, leads Schelling to the perspective developed in the *Weltalter* where, through and by a narrative perspective, we may grasp the effective reality of evil where this effective reality marks a resolute return to a pre- or proto-history which is at once the history of creation, the history of freedom and the development of a perpetually ekstatic temporality. This means that temporality is always and already allied to the possibility of freedom and consequently that although man is *in* time, his freedom originates from an “outside” of time.

4. God is Love

We shall return to this “narrative perspective”, but we ought first to remark on the development of a radical paradox: in order to save man with his freedom there is no other solution for man than to seek refuge in the divine essence by upholding that man is not outside of God but in God and that man’s activity is wholly part of the life of God. One however ought not to see here a reconciliation. For what Schelling is here developing is nothing less than the confrontation between a “metaphysics of evil” and, what we could call a “metaphysics of love”, stemming from the ontological distinction between ground and existence. It is thus that the entire question of the essence of human freedom shifts here. Since, for Schelling, the question will become: in which manner and according to the distinction ground and existence are we to understand in God what is *not* God. The role of the “negation” is here of capital importance. Not only because through it the question of understanding whether Schelling is looking to isolate God on one hand and man’s freedom on the other is rendered null and void, but also and more importantly because through it Schelling demonstrates that God is exempted from error or evil only insofar as human freedom can affirm itself over and against God. And thus God is exempted from evil only if this exemption depends on man’s exclusion from being reduced to a “mere passivity”. The positive reality of evil is, in this way, assured in the effective reality of man’s freedom, whilst God is exempted from this assurance only insofar as the responsibility of this exemption befalls man. It is in this manner that the two poles of the *Essay* can be formulated and affirmed: the “metaphysics of evil” on one side and on the other
a “metaphysics of love”13 – both being indissociable because precisely dissociated in human freedom, and both being dissociable because allied, but not reconciled, in God; not reconciled since for Schelling “God is Love” where Love is understood as that modality which lets the ground work as itself, that is, lets the ground persistently will its ground and thus also will itself beyond itself, out-side of itself: ex-istence.

In this sense the dynamic opposition between ground and existence, this opposition which allows Schelling to formulate the fundamental law that orders both the divine life as well as its revelation in the world and in history, is also what permits us to grasp the very radicality of evil as discord and disjunction of the two ultimate ontological principles, ground and existence. Hence, the possibility of evil consists in that man, instead of conforming his ipseity, his own being, which is the analogue in himself of the ground, into “base and instrument” seeks to elevate his ipseity to the rank of a reconciliation in which the distinction between ground and existence no longer expresses the possibility of their tension but reduces both, that is negates both in order to affirm a Spirit over and above them both. Ultimately, evil consists in the process by which negation is negated and relieved in and as the necessity of Spirit. In this manner, it is always from and by reference to the fundamental law of opposition that Schelling reinterprets the “dialectical” identity that culminates in the phrase “Good and Evil are the same”. That is, he sees at once the movement of dissociation and of unity between Good and Evil where this movement does not convert itself into their speculative reconciliation. Or again, he sees the incessant reaffirmation of their differentiation within their sameness whilst marking the sameness of their differentiation by never establishing the identity of their identity and difference. It is as if negation was here maintained as negation, that is, furthered as negation, maintained as a pure negation which would have been so negative that it would not accomplish itself in the negation of the negation, but rather exceeds this accomplishment in a further unnegatable negation. One must thus think and hold together the thesis of the universal necessity of evil and the thesis that evil remains always and already the choice proper to man. For, as Schelling incessantly repeats it in the Essay, the ground is never evil as such. That is, evil is as such only if it is Spirit. “... just as there is an enthusiasm for the good, there is a spiritedness [Begeisterung] of evil”14, states Schelling. It is this spiritual trait of evil, susceptible of provoking such an exaltation or spiritedness, such a Begeisterung, which characterizes evil in its specific human figure. Just as error is not a privation of truth, as Schelling will claim in the Stuttgart Lectures, but something highly positive, something which does not betray a lack of spirit but rather shows a perverted spirit, evil is not simply a privation of good but a true positive disharmony. This prompts Schelling into claiming that evil is the purest spirit – and as spirit it leads the most violent attack, willing even to destroy “the foundation
of creation.” Evil is spirit – of course, this phrase did not escape Heidegger who, in his monumental and decisive commentary, claimed that we needed to grasp its radical anti-speculative (i.e. Hegelian) force in order to think a freedom for evil.

5. Target: Hegel?

Of course, Hegel is the target here. And more precisely, it is Hegel’s entire dialectical system of negation and the negation of negation that is put into question by Schelling. In effect, it is this very dialectic of Spirit which Schelling is voiding and emptying. Hegelian speculative dialectic, this dialectic which operates by reconciling identity and difference in the negation of their contradiction, culminating in the form of Absolute knowledge, a Spirit comprehended in the return to the immediate, to paraphrase the well known formula of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is, for Schelling, the very modality of thought incapable of entering into the “narrative perspective”. Hegelian dialectic is but a symptom of philosophical research, not this research itself. For Schelling, the “narrative form” can only emerge at the point where the speculative dialectic is interrupted and frees itself from itself. One must here imagine what Schelling is requesting beyond Hegel. He is in fact insisting on the necessity that speculative dialectic do all that it is not able to do – namely operate by forgetting the speculative operation of negativity. In effect, the two thoughts are mutually exclusive and in truth not reconcilable. Certainly, both Hegel and Schelling are searching for a philosophical expression where the Absolute would come to manifestation. Certainly, both Hegel and Schelling are diametrically opposed to and radically put into question the philosophy of understanding which separates the Absolute itself into forms and concepts. But Schelling repudiates what Hegel calls the Philosophical Encyclopaedia, repudiates that which precisely, for Hegel, expresses the Absolute in its truth and beyond the philosophies of understanding. Schelling seeks something wholly other. He seeks rather the point of rupture of all Encyclopaedia, and most radically of the speculative and dialectical *Encyclopaedia* in its affirmed and assured teleology and in which the Absolute is Spirit which determines itself through the movement of Truth understood as the becoming of oneself and nothing other than this becoming, and thus by the movement of a mediation between this becoming as becoming other and this becoming as becoming oneself through the negativity of its becoming other. Philosophy, for Hegel, is the explication of the movement where the laborious work of the negative, working through each of Spirit’s mediations, each of its exteriorisations, reappropriates itself in the infinity of a truth in itself and for itself as whole as the multiplicity of Spirit’s manifestations. For Spirit is no greater than the force of its manifestations, claims Hegel in the opening pages of the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and consequently its temporality is wholly present in
each of its appearances which are in truth but one self-presentation of oneself. And this is the problem for Schelling. Spirit in the Hegelian speculative dialectic always and already is no greater than the force of its manifestation. That is, Spirit always succeeds in reappropriating itself, in itself for itself. Ultimately, thus that contradiction is always and already the essence of a movement in which Spirit recognizes itself, in itself and for itself and where each of the moments of its self-recognition never exceed but only express the totality of Spirit itself. Schelling seeks, on the reverse, that point of interruption which he will later name, in the Introduction of 1841, the “ecstasy of reason”\textsuperscript{17}, that is, the point where a movement of opening beyond itself, exceeding itself, is revealed, a force not of reappropriation but of expropriation which no negation could negate except precisely by supplementing negation beyond itself and where it would precisely forget its speculative role. A possibility is opened here for thinking freedom radically anew. Precisely not as grasped and comprehended in the process of a history which reappropriates each and every one of its moments in the form of Absolute knowledge, but rather as projecting itself beyond any reappropriation, that is, marking in thinking that which surpasses thinking. A freedom, as Heidegger emphasized so radically again in his Schelling course, to surpass man “beyond being and time”. Heidegger developed this Schellingian motif in all of its radicality in the 1930 Seminar. But leaving the Heideggerian development aside, it is important to note that before Heidegger, Schelling himself envisaged finite human freedom explicitly in a temporality determined as futurity, that is as what projects its narrative beyond the comprehension of the present and thus opens the narrative perspective to think the ownmost temporality of an event in its irreducible positivity as that which gives itself to thinking otherwise than by thinking. This is precisely what Schelling names Das Un-vor-Denkliche, the “un-pre-thinkable” which can never be reappropriated in the deployment of a speculative dialectic since it incessantly pierces this dialectic towards that which remains for it radically unthought, even unthinkable: a pure otherness preceding thinking itself.

It is here, at this very point where thinking is exposed to the “un-pre-thinkable”, that Schelling reveals, beyond the Hegelian speculative dialectic, what can appear outside of that which only expresses an economical structure of thought. In a certain manner, for Schelling, Hegel grasped thinking as that which only thinks the possible and what is possible for it. And thus, Hegel would have only thought the thinkable, that which is already thought. And thus Schelling poses the question: what happens to thinking after absolute knowledge? What comes to thinking after the movement of the Aufhebung accomplishes itself and affirms itself in, to quote Hegel from the last page of the Phenomenology of Spirit, “this absolute knowledge where Spirit has conquered the pure element of its existence, the concept”? From these hypothetical Schellingian questions, we can see that in truth Schelling is not opposed to
Hegel. But one can see here a deconstructive motif in Schelling, he acquiesces to speculative dialectic. He acquiesces to Hegel, that is, he accepts the Hegelian definition of philosophy as the comprehension of the absolute reconciliation as Spirit of reason and actuality. But he acquiesces to the Hegelian definition only to emphasize, against Hegel, that actuality is not reducible to what philosophy possibilizes for it. In this sense, he turns against Hegel what he inherits from Hegel. That is, Schelling insists that actuality is for the thought that seeks to comprehend it in and as the movement of absolute Spirit, the impossible. It is all that this thought cannot say, and cannot think. Ultimately, this means that it has not yet thought in its absolute thought.

Actuality is the impossible, and thus to think is to expose thinking to the impossible as unthinkable. This is most certainly the central idea around which Schelling’s positive philosophy pivots. And it marks nothing less than the danger for thinking and the future task of thinking. The danger for thinking would be its possibility, to become a ready-at-hand technique of determined procedures and of methodological practices. The future task of thinking however, its interest, its force and its power – where its will would will beyond itself – would be a certain experience of the impossible, that is of the Other than what is thought. In this sense, and following Schelling, perhaps it is time we think towards an experience of that which is not reducible to the possible, which is not apprehended by the possible but which would think incessantly as a negative – but a negative which would actually work as negative, that is work un-speculatively – in and within the incessant reaffirmation of inventing a thinking that would think otherwise than by and through the modality that thinking comprehends itself by thinking itself. In other words, to invent a thinking which would be exposed to the event of the other than thinking. It is surely impossible – but such is the task of this invention, of this thinking. Such is the task that Schelling set for philosophy when he called for the “artistic drive of the philosopher”, that is when he claimed for philosophy a productive imagination as vital necessity. When he declared, as early as 1803, in the Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums,18 that the philosopher must invent forms and that each new philosophy must have accomplished a new step in the form, or again that a philosopher must be radically original. Such declarations were quite new in the history of philosophy. No one had really stipulated before Schelling that a philosopher needed and could, ought to be wholly original in creating new forms. Even Descartes did not dare to use such phrases when he recommended the French language as a philosophical language. But such is the task of thinking, the thinking Schelling exposes thinking to. Perhaps the call of philosophy would be the following: to invent a thinking beyond thinking which would venture, originally, into thinking the impossible for and of thinking.

University College Dublin
References


10. Ibid. p. 42.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid. 32.


15. Ibid. p. 55.


Hitherto, the concept of will has been subsumed under the concept of force; I, on the other hand, do exactly the reverse, and intend every force in nature to be conceived as will.¹

A metaphysical school of the North, impregnated to some extent with fog, has fancied that it has worked a revolution in human understanding by replacing the word Force with the word Will.²

If Schopenhauer’s entire merit were reducible to attributing a new name, “will”, to Leibniz’s “force” (vis activa), it is true that the examination of his metaphysics would not provide us with much novelty. Yet, one might ask whether we are faced here with a simple “word” change, and further whether Victor Hugo (usually so perspicacious) has properly understood the meaning of “the word Will” in the “metaphysical school of the North”. One has to admit, however, that this new denomination is not without ambiguity. Schopenhauer claims repeatedly that no known “name” or “concept” truly captures this primary reality or “thing-in-itself”, which he designates for lack of a better term as “will”, basing himself on our specific experience of it through our own body.³

At the same time, he seems to be particularly attached to the term “will”, clearly preferring it to the term “force” because he thinks it is better equipped to capture the essential characteristics of this primary reality or true and universal substance from which all genera of being (or “Platonic Ideas”) as well as all the particular beings that make up the phenomenal world are derived. It goes without saying that this ambiguity is not accidental. It can be explained first by the fact that the word “force” has a much more limited meaning in Schopenhauer than in Leibniz, and second by Schopenhauer’s extension of the term “will” to include the metaphysical essence of all beings. For Schopenhauer, the only forces that exist are the “forces of nature”, and these are to be understood as the “objectification” of the universal “will” within the realm of material nature alone. In other words, Schopenhauer does not recognize the existence of the spiritual forces so important to Leibniz’s philosophy. As for the “will”, he extends its application well beyond the realm of human action, including animal “instincts” and “drives” as well as human “desires”. This surprising extension of the meaning of “will” is justified by the claim that, while only humans are explicitly conscious of the will, it stems from the same metaphysical principle as the forces of material bodies and the animal drives. For even when the human will is guided by rational representations or motives,
the roots of rational action still reach down into the same universal will at work in the blind mechanisms of natural forces and the primitive teleology of animal instincts.

While Leibniz’s “force” is characterized by rational determinations that are generously communicated to the behaviour of all beings, the “will” that animates all beings in Schopenhauer is instead characterized by blindness, ignorance, indetermination, unavoidable insatisfaction, and confinement in a sterile and destructive repetition. Schopenhauer’s will takes no interest in the rationality of the principle of reason; it completely ignores the individuation of particular substances and the subjectivity of human subjects; it is not bound by any of the inhibitions that restrain the force of finite substances in Leibniz; it is everything, yet from the standpoint of the requirements of the phenomenal world, the will is nothing. Unknowable in itself and barely recognizable in a few specific phenomena, it still governs the play of phenomena and thus continuously and inevitably discredits all rational constructions that our intellect and conscious representations project onto the superficial appearances of the world.

It seems that everything separating Schopenhauer’s will from Leibniz’s forces must bring it closer to Freud’s drive. Like the Freudian drive, Schopenhauer’s will is free from all original attachment to an object and leads a life ruled entirely by the pleasure principle. Moreover, the will also draws all of its inexhaustible and potentially destructive energy from itself, rather than from occasional stimuli or impulses (Freud’s *Triebreize*) that only bring about its temporal actualization. Like Freud’s drive, the Schopenhauerian will is much closer to our libidinal body and its affects than to the conscious representations of our intellect and their intentional objects. Freud was not blind to these deep similarities. One should, however, also remain mindful of the differences, particularly the fact that from the outset, unlike the monolithic nature of the Schopenhauerian will, Freud’s drive breaks apart into a multiplicity of partial drives that can just as well come into conflict with each other as form alliances, but are never reducible to one and the same force.

1. *How the universal will becomes an object of a particular representation*

   In Schopenhauer, the will that is everything in-itself, is nothing from the standpoint of knowledge governed by the principle of sufficient reason, for it can neither be clarified nor even accessed by intentional or representational consciousness. The will in-itself thus has to be “unconscious” in the two-fold sense that it neither possesses an original self-consciousness, nor can it be represented by another consciousness. Moreover, as well as withdrawing from all rational awareness, the will in-itself offers no handhold to the metaphysical principle of individuation. As such, it cannot be an unconscious subject, and its unconsciousness is not subjective in any way. But does this allow
Schopenhauer to thus avoid any tendency to subjectify the will? If the will has absolutely nothing in common with subjectivity (for instance, that of an evil genius) why then qualify all of its expressions and manifestations in the world of representation as “objectifications”? This brings us face to face with the central problem of Schopenhauer’s metaphysics, namely: the relation of the will to a phenomenal world in which it recognizes itself as if in a “mirror”, but from which it differs so greatly that, from its own viewpoint, this world of representation is without any true existence.

How then does Schopenhauer manage to bridge the gap that he has himself opened up between phenomena ruled by the principle of reason and the will as irrational metaphysical principle? In other words, why does the will want and need to objectify itself in a world of rational phenomena, and how can it “know itself” in a world from which it differs so greatly? Further, how can a will “free of all plurality” (frei von aller Vielheit) simultaneously want different sorts of things, and how can these different things, immanent to its arbitrary volitions, be transformed into transcendent worldly phenomena governed by the principle of reason? Finally, we must also satisfy the post-Kantian in all of us by explaining how individual human subjects living in a world of representational objects can know or at least experience (in themselves or through observing the phenomena of material nature and animal life) the action of the will in-itself.

Let us answer the first of these questions by proposing that Schopenhauer’s will is nothing more than a striving towards the realization of its immanent power, that is, towards the actualization of a merely virtual multiplicity. The will in-itself is thus a reigned-in tendency or force that impatiently awaits the appropriate “circumstances” (Umstände) to let itself loose and thus “manifest itself” (hervortreten). These occasions, which allow the will to realize its dynamic potential, are the only things that do not stem directly from its own nature and power. They thus remain external to the will and are constituted of objects or events that are situated or happen in the transcendent (or quasi-transcendent) realm of the phenomenal world.

It is tempting to say that the formless will in-itself requires phenomenal forms in which to release itself in order to realize and manifest its dormant powers. However, such a claim is insufficient as it explains neither how the will can be simultaneously one and many, nor how the noumenal multiplicity of its powers (which are situated outside time and space) can be embodied in the multiplicity of phenomenal objects constituting the spatio-temporal world of representation. This leads us to our second question. Answering it requires imagining the existence of a layer of intermediate realities – between the will and empirical objects – that would draw their noumenal nature from the will but their multiplicity from the phenomenal world. This is exactly what Schopenhauer proposes by inserting a middle and mediating realm of ideal (and representational) objects that he calls “the Platonic Ideas” between the unity or
indivisibility of the will in-itself and the multiplicity of phenomenal objects in empirical representation:

If, according to what has so far been said, all variety of forms in nature and all plurality of individuals belong not to the will, but only to its objectivity and to the form thereof, it necessarily follows that the will is indivisible and is wholly present in every phenomenon, although the degrees of its objectification, the (Platonic) Ideas, are very different. For easier understanding, we may regard these different Ideas as individual, and in themselves simple, acts of will [...]. But the [empirical] individuals are phenomena of the Ideas, and hence of those acts, in time, space, and plurality. (WWV, § 28, 207/155) 8

Given their intermediate status one can analyse the Platonic Ideas in two different ways, that is, starting from the will in-itself or from empirical phenomena. From the standpoint of the will, the Ideas manifest the will’s unfolding into different powers or “acts” as well as its articulation in different forms. In this way, the Ideas explain how an “indivisible” will can give birth to different types of objectification such as material nature, vegetable and animal nature, and humankind (or, more specifically, human individuals). It is thus the same noumenal will, the same metaphysical drive, that realizes itself in the forms tied to the natural forces of material bodies, the tendencies and instincts of living beings, and the will to live and desires of each human being. This realization of the will in various types of “objectivity” – with specific forces, tendencies, and desires – delineates a realm of pre-phenomenal and pre-empirical diversity, that is, the ideal diversity of (the different kinds and degrees) of “Platonic Ideas”. As such the Ideas define an a priori ontological order for the objects of the phenomenal world. From the standpoint of phenomenal objects and their spatio-temporal individuation, these ideal forms of objectivity represent the paradigm or ideal form behind their empirical existence (much in the same way as the Ideas in Plato himself). It is thus important to clearly distinguish between the will’s immediate objectifications (the Platonic Ideas) and its mediated objectifications (empirical objects), as well as between what these two types of objectivity can tell us about the nature of the will in-itself. To reiterate from the standpoint of the will: the will recognizes itself better and with more immediacy in the mirror offered by the Platonic Ideas than in the deforming mirror of phenomenal objects. The will is no less present in the latter than in the former, however, its action is veiled by the rule of the principles of reason and individuation.

This brings us to our third question, which deals with how far human beings – whose intelligence is limited to understanding the ideas and phenomena belonging to the rational world of representation – can perceive the work of an irrational will within this rational world. This is a central question for Schopenhauer’s entire philosophical system in the sense that, from a post-Kantian perspective, claiming that the will is at work behind the scenes in the empirical world necessarily requires an (a priori!) proof of the possibility of experiencing its action in some way. Without this proof, Schopenhauer’s claim
that the world as will and as representation is in fact one and the same world would lack any critical foundation. This being said, it seems that any attempt to provide such a proof is doomed to failure from the outset given the radical difference Schopenhauer opens up between the will and objects of representation, thus creating an apparently insurmountable gap. To produce the required proof, one would need to have access to at least one type of phenomenon that could be given immediately and indubitably in both ontological realms. One could then try to show through analogy how other types of phenomena were to be interpreted.

The specific phenomenon Schopenhauer uses to argue for the identity of the world as will and as representation is the human body. The proof that we require from him is thus a demonstration that, for each of us, our empirical and individual body actually lends itself to a two-fold experience: as body amongst other bodies in the empirical world, and as immediate manifestation or even organ of the will. In other words, Schopenhauer would have to show us how we apprehend our body through an originally double phenomenon, that is, as a phenomenon governed by the rational laws of the natural sciences and as an indubitable and direct manifestation of the irrational will that rules over our lives. To do this, our body would have to perform the miracle of phenomenalizing the noumenal.

2. How my body is given to me both as an organ of my will and as an object of my representation. The distinction between my libidinal and my objective body

For Schopenhauer, any phenomenalization of the noumenal will as thing-in-itself has the status of an “objectification” (Objektivation). Schopenhauer specifies: “By objectification I understand self-presentation or self-exhibition (Sichdarstellen) [of the will] in the real corporeal world (in der realen Körperwelt)” (WWV, chap. 20, 286/245). Such an expressive representation (Darstellung) can be read in two ways: either from the standpoint of the will and its need or way of presenting itself (Darstellung); or from the standpoint of human knowledge, which can formulate an idea or representation (Vorstellung) of the noumenal will’s phenomenal objectifications. Even though the will is both subject and object in this two-fold representation (Darstellung and Vorstellung), we are dealing in each case with a different form of the will. For in its “self-presentation or self-exhibition (Sichdarstellen) in the real corporeal world”, the will in-itself (quoad se) not only becomes an object, but also an object for our representation (Vorstellung), that is, a will quoad nos. More specifically, the will in-itself becomes a particular will that lends itself to being known (Vorstellung) by a subject – a subject that is itself nothing more than a specific objectification of the will in-itself. In other words, the will that objectifies itself by presenting itself (Sichdarstellen) becomes the object of a subjective representation (Vorstellung) in a subject that is nothing more than an
objective \textit{Darstellung} of the will in-itself. In presenting itself as these two types of object, the will in-itself also places a double constraint upon itself: it is first constrained by the multiplication or individuation of its \textit{Darstellungen}, and further by the principle of reason that governs the world of human knowledge (\textit{Vorstellung}). The objectification of the noumenal will in the phenomenal world thus always leads to: a fairly important distortion of its ontological nature, a limitation of its originally absolute power, its dispersion into an infinity of particular bodies, and the further distorting of its nature by a rational knowledge that inevitably misunderstands the will’s irrational essence.

To turn more specifically now to the human body, its particular way of manifesting the will principally consists in individual subjects immediately recognizing the action of their own will in the movements of their body. However, these voluntary movements of my body only express successive actions of my will and not my will in its entirety, which itself thus remains mostly unknown to me (WWV, § 18, 145/101 – 02). The same can be said about material and animal bodies – with the important difference that, unlike the acts of \textit{my} own will, I never have immediate knowledge of the various natural forces and animal instincts that inspire the movements of these foreign bodies. Yet, my own voluntary bodily movements and the behaviour of these foreign bodies have in common that they are worldly expressions (\textit{Darstellungen}) of particular and distinct wills that I can represent to myself (\textit{Vorstellung}). These different types of particular will found in natural forces, animal instincts, and the acts of the human will are themselves objectifications of one and the same noumenal will, a will that is omnipresent but remains entirely unknowable to me. All that I can know about this absolute will is its objectifications, that is, its manifestations (\textit{Darstellungen}) conditioned by the rules of representation (\textit{Vorstellung}).

Amongst all the phenomena of my representational world through which the will realizes itself by presenting itself in the form of empirical objects, the human body (\textit{Leib}) – and more specifically my own body – is exceptional in two senses.\textsuperscript{9} To begin with, I perceive the movements of my own body not only as the movements of a material body in the external world, but also as expressing my inner experience of the acts of my own will. Through this two-fold subjective experience, my phenomenal body takes on two distinct meanings for me: it is a phenomenal object like (and amongst) all other empirical objects, and it is also the “organ” or “instrument” of my own individual will (WWV, § 20, 153/108). As both of these remain my body and my experiences, this two-fold signification of my body must be the expression of a unity, and more specifically of a fundamental unity: my body (and my own body alone) allows the identity between my inner will and my actions in the external world to appear (to me). As such, the experience I have of my own body is the most reliable guide for understanding the action of the will in the
phenomenal world and the fundamental metaphysical unity between the will in-itself and its various kinds of objectification in the world of representation. My body is the distinctive being that allows me to think the metaphysical relation between Being understood as will and the world of representation understood as an emanation (or “objectification”) of this same universal will.

According to this first analysis of the distinctiveness of my body, it differs from all other phenomenal bodies in that it allows me to immediately experience the identity between the acts of my will and the movements or actions of my body in the external world (WWV, §18, 143/100). According to Schopenhauer, one can add to this identity between the specific acts of my will and the successive movements of my body a further identity (or at least a perfect “correspondence”) between my various bodily organs and the “chief […] desires” of my will which make use of these organs as an “instrument”.¹⁰ What applies to my bodily movements and organs also applies to my body as a whole. In other words, for Schopenhauer there is a perfect correspondence or absolute parallelism between my body as a whole and my individual will as a whole. My will as a whole is what underlies the successive temporal acts of my will in me; unlike these latter, the former changes very little. This continuity of my individual will, which expresses itself in all my bodily behaviour and makes me into a unique person, is what Schopenhauer calls: “my empirical character” (WWV, § 20, 151/107). My external perception of my bodily movements is thus accompanied by both an internal perception of the successive temporal acts of my will and an internal experience of the deeper nature of my individual will as a whole. This being said, my internal perception of my acts and my intimate knowledge of myself are still representations, that is, apprehensions of my will (whether changing or constant) as an object. While it is more familiar to me than any other object, it is still impossible to adequately grasp: the true nature of my voluntary acts and my empirical character remain veiled behind all representations I can have of them.

Regarding the successive acts of my will, even though I know them immediately through the movements of my body, they never represent my individual will as a whole (my “empirical character”), and even less my will in-itself, that is, my atemporal “intelligible character”. Regarding my empirical character, as it is an object that persists in time, it does not – like the successive acts of my will – allow itself to be grasped immediately. Instead, my empirical character, that is, my individual will in so far as it presents itself to me as the object of an empirical representation, only reveals itself to me through a prolonged experience that remains fragmentary and thus inadequate. As such, in my inner perception both my empirical character and my voluntary acts remain temporally determined in a way that is foreign to the true nature of my will. It is because of this temporal form that all objects of inner perception remain “empirical” objects. The empirical phenomenality of the objects of inner
sense does however have the following advantage over the objects of outer sense: it is not bound by the phenomenal forms of space and causality. While my will is never adequately understood by me, and always remains somewhat “opaque” and “a riddle”, it is revealed to me through my internal empirical representations as a distinctive empirical object amongst all other empirical objects because of its greater familiarity, “more immediate” givenness, and maximal proximity to the will or “thing-in-itself” (WWV, chap. 18, 229f./197).

This first analysis of my body as an object of double representation on the empirical level (immediate and mediated, internal and external, related to my will and to the external world) is followed by a further analysis that pays greater attention to how we internally feel the acts of our will without making them into objects of representation (Vorstellung). According to this second analysis, it is not through representation that the will animating my body is most originally known to me, but rather through feelings, or, more precisely, through the affects of pleasure and displeasure. Prior to the reality principle or the principle of sufficient reason governing objects of representation, it is the pleasure principle that governs the way in which my embodied will reacts to the various solicitations of the external world, the way in which it realizes itself in this world through successive acts, and the way in which my empirical character as a whole affirms itself. As organ of my will, my body is thus not only an effective “instrument” for the realization of the will in the empirical world, but also and more importantly an organ of enjoyment and pleasure for me, that is, a libidinal body.

Servant to one and the same master – my will – my body serves on two levels at once: as libidinal body, immediately sensitive to the “chief desires” of my irrational will; and as worldly body, an effective instrument for following the orders of the part of my will that is governed by rational motives and acts in the external world. As a result, all affections and impressions undergone by my body are experienced under the rule of both the pleasure principle and the reality principle:

To the subject of knowing, who appears as an individual only through his identity with the body (mit dem Leibe), this body is given in two entirely different ways. It is given […] as an object among objects, liable to the laws of these objects. But it is also given in a quite different way, namely, as what is known immediately to everyone, as is denoted by the word will. Every true act of his will is also at once and inevitably a movement of his body; he cannot actually will the act without at the same time being aware that it appears as a movement of the body. The act of the will (Willensakt) and the action of the body […] are one and the same thing, though given in two entirely different ways, first quite directly, and then in intuition for the understanding […]. Later on we shall see that […] the whole body is nothing but the objectified will, i.e., will that has become representation […]. Therefore, in a certain sense, it can also be said that the will is knowledge a priori of the body, and that the body is knowledge a posteriori of the will […]. Every true, genuine, immediate act of the will is also at once and directly a manifest act of the body; and correspondingly, on the other hand, every impression (Einwirkung) on the body is also at once and directly an impression on the will. As such, it is called pain when it is contrary to the will, and gratification or pleasure when in accordance with the will (ihm gemäß). (WWV, § 18, 143f./100 – 01)
This novel Schopenhauerian philosophy of the human body is based on one very simple intuition: my perception of the behaviour of my own body differs from my perception of the movements of other bodies (whether living or only material) because the former includes my internal experience of the acts of my will as source of my bodily behaviour. I know with self-evidence why my body behaves the way it does in the phenomenal world. Although similar in some sense to all other human bodies and to my perception of their phenomenal behaviour, my own body is also an absolutely unique body for me in that I immediately grasp the identity between its movements and the acts of my will (WWV, § 20, 150/106). It is in this sense that Schopenhauer can claim a double givenness of my body to me – as object of empirical representation and as organ of my will – without undermining its individual identity.

But what is then to be said about the “involuntary” movements of my body? Are they without relation to my will? Do they appear to me as movements of a foreign body? Or should we say instead that they express a kind of involuntary will that inhabits me but no longer allows itself to be guided by my explicit intentions or by rational motives? Schopenhauer tends towards the latter solution.11 For if my will is nothing more than an objectification of the universal will in an individual body, there is no good reason to think that my will would always follow rational and reflective rules. Taken in its entirety, the will that inhabits my body is nothing more for Schopenhauer than an irrational will to live12 that manifests itself through the modalities of my “empirical character”, which I know from experience to be far from completely rational. Even if I consider my will from the standpoint of its successive acts, there is still no reason to consider it as always guided by rational “motives”. If one keeps in mind my will’s source, that is, its origin in the universal will, it would seem much more plausible that all rational action on my part is the exception rather than the rule. My wanting this rather than that is often without rational explanation, and instead blindly follows the flow of passively endured “stimuli” (Reize).

Amongst my many bodily acts and behaviours, those that arise from my desires rather than from rationally deliberated motives can thus be qualified as involuntary. Despite their involuntariness from the standpoint of a rational subject, these acts still remain for Schopenhauer acts of my will in that, taken in itself, my will is not fundamentally rational (WWV, § 20, 150/106). But what about cases in which I only have a very obscure awareness (or no awareness at all) of my desire before acting? Do I then require recourse to an external perception of my bodily behaviour to become conscious of the nature of my desire after the fact? This would suggest that, at least in one case, my awareness of the identity between the phenomenal actions of my body and my will is not as “immediate” as Schopenhauer would have us believe. However, we would only be led to this double conclusion, if representation were the only way of
being conscious of this identity. Yet, on the basis of what we have already seen concerning the sensations of pleasure and displeasure, it is also possible to conceive of these sensations – which usually merely accompany our representations – as standing in for any lacking representation or internal perception of my will. Since the feeling of pleasure is an expression for Schopenhauer of my will’s agreement with an action I am engaged in or with an impulse or stimulus (Reiz) I am undergoing, this feeling of pleasure can infallibly provide an immediate awareness of identity between the involuntary behaviour of my phenomenal body and the unconscious acts or desires of my will. My feeling of pleasure simultaneously reveals to me the irrational motive of my involuntary bodily actions and their undeniable origin in my will. As such, even in my involuntary actions, my body continues to promptly carry out the intentions of my will – and my feeling of pleasure provides the proof of this.

Indeed, this is how Schopenhauer seems to conceive of the pleasure principle governing all the acts of my will – even when this principle has to take into account the requirements of the reality principle or the principles of sufficient reason. As such, the pleasure principle is a universal principle for the acts of my will, though it is not their only principle. Does this mean that what my will wants is always, directly or indirectly, a kind of pleasure? This would presuppose that my will could form an idea of pleasure, that is, that pleasure could be an object of representation before becoming the goal of an action. Yet, much to the contrary and quite clearly, Schopenhauer argues that pleasure and displeasure are anything but (objects of) representation (Vorstellung). They are rather sensations or affects. More specifically, they are first bodily sensations that arise when an “affection” (Einwirkung) that touches my body pleases (is “in accordance with”) or displeases my will (recalling here that my body is an immediate objectification of this will). Second, they are also more general and less localized sensations that manifest my will’s agreement or disagreement with my rational acts and intellectual pursuits. In either case, one cannot seek or obtain pleasure directly and for itself according to Schopenhauer. Instead, physical enjoyment (Wollust) and any other form of (even intellectual) pleasure arise as a kind of by-product of an action or affection in which our libidinal body or intelligence (brain) is deeply engaged. Consequently, it is not pleasure that my will wants, but rather to realize its essence, that is, to realize the “will-to-live” (Wille zum Leben) that animates my body through and through. Pleasure is thus the sensation that I feel when the events that affect by body and the way I represent these events to myself coincide with my will, that is, agree with my drives. Displeasure, on the other hand, is a feeling that arises in relation to bodily events or rational constraints that prevent or inhibit my will from realizing what its nature prescribes to it. Far from being wanted or sought by me, my pleasure for Schopenhauer is a sensation that forces itself upon me,
that is, a sensation explained by the fact that, for any event that affects my body, the will animating my body is “forced” (erzwungen) to express whether it wants it or not.

In this way, the universal application of the pleasure principle in Schopenhauer derives from the fact that everything which affects my body necessarily also affects my will. Yet, even though this affection of my will is inevitable, it can still happen in different ways. For instance, it can be more or less direct, or more or less powerful. Some bodily affections immediately unleash a passionate reaction of my will, while others seem to touch it very little or even leave it relatively indifferent. This depends not only on the strength of these affections, but also on the power of my body to offer any resistance to them. When the power of resistance is lacking, any affection undergone by the human body is directly transmitted to the will, which results in the affection only being experienced as a sensation of pleasure or suffering. Overcome by the violence of this affection and unable to represent its nature or its cause, the subject is thus without capacity to defend itself or react. It is reduced to the passive or primitive feeling of finding this affection pleasant or unpleasant. Its body is nothing more than a purely libidinal body. For Schopenhauer, excessive sensitivity to pleasure or pain is the sign of a weakness that he calls “weakness of the nerves” and explains as “a morbid and hypochondriacal disposition”. The norm for him is rather when moderate affections are mastered and filtered through our intelligence (or our brain) before they reach our will. In this case, the bodily sensations that arise from an affection or impression provide our intelligence with the opportunity to form an objective representation of the external world. The knowledge or perception we have of external reality is thus explained by the way our intelligence represents to itself the cause of these filtered bodily sensations, which do not in this case immediately overpower our will and our sensitivity to pleasure. Hence, the victory of the reality principle over the pleasure principle is the result of both the weakness of the impressions that affect our body (and more specifically, our brain) and our power to offer sufficient resistance to them so that they do not immediately reach our will.

This being said, in the end, all our intellectual knowledge is always animated and directed by our empirical will and the will in-itself. It is the will that draws our “attention” towards “this or that object”. It is also the will that nourishes our intellectual interests and secretly directs “the [...] association of ideas”. Even if the will’s influence on our thoughts “is frequently not noticed”, its influence is manifest in the fact that our interests do not change much and we are most drawn in our intellectual work to subjects that give us pleasure. In the progression of our thoughts and the accumulation of our knowledge, just like in the movements of our body, the will continues to stubbornly affirm itself, wanting nothing but itself through repetition or the eternal recurrence of the same. In the end, our most disinterested thoughts and our freest associations
are nothing more than manifestations of one and the same blind mechanism or machinery of the will, which follows its course inexorably and at any cost, wanting only its own self-realization and self-satisfaction. For Schopenhauer, the true nature of the drive is to be found in this impersonal and unstoppable will, whose path is marked by the repetition of an imperturbable rhythm. In other words, Schopenhauer’s drive can be likened to Freud’s death drive. For even if the will-drive pretends to be interested in and affected by our representations, it remains at its core incapable of any transcendence or interest in anything other than the affirmation and intensification of its own power. This makes the pretenses of the will even more dangerous. Its greatest pretense consists in hiding its action from us and making us believe that we are the masters of our own intentional consciousness. In the best case scenario, the will only hides from us our unconscious desires, of which it is the source; however, more often than not, it also leads us to deceive ourselves, and in the worst case scenario, it simply vetos those of our representations that have the misfortune to displease it.

If our intellect or intellectual consciousness is nothing but an epiphenomenon of our brain, and our brain nothing but an embodied objectification of the will, it is no wonder that for Schopenhauer our “conscious ideas” are nothing but “surface” phenomena, that is, “offspring of our mysterious inner being” in which “rumination” takes place “unconsciously”. These ruminations of our unconscious continue to take place not only despite our consciousness, but even during the “deepest sleep”, that is when our consciousness is interrupted. While we already lack a “clear consciousness” of many of our thoughts, this is even more so the case for our desires, that is, for those of our representations that are directly invested by our drives: “We often do not know what we desire or fear”. Most often, it is “only subsequently, and thus wholly a posteriori (erst hinterher, völlig a posteriori)” that we realize how our will-drive has let itself be affected by our subjective “motives”. And even in this case, there is no guarantee that we are not deceived about our true motives and the desires that they inspire in us. For often “we lack the courage” to admit our desires and our fears to ourselves and thus “bring them to clear consciousness. In fact, we are often entirely mistaken as to the real motive from which we do or omit to do something, till finally some accident discloses the secret to us […]” (WWV, chap. 19, 243 - 44/209 – 210). However, the misconception we have of our true desires and fears is not the only reason we are self-deceived. More often than not, it is not because our thoughts and desires are unconscious that we remain ignorant of them, but rather they remain unconscious because we want to ignore them – unless it is the will itself rather than us that has an interest in leading us into self-deception. This is why Schopenhauer goes beyond a mere analysis of unconscious thoughts and desires, providing us with a full-blown theory of repression.
3. How material bodies are subject to both natural forces and natural causal laws

Amongst the bodies that make up the phenomenal world, our own body is the one we know best and the only body for which we have immediate access to the will that moves it. For Schopenhauer, it is the double experience we have of our own body – as object of representation and as organ of our will – that provides the “key” (or clue) for understanding the being of all other bodies whose animating will remains inaccessible to us. In other words, “we must learn to understand nature (die Natur) from ourselves, not ourselves from nature” (WWV, chap. 18, 229/196). This is the case both for the behaviour of living organisms, that is, plants and animals, as well as the movements of material bodies. Concerning the latter, similarly to our own body, they are to be understood as objectifications of the will in-itself, even if this objectification of the will “in the inorganic kingdom of nature” is not on the same level as its objectification in the human body. This difference of levels comes particularly to the fore in the fact that inanimate bodies and their movements lack individuality (WWV, § 26, 180/132). This is not to say that all inorganic bodies are the same, nor that the will that inhabits them always wants the same thing. However, the difference between material bodies is limited to their species; it does not extend to particular cases of the same species. For example, even if the force of water and the force of fire are not identical, all water droplets and all fires in the world are animated by a same species of force. As such, the difference between natural forces remains general in character, and a given type of natural force can only be differentiated in a general way, for instance, through a change in its intensity.

This general character of natural forces is very advantageous for the physical sciences, particularly when they seek to generalize the phenomenal manifestations of these forces. Identical quantities of water with identical pressures turn mills of the same design at an identical speed. This speed can be scientifically calculated and the mechanical knowledge of engineers allows them to improve the productivity of existing mills or to build more efficient mills. The mill’s action thus lends itself to a scientific analysis where one reasons in terms of causality and proceeds by applying various laws of nature formulated in the physics of physicists. Even so, according to Schopenhauer, it is never the engineer nor the laws of physics that turn the mill, but always the natural force of water, that is, “the powerful, irresistible impulse with which masses of water rush downwards”.

Yet how are we to understand the perfect applicability of the laws of physical causality to natural forces of which they remain ignorant, while at the same time predicting their phenomenal behaviour with such high probability? Schopenhauer claims we should turn once again to our understanding of the behaviour of our own body, and more specifically to its way of acting rationally.
in the phenomenal world. The rational actions of our own body are those that are governed by rational motives, these motives being representations (Vorstellungen) governed by the principle of reason. However, this principle only gives us the necessary, and not the sufficient conditions of rational human action. For in the end it is not motives that push us to act, but our will. Our actions are thus rational when our will – their principium executionis – is guided by rational motives or representations that our understanding – as principium deiudications bonitatis – presents to it. In other words, we act according to or in conformity with rational motives, but not because of these motives. For our will (that is, for our individual “character”) these motives are but an “occasion” (Anlaß) for moving from potentiality to act. However, this “occasion” provided by (both rational and irrational) motives is a necessary condition of our actual action, that is, of the concrete realization or spatio-temporal “manifestation” of our will in the phenomenal world. More or less the same thing goes for our “involuntary actions” or reactions to the stimuli (Reize) or situations of the phenomenal world. While these reactions cannot properly be called actions – for they lack mediation by motives or representations – their happening similarly depends on both our will and the phenomenal circumstances.

Without delving further into the analysis of human action, we can already see how Schopenhauer would frame this analysis in order to help us understand how “natural forces” and the “laws of nature” simultaneously govern the movements of material bodies. Analogously to our individual will or “intelligible character”, natural forces are to be understood as “Platonic Ideas”, that is, as ideal objectifications of the will in-itself. As such, it is impossible to locate them spatio-temporally in the empirical world. Natural forces are “omnipresent” (allgegenwärtig) in nature. Moreover, this ideal and permanent presence is not limited to their actual action in particular natural phenomena, but permeates all of nature from the outset and even in advance (a priori). In other words, natural forces are really and insistently omnipresent, even if only virtually so, in a way that precedes and makes possible their concrete actualization. For Schopenhauer, natural forces are already at work in all of nature before actualizing themselves in particular empirical phenomena. Further, any given phenomenal actualization of a virtual natural force never leads to the abolition or disappearance of this force. The (phenomenal) actualization of a natural force is rather to be understood as an affirmation of its (noumenal) way of being a virtual force. Natural forces thus remain omnipresent and absolutely unavoidable before, during, and after their specific actualization in the phenomenal world. Similarly to the will in-itself – of which they are an ideal objectification – natural forces are inspired by an inexhaustible power or, in Schopenhauer’s words, an indefatigable will.

Such a permanent force, subject neither to entropy nor negentropy, is foreign even to dynamics in physics. With its focus on studying singular empirical
phenomena and their causal interrelations, experimental physics completely ignores the origin of these phenomena in noumenal forces. It breaks down the overarching movement that animates all of nature into instantaneous images, and contents itself with relating these images to each other in what Bergson calls a “cinematographic” way. Even in formulating general laws, traditional natural sciences remain and aim to be exclusively empirical sciences dealing with spatio-temporal facts. However, for Schopenhauer this limitation of the sciences is legitimate in at least two senses: what they claim about phenomena as empirical phenomena does not conflict with the teachings of a philosophy or metaphysics of nature; and the natural laws formulated by the sciences are the best possible explanation of these phenomena on the level of our empirical knowledge.

How in the eyes of Schopenhauer are we thus to understand the phenomenal actualization of natural forces from the dual standpoint of metaphysics and physics? A metaphysics of the will teaches us that the driving power of natural forces impatiently awaits the arising of favorable “circumstances” in the phenomenal world that would provide the “occasion” (Anlaβ) for this power to realize itself in an empirical material body. These phenomenal circumstances are empirical events that are characterized both by their spatio-temporal occurrence and their causal action. When a miller opens a dam lying upstream from his mill, this is a necessary cause behind the release of accumulated water and the subsequent turning of the mill wheel. However, from the standpoint of a metaphysics of nature this can only be a Malebranchian “occasional” cause whose power is limited to providing the occasion for water to realize its virtual force, i.e. the “irresistible impulse with which masses of water rush downwards”. As such, the “laws of nature” formulated in mechanics, which allow the precise prediction and calculation of the water’s movement and its effect on the mill wheel after the opening of the dam, only apply on a phenomenal level and not on a noumenal one. Yet, this does not detract from the necessity with which the laws of nature govern the movements of material bodies, nor from their incontrovertible power over all inorganic natural phenomena. In fact, while these laws remain bound by the spatio-temporal circumstances of the phenomenal world, they determine phenomena and their causal interactions in a normative fashion. Rather than getting caught up in the description of particular natural phenomena, the laws of physics address the necessary movements of all identical bodies, across all moments of objective time and everywhere in a homogenously conceived space.

Physics precedes metaphysics in the order through which we come to know nature. Without the observation of patterns in physical phenomena, we could never begin to conceive of their metaphysical nature. Does this mean that metaphysical knowledge of the natural forces acting on empirical phenomena is of lesser value or does not even truly deserve to be called knowledge? Could
we not say that everything we know about these forces comes from a superficial similarity between the movements of material bodies and the actions of our own body? Is this a well-founded analogy or is it rather the mark of an arbitrary and primitive anthropomorphism? Approached in this way, our metaphysical knowledge of material bodies would be merely hypothetical at best; as we know, this is precisely the conclusion drawn by many post-Kantian or neo-Kantian metaphysicians. This is not, however, Schopenhauer’s position. In his view, natural forces have the status of Platonic Ideas, and these Ideas lend themselves to what he calls an intellectual “intuition”.25 Despite the fact that we intuit Platonic ideas starting from the observation of empirical phenomena and that imagination plays a central role in this intuition (WWV, § 36, p. 241ff./186ff), intuition remains for Schopenhauer a true form of knowledge. Like the laws of physics, metaphysical knowledge of natural forces arises from objective representations (Vorstellungen); however, unlike our knowledge of empirical phenomena, the object of metaphysical knowledge is an ideal object given to intellectual intuition. Without detracting in the least from the value and legitimacy of the natural sciences, Schopenhauer attributes a two-fold advantage to metaphysical knowledge over the physics of physicists: it brings awareness to the action of the will in nature; and it challenges the natural sciences’ illegitimate claim to provide us with an exhaustive and “sufficient” understanding of natural phenomena.

The above reflections are meant to emphasize the drive character of the will in-itself (and its possible similarity to the death drive in Freud). The will in-itself is a metaphysical drive characterized entirely by want, and all it wants is self-realization. As such, the conscious representations that we, as human beings, make use of to understand its manifestations and conceive of their conditions of possibility are entirely foreign to the will. Moreover, the representations that guide our actions are motives for, but not of our will; for these representations originate in our intelligence rather than directly in our will – even if they provide a way for the will to realize itself in our actions. Consequently, empirical phenomena that do not require conscious representation for their realization are what best allow philosophers to form an idea of the will’s action in the phenomenal world. In other words, the most primitive objectifications of the will are the most informative ones concerning its nature as drive. As such, it is no surprise that Schopenhauer’s metaphysics devotes so much space to the philosophy of nature, and more specifically, to the natural forces of material bodies, and the vital and vegetative processes as well as the instinctive behaviour of animals. Though it is true that Schopenhauer reserves the terms “drive” (Trieb) and “desire” (Begierde) for manifestations of the will in the world of living beings, material bodies are also already inhabited by the will as metaphysical drive in the form of natural forces.

Husserl Archives – University of Leuven
References
1. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (hereafter WWV). All references to the German edition of this work come from: Arthur Schopenhauer, Zürcher Ausgabe, *Werke* in zehn Bänden, Zürich: Diogenes 1977, which contains the A. Hübscher edition. WWV comprises two parts: the first (*Band I – Vier Bücher nebst einem Anhange, der die Kritik der kantischen Philosophie enthält*) contains 71 paragraphs (§§ 1-71) and the second (*Band II – Welcher die Ergänzungen zu den vier Büchern des ersten Bandes enthält*) 50 chapters (Kapitel 1-50). As these two parts are divided into four volumes in the German edition and two volumes in the English translation, reference to the part and volume has been omitted in what follows. Instead either the paragraph number (“§”) or the chapter (“chap.”) is given so that readers can immediately recognize from which part any given reference comes. Reference to the paragraph number or chapter is immediately followed by the page number, first from the German edition, and then from the English translation. According to this referencing format, our first citation takes the following form: WWV, § 22, 156/111. All references to the English translation come from: *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., trans. E.F.J. Payne, New York: Dover 1969.


3. Cf. WWV, § 22, 155/110–11: “This thing-in-itself […] must borrow its name and concept from an object […] and therefore from one of its phenomena. […] But this is precisely man’s will. We have to observe, however, that here of course we use only a *denominatio a potiori*, by which the concept of will therefore receives a greater extension than it has hitherto had. […] But hitherto the identity of the inner essence of any striving (strebenden) or operating force in nature with the will has not been recognized […]. I therefore name the genus after its most important species […].”

4. See WWV, §§ 22-23, 29, 54 for a general characterization of the will in-itself.

5. WWV, § 54, 347/274–75: “[T]he mirror of the will has appeared to it in the world as representation. In this mirror the will knows itself in increasing degrees of distinctness and completeness […].”

6. WWV, § 23, 158/113: “[T]he will as thing-in-itself lies outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms, and is consequently completely groundless (grundlos), although each of its phenomena is entirely subject to that principle. Further, it is free from all plurality, although its phenomena in time and space are innumerable. […] It is one as that which lies outside time and space, outside the *principium individuationis*, that is to say, outside the possibility of plurality.”

7. WWV, § 26, 185/136: “The force itself […] is not subject to the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, that is to say, it is groundless. It lies outside all time, is omnipresent, and, so to speak, seems constantly to wait for the appearance of those circumstances under which it can manifest itself […].”

8. See §§ 25-28 and 34 for a precise account of these Platonic Ideas in terms of diversity and degree, as well as their apprehension through aesthetic contemplation.

9. See especially WWV §§ 18-21, 23 and 60, and chap. 20, 21 and 41 for a phenomenological description of the human body and its experiences (understood both in an objective and subjective sense) as well as the human body’s central place in Schopenhauer’s metaphysics.

10. WWV, § 20, 153/108: “Therefore the parts of the body must correspond completely to the chief demands and desires (*Hauptbegehren*) by which the will manifests itself; they must be the visible expression of these desires. Teeth, gullet, and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse […].” Cf. also WWV, chap. 20, 302/259.

11. WWV, § 18, 143/100: “The action of the body is nothing but the act of will objectified, i.e., translated into perception. Later on we shall see that this applies to every movement of the body, not merely to movement following on motives, but also to involuntary movement following on mere stimuli (*bloße Reize*) […].”

12. WWV, chap. 19, 280/240: “We ourselves are the will-to-live (*Wille zum Leben*); hence we must live, well or badly.”
13. WWV, § 18, p. 144/101: “However, we are quite wrong in calling pain and pleasure representations, for they are not these at all, but immediate affections of the will in its phenomenon, the body; an enforced (erzwungenes), instantaneous (augenblickliches) willing or not-willing of the impression undergone by the body.”

14. WWV, § 18, 144/101: “Weakness of the nerves shows itself in the fact that the impressions which have merely that degree of intensity that is sufficient make them data for the understanding, reach the higher degree at which they stir the will, that is to say, excite pain or pleasure […], but also give rise generally to a morbid and hypochondriacal disposition […].”

15. Arthur Schopenhauer, Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grund. Eine philosophische Abhandlung (enlarged 1847 edition), Kleine Schriften, Band 1, Zürich: Diogenes, 1977, § 44, 162f.. English translation by E.F.J. Payne: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, La Salle: Open Court, 1974, pp. 214 – 16. “The influence which the will exercises on knowledge is based not on causality proper, but on the identity […] of the knowing and the willing subject. For the will compels knowledge to repeat (wiederholen) representations […], generally to direct its attention to this or that object and to evoke at pleasure any particular series of ideas. Here too the will is also the secret director of the so-called association of ideas. […] But it is the will of the individual that sets in motion the whole mechanism (das ganze Getriebe in Thätigkeit versetzt) in that it urges the intellect, in accordance with [its interests] […].[T]he act of the will is frequently not noticed because its fulfilment is so easy […].” (translation modified) Cf. also WWV, chap. 14, 158/135 – 36.

16. WWV, chap.14, 157f./135 - 6: “To make the matter clearer, let us compare our consciousness to a sheet of water of some depth. Then the distinctly conscious ideas are merely the surface […]. But usually the rumination of material from outside, by which it is recast into ideas, takes place in the obscure depths of the mind. This rumination goes on almost unconsciously as the conversion of nourishment into the humours and substance of [life] (des Lebens). Hence it is that we are often unable to give any account of the origin of our deepest thoughts; they are the offspring of our mysterious inner being.” (translation corrected)


18. WWV, § 19, 148/104 – 5: “The double knowledge which we have of the nature and action of our own body, and which is given in two completely different ways, has now been clearly brought out. Accordingly, we shall use it further as a key to the inner being of every phenomenon in nature. We shall judge all objects which are not our own body, and therefore are given to our consciousness not in the double way, but only as representations, according to the analogy of this body.” Cf. also WWV, § 21, 154/109 – 10.

19. The case of animals is to be situated between the strong individuation of each human being and the total absence of individuation in material bodies. According to Schopenhauer, the individuality of animals is species-related, that is, it is necessarily mediated by the species to which they belong. Their individual will to live is thus subordinated to a concern for the survival of the species, for which individual animals willingly sacrifice themselves. This constitutes the essential difference between animal “instincts” and human “desires”.

20. WWV, § 23, 163f./117–8 : “Now let us consider attentively and observe the powerful, irresistible impulse (Drang) with which masses of water rush downwards […] [I]t will not cost us a great effort of the imagination to recognize once more our own inner nature, even at so great a distance. It is that which in us pursues its ends by the light of knowledge, but here […] only strives blindly in a dull, one-sided, and unalterable manner. Yet, because it is everywhere one and the same […] it must in either case bear the name of will. For this word indicates that which is the being-in-itself of every thing in the world, and is the sole kernel of every phenomenon.”

21. WWV, § 20, 150/106: “Therefore, the whole inner nature of my willing cannot be explained from the motives, but they determine merely its manifestation at a given point of time; they are merely the occasion on which my will shows itself. This will itself, on the other hand, lies outside the province of the law of motivation; only the phenomenon of the will at each point of time is determined by this law.”
22. On this see, WWV, §§ 23, 24, 26 and chap. 23.

23. WWV, § 26, 185/136: “The force itself is phenomenon (Erscheinung) of the will, and, as such, is not subject to the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, that is to say, it is groundless. It lies outside all time, is omnipresent, and, so to speak, seems constantly to wait for the appearance of those circumstances under which it can manifest itself […]”

24. WWV, § 26, 182f./134: “Therefore every universal, original force of nature is, in its inner essence, nothing but the objectification of the will at a low grade, and we call every such grade an eternal Idea in Plato’s sense. But the law of nature is the relation of the Idea to the form of its phenomenon (Erscheinung). This form is time, space, and causality, having a necessary and inseparable connexion and relation to one another.”

25. WWV, § 34, 231f./178–9: “Thus we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the what. Further, we […] devote the whole power of our mind to [intuition (Anschauung)] […] and let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present […]. Now in such contemplation, the particular thing at one stroke becomes the Idea of its species, and the [individual accomplishing the intuition (das anschauende Individuum)] becomes the pure subject of knowing.” (translation modified)
Cézanne: I have my motif ... (He joins his hands)
Gasquet: ‘What?’
Cézanne: ‘Yes …’ (He repeats his gesture, spreads his hands, the ten fingers open, brings them slowly together, slowly, then joins them, squeezes them, clenches them, inserts them together)

What is painting? It may seem strange that we must continue to pursue this question tens of thousands of years after our Paleolithic ancestors first created images on cave walls that still grace us with “ce même sentiment de présence—de claire et brûlante présence—que nous donnent les chefs-d’œuvre de tous les temps”. It may seem all the more strange to continue insisting on the freshness of this question in light of diverse theories of painting, tendencies in art criticism, and styles of painting that have flourished in the Western tradition since the image became a matter of philosophical concern with Plato. The question of painting is nonetheless far from resolution, and if we are to believe Merleau-Ponty in his celebrated *Eye and Mind*, it remains as far from resolution as the question ‘what is philosophy?’ such that the strangeness and freshness of the former implicates the strangeness and freshness of the latter. This entwinement of strangeness permeates Merleau-Ponty’s argument that the ontological tenor of Cézanne’s modernist paintings reveal the essence of painting as a genuine form of thinking and “ontological interrogation” through which the logos of the world is tangibly revealed. This novel vision of painting as a “figured philosophy” is portrayed in the composition of *Eye and Mind* itself: fleeting references to figures such as Paul Klee, Robert Delaunay, and Hermes Trismegistus, pointed insights into the fundamentals of painting (line, colour, space) and central themes in Merleau-Ponty’s thinking (the flesh, the lived-body, vision) are woven together with a deftness of touch recalling Cézanne’s own technique of painting into a compact image of what painting achieves. The challenge of *Eye and Mind* consists in disentangling and fathoming different expressions of its central insight into the truth of painting as the truth of thinking. Three modulations in particular, fundamental for any grasp of Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, I discuss here.

1. *Three Trajectories in Eye and Mind*

Much of the fascination exercised by *Eye and Mind* turns on its delirious quality as a philosophical portrait of painting. Different lines of questioning marble the argumentative development of *Eye and Mind*, each a modulation of its underlying insight that in painting there occurs thinking: painting thinks. Each of these modulations traces a trajectory, some cleanly delineated by
Merleau-Ponty himself, while others are less defined, marking off questions indirectly posed and incompletely pursued. With a critique of operational thinking and turn towards painting in search of contact with the “fabric of brute sense”, *Eye and Mind* moves—along a first trajectory—within the aspiration of *The Visible and the Invisible* to fashion a “savage ontology” of the *logos* of the world. This envisioned “savage ontology” gravitates around the elusive figuration of what Merleau-Ponty calls “this Visibility, this generality of the Sensible in itself, this anonymity innate to Myself”, for which the name of *flesh* (“la chair”) serves as a complex marker. As Merleau-Ponty remarks: “one knows there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate” this “element” of being and philosophical “unthought” figured in the term “flesh”.2 *The Visible and the Invisible* moves about a centre that avowedly lacks an historical vocabulary, established conceptual orientation and a recognizable form of thinking. In fact, “flesh” designates a compounded concept with three strands of ontological meaning: flesh of the world; flesh of the lived-body; flesh as the entwinement of the lived-body and the world (VI 271). These different senses of flesh each represents a radicalized iteration of a signature phenomenological insight into the nexus of horizons and lines of implication that texture the manifestation of the sensible world, as if the stability of Husserl’s distinctions between inner/outer and inter-subjective/subjective horizons—structuring the conjoining constitutions of object, self, and world—became volatized through a simultaneous compression and expansion. Even with its Husserlian and even more pronounced Bergsonian (*Matter and Memory*) antecedents, the revelation of “flesh” remained an open question for Merleau-Ponty: “When we speak of the flesh of the visible, we do not mean to do anthropology, to describe a world covered over with all our own projections, leaving aside what it can be under the human mask. Rather, we mean that carnal being, as a being of depths, of several leaves or several faces, a being in latency, and a presentation of a certain absence, is a prototype of being, of which our body, the sensible sentient, is a very remarkable variant, but whose constitutive paradox already lies in every visible” (VI 136). Neither the objectivity of what “there is” that would remain after the elision of subjectivity nor the primacy of subjectivity that would assert itself after the suspension of objectivity, Merleau-Ponty alternated between speaking of this depth, this flesh, as “nature”, “logos”, and “being”. Invoking Schelling’s notion of *erste Natur* in his 1956-1957 lectures *On Nature*, Merleau-Ponty considered this primary meaning of *phusis* as an “auto-production of sense” anterior to any reflection on being, and neither identifiable with God nor the world, as traditionally conceived.3

Framed by this pursuit of “flesh”, *Eye and Mind* attempts to show how flesh made paint reveals and thus thinks the depth and weave of carnal being in its paradoxical dimensions and “mystery”. The enigma of the lived-body, that “remarkable variant” of the enigma of carnal being, becomes ontologically
examined in painting. In the lending of the lived-body to the world, the constitutive paradox remarkably expressed in the lived-body becomes doubled, unfolded, such that “all the problems of painting” illustrate the enigma of the lived-body, which in turn “legitimizes” the enigma of painting. When read in light of each other, chapter four of *The Visible and the Invisible*, “The Intertwining – the Chiasm”, and *Eye and Mind* form a pair of mirrors facing each other with each reflecting a prototype of thinking in search of contact with carnal being, or “flesh”. If one were to project the line of argument delineated in *Eye and Mind* onto the line of argument animating “The Intertwining – the Chiasm”, a virtual image plotted along their points of contact would emerge charting the progression from a critique of operational thinking / philosophy of reflection through a series of insights into the enigma of the non-coinciding reflexivity of the lived-body and vision, through the entwinement of touching and vision towards the “most difficult point, that is, the bond between flesh and idea, between the visible and the interior armature which it manifests and which it conceals” (*VI* 149). This “most difficult point”—the invisible sun of Merleau-Ponty’s thinking—marks the point at which the unfinished “The Intertwining – the Chiasm” comes to an end that *Eye and Mind* intends to reveal as the point of painting itself.

*Eye and Mind* pursues a second trajectory of investigation, the arc of which circumscribes a further horizon around Merleau-Ponty’s considered question of the “flesh”. In its most generalized form, this second line of questioning crystallizes around the insight that thinking is manifest in painting. In Merleau-Ponty’s bold handling, this proposition displaces philosophical discourse, even his own, as the exclusive scene of thinking. What thus becomes hazarded is the idea that thinking (ontological interrogation of “savage being”) is manifest elsewhere, in painting, but also, and diversely, in modernist art. This genuine manifestation of thinking elsewhere calls into question a certain constitutive prejudice of philosophy from which what it means to think about art has historically been derived. According to a classical image of thought inscribed in the idea of “philosophy of art”, philosophy claims for itself authority over what counts as thinking and what calls itself thinking; art thus becomes defined as unthinking or a merely sensuous form of thinking, as the shadow of genuine thinking. Merleau-Ponty’s proposal that painting thinks strikes against an entire tradition of “philosophy of art” stretching from Plato to Hegel. Yet, the insight that painting *is* thinking must be understood in its proper ontological meaning. At issue is neither whether thinking is psychologically required for painting nor whether critical intelligence is needed for the aesthetic appreciation of artworks. As Clement Greenberg observed, “Cézanne was one of the most intelligent painters about painting whose observations have been recorded”, yet “intelligence does not guarantee the artist a precise awareness of what he is doing or really wants to do”. Much of the truth contained in this observation
is echoed in Merleau-Ponty’s own construal of the relationship between the creative process of thinking that expresses itself beneath the threshold of consciousness in the bodily movements (the touch of the brush, the flex of the wrist, the glance of the eye, etc.) producing a painting (a question to which the essay “Cézanne’s Doubt” is devoted). As Merleau-Ponty remarks, Cézanne’s paintings become “animated […] not when he expresses opinions about the world but in that instant when his vision becomes gesture, when, in Cézanne’s words, he ‘thinks in painting’” (PP 138-39). *Eye and Mind* is an invitation to look at painting as a beholding of thinking. One does not look at a painting (as one would look at an object) or look through a painting (as one would look through a window). One comes to thinking in painting. As Rilke memorably expressed, a painting by Cézanne is a “conflagration of clarity” that dawns, or breaks, upon us. This discovery of painting as a manifestation of thinking (*das bildnerische Denken* as Paul Klee calls it) provokes a re-appraisal of thinking itself (further amplifying Heidegger’s two-sided *Was heißt Denken?*—what calls for thinking and what does thinking call forth?) in undermining a stable demarcation between “philosophy” and “art”. This crossing between “philosophy” and “art” accounts for the unfamiliar landscape of *Eye and Mind* that openly runs the risk of incomprehension among both philosophers and art-historians, each for different reasons. Where the art historian only sees an illicit projection of a philosophical worldview onto painting (as Meyer Shapiro argues in “Cézanne and the Philosophers”), the philosopher only sees an opaque example of philosophy in painting—its shadow. The displacement of thinking from the scene of philosophy constitutes a palpating core of *Eye and Mind*. To fall under the spell of Merleau-Ponty’s dreamy prose is to become fascinated by a possibility that thinking occurs elsewhere, and not primarily in philosophy. The philosopher must allow art to speak to philosophy before knowing how to speak (of art) philosophically. With Cézanne, “the poets have learned to see” (Richard Exner); so, too, must philosophers, or at least, one philosopher: Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty’s guiding insight motivates yet a third trajectory of investigation that winds its way through *Eye and Mind* less perspicuously but therefore all the more suggestively. The thought that painting thinks further motivates the question regarding the *medium specificity* of thinking; the way in which thinking is inseparable from the specific materiality of its expression, or manifestation. Painting thinks in the manner of things in the making of a thing unlike other things. Thinking is thus not simply manifest in painting; it becomes *materialized* as painting such that the painting itself in its specific “objecthood” becomes ontologically salient. For Merleau-Ponty, the medium specificity of painterly thinking consists in the specialness of the handling of line, color, and surface through which “the invisible is rendered visible”, understood, not in any representational or mimetic sense, but more complexly and differently, as
a fleshing out, as it were, of the “silent logos of the world”. Merleau-Ponty looks to the arts—and painting especially—for how thinking makes ideas “exist in front of us in the manner of things” in the form of “carnal essences”. It is here that the polemic against Sartre’s theory of the imaginary—a decisive plot-point in the unfolding of Eye and Mind—has its critical import: if Sartre understood the imaginary as a “degraded form of thinking” condemned to think in the manner of things, for Merleau-Ponty, the imaginary produces a thing in the manner of thinking.

2. Philosophy and Art, Reduction and Essence

In the development of Merleau-Ponty’s writings, philosophy and painting already begin to shadow each other in the preface to Phenomenology of Perception; the former identified with phenomenology, the latter integrated into the wider realm of arts. As Merleau-Ponty proposes, philosophy “is not the reflection of a prior truth, but rather, like art, the actualization of truth”. A philosophical actualization of truth depends on a “radical reflection” of the logos of the perceptual world and its intricate horizons of sense that “shine forth at the intersections of experiences”. Radical reflection brings the “tightly woven fabric” of mute experience to expression in its originally un-reflected composure and is thus centred on disclosing in thinking the world of perception as experienced profoundly, yet naively, prior to thinking. This defining ambiguity of Merleau-Ponty’s project in Phenomenology of Perception is reflected in the pairing of the method of reduction and a theory of essences, both identified as defining contributions of Husserlian phenomenology to the endeavour of philosophy, and both essential for a genuine conception of thinking.

In Merleau-Ponty’s understanding, the method of reduction aims to bring thinking back to an original encounter with the world of experience, to the “things themselves” evoked by Husserl. The reduction operates a return to the “un-thought” world of sensible experience, not, however, as Husserl would have it, a return of the world to constituting consciousness, but on the contrary, a return of consciousness to the world, before and behind thinking. This paradoxical accomplishment amplifies in Merleau-Ponty’s handling the revelatory and critical aspects of the reduction. The reduction offers a methodological circumstance for how thinking can encounter (“reveal”) the world through a radical disengagement from the world. The reduction also incorporates a critical dimension of self-reflection spurring thinking to discover itself anew, in a genuine manner, by distancing itself from its own instituted forms of thought. Phenomenological thinking turns the world upside down in turning thinking inside out; the world becomes seen anew, as if for the first time, through this critical suspension in which thinking becomes present to the world in the genesis of its primordial manifestation, seen from below, not from above.
If the reduction progresses towards an original encounter with the sensible world along a vector of distancing, the vision of essences progresses along a vector of “seeing into” the world, plunging, as it were, into the invisible texture of perceptual experience. As with the method of reduction, Merleau-Ponty disentangles a genuine expression of essences from the insufficiencies of Husserl’s proposed theory. Revealing an essence takes form as an actualization of a seeing in which something more of the visible is grasped than the visible. An ontological inflection of essences as well as an increased appreciation of essences as structured “ways” or “manners” of appearing are here critical; essences resist reification or objectification into an “essence” traditionally conceived, as a special kind of entity or object of intellection. To speak of “an essence” or the seeing of “an essence” is, in fact, grammatically incorrect within Merleau-Ponty’s scheme of thinking. We should instead speak of a realization in seeing by which a texture, pattern, or matrix upholding the visible becomes rendered evident, yet without visible definitiveness. The full and true meaning of seeing cannot be itself understood—seen clearly—without this invocation of essences as a revealing of the mute texture of the sensible world. To see an essence is to visibly flesh out the invisible armature of the visible world, the style of its movement as manifestation. The paradox of essences is thus not only that the invisible can be seen (is this not the defining paradox of Plato’s so-called theory of ideas?), but that the meaning of seeing as such can only be understood in terms of this essential seeing of something invisible in the visible, without thereby sundering the invisible into something else, into another kind of visible or spectral object.

Reduction and essence are inseparable for genuine thinking. Each is a movement within the circuit of thinking. In the preface to Phenomenology of Perception, this infinite apprenticeship of learning to see the world anew called phenomenological thinking is said to be “as painstaking as the works of Balzac, Proust, Valéry, or Cézanne—through the same kind of attention and wonder, the same demand for awareness, the will to grasp the sense of the world or of history in its nascent state. As such, phenomenology merges with the effort of modern thought”. Even if we find only fleeting glimpses of this mutual shadowing (most notably with references to Cézanne), the questions “what is phenomenology?” and “what is art?” are silently addressing each other in Phenomenology of Perception. It is only, however, in a series of radio lectures, The World of Perception, that this affinity between philosophy and art becomes more explicitly articulated: “One of the great achievements of modern art and philosophy (that is, the art and philosophy of the last fifty to seventy years) has been to allow us to rediscover the world in which we live, yet which we are always prone to forget.” As with phenomenological reflection, the painter’s eye, as in the paradigmatic case of Cézanne, “strives to give birth to the outline and shape of objects in the same way that nature does when we look at them”.

83
In this painterly fashion, the hidden world of perception buried “beneath all the sediment of knowledge and social living” becomes not only expressed, but “brought back to life” (WP 52; 93). If painting “thrusts us once again into the presence of the world of lived experience”, a genuine philosophy of perception (i.e. phenomenology) equally leads us back to “a vision of things themselves” (WP 93). For both painting and phenomenology, “no detail is insignificant”; the “totality of flesh” in which meanings are “gearing into each other” is rendered visible. Merleau-Ponty suggests a parallelism and reciprocity between painting and philosophy: in aspiring to see the world anew, phenomenology can “restore painting and the arts in general to their rightful place” (WP, 93). In thus aspiring to see the world anew, painting would likewise motivate a restoration of philosophy to its rightful place—a place identified with the aspiration of phenomenological thinking. Although the affinity between painting and phenomenology is here clearly stressed, painting in fact shares with other arts this philosophical promise. As Merleau-Ponty concludes these reflections on painting and philosophy, other art—film, literature and music—are equally expressively able to bring “the world of perception back to life”, albeit differently, according to the specificity of their artistic medium.

As in the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty proposes in these radio lectures that art and philosophy each represent a medium for the actualization of genuine thinking. This convergence of art and philosophy does not only signal, as Alphonse de Waehlens once suggested, “the seeds of an aesthetics” in Merleau-Ponty’s early thinking. More significantly, this “great achievement” of modern art and philosophy sets into motion a threefold distinction between philosophy, art, and thinking that would progressively gain traction and weight in Merleau-Ponty’s thought, eventually shifting its orientation away from a philosophical aesthetics and towards posing the question of philosophy to art. If art and philosophy are capable of actualizing truth in their own medium of expression, art and philosophy cannot in turn exclusively claim to express—actualize—thinking. Neither art nor philosophy exhausts how thinking manifests itself, what it is to think. If art and philosophy each expresses a certain talent for thinking, a different manner of “rediscovering the sensible world of experience,” each must in its own way realize, give flesh to, as it were, the method of reduction and the vision of essences that Merleau-Ponty identifies with genuine thinking. The movements of reduction and essences can be differently “materialized” in various media of thinking. A difference (and distance) thus becomes pronounced between philosophy and thinking: the latter designates the genuine actualization of reduction and essence; the former an image of thought that has lost contact with the sensible world (as argued in *Phenomenology of Perception*) or “savage being” (as argued in *The Visible and the Invisible*). The possible actualization of thinking in either philosophy and/or art cuts both ways, however: it distinguishes thinking from
an image of thought, i.e. “official philosophy,” “operational thinking,” and “philosophy of reflection”. Likewise, it distinguishes painting from an image of painting (e.g. the symbolic form of Renaissance perspective). Thinking is not beholden to either philosophy or art, but more significantly, thinking is not exclusively the propriety of philosophy: there is non-philosophical thinking much as there is philosophical non-thinking. The vapidity of much “official philosophy” resides in an ignorance of just such a distinction.

3. Modernist Aesthetics and Modern Ontology

During the years feeding into the unfinished project of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty’s thinking became increasingly haunted by the absence of genuine thinking from the scene of contemporary philosophy. As Merleau-Ponty pointedly declares: *Nous ne savons pas ce que nous pensons*. This crisis of philosophy is characterized by a waywardness regarding what is and calls for thinking. As repeatedly examined in lecture courses during the years 1959-1961, Merleau-Ponty understood this crisis as an inability to actualize an “ontological interrogation” of “savage being” due to what he extensively criticized as an historically dominant “philosophy of reflection” and “operational thinking.” This *prise de conscience philosophique* shaping Merleau-Ponty’s thinking rendered further explicit and significant the distinction between philosophy, art, and thinking that had only been roughly delineated in earlier writings. The ontological transformation of Merleau-Ponty’s thinking from *Phenomenology of Perception* to *The Visible and the Invisible* must in fact be seen within this over-arching failure of philosophy to fulfill through *its own means* an “ontological interrogation” of being. The irony of the passage from Merleau-Ponty’s “early” to “late” thinking consists, in other words, in a widening discrepancy between an imperative for philosophy to return to thinking (by way of starting either from “Nature” or from the “mute flesh of being”) and an unthinking emptiness pervading philosophy today. Indeed, the more Merleau-Ponty insisted that philosophy become an ontology of “savage being,” the more he recognized that just such a savage thinking was manifest elsewhere than in philosophy. Philosophy cannot start with (just) itself.

The failure of contemporary philosophy to *think* manifests itself variously and was undoubtedly further reflected for Merleau-Ponty in the political and historical developments of the 1950s, yet two aspects are especially significant here. The remoteness of philosophical reflection from the “brute sense of being” is entrenched within the medium, or “materiality”, of its expression, namely, its discourse. Revealing a profound debt to Heidegger’s *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Merleau-Ponty considers that philosophical thought remains beholden to a metaphysical discourse structured around a series of fundamental distinctions (substance and accident, form and matter, etc.) that obscure rather than illuminate “the logos of savage being”, with the shortcomings of this
metaphysical inheritance most clearly in evidence (and critically exposed) with the question of art. Compromised by its own medium of expression, philosophy speaks without expressing (and revealing) anything fundamental; philosophy speaks around and above “being” without making contact with “being”. With the crisis of philosophy thus characterized as a crisis of its expressive medium, the discursive challenge of *The Visible and the Invisible* enters into sharper resolution. *The Visible and the Invisible* is caught between two shadows: in pursuit of a shadow (the “unthought”) it seeks to articulate, Merleau-Ponty’s self-fashioned idiolect remains haunted by the ghosts of a discourse it seeks no longer to imitate. Merleau-Ponty’s critique of metaphysical thinking can be seen more broadly as an innovative re-formulation of the problematic relation between “speaking” and “seeing.” Ever since Plato, a suspicion that philosophical discourse speaks without showing anything, or “seeing” in an emphatic sense of “revealing”, runs in tandem with the suspicion against the silence of paintings (an especially important debate for an Old Master revered by Cézanne: Poussin). As Merleau-Ponty attempts in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the revitalization of philosophical thinking requires a re-materialization of its medium of expression that in turn cannot be achieved without a re-vitalization of a seeing, or “intuition”, imbricated within this novel way of speaking philosophically.

The remoteness of contemporary philosophy from thinking stands in contrast with the contemporary manifestation of “fundamental thinking” in modernist art during “the past 100 years.” As Merleau-Ponty significantly proposes, “modern ontology” has taken form elsewhere than in the medium of philosophy. If philosophy is to become re-vitalized, it must make a new start with the arts and “find its assistance in the arts”. This turn towards modernist art functions as a generating axis for Merleau-Ponty’s “late thinking”, the full meaning of which was not entirely grasped by Merleau-Ponty himself, whose quest was abruptly cut short in the midst of this quiet revolution in the relationship between philosophy and art. Philosophy must enter into contact with “our questions” (nos questions)—our philosophical questions—in modernist art. Rather than pose the question of art to philosophy, Merleau-Ponty effectively poses the question of philosophy to art. In two lecture courses during the years 1958-1959 and 1960-1961, this transformation in the relation between philosophy and art is explored by way of a double-thesis regarding the manifestation of thinking in modernist aesthetics. Within these reflections, a recurring feature in Merleau-Ponty’s assessments of poetry, literature, and painting is the view that modernist aesthetics (exemplified in Rimbaud, Proust, and Klee) forges a new style of expression (“indirect signification”) coupled with a self-reflective awareness of artistic materiality. As Merleau-Ponty writes in *Eye and Mind*: “The entire history of painting in the modern period, with its efforts to detach itself from illusionism and acquire its own dimensions, has a metaphysical significance” (*PP* 139).
In these two lecture courses, Merleau-Ponty outlines a conception of modernist painting that could best be termed a *doubled* absolute. Replaying an argument earlier deployed in *The Prose of the World* (see the chapter, “The Indirect Language”) against André Malraux’s view of modernist painting as the “annexation of the world by the individual” (in contrast to the “objectivity” of classical painting), Merleau-Ponty suggests that modernist painting invents painting as an “absolute,” or self-referencing, medium that has broken from illusionism and the symbolic form of Renaissance perspective. As Merleau-Ponty lucidly formulates this guiding thesis: “Modern painting poses a quite different problem from that of the individual, namely, the question of knowing how one can communicate without the aid of a pre-established nature upon which all men’s senses open and of knowing how there can be communication prior to communication and, finally, how there can be a reason before reason”. Modern painting achieves a “fundamental thinking” of the world in complete innocence, without projecting an image of the world or returning to a pre-established form of rationality. Only in terms of this “metaphysical significance” can the modernist discovery of painting’s own dimension, or materiality, become fully grasped (*PP* 178).

It is here instructive to compare briefly Merleau-Ponty’s conception of modernist painting with the widely influential view of Clement Greenberg, given the apparent similarity of considering modernist painting as a self-reflection on its own medium. In Greenberg’s Kantian-inspired view, aesthetic modernism, set into motion by Cézanne, running through Cubism and culminating in American Abstract Expressionism, is an enterprise of “entrenching” the discipline of painting “more firmly in its area of competence”. Within aesthetic modernism, each art “had to perform this demonstration on its own account” since “what had to be exhibited was not only that which was unique and irreducible in art in general, but also that which is unique and irreducible in each particular art.” In painting, this critical self-exploration transforms what had traditionally been regarded as “the limitations” and “negative factors” of the materiality of painting—the flatness of surface, the shape of support, and the material properties of color pigments—into “positive factors” of aesthetic substance and significance. It is, above all, for Greenberg, the “ineluctable flatness of the surface” that defines what is unique to painting, and towards which modernist painting becomes increasingly oriented. Painting no longer aspires to imitate sculpture in attempting to represent three-dimensional space and sculpted bodies on its two dimensional surface. Painting no longer denies its own materiality and, in this regard, it attains an absolute significance. Painting is, it does not represent (in Greenberg’s words, it calls attention to itself as a painting). While Merleau-Ponty equally considers Cézanne and Klee as critical painters with their emphasis on the medium specificity of painting, he significantly departs from
Greenberg’s view of aesthetic modernism. This departure reveals itself most prominently in Merleau-Ponty’s conception of modernist painting as a doubled-absolute. For while Merleau-Ponty stresses the critical self-acceptance of the materiality of painting, he ascribes to this transformation of traditionally perceived “negative factors” into “positive factors” an ontological expressiveness robustly identified as thinking. For Merleau-Ponty, “Cézanne thought in painting”: his paintings offer a “revelation of the world, without a separate thinking,” which is “precisely modern ontology” (NC 206). The modernism of ontology resides with the inseparability of thinking from the materiality (or medium) of its manifestation. In Cézanne’s paintings, but also, so thought Merleau-Ponty, in the novels of Proust and Claude Simon, thinking becomes embodied in a strong and specific sense: thinking depends on the material specificity of its manifestation, or expression. The materiality of different forms of art (video, paint, etc.) supports and renders possible different forms of thinking; each expresses a distinct way in which the world calls for thinking. Artists work through the medium of their art as the form of their thinking—hence the frequent disparity between the thoughts of artists expressed in words and their expressed thoughts in the medium of their own art. In calling attention to its own materiality in order to give expression to the world, it is as if the world called attention to itself. Modernist painting makes contact with the world in itself—or Nature—in a manner that would strike Greenberg as inconceivable, and precisely because, for Greenberg, the essence of modernism rests with an aspiration towards “purity” and “self-definition with a vengeance” that forecloses any expressive function. Absolute painting for Greenberg is entirely pictorial whereas for Merleau-Ponty it is essentially iconic. The essence of painting consists in revealing une essence alogique du monde through its own material “presentness” (NC 503).

4. Husserl and Cézanne

Whereas in the preface to Phenomenology of Perception and the 1948 radio lectures, art and philosophy were considered as different yet reciprocal ways of re-discovering the sensible world, shadowing each other along a common axis of development, in the late 1950s, modernist art comes to be seen as an ontological avant-garde, with philosophy lagging behind, bereft of its own access to “fundamental thinking” and “savage being”. Merleau-Ponty’s previous assessment of the “great achievement” common to both modern art and philosophy during “the last fifty to seventy years” appears significantly self-corrected, given this search for contact with our questions in the arts of the “past hundred years”. Philosophy still awaits its modernism.

Yet, in arguably one of Merleau-Ponty’s most brilliant essays, “The Philosopher and his Shadow”, this shifted arrangement between philosophy, thinking, and art undergoes a further complication: Merleau-Ponty returns to the
originality of Husserl’s phenomenology in search of another contact with our questions. “Fundamental thinking” has indeed manifested itself within philosophy during “the past hundred years” in the form of Husserlian phenomenology, albeit in the elusive form of its “unthought”. In “The Philosopher and his Shadow”, Merleau-Ponty proposes a new start with the promise of phenomenology, as if the pursuit of “modern ontology” in the 1959-1961 lecture courses and The Visible and the Invisible remained haunted by the long shadow of Husserl’s thinking. This re-consideration of Husserlian phenomenology gravitates around the intrigue of the reduction that had earlier guided Merleau-Ponty in Phenomenology of Perception, yet its significance now becomes grasped with increased ontological purchase. The reduction delineates the “enigmatic possibility” of an “unthought” or “secret” dimension in the “shadows and reflections” marbling the manifest meaning and intention of Husserl’s thinking. A rumor of this secret is discernable in the “contradictory characteristics” of the reduction as presented in Ideen I and Ideen II. As noted above, the reduction suspends the natural thesis of the world for the purpose of unearthing the transcendental operations of consciousness on the basis of which the world is constituted and rendered manifest. Yet, as Merleau-Ponty claims Husserl to have dimly suspected in Ideen II, the reduction extends beyond the “closed and transparent milieu” of absolute consciousness in Ideen I towards a “third dimension of Nature” more fundamental than the distinction between subjectivity and the world, around which the transcendental idealism of Ideen I is constructed. In Husserl’s Ideen I, the suspension of the general thesis of the world is directly correlated to a conception of consciousness as a transcendental activity of constitution to which all forms of theses, or “positings” (Setzungen), including, most significantly, the thesis of the world, are related in the form of intentionality. Husserl’s characterization of the world as a general thesis (in contrast to the particular thesis of objects) corresponding to an attitude of consciousness towards the world tacitly assumes a conception of the world as an object of theoretical consciousness and hence as a correlate of constitutional activity. Only with the world thus conceived as beholden to some kind of thesis, or positing, of transcendental consciousness can the reduction be conceived (and motivated) as leading from the world to its transcendental origin in consciousness. The circle of transcendental reflection is (perhaps viciously) complete. As Husserl insists in Ideen I, the suspension of the natural attitude requires a fundamental shift from a (naive) natural to a (critical) transcendental attitude. The theoretical, or transcendental, attitude of consciousness towards the world betrays, however, the degree to which the world is already projected as standing in front of consciousness. The guiding thread of Husserl’s own description of perceptual experience as necessarily perspectival in character could thus be seen as a further confirmation of the suspicion that the world as such, as the “inclusive concept for all possible experience and knowledge”, is
implicitly grasped by Husserl as a world for an external spectator who is nonetheless also inside (i.e. the attitude of transcendental thinking), much as a spectator would stand in front of an image of the world constructed according to the logic of Renaissance perspective.  

In the charged analysis of the lived-body in *Ideen II*, Merleau-Ponty espies, however, another direction and meaning to the reduction that displaces the axis of absolute subjectivity around which the reduction of Husserl’s transcendental idealism in *Ideen I* gravitated. Against Husserl’s stated position, Merleau-Ponty contends that the “primordial depth” of the “world-thesis” cannot be identified with a corresponding attitude of consciousness. Rather than speak of a “world-thesis,” Merleau-Ponty speaks of a “primordial faith” or “perceptual faith,” where the meaning of “faith” (foi) does not designate “belief” in the sense of a positing/thesis (Setzung) or judgment. The “presentness” of the world in perceptual experience, as manifest in the operations of the lived-body (vision, movement, etc.), is diffusely pre-given and strangely robust as it eludes any affirmation or denial, and, indeed, generates intractable paradoxes as soon as it becomes an object of thematic questioning (VI 3). Splayed there before our eyes, the world escapes and resists suspension by theoretical consciousness, transcendental or otherwise; the world is not a possible object of transcendental reflection or noematic pole of intentionality. As Merleau-Ponty argues, this “presentness” of the world is given as a “primordial faith […] which is not even in principle translatable in terms of clear and distinct knowledge, and which—more ancient than any attitude or point of view—gives us not a representation of the world but the world itself” (S 163). Yet, this “original presentness” of the world itself (das Urpräsentierbare) does not designate a brute, monolithic given, but a “texture” or “infrastructure” within experience that “secretly” underpins and grounds the possibility of rendering aspects of the world (and ourselves) into a positive object of knowledge in “judicatory and propositional acts”.

Even though the “third dimension of Nature”—“our natural being, the barbarous core Schelling spoke of”—remains beyond the reach of transcendental reflection and its reduction, its shadow is nonetheless cast within phenomenological thinking itself (PP 178). The “outside” of phenomenology is “inside” phenomenology; phenomenology must become turned inside out in order to disclose this third dimension and thus think its own “unthought”. Despite his own self-understanding, Husserl points the way for a formulation of the reduction towards the “third dimension” in distinguishing between “material” and “lived” dimensions within the lived-body of transcendental subjectivity. As Merleau-Ponty argues, “Ideen II brings to light a network of implications beneath the ‘objective material thing’ in which we no longer sense the pulsation of constituting consciousness” (S 166). Material nature (nature as constructed by the operational thinking of the natural
sciences) is transcendentally grounded in an embodied subjectivity that is itself grounded in a folding of constituted and constituted dimensions within its own embodiment. This transcendental doubling of the lived-body as both “subject” (constituting) and “object” (constituted) reveals transcendental subjectivity to be entwined with the world in such a manner that resists internally its own thematic reflection—a reflection that bifurcates and objectifies this primordial “presentness” into an illicit separation between mind and body, mind and world. The embodied reduction to primordial “presentness” discovers the lived-body as absolute (the absolute here in which all spatial references are anchored) as well as relative to world (the lived-body as itself situated in the world). The reduction to the lived-body in this manner makes known a primordial “pulsation” prior to and behind the back of transcendental consciousness.

Crucial for such a radicalization of Husserl’s thinking in *Ideen II* is a conception of the lived-body as a nexus of different kinds of possibilities (movement, acting, perceiving) centred around the axis of an “I can” (*Ich kann*) that in turn gravitates around the absolute (or “original,” i.e. irreducible) “presentness” of the world. The lived-body gravitates around itself: which in turn gravitates around the world: which in turn gravitates around the lived-body (a complete proliferation of this chain of unfolding “insides” and “outsides” would have to include inter-subjectivity, i.e., other lived-bodies). The horizons of possibility that structure the lived-body are “meshed into the visible” world, given Husserl’s discovery of the lived-body as both a “subject” acting on the world and “an object” acted upon by the world. In an illustration of prophetic significance for Merleau-Ponty, Husserl masterfully described this unique reflexivity of the lived-body’s non-self-coincidence with the phenomenon of two hands—right and left—touching each other: in the rubbing of two hands, each hand senses the other hand as sensed and as itself sensing without conflating the difference of each hand as itself both touching and touched. In each hand, the sensation of touching is doubled by the sensation of “being touched”—each sensation is folded into the other without suppressing a constitutive difference between both. The circuit of reflexivity of hands touching each other is composed of a joining of the doubled sensations in each hand, but again, without an identity obtaining between the doubled-sensations of each. If the doubled-sensations of each hand (as both touching and touched) were to fully coincide with the doubled-sensations of the other, each hand would not be in touch with the hand of the other nor be in touch with itself in being touched by the other that it itself touches.

This crossing-over within the “subjective” and “objective” dimensions of the lived-body is reproduced within the constitution of things with a crossing-over of inner and outer horizons (and furthermore, a crossing-over of individual subjectivity and inter-subjectivity within the world). As a result, the lived-body
and things of the world are “woven into the same intentional fabric” such that “when we say that the perceived thing is grasped ‘in person’ or ‘in the flesh’ (leibhaft), this is to be taken literally: the flesh of what is perceived, this compact particle which stops exploration, and this optimum which terminates it all reflects my own incarnation and are its counterpart” (S 167, my emphasis). This emphasis on the literalness of flesh speaks against taking this critical conception in any metaphorical sense. The literalness of flesh is its “presentness” as composed of different “textures” or “relations” between the lived-body and things. Things of the world are literally there in “flesh and blood” in the sense that my lived-body is also present for them. Contact with the “presentness”, or flesh, of a thing reflects the “presentness” of the lived-body, but not as a mirroring or mimetic relationship between the thing and the lived-body or a Leibnizian notion of reflection within monads bereft of windows. As if to offer added descriptive weight to the “presentness” of flesh, Merleau-Ponty turns to colour as an “inaugural fact” (i.e. not a secondary quality or qualia). The brute givenness of a patch of colour is enmeshed within a nexus of suggestiveness or an “indefinite series of experiences”. As described in The Visible and the Invisible: “Its precise form [of colour] is bound up with a certain wooly, metallic or porous configuration or texture, and the quale itself counts for very little compared with these participations [...] The color is yet a variation in another dimension of variation, that of its relations with the surroundings: this red is what it is only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation [...]” (VI 132). An instance of colour—the green of this tablecloth—is a “concretion of a possible real here and now” (S 167). A patch of colour is a concrete variation within an unfolding chain of variations unfurling a landscape of the world. The synthetic variations that articulate the concretion of inner and outer horizons, as well as motivate further explorations along these intersecting horizons, are not the solitary achievement of a constituting consciousness nor the realization of an ideal order of things or system of appearances; instead, these synthesis of concretions are “effected” through the responsiveness of the lived-body to the solicitations of things in the world and are, in this sense, anonymous in the specific sense of not representing a constitutional achievement of an ego alone.

These delineations of Husserl’s “unthought” circumscribe for Merleau-Ponty the ontological problem of how to understand internally the relation between Nature and human subjectivity, yet not in terms of relating two separate regions of being, but as a relating cross-wise, as it were, within the “joints and articulations of being”. Two promissory notes, each issuing from Husserl’s thinking, are provided in this direction. As Husserl partly recognized, the synthetic variation of “entwinement” between Nature and the lived-body represents a style of synthesis not patterned on the Kantian formulation of subsuming heterogeneity under a conceptual unity or on the model of an
association between two discrete elements. The synthesis of entwinement is historically peculiar given its combination of integration and segregation in the anonymity of its performance. The flesh of the world is not seamless, but a segregated composition of what Merleau-Ponty calls without further elaboration “non-compossible” aspects of the world and human subjectivity. Husserl, for this part, could only “glimpse behind transcendental genesis, [this] world in which all is simultaneous”, a “savage” and baroque world animated by exuberance and grandeur (S 179). The world so beholden as a “deflagration of being”—as given all at once in its variegated bruteness—can only become accessible, however, for a consciousness reduced to its own “bruteness” or inhumanity, for what is required to think the “joints and articulations of being” is the paradoxical achievement of an encounter with the world innocent of any attitude, interest or standpoint towards the world. The radicalization of the reduction requires a dispossession of any motivation for the reduction; discovered is here not “an attitude among others but the comprehension of all attitudes, being itself speaking within us”(S 179, my emphasis). This enigmatic possibility gravitates around a radical indifference or non-attitude towards the world that would allow the world to become present from a distance marked by an absence of one’s own presence as an interest or attitude towards the world. In this manner, the perception of the world in a moment of genuine openness, or curiosity, allows for a wonder that would inhibit the projection of a constructed image or perspective onto the world. Beholden to the wonder of the world, we would be attuned to the world such that the “being of the world” may “speak within us”.

Husserl had him self recognized an affinity between the phenomenological attitude and the aesthetic attitude in a letter to Hugo von Hofmannsthal: both entail a perceptual encounter with the world removed from theoretical and practical interests (echoing Kant’s stress on the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgments in the Critique of the Power of Judgment). But according to Merleau-Ponty, Husserl in Ideen II was on the trail of an even more radical possibility of “disinterestedness” in envisioning “a new attitude which is in a certain sense completely natural but which is not natural. ‘Not natural’ means that what we have experience of in this attitude is not Nature in the sense of the natural sciences, but so to speak a contrary of Nature” (S 179). This dimension, contrary to the image of nature constructed by the natural sciences and its operational manner of thinking, could become disclosed to a form of thinking grasping the “alogical essence” of the world “in reproducing the outline of it”. The circuit of reduction and essence is once again affirmed. This vision of essences would not be a reflection in which an essence is an intellectual object of thought. A delineation of essences would, instead, take a non-prosaic shape of rendering visible the invisible fabric of the world in its savage (i.e. natural) being. As Merleau-Ponty writes:
willy-nilly, against his plans and according to his essential audacity, Husserl awakens a wild-flowering world and mind. Things are no longer there simply according to their projective appearances and the requirements of the panorama, as in Renaissance perspective; but on the contrary upright, insistently, flaying our glance with their edges, each thing claiming an absolute presence which is not compossible with the absolute presence of other things, and which they nevertheless have all together by virtue of a configurational meaning which is in no way indicated by its ‘theoretical meaning’. (S 181)

In this passage, the reduction from an image of the world constructed according Renaissance perspective (recall the centrality of perspectival experience for Husserl’s own conception of sensible experience) to the “wild-flowering world and mind” clearly functions *simultaneously* as a description of Husserl’s phenomenological impasse and Cézanne’s painterly achievement, telegraphing, as it were, the thesis of *Eye and Mind* in the conclusion to “The Philosopher and his Shadow”. A “savage world” awakens within Husserl’s thinking as its own “unthought” to which Husserlian phenomenology remains asleep. In looking back to Husserl’s “unthought” we are already looking forward to how Cézanne’s painting—a painting without shadows—brings to fruition the enigmatic possibility of the phenomenological reduction and its as yet unseen carnal vision of the world.

5. “The landscape thinks itself in me”

Shortly before his discovery of Cézanne’s paintings in 1906, Rilke observed that “to see a landscape [...] as something distant and foreign, something remote and without allure, something entirely self-containing, was essential, if it was ever to be a medium and an inspiration for an autonomous art; for it had to be distant and very different from us, if it was to be capable of becoming a redemptive symbol for our destiny.”23 As Rilke further reflected:

[L]andscape is foreign to us, and we are fearfully alone amongst trees which blossom and by streams which flow. Alone with the dead one is not nearly so defenseless as when alone with trees. For, however mysterious death may be, life that is not our life is far more mysterious, life that is not concerned with us, and which, without seeing us, celebrates its festivals, as it were, at which we look on with a certain embarrassment, like chance guests who speak another language.24

This mysterious festival of Nature is known to Merleau-Ponty as the “wild flowering” of the world that “flays our glances” with its delirious riot of “presentness.” Although this savage landscape is merely glimpsed in the “unthought” of Husserl’s thinking, Merleau-Ponty sees therein an eventual passage from Husserl to Cézanne, from philosophy to painting, from the phenomenological reduction to the painterly reduction, which forms the generating axis for *Eye and Mind*. And yet, the passage from philosophy to painting occurs in *Eye and Mind* with another unexpected turn: for if Merleau-Ponty’s consideration of “the arts, and notably painting” opens with the distinction between “operational” / “transcendental” thinking—a thinking that “looks from above and thinks of the object-in-general”—and the fundamental
thinking of art that “draws upon the fabric of brute sense,” a distinction familiar from his lecture courses and *The Visible and the Invisible*, a further distinction becomes introduced within the arts between the painter and the writer/philosopher announcing an ontological uniqueness to painting within the fundamental thinking of modernist aesthetics. What distinguishes painting from other arts is its realization of the enigmatic possibility of the reduction that, it is here suggested, neither writing nor philosophy, neither Proust nor Husserl, can fully achieve. As Merleau-Ponty stresses: “Only the painter is entitled to look at everything without being obliged to appraise what he sees” (*PP* 123, my emphasis). The painter looks at the world in an indifference that has suspended any attitude or interest towards the world. The interests of knowing, valuing, and acting are frozen in the clarity of an eye wholly given up to a fascination with the “presentness” of the world verging on stupefaction. Painting is anti-praxis as well as anti-knowing. It is also, for Merleau-Ponty, a kind of puncture in the *studium* of culture and a kind of deafness to the imperatives of history. The painter becomes dispossessed of his humanity and its symbolic structures of meaning so as to open himself to the world in its savage being: “it is as if in the painter’s calling there were some urgency above all other claims on him,” namely, the claim made on him by the world itself (*PP* 123).

The inhumanity of the painter stands in contrast with the writer and the philosopher, who both remain wedded to the medium of their thinking, language, and thus to a responsibility that prevents them from perfecting the reduction to the third dimension of Nature. It is as if the medium of discursive expression inhibited the full realization of the phenomenological reduction, as Eugen Fink had already once suggested. From the writer and the philosopher are expected “opinions and advice” as is responsibility of speaking. To speak is not only to address other human beings; it is to address others in the having of a world in view as invested with beliefs and significance for us. Can one truly speak without making some kind of claim about the world? Whereas the writer and the philosopher cannot “waive the responsibilities of humans who speak,” the painter occupies an irresponsible silence in an unforgiving neutralization of beliefs and attitudes, including, most significantly, the belief in the significance of belief itself. As Andy Warhol would recognize in his own brilliant way, the perfection of art is a perfected mirror of its environment in which things of the world come to look at us; for things to have a look is for things to have their own nature and thinking. If the philosopher is the one who awakes and speaks, the painter is the one in whom something other—the world—awakes and comes to speak. Hence the perpetual stupefaction of the painter, be it Cézanne or Warhol. Man is, to invoke Merleau-Ponty’s key metaphor, a hollow or openness—and hence, a freedom—in which Nature comes to self-manifestation. Dispossessed of his humanity as *zoon logon* and *zoon politikon*, the painter is the actualized reduction of the “secret of all secrets
beyond our positings and theses”, thus becoming himself something of an ontological prophet.26

The specialness of painting that allows for its perfection of the reduction reflects the uniqueness of its medium and the unique engagement of the lived-body in its making. The painterly reduction does not, however, progress one-sidedly to the “presentness” of the world, or flesh, from constructed images of the world by way of a suspension of the project of reason in its theoretical and practical interests. At the same time, the painterly reduction operates a return to the “presentness” of the lived-body, or flesh, from the surveillance of the mind. The painterly reduction is thus doubled: a reduction to the “presentness” of the lived-body as well as to the “presentness” of the world. This entwined reduction represents the inner meaning of Paul Valéry’s remark that the painter brings his body to the world—and thus, that only a body can paint—that anchors the description of the painterly reduction and the realization of its “secret science” in Eye and Mind. From this observation, the course of Merleau-Ponty’s argument repeats in its essential stations a trajectory already charted in “The Philosopher and his Shadow”: the entwinement of vision and movement opens onto the reflexivity of the lived-body as both vision (“seer”) and seen—a set of co-joined paradoxes generating further paradoxes, all of which compose the enigma of vision; the “presentness” of lived-body is a ceaseless “crossing-over” between vision and movement, “to see” and “to be seen”, eye and hand; the lived-body is composed of a “strange system of exchanges” that implicate “all the problems of painting” (PP 125); and the things of the world and the lived-body are literally composed of the same “fabric” or “flesh” (once again echoing “The Philosopher and his Shadow”). In the account developed in Eye and Mind, however, the “manifest visibility” of perceptual faith (i.e. the visibility taken for granted in experience) “must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility” (PP 125, my emphasis). The force of this “must” is at first gratuitous yet becomes clarified in its gratuitousness with the suggestion that different aspects of the visible world—colour, light, depth, etc.—are present to us “only because they awaken an echo in our bodies and because the body welcomes them” (PP 125). These echoes of the world crystallize into an “embodied diagram” or “carnal formula”, which, in its nascent condition within the lived-body, has yet to become differentiated into concretized modalities of sense perception and artistic expression. As a “carnal formula” of the world, the lived-body is, this respect, a lived-body without determinate organs, that is, a body that has not yet expressed its virtual diagram of the world through a determinate sense-modality of a esthesis and kineaesthesia. The lived-body awakes to itself as an expressive movement in the awakening of the world within it. In thus becoming a newly disclosed “presentness” for itself, the lived-body responds to the “internal equivalence” of the world within itself by transforming its “carnal formula” (or diagram) of
the world’s “presentness” into a movement of the hand that traces this diagram into a line, a drawing, a painting, etc. (or, to take another possible example, the movement of the entire body as in dance, as Paul Valéry discusses in Degas et la danse). The diagram of the world in me is something akin to a figuration that awaits a determinate and visible expression as a visible figure by me, with each expressed image a concrete variation of a virtual diagram, or “echo,” resonating in me. 27 Hence the importance of modulation in Cézanne’s paintings in the composition of an individual painting (technique of colour modulation, parallel touches, etc.) as well as in a series of paintings. Each painting of Monte Sainte-Victoire represents a possible variation and concretization of the virtual diagram “Monte Sainte-Victoire”. Each of these paintings is something of an organ of perception expressing a savage nature that itself is less than each of its organic modulations in being more than its possible realizations. The inhumanity of Nature is here expressed; for the trees and the sky are dead for us in the splendour of possessing of life that always looks past us (much as Cézanne’s wife vacantly looks past us in the portrait Madame Cézanne bleu, as if looking away to a point infinitely removed behind our own gaze at her). 28 Artistic creation produces a “tracing rendered visible” in transforming matter, not only physically through the application of paint, etc., but ontologically in re-materializing the medium of colour, line, and surface into a power of visibility of the second degree. The opacity of matter becomes itself a materialized visibility of the invisible. In this manner, for Merleau-Ponty, a painting is an iconic image, or visibility of the second degree, of the primordial visibility of the world.

Glancing back to “The Philosopher and his Shadow”, this organizing insight into how the painter realizes the reduction in lending his lived-body to the world allows for the formulation of a specific difference between the medium of phenomenology and the medium of painting, between Husserl and Cézanne. What differentiates the description of the lived-body in phenomenological discourse from its description in painting? In painting, the enigma of vision and the lived-body is re-doubled, folded onto itself in unfolding from itself: flesh is literally made paint in so far as the painter produces an image as a materialized visibility through his own lived-body. The philosopher, by contrast, does not lend his lived-body to the world in his writing to produce a thing in which he thinks; the philosopher does not think in the making of a thing, as does the painter in painting. A painting is an image, made of human hands, not an extension or projection of the lived-body onto the world, but a transformation of the lived-body in its entwinement with the world. Flesh made paint is a thing unlike other things; this ontological ambiguity of the thing of art produces a fracture in the world of perceptual faith through which an incandescent light of the primordial visibility of the world shines through. In his effort to render more precise what is freely recognized as this strange essence of a painting, Merleau-Ponty rejects
established conceptions of the image as a reproduction or mimetic image of something else; in fact, an image is not a second thing representing another thing or “transcendence” in the manner conceived by either Husserl or Sartre.

Both develop a comparable insight into the apparently paradoxical constitution of the image as a thing and non-thing, as a “transcendence” in the form of a thing. In Husserl’s analysis of “image-consciousness”, an image is constituted as a three-fold stratification of intentionalities, each with a distinct and nested intentional object: “image-thing”, “image-object”, and “image-subject”. To perceive an image is to perceive a certain physical object, to perceive this object as an image, and to perceive this image as the image of something. In this manner, as Merleau-Ponty himself notes, one does not perceive an image as one perceives other things: “The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as are the fissures and limestone formations” (PP 126). Yet, Merleau-Ponty proposes a more radical conception of the kind of transcendence here at play in the image than Husserl could have accepted: the image is in fact not an object constituted by consciousness and thus primarily not an object that consciousness faces. Merleau-Ponty rejects, in other words, the Husserlian conception of the image as a noematic correlate of intentionality, however complex in constitution. The image reverses the relationship of “constituted-constituting” in Husserl’s image-consciousness, for rather than looking at an image as one beholds an object, one sees according to an image, “wandering within it as in the halos of Being”, as if the power and spectacle of vision of one’s own experience of looking at a painting emanated from the painting itself (PP 126). In this regard, an image looks at us as a reflection of the world looking at us.

This reversal of the Husserlian conception of image-consciousness is followed by a second insight directed against Sartre’s theory of the imaginary. For if the image is not a thing or an image for consciousness, it is also not, on the other hand, an “in-itself” (l’en soi), by which Merleau-Ponty understands, an “outside” of consciousness (or better: a hole in consciousness) in the sense of something absent, as not there in “flesh and blood”. The image is the “presentness” of transcendence not the transcendence of an absence (i.e. something not present). The image, in other words, is neither an object for me nor an in-itself (a fascination or absorption of the “for itself” in the “in itself”). In a characteristically elusive formulation, the image is defined by Merleau-Ponty as “the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of sensing makes possible and without which we would never understand the quasi-presence and imminent visibility which make up the whole problem of the imaginary” (PP 126).

As with works of art in general, painting is not privileged with a fundamental or special ontological significance for Sartre. Art works are constituted through the imaginary and, in this sense, are “an irreality”. As Sartre writes: “Beauty is
a value that can only ever be applied to the imaginary and that carries the
nihilation of the world in its essential structure”. A painting, for example, a
portrait of Charles VII, is a perceptual thing, like other things: it has a material
existence and composition. Yet, the depiction of Charles VII in the painting is
not a thing really present before me. Anticipating a crucial insight stressed by
Merleau-Ponty and originally argued by Husserl, the aesthetic object, or
“image-subject”, “Charles VII” is not a real object given to a “realizing
consciousness”. In the presence of an image, consciousness is not in contact
with the real. “Charles VII” is an “irreal” object given through the irrealization
(or “nihilation”) of a real object (the materiality of the image) such that the
latter lends its irrealized materiality (or body) to the former as its analogon.
The painting as a real, perceptual object is, through the “magical
transformation” of the imaginary, the “material analogon” for the aesthetic
quasi-object “Charles VII”. The distance to the object as “not-present” in
“flesh and blood” yet magically incarnated is constituted through the
irrealization of the real. In the case of painting, as Sartre understands,

each stroke of the brush was given not for itself nor even in terms of the construction of a
coherent real whole [...] it was given in connection with an irreal synthetic whole and the aim
of the artist was to construct a whole of real tones that would enable this irreality to be
manifested. So the painting should be conceived as a material thing visited from time to time
(every time that the spectator takes the imaging attitude) by an irreality that is precisely the
painted object.

On this view, the material and visible properties of a painting are “visited”
by an invisible irreality “every time that the spectator takes the imagining
attitude” with the effect that the materiality of the painting becomes entirely
denied (negated) for the sake of the irreal. For a painting to be painting, it
must be visited by an irreal object at the expense of the “presentness” of its own
materiality. The medium must be denied in its actual materiality in order to
realize (more accurately speaking: “irrealize”) the spell of a presence, as if the
medium surrendered its materiality to the spectral body of the imaginary. In
this manner, l’imaginaire is a degradation of thinking to a thinking in the
manner of things: the irrealization of materiality (i.e. medium) is the negation
of materiality through its magical transubstantiation into an irreal materiality
that renders something absent all the while making us believe that it is present.
As with Sartre’s example of the actor, the movements of an actor’s body
imitating Maurice Chevalier are, as Merleau-Ponty notes, “borrowed from the
real world in order to refer to prosaic things which are absent.” L’imaginaire can
only make things present at the expense of the world itself.

Steering an argumentative course between Husserl and Sartre, Merleau-
Ponty conceives of the imaginary as “much nearer to” and “farther away from”
the real: nearer since the imaginary is “in my body as a diagram,” yet farther
away since “it offers the gaze traces of vision, from the inside, in order that it
may espouse [...] the imaginary texture of the real” (PP 126). This imaginary
The texture of the real or “alogical essence of the world” is literally materialized in the paintings of Cézanne in three distinct ways, each representative of Cézanne’s innovative technique of painting and style of composition. As the art historian Fritz Novotny argued, Cézanne’s paintings are constructed according to a “new and unknown language” whose expressive power principally resides in ascribing a novel aesthetic function to colour. As Merleau-Ponty echoes, colour is “the dimension that creates—from itself to itself—identities, differences, a texture, a materiality, a something...” (PP 141). This shaping power of colour is expressed through Cézanne’s technique of “modulating” spatial forms, geometric surfaces, and plastic bodies through variations of colour “spots” (taches), or “touches”. Rather than model spatial form in a sculptural fashion with clean delineations of lines, spatiality is progressively built up, mosaic-like, through variations of colours, with each “touch” differentiated from its neighbour slightly or dramatically, depending on the intended profile to be presented. The colour green, for example, is a series of variations, yet these variations do not gravitate around a fixed essence or identity “green”. The variation of slight differences in shadings within a colour produces the effect of an eidetic variation through the full spectrum of a colour’s possible shadings without however arriving at an exact identity of that colour. This technique of modulation instinctively performs a kind of eidetic variation of what Husserl identified as the “anexact essence” of a sensible quality. Yet, whereas Husserl considered the progress of variation to be animated towards a telos, or finality, in Cézanne’s handling of colour, variations of sensible qualities are not directed towards a telos or identity. This absence of any teleological direction in the progress of eidetic variation reflects the virtual diagram that becomes expressed through variations—given flesh—without, however, corresponding exactly or exhaustively with the diagram. Each touch of colour is the concretion of a possible coloration within an indefinite variation of possible concretions. The technique of colour modulation does not provide an analogon for an “irreal synthetic whole; instead, the “anexact” (or alogical) essence of colour, as a differentiation or texture (or “dimension”) of the visible, becomes rendered visible, presented in the material composition of the painting itself. This innovative handling of colour is also connected to a fundamental re-imagining of the line and its relationship to colour. Lines in Cézanne’s paintings are not genuinely drawn; these “non-prosaic” lines do not cleanly delineate a sculpted form in the manner of a positive description of an object in itself. The line renders visible a dynamic of animation—a line of force, as it were. In many of Cézanne’s paintings, the modulation of colour shaping spatial aspects of composition is inseparable from the traversing motion of serpentine lines; the line is often delineated through the progression of a colour modulation that overlaps, or bleeds into, the line (touches of colour are not aligned along the axis of the line), or the colour “red” of the apple is both inside and outside...
the blackened sketch of its outline, as if to blur any clear distinction between
inner and outer horizons of a thing. Line and colour lose any strict eidetic
identity and separation from each other. Within the variation of colours as well
as the variation of colours into line and line into colour, the eidetic unity is what
Husserl would have called *eine konkrete Zwittereinheit* (concrete hybrid unity)
based on conflict or difference. But, whereas Husserl considered that within
an eidetic variation “no alteration is possible in which all the phases of the
alteration do not belong together” such that, in this sense, “a color could change
only into a color and not, e.g., into a sound”, in Cézanne, we witness precisely
this impossibility of colour modulating into a line and a line modulating into
colour. The “hybrid-unity” of eidetic essences is a unity, for Merleau-Ponty,
of “non-compossibles” generated through a principle of equivalence in
differentiation. Color, line, plastic form, and spatiality are, for Merleau-Ponty,
“diacritical values” within a system (the painting itself) that assigns topically to
each touch of colour, fold of space, thrust of line, etc., a precise aesthetic value
in relation to the whole. This diacritical inscription of colour, line, and surface
within the picture plane can be understood as an ontological flattening that
paradoxically produces a novel dimension of depth in the painting. Colour is no
longer subordinated to space and line; space is not first constructed with the
drawing of lines, followed by the application of colour. Colour, line, and space
are liberated from not only the symbolic form of perspective but also from any
ontological hierarchy as enshrined in the distinction between primary and
secondary qualities. On Cézanne’s canvas, colours, lines, and space
communicate with each other within a system of (non-identical) equivalences:
the painting. This diacritical flattening of the elements of painting is directly
related to the accentuated flattening of pictorial space and pronounced visual
presence of the material support of the canvas in Cézanne. Flattening produces
a depth of simultaneous “presentness” that is “no longer a third dimension but
envelopment, reversibility of dimensions, and deflagration of Being”—or in
Rilke’s term, a conflagration of clarity (PP 140).

It is in this strange *eidetic* sense of the painted image as an ontological icon—
“wild-flowering”—that the “painter’s world is a visible world, nothing but
visible: a world almost mad” in the way anticipated in “The Philosopher and his
Shadow”, but also in *The Visible and the Invisible*, yet only genuinely
actualized—seen—in Cézanne’s paintings. Cézanne’s art is to think the sublime
indifference of nature in paintings made of human hands, which renew, in
Rilke’s words, the “peculiar value of art [to be] the medium in which man and
landscape, form and world, meet and find one another”. This conjoined
“presentness” was literally grasped by Cezanne himself in the mute gesture of
folding his hands together, joining “the wandering hands of nature”, in the
making of a thing in the manner of thinking called painting. As Rilke once
confided to Lou Andreas-Salomé: “Somehow I too must find a way of making

101
things; not plastic, written things, but realities that arise from the craft itself. Somehow I too must discover the smallest constituent element, the cell of my art, the tangible immaterial means of expressing everything.”39 In its own way, Merleau-Ponty searches in *Eye and Mind* for a reality to arise from the craft of philosophy itself in the making of a philosophical portrait of painting that would at the same time provide a self-portrait of *our* thinking.

Husserl Archives – University of Leuven

References

7. When reduction and essence are taken separately, abstracted from a dynamic interaction with each other, each *appears* to move counter-purposively with regard to the other: while the movement of reduction involves a suspension of the world, the vision of essences involves a proximity to the world, or “com-presence,” as a type of seeing (“intuition”) through which the invisible texture of the world becomes revealed in the visible. Only when both registers are brought together, when reduction and essences are coupled, gear ing into each other, does the circuit of genuine thinking occur. Despite the transformation of thinking from *Phenomenology of Perception* to *The Visible and the Invisible*, this conception of thinking as a circuit passing across the registers of reduction and essence remained entrenched for Merleau-Ponty.
11. It is the problem at the center of *The Prose of the World*.
13. The importance of Schelling’s philosophy of art for Merleau-Ponty is here apparent. See, Merleau-Ponty’s gloss on Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*: “art can serve to save philosophy, since ‘art alone [...] is capable of objectifying in a complete and evident way for all that the philosopher is capable of expressing only subjectively” (*Nature*, 46). As Merleau-Ponty also comments: “In this sense, as Schelling says, art is the ‘document’ of philosophy and its ‘organ,’ and by ‘document’ we must understand objectivation” (*Nature*, 45).
17. Ibid. p. 2.
18. As Merleau-Ponty remarks in his lectures on Schelling from his 1956-1957 course Nature: “Art is the objective realization of a contact with the world, which itself cannot be objectivated, just as philosophy is the discovery of an arrangement whose meaning is open” (Nature, 45).
19. Along with The Visible and the Invisible and Eye and Mind, “The Philosopher and his Shadow” forms a panel in the triptych portrait of Merleau-Ponty’s nascent ontological thinking. Each of these writings can in turn be considered as marking a different horizon and bearing: towards the past of his thinking with “The Philosopher and his Shadow”; towards the present of his thinking with The Visible and the Invisible; towards the future of his thinking with Eye and Mind.
21. Michel Foucault’s suggestive analysis of Las Meninas in Les mots et les choses could thus be seen as visually encapsulating the deployment of Cartesianism from Descartes to Husserl.
25. Warhol’s 1964 film Empire is in the same aesthetic lineage as Cézanne’s portraits of Mont Sainte Victoire. The Empire State Building is New York City much as Mont Sainte Victoire is Provence. Each presents l’heure totale of a world. And yet, we can also see in Empire a novel kind of cinematic reduction: the camera eye is an inhuman eye onto the world bereft of any attitude or interest towards the world and thus, in this regard, an asubjective un-lived-body by which the world becomes nonetheless articulated in its brute openness. The pure “presentness” of Empire reflects an entirely unedited and undirected looking at the world. Of Warhol’s camera, one could say what Cézanne once said of Monet: it is just an eye, but my God, what an eye.
26. In Rilke’s magnificent words: “For one thinks of him [Cézanne] as a prophet, but they have all left earlier, those old men who would have had the power to weep before the nations of our day.” One thinks again of Andy Warhol.
27. This notion of an embodied, yet virtual diagram (or in Husserl’s language: a phantom) is here clearly indebted to Bergson’s notion of virtual memory and the diagram in Matter and Memory.
28. Galen Johnson’s proposal that Cézanne’s portraits of his wife “confirm indisputably” his “tenderness for his wife” seems entirely forced even if we should also be skeptical of the attempt to infer the opposite attitude towards his wife; Galen Johnson, The Retrieval of the Beautiful, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010, p. 60 (my emphasis). Strange to think that a painting could at all “confirm indisputably” ... is this not to possess an evidence for a judgment (a positing), and thus fail to see in the very sense Merleau-Ponty struggled to make us see in paintings? If there is at all “tenderness,” it is precisely in the degree that we see without remaining beholden to the prejudice of an attitude or desire, and thus dispossess ourselves of our humanity so as to be touched by the brutality of nature, especially that of others.
30. The Imaginary, p. 189.
31. The Imaginary, pp. 189-190.
32. As with the description of Roquentin in the gallery of portraits in La nausea, for Sartre, a painting can only be said to be looking at me to the degree that I am revealed to myself in its gaze.
33. Fritz Novotny, Paul Cézanne. Gesammelte Schriften zu seinem Werk und Materialien aus dem Nachlass, Vienna: Klever, 2011, p. 498. Rilke was likewise much taken by the innovative use of color: “[Cézanne] demonstrated so clearly the extent to which painting is something that takes place among colors, and how one has to leave them alone completely, so they can settle the matter among themselves. Their intercourse: this is the whole of painting.” Letters on Cézanne, p. 75.

34. For the importance of this non-teleological conception of eidetic variation and “anexact” essences of sensible qualifies for Merleau-Ponty, see. Leonard Lawlor, “Becoming and Auto-Affection”, Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal, 30, 2 (2010), 219-238.

35. Edmund Husserl, Erfahrung und Urteile, § 87. As Husserl remarks: “Diese merkwürdige Zwittereineinheit liegt der Wesenserschauung zugrunde.” Lost, however, in the English rendering of Zwitter into “hyrbid” is the instability of not being able to focus and hold each conflicting aspect without snapping to the other, as with those images in which the eyes open and close as you move it in your hand.

36. Erfahrung und Urteil, § 87 (my emphasis).

37. As Fritz Novotny argued in his 1938 Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftliche Perspektive—a crucial study for Merleau-Ponty—Cézanne never completely abandoned the symbolic form of Renaissance perspective.


Le monde sensible et le monde de l’expression is one of the two earliest courses that Maurice Merleau-Ponty held at Collège de France in 1953. It belongs to a period when his philosophy undergoes a radical development, although the texts from these years still remain largely unexplored. This publication, edited by Emmanuel de Saint Aubert and Stefan Kristensen, offers an important elucidation of the development of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy from Phenomenology of Perception to The Visible and the Invisible.

The goal of the course, Merleau-Ponty states, is to deepen the analysis of perception in order to understand: “the expressive relation … the body - the sensible, natural or mute world … man - the institutional, cultural or speaking world.” The relation between the body and the sensible world is the main theme of this course, whereas the relation between man and the cultural world is treated in another course the following year. The general aim of both studies is to understand the relation between the sensible and the cultural world, as this was insufficiently elaborated in his earlier works. The first lecture presents an important critique of Phenomenology of Perception, where Merleau-Ponty states that, although he wanted to challenge the classical notions, the book “remained nevertheless ordered by classical concepts”. As a result, the relation between perception and being remained enigmatic, and the ontological implications of his phenomenology unclear. Thus, in these lectures, he again approaches the notion of perception and seeks to give an account of it wherein it is no longer conceived as sensory givenness, but as an “access to being” (46). Merleau-Ponty formulates a critique here of his own work that is similar to what he had outlined earlier in his application to the Collège de France; he claims that Phenomenology of Perception was unable to show how truth emerges in the perceived world, which makes the phenomenological investigations appear to be psychological descriptions that remain distinguished from a true reality beyond them. The Cartesian dichotomies between subject and object, and body and soul that Phenomenology of Perception wanted to question would thus only be re-established and the world would still be an object, independent of our experience of it.

In Le monde sensible et le monde de l’expression, Merleau-Ponty again challenges the Cartesian framework that remained implicit in Phenomenology of Perception. Instead of a positive consciousness that stands in front of an impenetrable extension, he seeks to redefine perceptual consciousness as well as the perceived world. To have consciousness of something can no longer be understood as a possession of ideas or significations, because such a consciousness “can only have to do with its own significations” and things “can only touch it by awaking one of the significations it conceives”. Perceptual consciousness is both closer and further away from the things it perceives, closer because as a part of the world it is not cut off from the perceived but “encroaches on it, surrounds it”, farther away because the perceived only reveals itself “through its vibration in me” (49), which means that the things always remain beyond the perception of them.
Consciousness is not “possession of representation” but an “exact divergence [écart]” (164). The perceived thing is not positively given, instead it is negatively defined by what it lacks as much as by what it possesses; it is not an essence, but an “internal logic” (49). With the perception of a circle as a privileged example, Merleau-Ponty radicalizes Gestalt psychology and extends the figure’s dependence on the ground to the perceived’s dependence on its imperceived. The meaning of the circle is a “mode of divergence”; it is not perceived as the geometrical circle, but as a “change of direction at every moment but always in the same manner”, and that in relation to which it is divergence is not posed, but only recognized in all the points that the circle does not observe. As perceived, “it offers a tacit meaning that reveals itself in the exceptions where it is missing rather than in its own position”. The circle is not a sensory givenness, but a meaning that expresses itself before us through a mixture of perception and imperception.

Expression is understood as the “capacity a phenomenon has to, through its internal structure, make another known, that is not or has never even been given”. This expressiveness is found both in the tool and the work, and in a more complex sense also in the work of art. The latter presents a reciprocal relation where man expresses himself in the product at the same time as the product expresses the world. Man is indirectly expressed as “the center of the perspective of these views”; he is present as the “relation between the expression and the expressed” (57). It is in this latter sense that ‘perception is expression’; it is ‘expression of the world’. The perceived meaning is given in the same way as expression in a painting, where “a stroke of green placed here makes a cheek smile without us knowing how, due to a syntax we practice without having a science of it”.

From the exploration of expression, Merleau-Ponty again poses the question of the relation between the natural and the cultural world. In Phenomenology of Perception he understood cultural expression and language to be based on the body’s capacity for expression, which centered it around the subject. The intersubjective character or, as it was later called in The Visible and the Invisible, the intercorporeal character, of language was left out, which made understanding how language can express a truth that transgresses the individual perspective enigmatic. Here, Merleau-Ponty again approaches the relation between the expressiveness of the body and the expressiveness of language, and this time it is not understood from the bodily gesture, but from the phenomenon of movement. It is here that the link between the natural and the cultural worlds is to be found, because, as such, movement belongs to the sensible world, where it reveals the expressive relation between the body and the natural world, but it also supports other kinds of significations; it is itself a means to and a capacity for expression of a higher degree.

Merleau-Ponty’s elaboration of movement starts from a double critique of, on one hand, an idealist’s standpoint and, on the other hand, an empiricist’s one (70). The idealist would examine our verbal concept of movement rather than movement itself and, pretending to know what he searches for, only imply what he sets out to find. The empiricist, on the other hand, would view it as an objective transition between two points. The idealist’s view empties the meaning of the phenomenon of movement, whereas the empiricist’s view makes movement itself impossible. As Zeno’s paradox shows us: if we conceive the room as consisting of an infinite number of parts, there can never be any movement because either the transition between two variable points is done or it still remains to be done, but the movement itself is never there. Merleau-Ponty claims that this is what Bergson sensed, i.e. that it is the actual and infinite division of time and space and their composition from an infinite number of units that made the movement described in Zeno’s thought impossible. If movement is to be possible, it
requires that time and space are divisible but not divided, that they permit an in-between for the positions and instants, which is not possible in itself (91). Thus the thetic consciousness ‘stiffens the movement’, which can only be seen “out of the corner of the eye, on the condition that one does not reflect upon it, that one does not know what he sees, like an appearance or an illusion”.12

In order to show that there is no movement in itself but only the phenomenon of movement, Merleau-Ponty compares real movement with the stroboscopic. Even when real movement appears, there is only, on the retina, a successive activation of different regions which means that the perception of it resembles the perception of the stroboscopic, to the extent that a subject who does not already know which is which cannot distinguish between them. With terminology borrowed from Gestalt psychology, he explains that movement appears in the same way as the figure on the ground, because the figure’s segregations are made by man and not given by stimuli, and the identification of the movement is of the same order as the identification of a figure at rest with itself. The movement is composed of “figural” characteristics - it is like a figure that by itself realizes a spatio-temporal segregation (95f.).

Merleau-Ponty deepens the conception of movement as a figure on a ground, and claims that movement can no longer be understood as a change of place, but instead as a revelation of being, resulting from its inner configuration.13 He compares the perception of an insect on the window to one of an airplane at the horizon. They are perceived “without passing through the relation of the objectively appearing size-distance”, i.e. they are not identified by an intellectual recourse to an idea, but through a different configuration of the perceived field wherein they describe different structures. They can be confused, i.e. the insect can be thought to be an airplane, but both when they are recognized and mistaken they are perceived as a “style of movement”. There is a mutual dependence between the meaning and the style of movement: “the meaning is a means to account for the movement’s style but appears only through it.”14 This can be compared to how the expressiveness of language is understood in Prose of the world, where Merleau-Ponty describes how the writer makes his language expressive through his characteristic style of using the words. From Saussure, he borrows the idea that significations are negatively defined by their relation to one another, and transposes this idea to the perception of movement: “One could say, signs, but in a modern meaning, not as a sum of given things but as realizations of one and the same power of phonetic variation, that only differs from itself by opposing itself, and that are diacritical and in interaction. In that sense perception of movement is like reading.”15

The very existence of movement requires, according to Merleau-Ponty, that there must be a “blend of before and after, of here and there, encroachment”. This is only possible if the movement is neither solely in the things nor for me as a viewing subject, but instead performed “through a kind of blend between me and the things”.16 Movement is only possible in interplay with our body, our motricity is the “foundation of the object’s mobility”.17

From the phenomenon of movement, and with important influences from Paul Shilder as well as the neurologists Pierre Bonnier and Henry Head, Merleau-Ponty elaborates the notion of the body schema. He describes it as an “opening towards a world through motricity” (158) and understands it as a schema in the sense that it is a “system of references” and not a thing in space. It is not spread out before us like an object but rather is a “system of immediate, intersensorial equivalences”,18 that arouses the perceived space and reveals both the body’s and the world’s existence. It is “a certain structure of the perceived world and this latter has its roots in it”.19 It is not here in the sense of an inter-objective relation, but as my contact with the outside, its voids indicate
that we are with it, situated in it. In a normal resting position it is not sensed, because then “the body is similar to its ground” and nothing is “sensed as figure”; it is in relation to this position that everything else is “divergence, anomaly and thus perceived expressively”.20 Again, Merleau-Ponty makes a comparison to language: in the same way as language expresses differences in significations and not significations, the body schema is not a perceived thing but an index of our prethetic relation with space, and what we perceive are only differences or divergences in relation to it (143).

The body schema is also “relation with the other, language, thought” (158), and speech, which is described as an “especially fragile superstructure of the body schema” (164). Merleau-Ponty claims that language is that which ‘furthest sublimes the human movement’ because here the ‘body opens itself to a gesticulation according to a law of construction that is not natural and not gestural’.21 Language can no longer be understood as based on the bodily gesture, as it was in *Phenomenology of Perception*, and although there are a number of analogies drawn between the body’s relation to the perceived and our relation to language, the latter “passes to another order” (165). With the discussion of movement, Merleau-Ponty accounts for how natural expression can be transformed into cultural expression, but not how the difference between them should be conceived. He states that language is “not only sketching a perspective, an articulation of the physical and social world, but further reaches a truth” (162). Does this mean that language has a privileged position as a vehicle of truth? Merleau-Ponty asserts that this will be further examined in another course next year, which means that he does not answer to the initial problem of the perceived’s relation to being and truth, but rather prepares the path for an answer.

As he places the divergence of consciousness and the perceived at the center of his understanding of perception, he prepares the tools for the ontology that will be elaborated in his later philosophy: an ontology that presents a real alternative to Cartesian idealism, because it operates outside of its concepts. Instead of the Cartesian impenetrable extension, he displays the perceived world as an interplay of imperception and perception. Instead of a positive consciousness that possesses its ideas he shows how the perceptual consciousness is opened towards the world through its voids. With the phenomenon of movement, he indicates how the body and the world surround and encroach on one another. In a dialogue with Gestalt psychology, Pierre Bonnier, Henry Head and Paul Schilder, the discussion of movement is deepened through the elaboration of the body schema. As stated above, it is described as an opening towards the world through our motricity and gives an account of the mutual dependence between the body and the world. Perception is performed through their interaction and can now be understood as an expression of being, in which being reveals itself before us.

The greatest advantage of the course is how it displays a number of central themes in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy. It provides important insights into the understanding of expression, perception, movement and the body schema, as well as showing which questions they arise from. The course is essential in order to understand the development of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, as it prepares for the later ontology without introducing a rupture with his earlier works. Instead, it deepens and transforms the earlier discussion of perception through a critical encounter, where its ontological implications are extended and made more radical.

Lovisa Håkansson
Uppsala University/Södertörn University
References
2. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le monde sensible et le monde de l’expression*, eds. E. de Saint Aubert et S. Kristensen, Genève: Métis Presses, 2011, p. 63 [unless otherwise indicated all further references are to this text, all translations are the reviewer’s own].
   “rapport expressif corps-monde sensible, naturel ou muet homme-monde institutionnel ou de culture ou parlant”
4. p. 45, “restait tout de même ordonnée à des concepts classiques”.
6. p. 48 “[…] cette conscience ne peut avoir affaire qu’à ses significations […]”, “Rien ne peut la toucher qu’en éveillent en elle une des significations qu’elle conçoit”.
7. p. 56, “mode d’écart”, p.50 “[…] change de direction à chaque instant mais toujours de la même façon”.
8. p. 49, “[…] il offre un sens comme tacite qui se révèle plutôt dans les exceptions où il manque que par sa position propre”.
9. p. 48, “[…] la propriété qu’a un phénomène, par son agencement interne, d’en faire connaître un autre qui n’est pas ou même n’a jamais été donné”.
10. p. 48, “perception est expression”, “expression du monde”.
11. p. 50, “[…] ce sont plutôt des significations comme celles du tableau: une touche de vert placée ici fait sourire une joue sans que nous sachions comment, en vertu d’une syntaxe que nous pratiquons sans en avoir la science.”
12. p. 90, “Pas de mouvement devant conscience thétique qui le fige”, “On ne peut le voir que du coin de l’œil, à condition de ne pas réfléchir, de ne pas savoir ce qu’on voit, comme apparence ou illusion”.
13. p. 102, “Donc ici mouvement = révélation de l’être, résultat de sa configuration interne”
14. p. 114, “[…] sans passer par le rapport objectif grandeur apparente – distance”, “style de mouvement”, “[…] le sens est moyen de rendre compte du style de mouvement mais ne paraît justement qu’en lui”.
15. p. 111, “Si l’on veut signes mais au sens moderne non d’une somme de données, mais de réalisations diverses d’un seule puissance de variation phonémique, qui ne se distinguent qu’en s’opposant, qui sont diacritiques et en interaction. En ce sens là perception du mouvement = lecture”.
16. p. 90, “[…] qu’il y ait mélange de l’avant et de l’après, de l’ici et du là, empiètement. », « par une sorte de mélange de moi et des ‘choses’”.
17. p. 120, “Notre motricité comme fondement de la mobilité des objets”.
19. p. 144, “Donc le schéma corporel est aussi une certaine structure du monde perçu et ce dernier a sa racine en lui”.
21. p. 164, “sublime davantage le mouvement humain”, p. 162 “[…] le corps s’ouvrait à gesticulation selon loi de construction (langue) non naturelle, non gestuelle”.

109
In *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature*, Ted Toadvine issues a bold critique of a large portion of the work being done today under the banner of environmental philosophy. According to Toadvine’s diagnosis, in primarily focusing on practical solutions to specific environmental problems, a significant portion of environmental theorists have lost sight of the philosophical assumptions that frame the way we think about these problems in the first place. Explicitly eschewing the practical, problem-solving orientation of so much environmental thought, Toadvine takes a more “hermeneutical” approach by interrogating the forgotten assumptions concerning the relation between humans and nature that motivate the way we think about environmental issues (133). Insofar as it is thus concerned with the traditional topics of “the being of nature, the being of humanity, and the relation between them”, this investigation is presented as an attempt to retrieve the concept of nature as it “has been developed in the history of Western philosophy” (7). The specific task and challenge that Toadvine sets for this renewed philosophy of nature is to understand how we can think nature in a way that recognizes our immanence to it while at the same time respecting its transcendence and resistance to the ideas we have of it.

As is suggested by the title of this book, the philosophy that Toadvine thinks is uniquely able to accomplish the task of thinking nature in its duality as that which both includes and excludes us is the philosophy of nature developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Although, as Renaud Barbaras points out, “it is only very late in Merleau-Ponty’s work that the concept of nature becomes the object of a separate reflection”,1 Toadvine convincingly demonstrates in his illuminating reconstruction of the development of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy that the question of nature and its relation to human life and reflection is a central concern—even when not explicitly thematized for itself—running through all of Merleau-Ponty’s work. Following Merleau-Ponty, Toadvine argues that the paradoxical conjunction of our immanence to nature and the fact that its meaning transcends us is constitutive of the very being of nature and therefore both terms of the duality must be embraced rather than reduced or resolved. On the one hand, perception involves a primordial openness to the real world and to nature. However, just as we perceive objects from a certain point of view, our access to nature is always mediated by our specific personal, cultural, and historical situation. But rather than being an obstruction to our access to nature, this mediation is the very condition for its appearance. For this reason, Toadvine argues that our relation to nature is best explained in terms of Merleau-Ponty’s notion of *expression*. Toadvine writes, “What we reach through seeing, touching, painting, or speaking nature is obviously not a level of noumenal reality. But neither are our stylization and creative appropriation a screen between ourselves and the world; they are, instead, the condition for anything whatsoever to appear, to be disclosed. Nature, therefore, is precisely what discloses itself *through* our expressive acts, and as requiring such expression for its disclosure” (15). The work of explaining the details and evolution of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of nature and its culmination in his account of the relation between humans and nature as an expressive relation is the central task of the five chapters of the book. These chapters are based on close readings of Merleau-Ponty’s accounts of meaning, perception, reflection, expression, animality, space, and, the logic of the chiasm and are organized such that they roughly follow the chronological progression of Merleau-Ponty’s thought from his first to his last (unfinished) work.

In addition to providing an expert reconstruction of the whole of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy through the lens of the specific theme of nature, Toadvine also argues that
a philosophy of nature inspired by Merleau-Ponty—what Toadvine calls “ecophenomenology”—suggests a critique of and alternative to the terms of certain debates in environmental thought. Specifically, Toadvine argues that a philosophy of nature that is inspired by Merleau-Ponty provides the means to overcome the intractable dispute between realist and constructivist theories of nature (represented in the book by the work of E.O. Wilson and William Cronon, respectively), which is presented as replaying the dispute between empiricism and intellectualism that Merleau-Ponty responded to in his own writings. Insofar as the realist and constructivist camps have tended to overemphasize either our inherence in nature or the socio-historical situation through which we access nature, they have also not been able to recognize the tension between these two aspects that allows us to think nature in its duality.

This book enters into dialogue with and will be of interest to at least two (not necessarily distinct) audiences. On the one hand, insofar as Toadvine presents an informative and insightful reconstruction of a central theme in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy as it develops throughout his work, this book makes a significant contribution to the literature on Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology in general. On the other hand, insofar as Toadvine’s eco-phenomenology questions a number of foundational assumptions of a large swath of environmental thought, this book should certainly raise interest in the broader field of environmental studies. In short, Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Nature is an exceptionally clear and insightful work that deserves closer study by anyone interested in Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy or the threefold question of the being of humans, the being of nature, and their relation.

Trevor Perri
Institute of Philosophy, University of Leuven, Belgium

Reference