Thinking with Style:

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Merleau-Ponty's Ontology of Style—Thought, Expression, and Art

MEIRAV ALMOG

It is certainly right to condemn
formalism, but it is ordinarily
forgotten that its error is not that it
esteems form too much, but that it
esteems it so little that it detaches it
from meaning…*The true contrary to*
formalism is a good theory of style

——Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect Language and The Voices of Silence'

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty describes how, in a foreign country, one begins to gradually understand the sense of an unfamiliar language's words "by their place in a context of action and by participating in everyday life".[1] In the same way, he writes, a piece of philosophical writing discloses itself through its particular *style* (Spinozist, critical, Phenomenological)—"*which is the first sketch of its*

* I am indebted to Hagi Kenaan for our ongoing dialogue about style, and his insightful comments during different stages of writing this essay.

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 184.

sense. I begin to understand a philosophy by slipping into this thought's particular *manner of existing*, by reproducing the tone or the accent of the philosopher in question".[2] Merleau-Ponty's famous saying, "Phenomenology allows itself to be practiced and recognized as a manner or as a style" should be read in this light[3].

Yet what do we actually recognize? What is style? What is its place within human expression, its connection to meaning and thought? How can a thought have a style, a tone, an accent? Is it an ornament of sorts, artificially added to one's expression? If not, what is style's ontological role within philosophical and artistic expressions—and how can one recognize it? What are the ontological characteristics of style? And, finally, what repercussions ensue from style's ontological dimension with regard to the phenomenological manifestation of one's "subjectivity"? Let us begin with a few introductory remarks on Merleau-Ponty's notion of style in general, which will better situate our discussion of these questions.

1. Meaning, Objects, and Style

Style first appears in the *Phenomenology of Perception* as an element related to the occurrence and appearance of sense in general; it provides an answer to questions concerning the meaning of things in the phenomenal world. Style is defined, as mentioned, as a first draft of sense.[4] It is what gathers together a given thing as an entity despite its changes; it serves as the initial form of sense that establishes the *identity* of things. But it does so without consolidating a static and established essence, that is, without turning the thing into a mere object. In other words, the perceptual object is present as what and how it is through its style. This applies equally to natural objects such as a piece of wood and to complex cultural structures such as the city of Paris.

> Each thing appears to us through a medium that it colours with its fundamental quality. This piece of wood is neither an assemblage of colours and tactile givens, nor even their total *Gestalt*; rather, something like a woody essence emanates

[2] *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 184–85, my emphasis.
[3] Ibid, p. xxi.
[4] Ibid, pp. 184-85.

> from it, these "sensible givens" modulate a certain theme or *illustrate a certain style that wood is*, and that establishes an horizon of sense around this piece of wood and around the perception I have of it.[5]

Things do not show themselves as a collection of qualities or a set of necessary features but as entities that possess a certain style, a certain initial meaning in the sense of a primordial form. This preliminary form brings forth a distinctive appearance, yet does so not in the form of character or characteristics. At the same time, style is not an "essence" in the traditional sense of the term, but something different—it is sensitive to carnal existence in the world. In fact, "Style is the affective or modal consequence of being an embodied point of view".[6]

Meaning, for Merleau-Ponty, is "grounded in the world and subject to its temporality."[7] As the first draft of sense, style is a form of sense open to the organic development of things in the world, their changes over time. Objects can exhibit a style of being—a way they act within a given environment with regard to past and future. For instance, although Paris in the 1940s was vastly different from the city today, a certain style enables it to possess an historical unity despite having evolved over time.

> Paris for me is not an object of many facets, a collection of perceptions, nor is it the law governing all these perceptions. Just as a person gives evidence of the same emotional essence in his gestures with his hands, in his way of walking and in the sound of his voice, each express perception occurring in my journey through Paris—the cafés, people's faces, the poplars along the quays, the bends of the Seine—stands out against the city's whole being, and merely confirms that *there is a certain style or a certain significance which Paris possesses*.[8]

[5] Ibid, p. 476, my emphasis.
[6] Linda Singer, 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style' in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. by Galen A. Johnson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 240.
[7] M. C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 78.
[8] *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 293–94, my emphasis.

Thus, the style of objects can be regarded as a manifestation of the Husserlian concept of noematic nucleus, though for Merleau-Ponty the thing's synthesis is practical and perceptual, extending beyond the sphere of consciousness. Style is the way one can describe the appearance of perceptual unification that gathers itself before our eyes and can never be perfectly reconstituted in thought.[9]

Objects however do not necessarily engage with their environments to the extent that human persons do.[10] Objects vary in their capacity to interact with their surroundings. A piece of wood responds to its environment in a different way than the city of Paris, or a bicycle or computer. Nevertheless, all differ fundamentally from human beings in this regard, and thus the ontology of *human* style will be the focus of my investigation. How, then, does style relate to human thought, language, and expression?

2. **Thought, Language, and Expression**

The nature of the linguistic act is rooted in meaning that stems from movement and gesture—that is, from expression. Expression stands at the heart of the linguistic act, as opposed to what is claimed by the traditional, representational model. In the latter, meaning already exists prior to its expression; because thought wholly exists before words and speech, its mode of expression is secondary to its meaning. If thought wholly exists prior to its expression, it can be, theoretically, expressed, in several or maybe even an infinite number of forms, from which one can choose: thus, leaving its meaning intact. However, according to Merleau-Ponty, expression *brings meaning into existence*[11]—it *constitutes* meaning rather than merely translating or representing it.[12] Similarly to the realization of art forms—the playing of a musical piece, or the dance performance that follows written instructions for movement—the manner of expression is an integral part of meaning that gives carnal form and style its existence.

The heart of Merleau-Ponty's criticism against the representational

[9] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 241.
[10] Christinia Ryan Landry: *A Phenomenological Account of Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Style: From Embodiment to Flesh*, Thesis, (Brock University, 2005), p. 23.
[11] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*. ed. by Claude Lefort, trans. by John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 141.
[12] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 183.

model lies in the central, basic argument that a word's meaning is not separate from its forms of expression. By placing a word "on" an object, one does not act on a pre-existing mental foundation which already includes the object. Rather, one becomes aware of grasping the object *in* that act of expression. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that for the child, the object is unknown until it is given a name—*speech completes thought*, rather than transforming a readymade thought into sound.[13]

This approach runs counter to two central philosophical movements in Western thought. The Empiricist movement regards Speech as a physiological or psychological reaction to stimulation, (as, for instance, in behaviourism) and, thus, for Merleau-Ponty, in Empiricism, "Man can speak in the way an electric lamp can become incandescent."[14] Whether it is stimuli trigger or state of consciousness that brings "the appropriate verbal image in virtue of required associations"[15], speech remains merely a flow of words with no manifestation of the subject's intention to express, to speak, and the sense of the words is assumingly applied with the stimuli or the state of consciousness as their product and thus situated exterior to it. Thus, here, speech cannot be regarded as an action since it does not manifest one's inner possibilities, and in that manner, Merleau-Ponty writes, that in Empricism, "there is no one who speaks".[16]

In intellectualism (or as it is more commonly known, rationalism), the word is also to be distinguished from its meaning, being grasped as a container, an empty vessel that merely carries thought. The word has no effect of its own since it stands merely as an exterior sign of what is utterly internal—to thought—which can also occur without the word and to which the word adds nothing. The thought "owns", so to speak, the meaning, and thus the word remains an empty shell. Yet, as Merleau-Ponty emphasizes, "speech is not the 'sign' of thought…speech and thought would only admit of this external relation if there were both thematically given; in fact, *they are enveloped in each other*…"[17]. Hence, if one adopts an intellectualist approach, there is a subject, but as Merleau-Ponty stresses, it is a *thinking* rather than a *speaking* subject.[18]

[13] Ibid., pp. 177-88.
[14] Ibid., p. 180
[15] Ibid
[16] Ibid., p. 182
[17] Ibid., p. 187, my emphasis.
[18] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 182.

In that sense, Merleau-Ponty concludes that Empiricism is not fundamentally different from Intellectualism in its approach to the role of expression, and especially, of the act of speech. Both approaches assume that a word's expression is *exterior* to its meaning, so in both cases the word itself remains empty. The representational model regarding speech thus turns thought into a frozen, motionless act, forcing us to view speech as nothing but the external relations between two speakers.[19] Thus, by claiming that a word's meaning does not stand separately from its forms of expression, Merleau-Ponty calls into question both Empiricism and Intellectualism. Furthermore, this claim evokes a few essential conclusions about the connection between thought, expression, and style.

Thought and expression are constituted simultaneously. Speech is not a mere sign for the existence of thought that stands autonomously from the act of speech, but is rather an essential part of the experience of thought. One gains ownership of her thought through the experience of linguistic expression—by presenting her own thought to herself through expression, whether private or external. Without expression and communication (with oneself or/and with the other), thought would sink into unconsciousness as quickly as it came, failing to exist for itself.

Thus thought, also, is not an internal thing—it does not exist independently from the world and from words.[20] Merleau-Ponty rejects the romantic attitude which recognizes a private language that, by definition, cannot be communicated. He grants that from time to time one can get confused and think that one's thought is independent and that one has a sealed-off "private world". One can think that a thought can exist prior to its expression because one has thoughts that have already been created and expressed; by quietly recalling them, one experiences the illusion that they possess a private life prior to their expression.[21]

Thus, thought is never a pure, private meaning or a manifestation of intrinsic existence—of pure "subjectivity" standing on its own. It is always something that draws its existence from the living body—something created by expression and speech which is already intertwined with the world. At the heart of speech and linguistic meaning stands the carnal manifestation which gives one's actions and sayings meaning while receiving, at the same time, its meaning from them.[22]

[19] Ibid, pp. 184-85.
[20] Ibid., p. 188.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Jerry H. Gill, *Merleau-Ponty and Metaphor* (Atlantic Highlands, NJe and London:

Speech is a unique act that carries its meaning in the same manner as the carnal gesture. It does not merely transfer meaning that is already known by one interlocutor to the other: "Speech has to teach its own meaning to both the speaker and the listener".[23] Speech has to bring meaning into existence and thus has to transcend itself as a gesture.[24] The somatic face of speech—intonation, accent, and style—creates a fabric of linguistic meaning in which thought and speech are entwined.

Merleau-Ponty is aware that language has its representational aspects, though they are not its initial ones.[25] Language, is, in fact, a spectrum: at one pole stands authentic speech—that is, the creative, primordial one—and at the other, the automatic, ready-in-advance speech. Merleau-Ponty understands that most manifestations of our expression, especially in daily life, are situated near or at the pole of second-order speech, but he wishes to focus on the rare cases that reveal the originary creation of meaning, where speech is first formulated.

Thus language is not some outer attachment to intellectual thought—language has content, meaning, yet not in a sense that it represents a closed, intrinsic, self-aware *a priori* thought that "looks" for words to come "out" of its inner sphere. Thought does not exist independently; language and thought are constituted together within the carnal sphere of speech which serves as the ground for meaning. Hence, taking this into account, what does language express? And how does style relate to it?

Language has an existential sense and significance—it is the way that one situates oneself within one's world of meaning,[26] which is constantly in flux. Once language is taken as the way that a human being constitutes a living communication with oneself or the other, it can no longer be considered a tool or an instrument, but must be regarded as a manifestation of one's intimate existence and mental connection with others and the world.[27]

The phonetic gesture—speech—expresses to one's listeners, as well as to the speaking subject himself, *style*, a manner of existence. Language, specifically as speech, is what gives human beings the ability

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Humanities Press, 1991), p. 16.
[23] *The Prose of the World*, p. 141.
[24] Ibid.
[25] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 178.
[26] Ibid, p. 199.
[27] Ibid., pp. 201-2.

to construct, with the assistance of their carnality, their world in the Heideggerian sense—that is, the space around them in which things and human beings have meaning for themselves and for others.[28] This ability manifests itself most clearly in artistic expression.

Hence, Merleau-Ponty rejects the artificial separation between "content" and "form", meaning and expression—style is an intermediary notion that bridges the tension between "what we say" and "the *way* we say it." As he writes: "It is certainly right to condemn formalism, but it is ordinarily forgotten that its error is not that it esteems form too much, but that it esteems it so little that it detaches it from meaning…*The true contrary to formalism is a good theory of style* or of speech".[29] Yet Merleau-Ponty never directly elaborated his notion of style: it has to be extracted from his writings, possibly because he "is not interested in style as a technical matter, or as the object of judgment of taste. Thus he does not develop an explicit method of stylistics. The references to style in his work occur contextually, within the larger discussions of perception and expression. Merleau-Ponty is reluctant to consider style apart from its objects, and the processes by which it is generated and apprehended."[30] My aim is to further explore his notion of style, extracting it from those investigations. Thus, I wish to turn to the place where style is most evidently identified and is seen most lucidly, and to elaborate on style in the context of artistic activity[31], so as to infer style's existential and ontological characteristics.

[28] Ibid., p. 199.
[29] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' in *Signs*, trans. by Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 77, my emphasis.
[30] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 234.
[31] Style is a term that usually has its place within the field of art. However, Merleau-Ponty's choice of using the concept of Style is, in my view, far from accidental; it manifests the deep debt Merleau-Ponty shows to the realm of art within his ontology. Merleau-Ponty is a philosopher who gives substantial power to art within his ontology. Art, and especially, painting has an important ontological role in revealing the Being of the world.

3. Style and Artistic Expression—Painting[32]

Style is related, from its nascent state, to expression and art. The word's etymology comes from the Latin *stilus*, meaning a stake, but also an instrument of writing, manner of writing, or mode of expression. Style is a *manner* of expressive existence and also an instrument by which one expresses oneself. Style is the *stylo* with which one inscribes one's existence in the world. It manifests the immanent connection between human creativity and the instrument of expression—*stylo*—which is to say the lived body: the hand that writes, paints, preforms a gesture and expresses. Hence, it is not surprising that style comes to the fore, in its most pronounced way, within art.

Style can be known, thought, and defined only from and through expression; in other words, style comes into existence *with* expression. "The body", Merleau-Ponty writes, "is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art."[33] Each is, for him, an expressive vehicle of a point of view, and thus possesses the coherence of style.[34] Each arranges itself in relation to meaning in an implicit manner, as an invisible virtual focus of the visible. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty claims, that art is an *amplifier* of the body-schema's expressions: "it is the expressive operation of the body, begun by the smallest perception, which is *amplified* into painting and art."[35] Art amplifies perception and expression; hence style can be seen more clearly within art than within other forms of expression.

Yet, why is painting an amplifier of perception and expression? And in what way is style enhanced within pictorial expression? Let me preface this discussion with a few words regarding Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of vision and the ontological significance of the act of painting.

Like all forms of perception, vision is, for Merleau-Ponty, essentially embedded in a flesh-and-blood human being rather than a soul or a pure mind. This bears two main implications vis-à-vis the carnality

[32] I chose to focus here specifically on painting since Merleau-Ponty dedicates most of his aesthetic writings to this form of art, giving it a unique ontological power. Thus, these writings hold the most extensive discussion of style in the context of artistic expression, even if mostly in an implicit manner.

[33] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 150.

[34] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 242.

[35] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 70, my emphasis.

of vision. First, unlike the Cartesian concept of vision, sight occurs not in some "camera obscura" within my soul but rather *in* the world itself. Second, the carnality of vision brings with it the duplicity of feeling. To see is structurally always also to be seen; vision is understood to be equally active and passive. In other words, to see is not merely an active position, but, due to my carnal existence, adheres to it a passive aspect of being looked at; one is a subject and an object of vision. Moreover, the one who sees and what is seen constantly reverse positions, making untenable the traditional strict contrast between them. Thus, for instance, one can recognize one's own look in what is seen.

Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between visibility of the first and second power. The first is vision described as taking into account the presence of a specific human body in the world and the duplicity of feeling. The second—manifested by the painting—is "a carnal essence or icon of the first. It is not a faded copy, a *trompe l'oeil*, or another *thing*."[36] Painting—vision of the second power—is not a representation, duplication, or mimesis of things in the world, nor is it something akin to an ordinary object, to a mere "thing." Rather, it is the manifestation of the world's imprint upon the painter's body. Painting is the concrete, worldly expression of the painter's phenomenological sight—of the fabric woven by the painter, that which gathers the mutual intertwinement of her and the world in her daily existence. It is the painter's manifestation of her Heideggerian *Being-in-the-world* and, hence, a manifestation of the painter's style that adheres to it. In other words, because the image, the painting, is the carnal essence of vision and, more generally, of perception, it is the amplifier of "the expressive operation of the body".[37] *The painting is what condenses, intensifies, and amplifies the artist's style; painting gives style a body*, so to speak.

In a museum we come across a painting we have never seen, yet we can tell that it is a Vermeer. What transforms this painting "into" a Vermeer, Merleau-Ponty writes, "is not the fact that this canvas which one day was painted has come from Vermeer the man. It is the fact that the painting observes the system of equivalences according to which each of its elements … marks the same deviation…".[38] These gentle relations among the elements cannot be broken down into a list of characteristics:

[36] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Eye and Mind' in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. by James Edie. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 164.
[37] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 70, my emphasis.
[38] Ibid, p. 61.

Vermeer's selection of colors, use of light, compositional forms, and the movement, rhythm, and strength of his brushstrokes. To enumerate such characteristics as constituting the painting's identity as a Vermeer would turn the artist's style into an object. What turns a painting by Vermeer into "a Vermeer" is "the fact that *it speaks the language of Vermeer*"[39]— that it manifests Vermeer's *style*.

What, then, is the texture of the painting? And how do language and style relate to it? In the beginning of "Eye and Mind," Merleau-Ponty writes, "The painter 'takes his body with him,' says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into painting".[40] A pure mind cannot paint on its own, stresses Merleau-Ponty. Yet, this is not to be understood just in the trivial sense of the body being a simple "painting tool" for the soul, but, also in the sense of the body being uniquely important to the creation of painting. Because the painter "takes" her body everywhere, she can lend that body to the world and manifest on the canvas, with it, by it, the way she is grafted into the universal by what is most her own—the chiasm that sensibility brings about.

Of critical importance to the ontological texture of painting — to the fabric of style and, indeed, its very expressibility — is the fact that the act of painting is performed by human flesh, that it is human flesh that paints.

> The word "image" is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that a design was a tracing, a copy, a second thing, and that the mental image was such a design, belonging among our private bric-a-brac. But if in fact it is nothing of the kind, then neither the design nor the painting belongs to the in-itself any more than the image does. *They are the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside, which the duplicity of feeling* [*le sentir*] makes possible....[41]

Painting is not a representation of the world, and yet this does not mean that it is a realm where the painter simply pours onto the canvas his intrinsic and private emotions. The painter's work is never a mere

[39] Ibid.
[40] 'Eye and Mind', p. 162.
[41] Ibid, p. 164, my emphasis.

manifestation of his mental or carnal life, nor is it completely beyond his life—it is the embodiment of the artist's ability to draw his life toward an audible or silent form of expression.[42] Though expression is indeed inherently related to experience and to selfhood, or more accurately, to *one's* experience in the world, it cannot be reduced to the facts of experience or to mental forms.[43] Rather, expression manifests the intermingling of a person with the world, and is thus neither completely *subjective* nor completely *objective*. "The painter does not put his immediate self—the very nuance of feeling—into his painting. He puts his *style* there"[44]— his intertwining with the world.

Thus, for instance, in "Cézanne's Doubt" Merleau-Ponty describes Cézanne's uncertainties regarding his vocation: "As he grew old, he wondered whether the novelty of his painting might not come from trouble with his eyes, whether his whole life had not been based upon an accident of his body."[45] But for Merleau-Ponty, the weakness of Cézanne's eyes is as essential to his style of painting as any other "intrinsic inspiration" would be: his bodily situation is inseparable from what he creates.

Moreover, both the "carnal" and "mental" sources make up but one segment of his creation, since painting is the manifestation of Cézanne's human flesh enmeshed in the world. As Singer writes, "No painting can be purely self-referential. A private painting is as unintelligible as a private language. On the other hand, no painting is entirely free from the particularities of its origins. Painting is possible because the artist and his world can engage in a mutual exchange of significance".[46] Cézanne's paintings, in fact, manifest the way Cézanne draws his whole life toward expression and, hence, toward a meaningful interpretation of the world.

Embodying the vision of the first power, the painter expresses, "puts out," the chiasmic duplicity of feeling as vision of the second power: he reveals the way the world is intertwined with him by weaving

[42] "…language speaks, and the voices of painting are the voices of silence." 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 81.
[43] Bernhard Waldenfels, "The Paradox of Expression," in *Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, ed by: Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, (Albany: State University of New-York Press, 2000), p. 94.
[44] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 52, emphasis in original.
[45] Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt' in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. by Hubert and Patricia Dreyfus. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1964), p. 9.
[46] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 239.

into the canvas the way he is intermixed with the world—*his style*. That is why, eventually, the painting *is* "the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside".[47] Painting is deeply dependent on the painter's carnal sight and movement, which essentially bring style with them.

> This fold, this central cavity of the visible which is my vision, these two mirror arrangements of the seeing and the visible, the touching and the touched, form a close-bound system that I count on, *define a vision in general and a constant style of visibility from which I cannot detach myself*.[48]

Every painting is an expression of the painter's style—her unique, provisional interaction with the world manifested on canvas. Style serves as an essential part of human existence, a miracle that comes from our incarnate life[49] without being thematically examined or planned in advance.

Style "is the universal index of the 'coherent deformation' by which he concentrates the still scattered meaning of his perception and makes it exist expressly."[50] The inverted commas around "coherent deformation" emphasize that this process is not to be understood as *real deformation*, since, in fact, there is no "clean," "objective," "a-perspectival" vision of the world. Each person creates their own *coherent deformation*, but it is the painter who has the privilege of manifesting it within carnal, worldly expression. Not that each individual possesses a private world ("*his* world," as Merleau-Ponty emphasizes): within our shared world, each person has his or her own world that differs from those of others only by a slight and mysterious slippage.[51] One's style is not the style of one's life, but one draws one's life toward expression,[52] and in doing so, toward style and meaning—this is, in my view, our existential compulsion. Yet, the fact that this process can never occur in an *intrinsic laboratory* of the Cartesian subject does not mean that the painter is led only by the world when leading his life toward expression.

[47] 'Eye and Mind', p. 164, my emphasis.
[48] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 146, my emphasis.
[49] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 66.
[50] Ibid, p. 55.
[51] *The Prose of the World*, p. 134.
[52] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 63.

To sum up this point, style is a manifestation of the painter's unique "coherent deformation".[53] Consequently, style is not to be viewed as a simple list of characteristics applicable to an artist, as Singer writes: "Merleau-Ponty cautions against the temptation to dissolve a style into a series of effects. That, to his mind, would be to see the wrong side of the painter's work and to miss its real purpose. To fetishize the spatial distortions of Cézanne or the brushwork of Poussin, is to obfuscate awareness of that which they make visible."[54] An artist's style is more than a collection of formal traits. It is what unites, for instance, Cézanne's or Vermeer paintings in a deep sense, beyond the trivial fact that they were all made by the same painter—they all *speak* the dynamic *language of the artist.*[55] It is, instead, the sign of the painter's style of existence in the world.

Yet, this language, this style, is something that is only vaguely accessible to the artist himself:

> Even when the painter has already painted, and even if he has become in some respects master of himself, what is given to him with his style is not a manner, *a certain number of procedures or tics that he can inventory*, but a mode of formulation that is just as recognizable for others and just as little visible to him…[56]

How indeed can one recognize an artist's—or perhaps also another person's—style? And why is it much more difficult to recognize your own style? Though the fabric of every painting is already immersed in style, something more is required, if we are to recognize an artist's style. One painting will not suffice; to see and grasp style, one needs to recognize a thread of consistency woven into the continuous heterogeneity of the painter's art. One needs to discern the virtual focus of the artist's existence, the unity without identity that she unfolds before us.

Moreover, it is also not easy for the painter to recognize his own style. Merleau-Ponty sheds light on another critical issue regarding the forming of artistic style and its recognition. As he asks:

[53] Ibid., p. 55.
[54] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 235.
[55] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 61.
[56] Ibid, p. 53, my emphasis.

> How long it takes … before a writer learns to speak with his own voice. Similarly how long it takes the painter—who does not, as we do, have his work spread out before him, but who creates it—to recognize in his first paintings the features of what will be his completed work, provided that he is not mistaken about himself.[57]

These moments of fragile crystallization of one's voice, of the artist's style, particularly interest Merleau-Ponty (as do the rare moments of the creation of initiative language and speech), since in them style maintains its intermediary and temporal essence. Style develops organically, from the different influences of the era the artist lives in, his personal interests, his biography, character, "hand," history, genetics—all woven together and constantly in flux (as, for instance, in Picasso's different periods of painting: the blue period, the rose period and so on). Yet it is a delicate moment, since style's tendency, like those of every form of meaning, is to finally become a kind of sediment—to lose its temporal, non-essential formation, and, in a way, to degenerate into a mere thing.

In its nascent state, the artist's style is fragile as expression itself, which is, as Merleau-Ponty writes, "like a step taken in a fog. No one can say where, if anywhere, it will lead".[58] It is a moment in which, on the one hand, the painter's style is no longer completely latent and *pre-thematic*[59] to him; on the other hand, in this moment style has not yet become an object for him and for others. In that fecund moment the invisible meaning of style sprouts and finds a body—an emblem in-between the holes and niches of the visible fabric:

> Before the style becomes an object of predilection for others and an object of delectation for the artist himself (to the great detriment of his work), there must have been that fecund moment when the style germinates at the surface of the artist's experience, and when an operant and latent meaning finds the emblems which are going to disengage it and make it

[57] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 52.
[58] *Sense and Non-Sense*, p. 3.
[59] As Merleau-Ponty writes: "As the artist makes his style radiate into the very fibers of the material he is working on, I move my body without even knowing which muscles and nerve paths should intervene, nor where I must look for the instruments of that action."— 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 66.

> manageable for the artist and at the same time accessible to others.[60]

The painter's style undergoes a gradual process of becoming legible. It comes "to the point that the famous chair becomes, Malraux says, 'a brutal ideogram of the very name of Van Gogh'".[61] There comes a time when the artist's style becomes an ideogram: Rothko's rectangles of colour or Monet's water-lilies. According to Merleau-Ponty, this moment is of "great detriment [to] his work",[62] because this sort of shorthand view flattens and simplifies the artist's style, reducing it to a mere object or element. As Husserl writes regarding existential style, if we can guess the precise wording a person would use, "then we say the man is a stereotype".[63] Analogously, when an artist's style is completely determined, it becomes a stereotype or cliché. Hence, we come to ask: what are the repercussions of style's role within the realm of art? Does it, in fact have a key part, albeit an implicit one, in Merleau-Ponty's late phenomenological ontology?

4. Style as an *Existentiale*

Merleau-Ponty's investigation of style within art opens up more broadly to the view that style is a dynamic phenomenon adhering to human expression. Style, as aforementioned, is the initial draft, the first sketch of meaning. It is initiated when a person organizes the world into meaning, with the lived body that is already in the world and is oriented toward meaning—that is, with human *expression*.

Expression is the most basic occurrence of the lived body. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "every human use of the body is already *primordial expression*".[64] Meaning is created by the various forms of expression: bodily movements, speech, painting, even perception. Therefore, the human, lived body is a source of primeval meaning-fullness and, hence, a source of style. For Merleau-Ponty (citing

[60] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 53.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: Second Book*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1980), p. 283.
[64] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 67.

Malraux), perception already stylizes;[65] "it cannot help but to constitute and express a point of view at the same time that it is the condition for revealing a world that inevitably transcends it".[66] Therefore, each expression of the body-schema's elements—of vision and movement—is already immersed in style.[67]

Stemming from an organic, temporal existence, style can be reduced to neither a simple set of characteristics (as has been shown regarding the artist's style), nor an individual's personality, rather, it is an exigency that stems from one's lived body.[68] Style manifests itself in every experience of man's intertwining with the world; it is embedded within every form of perception and expression of the human flesh.

What are the implications of these aesthetical and metaphysical observations of style with regard to the human constitution of individuality? Can style serve as the ground for the construction of a non-traditional subjectivity, allowing such a subjectivity to emerge out of the fragility of our elemental carnal being-in-the-world and to mark our unique existence? Can style be the "unifier" of human flesh, of carnal subjectivity? In other words, can it serve, as Singer suggests with regard to objects, as the Husserlian "Noematic Nucleus" of human flesh? Would style suffice to hold human existence from "within" through a process of constant change? Finally, can style replace the traditional homogenous substratum that is said to stand beneath the subject and, henceforth, mark the ever-changing, unique existence of each of us through it in the realm of phenomena?

To begin with—in what will necessarily be a brief delineation—we should view these questions with a novel notion of the subject in mind. We should bear in mind that Merleau-Ponty's starting point for philosophical inquiry is a conception of human existence that is inseparable, from its very beginning, from one's carnal, vivid existence in the world. The structure of embodiment indivertibly introduces a

[65] Ibid, p. 54.
[66] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 243.
[67] "The concept of expressive gesture is the pivotal one in Merleau-Ponty's account of style, for it is that which provides the link between the generative and affective phases…[.] style emerges from and appears as an expressive gesture, which is an extension of the body's basic capacities to intentionality intertwine with the world."--Singer, 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style' in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, p. 238.
[68] 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence', p. 54.

dimension of "objectivity" and generality into the realm that has traditionally been called "subjective" and private.

Merleau-Ponty regards every human individual to be part of a general, impersonal world that stems from one's carnal existence; but, at the same time, one possesses one's own human world that one has created for oneself. He refers to this inherent tension of "generality" and "privacy," of anonymity and singular life at the ground of human existence, as *an innate complex*. As early as *Phenomenology of Perception*, he writes:

> Around the human world that each of us has fashioned, there appears a general world to which we must first belong in order to be able to enclose ourselves within a particular milieu of a love or an ambition. [… M]y organism—as a pre-personal adhesion to the general form of the world, as an anonymous and general existence—plays the role of an *innate complex* beneath the level of my personal life.[69]

Hence, for Merleau-Ponty, selfhood is built upon this basic complex tension between the *individual and the general* spheres.

Style is unaffectedly issued from the human body, from the basic fact of each person's carnal existence. It is the essential ability of each person, perhaps inevitable, to draw one's life—a particular experience of the world—toward expression (toward meaning), and, by doing so, to interweave aspects of *internality and generality*, immanency and exteriority, without being fully aware that this is happening and without these elements ever existing independently.

Style comes structurally with our human existence as carnal persons and, therefore, it can be considered to be the essential structure of human existence. In this respect, I propose to understand style as an *Existentiale* in the Heideggerian sense—that is, as a fundamental structure of human existence. Moreover, I suggest to look at it as the primary, most basic existentiale of *care* [*Sorge*] that, in a way, encompasses and constructs all other existentiales.

> There is no individual that would not be representative of a species or of a family of beings, would not have, *would not be*

[69] *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 86.

> *a certain style*, a certain manner of managing the domain of space and time over which it has competency, of pronouncing, of articulating that domain, of radiating about a wholly virtual centre—in short, a certain manner of being.[70]

Hence, style's structure is already a dynamic, evolving, "flexible" fabric between a human being and his world—this interaction inscribes itself within the body as one's particular manner of being. This *manner of being*, this style, has two folding, interwoven aspects: the general "representative of a species," and the personal, representing one's disposition toward one's domain of life. In fact, not only is style an existentiale of human existence, but I would propose that we also see it as the worldly expression, the manifestation and embodiment of the ontological structure of human flesh—of the fold of generality over individuality.

Moreover, style, as what essentially adheres to the living body, is an intermediary phenomenon that stands between pure internal, free, and active volition, and the total determinism and passivity that is related to "human nature" or behaviourism. As M. C. Dillon writes, "the body is neither purely subject (in which case it would be invisible to him) nor purely object (in which case it could not serve his primitive intentions); it is rather the ground of a style of interacting with the environment"[71]. Style is a complex mixture of subject and object; it is an intermediate phenomenon that lies in-between them; it is what is both passive *and* active.

> Personal style is an uncanny admixture of the anonymous and the personal, the inherited and the created. It is lived as an ambiguous exchange of significance between the individual and the world he inhabits. Style emerges as an intertwining of freedom and facticity, as the appropriation of a given situation and the transcendence of it. A personal style is never simply given or simply chosen. It is a response to and founded upon the conditions of existence and embodiment. It constitutes the establishment of a lived coherence which gathers the elements of existence into a life, a project with direction and character.

[70] *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 115, my emphasis.
[71] *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, p. 122.

> Style ensures my existence of a stability, while allowing for the possibility of growth and change.[72]

For instance, the style of one's walk is deeply related to one's body type, particularly the length of one's legs and genetic inheritance. At the same time the style of one's stride is also essentially affected by the place where one grew up, whether this be the countryside or a crowded city (and might determine whether one's base rate of walking is slow or fast), and by one's current home, way of life (working three jobs, say, would tend to require a more hurried pace), age (the trails of time carried within one's body), or character (the tendency of an inveterate daydreamer to look at clouds while walking). The way one carries and moves one's body depends also on one's self-confidence and temperament (energetic or sluggish), etc. And is deeply related to one's ambitions, dreams and hopes for the future, as well as one's history and specific past experiences. All these influences are manifested in one's style of walking, and form part of one's more general style of existence. Such a style, of course, keeps changing over the years within broad patterns of consistency. Hence, style bridges the private and the social, which remain in a state of tension. From its very beginning style is already related just as much to the social, shared preserve—to a person’s culture, nationality, home life and family background—as to what is usually considered as intrinsic, such as personality. In fact, we see that each is intermingled with the other.

Because style adheres to an ever-changing being, it is deeply related to time, temporality, and its own development. First, style is "affected" by the changes of time; consider Cézanne's weakness in his eyes, causing the artist's style to be "affected" by his aging. Style is developed *with* human existence, and thus, naturally, reacts to time—to the dynamism in which persons change over time in every aspect: gaining knowledge and maturity, changing and developing thoughts and ideas about life, and so on.

Style is a complex, dynamic structure that unifies one's life through meanings and experience while being open to the prospects of one's future. One learns to reorient and develop past experiences in expectancy of future events, to approach the world in a way that retains traces of long-forgotten habits even as it offers room for future hopes to be

[72] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 242.

articulated.[73] Style is an expression of such equilibrium between past and future.[74]

Nevertheless, style is related to time in even a more profound way. It encompasses the various gestures of one's behaviour within something larger than their mere sum. It possesses, in its structural essence, a coherence that is sustained through change. Style, like other temporal phenomena such as a melody, a (life) story, or a film, requires duration to reveal itself. In fact, style has no meaning without the presence of duration within it; it is meaningless in a "snapshot," or "frozen moment." However, unlike most temporal phenomena, style is related to existence and, thus, its ending is not defined in advance (as is that of a movie, for instance). Its essential fabric is a *spontaneous* consistency within continuous change—a thread of consistency that is entirely my own, but can be discerned within the world. As Singer writes: "Style is that by virtue of which human behaviour is not just a series of gestures…but a melodic unfolding of a point of view, a distinctive way of being and being-with".[75]

Style, as the first form of meaning, imbues one's existence with a "virtual focus"—it is one's *in-visible* meaning that lies within the visible. Style is what, on the one hand, "connects" or condenses the different gestures, movements, expressions of one's behaviour—it functions as their centre of gravity. On the other hand, style is also continually created in the process of becoming, perpetually renewing itself while maintaining its coherence.

Style holds within itself a unique disposition of time. Though it stems from my carnal existence, style precedes me—I find myself, so to speak, within my style. On the other hand, I am never identical to my style, I am always already beyond it—I transcend it. This is because style is, in fact, a non-essential unity of one's existence, a unity without a full identity. Hence, as a dimension of human existence, style has for its fundamental structure an openness toward the future—a promise for consistent continuity. Like a comet, it drags with it a trail, a wake, and, at the same time, it gathers within itself a horizon yet to be reached. To reveal itself or be revealed, style requires duration; it cannot show itself on the basis of a single movement, gesture, or painting. Why is that so?

[73] *A Phenomenological Account of Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Style*, p. 12.
[74] "Our body is not an object of an 'I think', it is a grouping of lived-through meanings which moves towards its equilibrium."—*Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 153.
[75] 'Merleau-Ponty on the Concept of Style', p. 242.

For Merleau-Ponty, meaning cannot reveal itself in a simple way; it is never a simple *given*. It is, in fact, a manifestation of a much wider ontology of the visible and the invisible—*meaning is invisible*.[76] Ontologically speaking, if style is the first sketch of meaning, and primordial meaning is invisible, then *style is ontologically invisible* as well. What is meant here by *invisible*? Not merely the commonsense meaning of something that does not show itself: for Merleau-Ponty the invisible is not opposed to the visible but is bound up with it, serving as its infrastructure. As a non-monolithic realm, the visible includes an integral aspect of invisibility that vibrates within the field of visibility and can manifest itself only from within it. Hence, the invisible is literally in-visible, in-(the)-visible, and it remains as such as long as it is regarded separately from the visible as an autonomous entity. As Merleau-Ponty writes:

> Meaning is *invisible*, but the invisible is not the contradictory of the visible: the visible itself has an invisible inner framework (*membrure*), and the in-visible is the secret counterpart of the visible, it appears only within it, it is the *Nichturpräsentierbar* which is presented to me as such within the world—one cannot see it there and every effort to *see it there* makes it disappear, but it is *in the line* of the visible, it is its virtual focus, it is inscribed within it (in filigree).[77]

Style is invisible if one looks for it or views it as a thing, as an object. Nevertheless, as with meaning, style exists within the visible, but in a form different than that of a simple object. It resides within intervals—*between* one painting and another, within the space between words and gestures. Style is, in a way, what dwells within the folds of the visible, and, perhaps, within the folds of human flesh. It is the "virtual focus" of things, what gathers them from within, their *in*-visible meaning lying within the visible in an indirect way. Though it never unites with the visible or stands completely on its own, style is the *in-visible* thread that holds from within, *gathers* the luxuriance and diversity of the visible. It is a thread of consistency intertwined with the continuous heterogeneity of the visible—an *indirect, silent* language. Hence, if for Heidegger, *Dasein*

[76] *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 215.
[77] Ibid.

is time, we may analogously say that, for Merleau-Ponty, human existence is *style*, or, as Buffon puts it in his famous remark: "*Le style est l'homme même*."[78]

[78] Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, "Discours sur le Style" dans *Œuvres complètes de Buffon*, (Paris: Pillot Librairie Salmon , 1829) pp. 83-94.

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The Fossil and the Word: Towards a Concept of the Philosophic Fragment

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Nothing is more rarely the subject of
philosophy than philosophy itself.

— Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragments*[1]

That philosophy has earned its contemporary irrelevance is a claim about which only a philosopher could today quibble. *Il n'y a donc pas un temps des philosophes* [The time of the philosophers does not exist], declared Einstein in 1922, at a time when philosophy was still thought to possess inalienable rights over the scientist. So prevalent was this conviction that when Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize a few months later, the committee president withheld recognition of the theory of relativity and reminded his audience that the time of the philosophers still reigned: "It will be no secret," he said, "that the famous philosopher Bergson in Paris

· The present essay owes much to the insights of student colleagues from the Summer 2017 "Philosophical Fragments in Contemporary Philosophy" seminar at the University of Vienna to whom this paper is dedicated, in thanks.

[1] Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenaeum Fragments," in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 18. Henceforth abbreviated as *AF*.

has challenged this theory"[2] — a challenge quickly overcome by an ascendant science from which philosophy would soon be wholly excluded.

Since then, philosophy has continued its slide into obsolescence. Having recognized that its medium is a language sullied by history, it sought refuge in a soil more pure, confused the material of thought with the exhortations of an absentee Being of beings, and, in forms that feign ignorance and modes that aspire to an ever more elusive prominence, proceeded as though the dread knowledge of elementary estrangement implicit within the *Athenaeum's* imperative should signal a return to home and homily rather a philosophy that would confront the historical and contemporary disparity between need and its satisfaction. Philosophy's age-old wish for actuality, its hope for a life that would be material and concrete finally came true; not as fairytale or nightmare, but as predicted — corpus become corpse, ethereal turned solid, gone rotten, become fossil. The most recent vogue for mathemes, the continuing logorrhea of ludic errata and the seemingly irrepressible uselessness of unending commentary are evidence of how a sense for words' insufficiency can become alibi for abandoning the effort without which the insufficiency of philosophical form becomes an invariant that, once hypostasized, itself becomes mythical. What once volatilized the word moves it no longer. Having mistaken the most reified for the most concrete material of thought, the spirit and letter of contemporary philosophy are today without living referent: artifacts all, encased and exhibited within that Natural History Museum in which things, places and years are interred — words corpsed and stuffed, rigor mortis bones bent to please. Philosophy lives on today as the memento of its own unrecognized extinction.

How much this was fated, how little it was necessary cannot be readily determined. Certain, however, is that these contemporary demonstrations of inconsequence were prepared by a thought that wants the Absolute, aims at the adequation of world and idea, but proceeds with words unequal. This debility, determinative of philosophical cognition, demands of any future philosophy that its content inhere within its form and that its presentation achieve a most exacting mimicry of its object if it is not to renege on its responsibility to know phenomena from the inside

[2] Jimena Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the Debate that Changed our Understanding of Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 4.

and mark the time it can neither restore nor regain. Were it to follow the *Athenaeum's* imperative to make philosophy the subject of thought, contemporary philosophy would transform that material and immaterial form of which it is made into something other than that organization of a fear through which it defends itself against a linguistic character it's long derided as mere rhetoric.

To such resigned self-satisfaction, to these endless attempts at purging philosophy of that inconstancy it attributes to its unnecessary reliance on language, it must be countered that the felt insufficiency of words is no affective phenomena impressing itself upon a subject capable of separating the rhetorical moment of truth from its extra-linguistic aim — the expressive moment dividing philosophy from itself belongs to the objective nature of a reality that is both contradictory in itself and constitutive of philosophy as such. To stamp such insufficiency as either subjective or objective, either mythical or real, is to pretend that the movement of phenomena could be stopped by a decree incapable of enforcing any such law. Where nominalism flees the corruptions of a fallen human language injurious to the thought that demands the most pure, the inconsequence it earns is thought's punishment for having foresworn the labor dialectics knows as both spear and salve. "The organon of thought" is not idea or insight, but language itself, that which is alone capable of effecting "a mutual approximation of thing and expression, to the point where the difference fades."[3] The language of philosophy, its formal, functional character, is no tool to be deployed, no detritus to be disposed of; it is, instead, both surface and sediment, form and content — and more: the condition, itself without guarantee, of approximating a truth nowhere authorized. To meet this call requires the most exacting experiments in philosophical form. Because there is no thought that is not itself already articulate, that most dynamic interaction of differentiated elements that is the truth of phenomena can only present itself in a form capable of extracting the same dynamism and differentiation from language itself — that the greatest philosophers have also been philosophy's greatest stylists is no coincidence attributable to the eccentricity of individual style: The expressive capacity of philosophy is one with its content.

[3] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), p. 56.

Treatise, tractatus, discourse and dialogue — titles to indicate that philosophical content is determined by and only possible as form. The substance of Descartes's *Meditations*, for instance, knows that its truth relies as much on its desired relation to geometry as on the exhausted inscription and itinerary of a day's lassitude. Philosophy's immemorial denigration of rhetoric cannot dispense with rhetoric's singular ability to give form to thought. For all its envy of mathematization, the copula's antinomial structural remains the condition of articulating a world supposed to be knowable in itself — until, of course, that world is shown to have withdrawn into utter, inhuman incomprehension.

For once the subject of philosophy became inadequate to its object and Kant, the great world-destroyer, made the critique of naive and dogmatic comprehension the principal form of philosophical labor, it was unclear what would follows in its wake. "What had heretofore ensured the philosophical itself disappears," write Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy.[4] And continue: For Kant, as well as all successors to this crisis, "the system as such [...] is continually lacking precisely where it is in greatest demand."[5] For the material that survived this crisis was ill-suited to the satisfaction of philosophy's classical aims: To where might philosophy turn to find that Archimedean point from which it might "shift the entire earth" once the subject had become a synthetic capacity of so little substance[6]; with no access to things in themselves, to what small portion of the world could it still lay claim; and with the concept everywhere inadequate to reality, what of the power of the concept still remains? Emptied of substance, delimited in its aims, insufficient in its means, philosophy could no longer assume for itself a form commensurate with content it could imagine but no longer pretend to possess. Its discontent proceeds from the dual recognition that its inherited form is no longer sufficient and that a philosophy that would be the equal of its object requires the transformation of philosophical form. To this late eighteenth century problem we remain contemporaries.

— Not, however, because contemporary philosophy has shown itself particularly adept at effecting this transformation; indeed, the very

[4] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press), p. 30. Henceforth abbreviated as *LA*.
[5] LA 32.
[6] René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. and trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 16.

opposite —philosophy proliferates today in forms unaware that changed philosophical content require a similar transformation in form. The absence of adequation that is our Kantian patrimony is in no way compensated by the reversion to scholia of philosophers contemporary and historical or the construction of self-contained systems dedicated to reclaiming philosophy's systematic nullity. Because the resignation of thought to procedure consigns philosophy to a present hostile to the history in which philosophy's substance inheres, wherever philosophy remains cognizant of the *Athenaeum's* imperative it proceeds as did Kant's contemporaries — in the form of the philosophical fragment. From Baudrillard[7] to Blanchot[8], from Cioran[9] to Adorno and Horkheimer,[10] the philosophical fragment presents itself as the contemporary of a present broken and beyond repair. A society fragmented into hamlets of privilege and whole hemispheres of want impresses itself into the form of philosophical presentation, ridding it of the ruse of reconciliation. The sense that the word's native insufficiency could no longer be compensated by sublating individual inadequacy into

[7] See Jean Baudrillard, *Cool Memories*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1990); *Cool Memories II: 1987-1990*, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity, 1996); *Fragments: Cool Memories III, 1990-1995*, trans. Emily Agar (London: Verso, 2007); *Cool Memories IV, 1995-2000*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003); *Cool Memories V: 2000-2004*, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

[8] See Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. Lycette Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[9] See E.M. Cioran, *A Short History of Decay*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2012); E.M. Cioran, *Drawn and Quartered*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2012); E.M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2012); E.M. Cioran, *The New Gods*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Quadrangle, 1974); E.M. Cioran, *Tears and Saints*, trans. Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); E.M. Cioran, *All Gall is Divided*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2012); E.M. Cioran, *The Fall into Time*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Quadrangle, 1970).

[10] See Max Horkheimer, *Dawn & Decline: Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969*, trans. Michael Shaw (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978); Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). For a brief note on Adorno's conception of the fragment as a philosophical form, see Ulrich Plass, *Language in History in Theodor W. Adorno's Notes to Literature* (New York: Routledge, 207), p. 191, n. 31.

a whole within which each would be thereby redeemed has turned over into the demand that philosophy's words admit their weakness and despair of the system to which they are unequal — presentiment that the particular protests against totality; that the dross of disaster is itself indictment and critique, the negative of a world awash in pictures but resistant to being pictured in itself. The contemporary fragment is today synonymous with that call for redress against which the unmeaning meanness of philosophy now stands convicted. "It is time not for first philosophy," writes Adorno, "but [for] last philosophy."[11] As it makes this program its own, the philosophical fragment's contemporary ubiquity signals a form of philosophy attuned at last to the wordless resistance animating every disparaged word and proceeds in the name of what each most wants: to revoke the priority of an illusory whole and compel philosophy to think mortal thoughts.[12]

A compelling origin myth. But no matter how convincing is the idea that fragmentation at the level of the genera (society, totality, language) should leave its mark on this particular species of writing, such an account substitutes a determination of the intra-philosophical need to which the fragment responds for dubious notions of inheritance, causality and reflection. Lost in the all too clear resonance of the fragment is that which is not sound but substance, not natural but conceptual. Indeed, the fragment's very ubiquity, that force of self-evidence that has made it a signature of the contemporary, could also be the index of the fragment's utter opacity—or worse: of its having so sutured itself to the abracadabra of the critical, the creative and the contemporary that it is already

[11] Theodor W. Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique: Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p. 40.

[12] Epicharmus's Fragment 20, "A mortal must think mortal and not immortal thoughts," serves as the epigraph to Adorno's *Against Epistemology*, composed between 1934 and 1937. In terms of the importance of the fragment for Adorno's thought, it should be noted that his posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* was to have had as its epigraph the following fragment from Schlegel: "One of two things is usually lacking in the so-called Philosophy of Art: either philosophy or art." See Friedrich Schlegel, "Critical Fragments," in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 1-16. On *Aesthetic Theory's* intended incorporation of Schlegel's fragment, see Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, "Editor's Afterword," in Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann; trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 366.

ideological to the core.[13] For a need in thinking is no guarantee of its satisfaction. Better philosophical modesty and acknowledgement of the extra-philosophical fact that hunger alone cannot provide the food the starving so crave.

In contemporary philosophy, the need for the fragment is no less strong — and no more effective. Whether it presents itself as a reaction to Hegelian totality, a preference for the part as cryptogram of the whole or the last word on an exhausted dialectic, the fragmentary imperative resounds all the more loudly the less it is capable of satisfying its own concept. Fragments predominate without any sense for how each in isolation and all when assembled might fulfill the demand for independence from and non-coincidence with the whole. The failure of the fragment becomes its guilt: it achieves in semblance what is refused it in reality. Its delight in transgression is pleasure in a strength it feels but has yet to achieve, compensatory satisfaction for a need it knows it cannot meet. That a recent book could bill itself as offering an incomplete history of the fragment, then range over the fragment's relevance to the fields of architecture, archaeology, nuministics, art history, critical theory and film studies is evidence of the inconsistency of that which aspires to the status of the concept but serves, instead, as the guiding image of a present lacking any other means of orientation.[14] Wherever the fragment radiates an essential incompletion, brokenness or marginality, its warmth soothes and pacifies. For the gaze that falls upon such fragments, the force of analogy and a sense of self-recognition provide succor wherever misrecognition and insufficiency are felt most acutely. The fragmented self there comes to rest, assured that it is not alone, but among equals.

[13] In the last session of his 1959 lecture course on dialectics, Adorno emphasizes the "fragmentary character which is perhaps the only form in which dialectical thought is possible today," then immediately qualifies this characterization as already "something like an ideology". See Theodor W. Adorno, *An Introduction to Dialectics*, ed. Christoph Ziermann; trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 219.

[14] See *The Fragment: An Incomplete History*, ed. William Tronzo (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009). For an analysis of the fragment in its relationship to visual studies, see Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1994). For an analysis of the fragment as the starting point for 20th century theories of modernity, see David Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

All this playacting consoles what it should come to know: that philosophy's search for a form sufficient to the contemporary eventuates in the philosophical fragment does not mean that the fragment is in any way adequate. If there is to be something that is both philosophically and historically binding in the notion that "[m]any modern works are fragments as soon as they are written,"[15] then *modern*, *work*, *fragment*, and *writing* would each have to first be determined in their specificity, in the singular, material organization achieved within the contemporary philosophical fragment before that form is to be known as *concept*, as a notion whose subterranean links with both the history of philosophy and the present possibility of any future philosophy could be made and charted.[16] And if it is true that "From its inception in Greek thought, philosophy has contained the two absolutely symmetrical alternatives of a systematic and a nonsystematic approach to truth," then the fragment's apparent opposition to systems is "in no sense radically subversive of the idea of science or of systematicity as characteristic of the philosophical enterprise; it is, rather, a genuine possibility *within* philosophy itself, and it carries out the systematic requirements of philosophy in its own way."[17] Because such a totalizing spirit, internal to the fragment, would be poison to the passion to be done with system once and for all, it is little wonder that the attempt to further refine the fragment's conceptual self-consistency is so lacking in contemporary discussions of the philosophical fragment.[18] Instead, those who turn to the fragment today

[15] AF 21.

[16] It is to the credit of Rodolphe Gasché, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy that their studies of the fragment of Early German Romanticism insist upon the strictly *philosophical* nature of the fragment. See Rodolphe Gasché, "Foreword: Ideality in Fragmentation," in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. vii.-xxxii; henceforth abbreviated as *FIF*. The present essay can only schematize what a more satisfactory excurses would produce from within the textual fragment itself.

[17] Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 178.

[18] In addition to the authors mentioned throughout this essay, notable exceptions include: Maurice Blanchot, "The Athenaeum," trans. Deborah Esch and Ian Balfour, *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Des Allemagnes: Aspects of Romanticism in France (Summer, 1983), pp. 163-172; Hans-Jost Frey, *Interruptions*, trans. Georgia Albert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). See also Leslie Hill, *Maurice Blanchot and Fragmentary Writing* (London: Continuum, 2012); Camelia Elias, *The Fragment: Towards a History and Poetics of a Performative Genre* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004); Gerhard Richter, *Thought-Images: Frankfurt School Writers'*

multiply the sense and import of a word philosophy would have to first determine as concept. Now synonymous with *negativity*, *indeterminancy*, *discontinuity*, *disobedience* and *irreducibility,* the fragment takes on the shine of words made for profit because it has never achieved that conceptual immunity through which it might resist the endless effort to reduce what the fragment portends as paradox. Every discourse that seeks to master the fragment spies the possibility of a resistance with which it chooses not to contend. "The usual aim of talking about texts is to understand the text as order and thus to make it accessible to the grasp of the concept," writes Hans-Jost Frey

> That is why the fragment, which does not fulfill the presupposition of wholeness, is not a popular object for literary scholarship and perhaps not even a possible one. The fragment cannot be controlled. Thus the encounter of literary scholarship with the fragment creates a contradictory situation. Either the discourse about the fragment must deny it as what it is and falsely claim to make it into a whole, or it must itself be put into question in its claim to master the text. Either the fragment or literary scholarship must be given up.[19]

Were philosophy to set itself the same choice – either the fragment or philosophy must be given up — little would change: better to know nothing of the fragment than to recognize the debility philosophy has long cultivated in the face of the fragment's dissatisfaction. Between what the fragment would want of its concept and what the word now

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Reflections from Damaged Life (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Simon Critchley, *ABC of Impossibility* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2015); David Cunningham, "A Question of Tomorrow: Blanchot, Surrealism and the Time of the Fragment," *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 1, Winter 2003; Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 201-220; Kevin Newmark, *Irony on Occasion: From Schlegel and Kierkegaard to Derrida and de Man* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012); Ben Grant, *The Aphorism and Other Short Forms* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Noli Me Frangere," in Nancy, *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 266-278.

[19] Hans-Jost Frey, *Interruptions*, trans. Georgia Albert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 32. Henceforth abbreviated as *INT*.

signifies there is neither resemblance nor the possibility of reconciliation. And nowhere does the difference between the present nullity of a word and its possible conceptual consistency make itself felt more plainly than in the philosophical fragment. For the persistence of a word is no guarantee that something of consequence survives within it as concept. Though this disparity might have once provided the conflict necessary for the further refinement of the fragment's conceptual character, philosophy is today too steeped in the fetish of the fragmentary to notice difficulties almost too numerous to enumerate. For what a concept of the fragment would first require is that it not give itself over to those delusions dominating the concept's every want — the vapors of first philosophy cannot embolden claims to origin from which the fragment is excluded; and the triumphal finality of last philosophy would find in the fragment, not satisfaction or exclamation, but only the wantonness of ellipses. The concept of the philosophical fragment opposes every word with which it is associated and militates against the speculative concept's own self-understanding — as though the speculative concept had assumed for itself a sovereignty ignorant of the fragment only because it refuses to recognize its rival; as though the fragment that has yet to achieve its concept can only envy, disdain and wish for the destruction of that which it knows to have usurped its rightful place. For while the speculative concept holds fast to distinctions through which its consistency comes to cohere, the concept most wanted by the philosophical fragment knows no such distinctions and remains utterly, unadvisedly and impetuously self-sufficient. Rivetted to that place of near-indistinction between philosophy and literature, writing and naming, part and whole, the fragment requires that its concept recognize that which is fundamentally incompatible with the speculative concept's origin and end. What the latter needs the fragment refuses. A concept wants clarity, needs the determinable difference of one thing from another, requires that the whole of the life of a thing be captured and contained within the delimited contours of a determinable concept.

Something of the conceptual difficulty determinative of the fragment is figured by Adorno's attempt to construct a form of dialectics for which neither end nor origin provide points of orientation. The set of relations governing concepts are there informed by the idea that the concept's unnatural dynamism is itself a product of nature's essential volatility. It is for this reason that Adorno's negative dialectics sought to so combine history and nature that the most exacting consciousness of

reality become a philosophy of constellations and force fields. This turn to a philosophy in which the movement of the concept should approximate the movement of matter, this privileging of the paths along which ideas are pulled in their orbit around the object is, in Adorno, coupled with the knowledge that the concept is itself also a thing of substance, an object of mass determinable, of force determinative, that transforms the space surrounding it, effecting in all that surrounds it a change commensurate with the mass of that concept that has arisen in their midst. The kinetic properties of the concept do not permit that its surroundings remain unchanged and frustrates all attempts at finding an image adequate to what the concept of the fragment knows about the fate of images.

While the speculative concept's delimitation of space requires of its notions that they occupy dimensions similar to those traditionally assumed by objects of nature, for the fragment, neither image nor nature will suffice. While an image requires that form of picture-thinking that sees only stills, series and simultaneity, the fragment is the knowledge of that which is so utterly discrete and self-contained that its minute indivisibility expands under the microscope until it shatters the frame within which every picture is contained. And while nature, in both its givenness and its development, always requires an observer to survive nature's transformation, the fragment looks out from that sightless gaze that would survive both nature and the observer's end. What the fragment wants, indeed, what the fragment most needs, if it is not be treated as either remainder or resemblance, is that non-relation to an outside the speculative concept cannot allow since such a concept would, in destroying relation, also destroy the distinction through which inside and outside are determined, rendering futile the basic conceptual task of setting a limit to that which should be itself and not another. Paradoxical as it may appear, the fragment that resounds, as word, with *part*, *piece* and *particular*, would be, as concept, indistinguishable from the the omnipresence of a whole that encloses all because it is nowhere divisible. Its inmost need is for that singularity that does not permit relationality, and is driven by the "ambition of a total book, a sort of perpetually growing Bible that will not represent, but rather replace, the real."[20]

[20] Maurice Blanchot, "The Athenaeum," trans. Deborah Esch and Ian Balfour; *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 22, No. 2, Des Allemagnes: Aspects of Romanticism in France (Summer, 1983), pp. 170-171.

Through it, the categories of size, substance and extension colonize and consume that givenness of matter common to both naive science and non-dialectical philosophy.

Nearly a century ago, Bergson and Einstein approached a similar problem. For when Einstein asked after the time specific to two points travelling away from each other at the speed of light, Bergson replied that Einstein had proceeded as though those points need belong to two different substances and asked: but what if there is a substance of such extended stuff that it occupies both the origin and end of that travel? Would it not also know, within its singular self, two entirely different times? A question no less fantastic than the physicist's *Gedankenexperiment*, and one that betrays the philosopher's refusal to bow to the givenness of matter and insist, instead, upon the possibility of a concept that does not as yet admit any actual analogue. For just as there are conceivable substances capable of so extending themselves that they occupy a space refused all existent objects, so too are there concepts of such extension that once they are treated in their singularity, they extend to an infinity from which we are excluded. That Einstein's thought experiment met its limit in its failure to think scale outside human measurements redounds upon a philosophy that cannot think the extension of matter past the point beyond which it would be recognizable to the thought that needs the limitation and all-too-human proportions of a speculative concept inferior to the imperative that resounds within the philosophical fragment and demands of philosophy its own concept.

For what is the singularity of the philosophical fragment if not indifference to every Nietzschean hammer, the yawn accompanying every procession of whatever regiment of truth? An anchorite more practiced than Zarathustra, the fragment remains unmoved in its mirthful self-sufficiency. That philosophy must proceed towards the whole, that the Absolute is both origin and goal are truisms for which the fragment has no need. Between philosophy's speculative concept and the concept of the fragment there is about as much relation as between the Hadean age and our own — indeed, even less. For while we know ourselves inheritors of a past in which we in no way participated, the fragment occupies a space outside geological time and lays waste to that continuum in which philosophy remains ensnared. Nothing contiguous, causal, coterminous or exogenous persists alongside a fragment that needs absolute isolation if it is to satisfy the imperative self-sufficiency of its concept. The fragment wants to outlive the end of the last man and last

word as the sole survivor of a catastrophe from which it is immemorially immune. Fragment, then, as fossil — a designation sufficient were the fossil not the result of a process of fossilization from which the fragment is alone excluded. For if the fragment were equal to its own concept it could not have come to be out of anything other than itself and thereby refuses the developmental paradigm of degeneration. In it, there is no tendency toward entropy, only the endless self-generation of a nothing through which the fragment ensures nothing outside itself.

If the fragment is unlike the remainder with which it is commonly confused, then the singular form through which it presents itself must be distinguished from the survival it scorns as an arbitrary happenstance that has nothing to do with its own unique relation to the division of time and its own peculiar character of written work. For while writing typically proceeds in debt to the past from which it has sprung and in anticipation of a future it confounds with posterity, the writing of the fragment knows no such differentiation. The only future it knows is one in which there is neither paternity nor patrimony — and posterity for nothing except itself. The fragment's most pressing and impossible question proceeds from this autonomy and asks why writing need require anything other than itself. *Pressing* because the fragment's existence requires it be thought without relation to the exigencies of any category outside itself; *impossible* because it can only exist independent of categories extrinsic to itself. In this the fragment aspires to the godliness of the most profane philosophy: towards the inimitable that is absolutely singular, in need of neither mediation nor condition. If the fragment was once the death mask of the whole, it has since become the godhead of that which knows no resemblance.

It is no coincidence that a consideration of the fragment in its relation to the possibility of the concept should lead to the thought of infinity. The most exacting cognizance of both the world's brokenness and philosophy's elemental insufficiency has long found in the fragment resources for turning the sign of what is most mortal into the signature of the absolute. Within the various histories of the fragment, this identity of the most limited and the most unlimited has been made characteristic of the form. Like all such histories, the itinerary of the concept of the philosophical fragments is incapable of exhausting the inmost need of the concept. No chronology, no matter how instructive, can disclose the future of a concept whose past is overtaken by its subsequent development. Indeed, an historical analysis of a concept would only be

equal to that concept if it were to see, not only the simple past of phenomena, but also the past that will accumulate as it proceeds past the point visible to the eyes of the present but inherent to the life of phenomena. Like all histories, then, the history of the philosophical fragment will one day appear as so many hieroglyphs illegible to the eye ignorant of contemporary characters. Like all histories, the history of the fragment can only be told in dread knowledge of a future deciphering in which what is now legible will later be lost. Like all histories, the history of the fragment must nevertheless be told if thought is not to rest content with a certainty it's nowhere earned.

To get inside the philosophical fragment, it might be thought advisable to observe and delineate the mechanics and material of its infrastructure. But to speak of the fragment in this way is to suppose that there is a structure essential to the fragment, something singular to its construction, something specific to its form across all iterations. The fragment's history demonstrates the illusoriness of this identity — too numerous are the examples, too undeveloped is the thought of specificity, too great is the historical range and conceptual resonance of the notion and fact of the fragment. In short, then, the search for the fragment seems to suffer from the same inevitable incompletion and shard-like multiplication typical of the fragment itself: ruin of a whole that is itself absent, the fragment and its search seem promised to incomprehensibility.

The cause of incomprehension is clear — the concept of the fragment frustrates the need for clarity and precision characteristic of the speculative demand for conceptual differentiation and is thus given up. Its absolute self-sufficiency implies the insufficiency of human understanding and makes of the fragment one of those words that "often understand themselves better than do those who use them."[21] Though the fragment proliferates today, its native knowledge was the object of far more urgent and strict pursuit during the period of Jena Romanticism, when the brothers August and Friedrich Schlegel, as well as Schleiermacher and Novalis, produced six issues of the review *Athenaeum* between 1798 and 1800. Even Adorno, himself among the most strident critics of romanticism, nevertheless recognized in the Romantic fragment that which is "not complete but progresses onward

[21] Friedrich Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility," in *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, ed. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 119.

into the infinite through self-reflection," an "anti-idealist motive in the midst of Idealism"[22] whose recovery was essential to contemporary philosophy. Because all subsequent thought of the fragment organizes itself around the various lines of possible and impossible production opened up by the Romantic fragment, to retrace these lines is also to chart the paths internal to the concept and differentiate these potentialities from the fragment's more contemporary and more total neutralization.

According to the exacting analyses of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy and Rodolphe Gasché, the novelty of Jena Romanticism's concept of the fragment consists in its having produced, within the apparently antisystematic form and tendency of the fragment, an essential mode through which the pursuit and presentation of the system became possible. In this, the Romantic fragment frustrates the traditional prejudice according to which the anti-systematic is to be considered rhapsodic, mystical or non-rational: in short, unphilosophical. According to Gasché, however, "fragmentation and systematic intentions are not exclusive for fundamental reasons: a fragment, in the Romantic sense, is the only possible presentation they could conceive of the system."[23] Against the contemporary conviction according to which the fragment is to be thought in terms of incompletion, partiality and necessary insufficiency, the Romantic fragment "strive[s] toward the totality of knowledge." And, Schlegel adds: "Whoever fails to do this is not only no philosopher, but fails to philosophize at all."[24] In the aftermath of the Kantian prohibition on things-in-themselves, "the idea achieves presentative reality exclusively as fragment," writes Gasché

> All schematization or exemplification of ideas produces only fragments. Conversely, fragments, strictly speaking, are then ideas in presentation. They are not leftover pieces of an integral whole, broken parts of a former or anticipated totality; they are that whole itself *in actualitas* — the only way in which the supersensible substrate occurs, or becomes present.

[22] Theodor W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form," in *Notes to Literature: Volume One*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann; trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 16.
[23] FIF xi.
[24] Friedrich Schlegel, "Philosophical Fragments (1796)," in *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, ed. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 337-338.

> Fragmentation, consequently, rather than implying some loss or lack of presence, represents the positive mode in which presentation of the whole occurs.[25]

But if the totality of knowledge can only be achieved within a system and even the greatest of systems are themselves only fragments, then the fragment is not only the form through which totality appears, but every fragment is itself a system *in nuce*. In this, the fragment's co-production of system and totality combine the singularity of that coming-to-appearance that is the individual fragment with the multiplicity of singular fragments whose collective production and presentation is the condition of the whole. Fragments proliferate, even when the fragment itself is nowhere achieved. "A dialogue" Schlegel writes, "is a chain or garland of fragments," and continues:

> An exchange of letters is a dialogue on a larger scale, and memoirs constitute a system of fragments. But as yet no genre exists that is fragmentary both in form and content, simultaneously subjective and individual, and completely objective and like a necessary part in a system of all the sciences.[26]

The inexistence of the fragment is owing, above all, to the Idealist failure to correctly conceive the system. For Schlegel, this failure is owing to the fact that, "according to the way many philosophers think, a regiment of soldiers on parade is a system."[27] The result is that "most thoughts are only the profiles of thoughts," of potential interest only if they were to be "turned around and synthesized with their antipodes."[28] Were that possible, "an idea [would be] a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts. An ideal," Schlegel adds, "is at once idea and fact."[29] This identity of opposites, which Peter Szondi regards as having "prepared the way for the Hegelian dialectic,"[30] is

[25] FIF xxvii.
[26] AT 27.
[27] AT 23.
[28] AT 23.
[29] AT 33.
[30] Peter Szondi, "Friedrich Schlegel and Romantic Irony, with Some Remarks on

integral to that body of the fragment within which opposites become indistinguishable in their mutual interpenetration: "Aren't all systems individuals just as all individuals are systems at least in embryo and tendency? [...]," Schlegel asks: "Aren't there individuals who contain within themselves whole systems of individuals?"[31] Individual and system here combine in a movement within which the singular totality of the fragment necessitates plurality, while the creative act of the fragment is at one and the same time individual fragment, system within fragment, production of system as the combination of fragments and the joining of each and all that is the movement of the whole. Inasmuch as the idea is that which is without concept and outside any possible experience, the fragment becomes the motor of supplementarity whose resultant ensemble is the whole as self-production of the jointure through which the presentation of each becomes possible. It is this "irreducibility of presentation,"[32] characteristic of art, that makes the aesthetic the mode in which the individual, sensible presentation of the idea as fragment the condition of the singular turning over into the multiple, the result of that excess of representation which is the spur for ever more fragments. Only in this way, as absolute singularized and as singular universalized, can the system appear to the Romantics. As Walter Benjamin knew, the task of writers of the *Athenaeum* was not so much to "grasp the absolute systematically" as to "grasp the system absolutely."[33]

And while Schlegel's claim that "many of the works of the ancients have become fragments [while] [m]any modern works are fragments as soon as they are written"[34] joins ancient and modern within the production of the fragment, for Jena Romanticism the fragment is equally the most proximate form of the phenomena of the future. "A project is the subjective embryo of a developing object," Schlegel writes

> A perfect project should be at once completely subjective and completely objective, should be an indivisible and living

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Tieck's Comedies," in Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 57.

[31] AT 51.

[32] FIF xxiii-xiv.

[33] Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 138.

[34] AT 21.

> individual. In its origin: completely subjective and original, only possible in precisely this sense; in its character: completely objective, physically and morally necessary. The feeling for projects – which one might call fragments of the future – is distinguishable from the feeling for fragments of the past only by its direction: progressive in the former, regressive in the latter. What is essential is to be able to idealize and realize objects immediately and simultaneously: to complete them and in part carry them out within oneself. Since transcendental is precisely whatever relates to the joining or separating of the ideal and the real, one might very well say that the feeling for fragments and projects is the transcendental element of the historical spirit.[35]

According to Szondi, it is through Schlegel's "concern with *eschatology* and *utopia*" that the fragment sheds its association with the fragment as remainder and opens up the possibility of 'fragments of the future'. In Schlegel, then, "the fragment is no longer the unachieved, that which has remained in a partial state, but rather anticipation and promise [...] a stage in the quest for synthesis."[36] Because the reflecting subject is able to assume a "retrospective view" upon the fragment of the present and thereby glimpse "the dimension of the future," "the subject comes to be temporarily ahead of himself" and the present fragment becomes the germ of the fragment of the future.[37] "Everything is seed,"[38] notes Novalis—a germinal[39] future known to the subject of self-reflection through that eschatological promise of redemption from which our own age rightly suspects itself of having been excluded.

[35] AT 20-21.
[36] Peter Szondi, "Friedrich Schlegel and Romantic Irony, with Some Remarks on Tieck's Comedies," in Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essay*s, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 64-65.
[37] Ibid. p. 64.
[38] Novalis, "Logological Fragments I," in Novalis, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 66.
[39] For penetrating analyses of those forms of life to which a concept of the fragment would have to address itself, see Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life: Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Keith Ansell Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

In the systematic approach favored by the Romantic fragment, the subject no longer occupies the Archimedean point of knowledge. Once Kant had shown the subject to be a thing of insubstantial stuff that is little more than the formal accompaniment of representation, the subject could no longer serve as the secure ground for knowledge. Rejecting Fichte's attempt to restore the subject dethroned by Kant,[40] the Romantics remain our contemporaries inasmuch as they sought to know the object from within, and knew the object to be itself an organ of knowledge — indeed, itself capable, not only of self-knowledge, but of knowledge of ourselves. "In all predicates in which we see the fossil," Novalis writes, "it sees us."[41] The essential weakness of the subject that connects the late 19th century to our own, figured in Adorno's *Minima Moralia* as the "dissolution of the subject,"[42] necessitates forms of knowledge in which the poverty of the subject could give way to the primacy of the object.

If it is true that, as Jean-Luc Nancy and Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe claim, "the totality should be present as such in each part and that the whole should be not the sum but the co-presence of the parts as the co-presence, ultimately, of the whole with itself,"[43] then it follows that within the totality that is the fragment there is no center, but only a multiplicity of fragments, each of which "indicates the center."[44] This distribution and equality of singular pluralities, of system as the jointure of an ensemble, is reflected in the *Athenaeum's* construction — the Romantic fragment was itself the product of a conspiratorial anonymity that, like the fragments themselves, were determined by the impossibility of a single point of origin and thus underlined the fact that the singularity of each was the condition of the singular-multiple that was constituent part and mobile possibility of the whole. In this sense, the fragment

[40] On the relationship between Fichte's Transcendental Idealism and the writers of the *Athenaeum*, see Haynes Horne, "The Early Romantic Fragment and Incompleteness," in *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings*, ed. Jochen Schulte-Sasse et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 289-313.

[41] As quoted in Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," in *Selected Writings: Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 145.

[42] Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974), p. 16.

[43] LA 44.

[44] As quoted in LA 44.

became the condition of possibility of form itself, and thus of the organic movement of the whole.

At this point, however, and in order to track the further movement of the concept of the philosophical fragment, it is necessary to detach the Romantic fragment from what the concept of the fragment itself wants, both in itself and at present. For while it may be the case that both Early German Romanticism as well as our own late modern romanticism remain bound to the Idealist idea according to which "knowledge is only actual, and can only be expounded, as Science or as *system*,"[45] there is little reason to suppose that either system or knowledge depend in any way upon us. To grant the fragment the prerogative of a future totality need not have as its condition either the subject's synthetic organization of phenomena or the promise of anthropoid redemption. According to Manfred Frank's rather optimistic account, fragments "correct [...] the totalitarianism of the analytic spirit, in that they defend — ironically — the synthesis which *is* not but *ought* to be, against the existing dissolution. In this respect," Frank continues, "the fragment stands in the service of a new totality."[46] But while the movement of matter requires the creation of a new totality, it is in no way necessary that this totality possess any resemblance or relation to what '*ought* to be.' Indeed, if the fragment is to be followed in its will to singularity and survival, then it quickly turns over into that absolute of non-relation from which the wants of the subject of self-reflection are constitutively excluded. The mistake of Jena Romanticism might then be said to consist in the fact that "in their speculations truth assumed the character of a reflective consciousness in place of its linguistic character"[47] — inasmuch as one proceeds, with Benjamin, in supposing that it is only through this linguistic character that philosophy might approach "that area of truth towards which language is directed"[48], where human language must exhaust its communicative function if it is to articulate the mute lament of the fragment.

[45] G.W.F. Hegel, "Preface: On Scientific Cognition," in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 13.
[46] Manfred Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. Elizabeth Millan-Zaibert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 213-214.
[47] Walter Benjamin, „Epistemo-Critical Prologue," in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), p. 38. Henceforth abbreviated as *ECP*.
[48] ECP 27.

A brief excursus on reading and writing is here instructive. According to Hans-Jost Frey, "What makes the fragmentary [...] text resistant to control is that not everything can be captured in relationships. What cannot be mastered in texts," he continues,

> is what cannot be integrated, what cannot be absorbed by either a logical or a rhetorical relation: what is unrelated. Since discourse is relation, it is impossible to talk about the fragment, unless any relation that inevitably arises from the moment that there is talking is also immediately dissolved, since it does not hold any more than any other one, which is in turn also posited only so that it can be deposed. [...] The paradox posits the impossible relation and thereby points out of the possibility of relation and toward what is unrelated, uncomprehensible, unmasterable.[49]

At the moment of writing, the sentence most wanted knows the history of sentences in which all writing is fated to participate, knows too the post-history of words in which all are equally lifeless and fossilized — and wants neither. The fragment pledges itself, instead, to that total isolation and autonomy through which its singularity becomes absolute and dissolves any relation to past, present, or future. "A fragment," Schlegel wrote, "like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog."[50] In this absolute autonomy the fragment is without relation. Were the singularity that is the fragment to achieve what it wants most, it would not eventuate in that singular-multiple that is the condition of joining together a collective of fragments that should present the whole: the fragment is, instead, the singular absolute, complete in itself and without relation to anything else because the moment the fragment exists, nothing else will have survived.

The author of the philosophical fragment writes neither for posterity, peers, nor himself. Communication comes here to its end. Whoever speaks of writing as a message in a bottle speaks of writing in general, not that writing of the philosophical fragment for which the last shore has already washed away. Indeed, the thought that wants the

[49] INT 33.
[50] AT 45.

fragment does not want it for any thing or any one. That the fragment exists is enough. For at the start of each sentence, as the lull of words gains in distinctiveness, and stretches out in search of its period, what is most wanted is that this one sentence should persist, as itself, crystalline and complete, needing nothing, a fossil perfect past the possibility of the whole it has destroyed and absorbed.

If there is an aesthetic character specific to the fragment, then it hardly consists in the presentation of sensuous particularity with which the drive of the artwork is confused. Its aesthetic character consists, instead, in the wish, equally proper to the artwork, to destroy everything that is not itself in order that it should itself become the absolute. In this the fragment shows itself as the contemporary of a time whose idea of totality is incompatible with that of either Jena Romanticism or those Frankfurt School writers of the philosophical fragment whose history remains to be written: the contemporary thought of totality is the totality of extinction. And if philosophy were to today achieve that "dual insight" into the "becoming and disappearance"[51] of phenomena through which it might finally come to know the life and death of phenomena, then philosophy would have to become that "organon of extinction"[52] in which the ever-deferred knowledge of the concept of the philosophical fragment is contained.

And there, in the fragment that survives fate and reconciliation, Proust's wish for a "contrary philosophy which would predict the conservation of everything" looks out from inside the fossil of the concept, indifferent to that "philosophy [...] according to which everything is doomed to oblivion,"[53] and loses itself in the golden laughter[54] that accompanies the fragment's having finally gotten the last word.

[51] ECP 45.
[52] Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 239
[53] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time: Volume One; Within a Budding Grove: Part One*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin; revised D.J. Enright (London: Everyman's Library, 1992), p. 464.
[54] On "golden laughter" as the highest rank to which philosophy might aspire, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche: Volume Eight*, ed. Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large (Standord: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 194.

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Creative Metaphor: An Essay on Bergson's Writing Style

MÉLANIE WEILL

Bergson is a great writer. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1927. His prose is beautifully clear, full of poetic images, and flows effortlessly. He is one of those philosophers who are paradoxically at the same time very critical towards language and manipulate it very well. His way of writing stems from a constant vigilance about the limits language sets to our thinking and manifests an effort to challenge those limits in order to be able to formulate new philosophical ideas. At the very core of his philosophy, lies the notion of *creation* – and his attempt to create on a philosophical level also translates into a creative use of words. A reflection upon his style seems therefore absolutely essential to the understanding of his philosophy.

One of Bergson's aims was to philosophise without an overly technical or obscure jargon, and instead to speak in everyday words. In a text written in 1915 about French philosophy, as he puts forward the "clarity" of the French style in philosophy, he writes: "*il n'y a pas d'idée philosophique, si profonde ou si subtile soit-elle, qui ne puisse et ne doive s'exprimer dans la langue de tout le monde*."[1] This, according to Bergson, is the principle that the great French philosophical tradition – Descartes, Pascal, Rousseau, *et al.* – followed. He argues that French

[1] (My translation) "There is no idea, no matter how profound or subtle, that cannot and must not be expressed in everyone's language," in Henri Bergson: *Mélanges* (published by André Robinet, Paris Presses universitaires de France, 1972) p. 1183.

philosophers chose to use the full potential of the already-existing language, by inventive use and combination of already-existing terms, rather than by adding new terms to their language. Therefore, the French philosophers make language more *flexible*– loosening the rigidity of usual definitions– rather than multiplying neologisms.

This "democratic" principle that Bergson describes here as the root of the French philosophical tradition can be perfectly exemplified by Bergson's own work. It is indeed as much an imperative the philosopher seems to have set to his own writing as it is a description of his predecessors' philosophical style. In his essay from 1889 (*Time and Free Will*), Bergson distinguished between lived time and mathematical time – an opposition he himself regards as the core intuition of his whole philosophy. In order to baptise his invention he borrows a common term: "*durée*". This duration will for him denote the qualitative, subjective experience of time, rather than its external measurement. None of his later concepts (intuition, intelligence, instinct, image, élan vital etc.) is a neologism either – although all of them are defined in a way that departs somehow from their common use. In this way it becomes clear that the same Bergson who criticises the never-ending addition of neologisms that obscure philosophical language is also the one who makes the "creation of concepts" the heart of the philosopher's task (in his book on method, *Creative Mind*), an idea Gilles Deleuze would later develop.[2] The two principles are non-exclusive because conceptual creation is possible without lexical creation: a new idea can be expressed by using and associating the old terms in a new way; it does not always necessitate the further complication of language. Introducing new philosophical terms might even originate more in the wish to appear scientific than in a real necessity. Bergson's concern for elegance and his attempt to avoid complicating and obscuring language through the use of neologisms is therefore not antithetical to the creation of concepts. It rather means that the new philosophical ideas that the philosopher invents have to be conveyed by a certain way of using older terms – Bergson sometimes describes his style as attempting to "twist" language in order to make it express something that has never been expressed before.

[2] Cf. Gilles Deleuze: *Le bergsonisme* (Paris, presses universitaires de France, 1966) and Gilles Deleuze et Felix Guattari: *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie ?* (Paris, les éditions de minuit, 1991).

Bergson's care for elegance and clarity is probably what makes his philosophy deceptively simple. On the surface, the terms he uses are common terms. You could randomly open one of Bergson's books and begin reading the page, and you would never be left with absolutely no clue what he is talking about, even without being a specialist. This is also what made him in his time an extremely successful philosopher – probably the first philosopher to enjoy such a level of celebrity during his lifetime. His popularity extended beyond the realm of academic philosophy because even for a layman Bergson's style works in a suggestive way, through his use of common terms and numerous metaphors, comparisons and examples. With this figurative style Bergson forces himself to make his philosophical ideas relatable to common, lived experiences, and therefore offers a point of entry to the neophyte.

For some philosophers this way of writing, though appealing, shows a lack of rigor. In an article called "The philosophy of Bergson"(1912), Bertrand Russell criticises Bergson for his overly literary style. He writes:

> He [Bergson] does not give reasons for his opinions, but relies on their inherent attractiveness, and on the charm of an excellent style. Like the advertisers of Oxo, he relies upon picturesque and varied statement, and an apparent explanation of many obscure facts. Analogies and similes, especially form a very large part of the whole process by which he recommends his views to the reader. (Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Bergson" in *The Monist*, vol. 22, p. 322)

Given that Russell was a great logician and contributed to the founding of analytic philosophy, his position on Bergson is not very surprising. In this context, it is actually extremely meaningful because it is rooted in a fundamental disagreement regarding the method of philosophy itself. He acknowledges Bergson's talent as a writer and calls his style "excellent", but this apparent praise is merely veiled criticism. Bergson's style is said to work as a "charm" seducing his readers into thinking he is right, rather than by providing reasonable arguments to sustain his claims, and his competence as a philosopher is said to boil down to that of a talented advertiser. It seems that in Russell's vision, philosophical style should strictly follow the laws of logic, and that there is no place – other than pure decoration – for images in philosophy.

The main problem that arises from this brief picture of the opposition between Russell and Bergson is the following: does one need to be a good writer in order to be a good philosopher? Or is this care for style on the contrary a way of misleading the reader into esthetic rather than rational appreciation of the philosophical ideas expressed? I will explore this problem in greater depth through Bergson's use of metaphors and comparisons, since, as Russell accurately points out, this is one of the most prominent features of his singular writing style. I hope to show how Bergson's use of metaphors is ultimately essential for his conceptual creations: therefore, insofar as philosophy can indeed be defined as the activity of conceptual creation, metaphors, far from being an ornamental accessory, will stand at the very heart of philosophy.

Why does Bergson use metaphors? Connection between Bergson's writing style and his philosophy

A number of Bergsonians have harmed Bergson more than they have helped him by praising the mysterious, hypnotic virtues of his words. This article aims on the contrary at exploring the way Bergson's metaphors actually work within his philosophical research and in accordance with his theoretical reflection on language, rather than treating them as a sort of magic tool. It also relies upon the principle that Bergson's style is not a sort of beautiful disguise for his ideas but that the form in which he writes is appropriate to what he aims to write: in other words, it is impossible to separate form from content, as Russell does by arguing that the content is null although the form is beautiful. The main objective is here therefore not as much to explore the variety of images Bergson uses but to focus on what a metaphor is and why this primarily literary tool could have its place within a conceptual discipline such as philosophy.

Bergson himself emphasised the role images play in his writing in the article "Introduction to Metaphysics" originally published in 1903. Often pictured as an irrational philosopher, and often attacked for his literary style, Bergson defends his writing style by drafting a theory of the philosophical use of metaphors. His thoughts are short and dense but quite interesting.

First, he tries to express what his core concept "duration" is, proceeding by an accumulation of different images rather than by a regular definition: "*It is, if you like, the unrolling of a spool* (…) *But it is*

just as much a continual winding, like that of a thread into a ball". He then corrects this image and in the following paragraph wishes to replace it with another one: "(…) *We must therefore evoke a spectrum of a thousand shades*", and then, correcting that image again: "(…) *Instead, let us imagine an infinitely small piece of elastic, contracted, if it were possible, to a mathematical point* etc.".[3] Each time Bergson uses a new image to describe his concept of duration, this image appears to him only relevant to a certain extent and he finds himself obliged to point out its irrelevance and propose another image to replace it. An extremely frequent metaphor for expressing duration, that reoccurs several times throughout his work even though he does not quote it here, is also that of the *melody.*

The images Bergson uses are, as Russell pointed out, extremely varied, even for the description of one and the same object. In the "Introduction to Metaphysics" it appears that this accumulation is intentional on the part of Bergson. According to him all of the images taken individually are "insufficient" to convey the intuition of duration: they have to be considered in their multiplicity. He justifies the fact that he uses images, and so many of them, in these terms:

> No image will replace the intuition of duration, but many different images, taken from quite different orders of things, will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on. (…) On the other hand the disadvantage of too simple concepts is that they are really symbols which take the place of the object they symbolise and which do not demand any effort on our part. (Bergson, "Introduction to Metaphysics" in *Creative Mind*, pp.195-196)

This passage contains essential reflections about metaphors that should be borne in mind throughout our reflection:

1. It appears clearly here that the formal use of metaphors has to be understood in relation to the doctrinal critique of concepts.

2. Bergson's view of metaphors is a rather cautious and critical one. For him they do not contain the intuition but only point towards it.

[3] "Introduction to Metaphysics", in Henri Bergson: *Creative Mind*, transl. Mabelle L. Andison (Greenwood Press, 1946) pp. 192-194.

In Bergson's philosophy, concepts are frequently defined as fixated representations that hide reality in their singularity and mobility. This is why he calls them *symbols* i.e. inadequate representations, which allow us to refer to reality and reflect upon it, but which should never be taken for reality as such. We should always remain aware of the distance between symbols and what they aim to symbolise and avoid taking them as substitutes for reality.

Throughout his work, Bergson emphasises the conventionality of lexical categorizations and protests against the simplistic view that language operates upon our real experience. He defines concepts mainly by their generality: one and the same concept covers different individual elements. Concepts do not give you access to the reality itself in its absolute singularity; they only allow you to speak in general. They work as "etiquettes", to use one of Bergson's most famous images, or as boxes, in which a collection of various items are gathered and treated as one. The way I feel sadness is different from the way someone else will feel sadness, but we still both use the same word – any conceptualization is therefore fatally imprecise. Bergson's whole philosophy and way of writing is deeply marked by this concern that one should not be duped by words and think that one holds a reality once one is able to name it. In fact, far from enabling one to hold any true meaning, this nominal categorization is most often a result of what Bergson calls habits of language and thought. We name a thing a certain way because of the definition we were taught by society through a repetitive use. This is why the use of concepts can show the absence of an effort to think anew: reflection would stop at the moment you put the item in the right box – "right" meaning that it has followed social conventions – and then everything would be considered clear and tidy.

This concern about the imprecision of our language and its incapacity to translate the subjective in all its singularity was shared by many philosophers. Despite the defaults of language, Bergson still uses it, and does not condemn it to fail. In my view he finds in the metaphorical use of language a way to kick the boxes and bring a bit of confusion into the well-ordered world of concepts. In more literal terms: metaphors have the power to question the way we usually describe the world through the grid of our language.

On a linguistic level, using a metaphor means assimilating two things that are conventionally defined as being different. Therefore a metaphor consists in a disturbance of conceptual differentiations. As

Aristotle, who first defined "metaphors" in his *Poetics*, put it: *"Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else*".[4] For instance when Bergson writes, in *Laughter*: "*Deep in our souls we should hear the strains of our inner life's unbroken melody*",[5] his statement is literally false. He gives our inner time a name that belongs to the succession of musical notes. The duration is not what Bergson calls it and we cannot actually hear it. In the same way, when Bergson writes that duration can be compared to the unrolling of a coil, or to its continual rolling up, or to a myriad tinted spectrum, or to an elastic body, it is in fact none of those things – as Bergson himself points out, which shows he is not blind to the falsehood of metaphors. So that by using an image Bergson describes a thing as being something it literally is not: he breaks a linguistic law, he oversteps a conceptual boundary. Why call "duration" all of those things that it is not?

It should be noted that this literal falsehood of metaphors is why metaphorical language appears prima facie as irrational. For a logician like Russell, the use of metaphors seems absolutely arbitrary. In his 1912 article about the philosophy of Bergson, he criticises the numerous images Bergson uses in order to depict life in *Creative Evolution*, with the argument that none of those various metaphors is actually preferable to another and that the reader can chose which ever metaphor he likes best. In that sense metaphors are irrational because contrary to arguments rooted in logical necessity, they seem to be the result of fantasists and fortuitous associations, and there is no criteria of truth that would allow one to decide which of the various images is the truest one. It seems that under the regime of metaphorical language anything can be predicated of anything without any rule or need for justification, and that language in the end loses all form of meaning.

Such experimentation with metaphors was indeed attempted in Bergson and Russell's time by the surrealist movement. The surrealist poets searched in their writings for the most unexpected associations in order to create a sense of shock and surprise. In the "Manifesto of Surrealism", André Breton describes their use of images as destined to create a "sparkle" through a stupefying and sudden identification of two

[4] Aristotle: *Poetics* (1457^{b}1), in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol. 2*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton University Press 1984), p. 2332.
[5] Henri Bergson: *Laughter*, transl. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (Macmillan and Co St. Martin's street, London, 1911), p. 150

completely foreign realities.[6] For surrealists, the more unsettling and the more absurd an image appears, the better. Lautréamont's famous verse from his *Chants de Maldoror*, "*beau comme la rencontre fortuite sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie*"[7] serves as a sort of motto for the movement. The unconscious is set free in surrealist writings and paintings: the most chaotic associations between the most unrelated objects, are seen as the most beautiful.

The way surrealists use metaphors is enlightening because it shows in what sense metaphors can work as opposed to concepts in an irrational way. It seems that there is no care in this metaphorical language for non-contradiction and linearity – on the contrary. It goes without saying, though, that the way Bergson uses metaphors cannot be conflated with the way surrealists use metaphors. Contrary to them, the philosopher does not aim at destabilizing his readers with his metaphors. What we can learn by confronting the way Bergson uses metaphors and the way surrealists use them is that Bergson's use of metaphors is actually a properly *philosophical* use of a *literary* device. Bergson does not seek originality for the sake of originality or creation for the sake of creation. His metaphors aim at being relevant to the philosophical argument he wants to make. This is why he will correct his metaphors when they are inadequate and multiply them in a search for the most relevant metaphors. His search still obeys an imperative of adequacy and not of chaos.

In fact Bergson uses metaphors for their inadequacy and at the same time, by denouncing this inadequacy, still submits himself to a regime of truth. The metaphor's inadequacy is recognised and in fact even claimed: it is precisely in the display of their inadequacy that the power of metaphors over literal conceptual language lies. Whereas concepts tend to substitute themselves for realities and are used with the illusion that they are identical to realities, metaphors show their own inadequacy, and this is why they are more thought-provoking than

[6] "*It is, as it were, from the fortuitous juxtaposition of the two terms that a particular light has sprung, the light of the image, to which we are infinitely sensitive. The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors.*" in André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, transl. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, 1971), p. 26

[7] "As beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella", Lautréamont: *Les Chants de Maldoror*, in *Œuvres complètes* (éd. Guy Lévis Mano, 1938, chant VI, 1), p. 256

concepts. Metaphors and concepts are at the core not that different insofar as they are both symbols that are somewhat distant to reality. However, metaphors show this distance openly: they show the true, deceiving nature of language and invite one to think beyond them, whereas concepts close the reflection because they claim perfection. The symbolical nature of all types of language is revealed to the eye of the reader in the case of a metaphorical use. In that sense Bergson's use of metaphors resonates with his denunciation of language as a merely symbolic representation of reality. Although images need to be corrected and multiplied, they remain preferable to the literal use of concepts and definitions, working within the illusion of a perfect identity between words and things. Without going as far as the surrealists – that is to say, without putting into relation two completely unrelated objects – Bergson, through his critique of concepts and his use of metaphors, aims to distance himself from the conceptual regime of identity. Speaking in metaphorical terms amounts to recognizing that talking of something in terms of difference may be more instructive than attempting to define what it *is*.

This middle position between an absolutely literal use of concepts and the chaotic surrealist use of metaphors can be shown through the use Bergson makes of the metaphor of melody in relation to his concept of duration, to pick one paradigmatic example from the tremendous variety of images offered by Bergson's work.

Duration as Melody

To pick up the question we left unanswered earlier: inner life is not a melody and cannot be heard – why then, I asked, does Bergson call it a melody? In order to understand the rationality of this metaphor despite its literal falsehood, it is necessary to place it within the reflection Bergson leads in *Time and Free Will* regarding two distinct concepts of time.

core intuition, as he often emphasises, is that the time that we count and measure is different in nature from the time that we experience subjectively – although this essential difference is hidden when we apply the same etiquette on both of them: "time". This is a perfect example of what Bergson considers an imprecise concept, which hides the singularity of experience. By his distinction between mathematical time and duration, Bergson aims at making this imprecise concept more precise. This strategy of division was perfectly identified by Deleuze in *Bergsonism*: Bergson claims that we use the same word to describe two

things that are actually different in nature, and his role then as a philosopher is to reestablish this unseen distinction by breaking the one initial concept into two different concepts. Now my argument is that this conceptual distinction between two kinds of time is made with the help of two metaphorical connections: on the one hand, a connection between mathematical time and *space* and on the other hand, a connection between duration and *melody*. It is by bringing together one kind of time with the notion of space and the other kind of time with the notion of melody that Bergson is able to describe more precisely and to show more evidently the difference internal to this uniform concept of time. Bergson brings the heterogeneity of metaphors within the homogeneity of concepts: since everyone knows a melody is different from space, because they are two different concepts in our language, everyone will also be able to understand the way in which the two bergsonian concepts of time differ from each other, although this conceptual difference is hidden by our language. This means that in order to reform our conceptual categorizations, Bergson still relies upon them: he uses a difference that is conventionally made between space and melody in order to show the difference that is not conventionally made between two opposed natures of time. The metaphors help Bergson to reveal an internal unseen difference by relating it to an external, obvious conceptual difference.

Bergson's work consists in a constant reflection upon our conceptual categories, a critique of their fixity, and an effort to redefine them in new ways. This is what is meant when philosophy is defined as an activity of conceptual *creation* – as opposed to the mere use and mechanical application of already made concepts. The philosopher moves the lines of conceptual differentiations through showing new differences within a concept deceptively considered identical. But to define philosophical activity as conceptual creation does not amount to a rejection of metaphors from the domain of philosophy. In fact my argument is that metaphorical creations have to be understood not as opposed to conceptual creations but on the contrary as a tool that helps conceptual creation.

Although on a static level concepts and metaphors can be seen as opposites, for the philosopher who places himself in a creative perspective– in the perspective of generating new concepts rather than using older already-defined concepts –the conceptual creation no longer appears as antithetical to a metaphorical use of words. Both the

conceptual creation and the metaphorical creation in fact rely on one and the same fundamental principle, that of the malleability of language, that of the imperative to constantly redefine, question, and distort the conceptual frames we have at our disposal. For Bergson, language is not an indifferent medium in which to convey his thoughts but a material with which he internally works. Both metaphors, which use old terms in new ways, and conceptual creation, which aims at redefining older concepts, rely on this principle that the philosopher should detach himself from preconceived definitions and use words anew, according to the new ideas he aims at expressing. In that sense, whenever Bergson uses a metaphor, he is not drifting outside of philosophy towards poetry, but rather he is at the very heart of the philosophical reflection. When Bergson uses a metaphor it indicates that he is adventuring into the domain of what is yet unsaid, and he is trying to find ways to say it. It indicates a moment of philosophical creation: the effort to distance himself from habits of language set by conventional use by using older categorization in an unorthodox way – and finally to engender his own new philosophical categories more appropriate to the reality he aims at describing.

In our specific example: beyond the habit of calling "time" both the measurement of time and its lived progression, Bergson perceives an internal distinction. Even though the common definition teaches us to see time as one and the same thing, for Bergson this name covers two opposed realities.

He sees that the time we divide into seconds, minutes, and hours, has to be distinguished from the time that we experience immediately – the time within which we live, or even better: the lived time ("within" suggests that we are somehow contained in "time", but in Bergson's philosophy it is much more that time is itself the substance of our being). In order to express this essential difference, he uses two metaphors. For him, the first kind of time appears comparable to space. We trace geometrical limits and grids within it, like we would do within an empty, abstract space. The second one is on the contrary indivisible. In order to characterise this indivisibility Bergson compares this second kind of time to a melody, that is made of a succession of notes, each different, but each fused into the other and inseparable from each other. Just as it makes no sense to cut out one of the notes of the melody, you cannot individualise one moment of duration from the other one. Both duration and melody form an indivisible whole, a continuity without interruption. I

am not at one moment sad and suddenly at the following moment happy, the way two o'clock follows three o'clock – I live continuously through each ever changing state, and those states can only be explained by the whole history I went through and the whole previous states I went through – like a melody that swells along its progression. Whereas mathematical time can be quantitatively dissected, duration needs to be qualitatively appreciated– it is impossible to enumerate the inner states I go through and to quantify their intensity the way I count hours and days. They have to be lived through probably the same way that it is essential, in order to appreciate a melody, to get the experience of hearing it – not only seeing a number of notes displayed on a score. Inner life is also like a melody always diverse and always one at the same time. It is essentially mobile, always changing, although it has unity by virtue of the fact that all the various states I go through remain the states of one being, me – the same way all notes of a melody differ but pertain to one and the same melody that they each help constituting. Mathematical time is immobile, or at least infinitely and mechanically repetitive, but duration consists in a creative progression, with a beginning and an end, and in between the two an actual evolution instead of an indifferent stacking of seconds, one following and replacing the other, each exactly the same.

As opposed to surrealist metaphors, the metaphor of the melody in Bergson's work is not fortuitous. It is literally false, as any metaphor is, but that does not mean it is absurd. It relies on a series of common points with duration: indivisibility, heterogeneity, mobility, unity etc., that Bergson develops throughout his work. Each time the metaphor of the melody reoccurs, Bergson underlines another of its meaning, so that far from being a simple metaphor it shows in fact a complex network of signification. It is arguable that the exploration of the metaphor of the melody in its multiple meanings helps the philosopher to make precise his own conceptual invention throughout his works. The metaphor works as a tool that helps the philosopher to refine his intuition. Since duration is a new concept, and inner life a kind of mysterious thing to define, it is helpful to relate this unknown object to a better-known object, working in an analogous way: in our example, the melody plays the role of this better known object whose internal organization presents analogies with that of the object of study. Some philosophers, such as Max Black, have developed this conception of metaphor as a sort of model,[8] allowing us to

[8] Cf. Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy*

talk of an unknown area by a translation into a more familiar, analogous area. In this view, when Bergson brings together melody and duration, it is not only a matter of illustrating his ideas in order to make them clearer or more appealing to the reader – it also helps the philosopher himself to enrich his conceptual invention. It is a tool the philosopher uses because what he aims to express is difficult to define. Describing what a melody is seems easier than describing what inner life is – and the former might give us an insight about the latter. In this sense the metaphor helps to speak of what could at first seem unspeakable.

The rationality of the metaphor therefore lies in the fact that the metaphorical link relies upon literal similarities. While staying aware of the distance between the object and its metaphorical correlate – what Bergson calls the "insufficiency" of a metaphor, which is essential to the metaphor – this metaphorical link can still help enlighten some aspects of the philosophical concept related to it. Through the metaphor, Bergson shows resemblances in spite of conceptual differentiation; indeed a duration is not a melody, but some of the features of the melody can apply to duration; so that seeing duration as a melody can help one to understand what duration is, especially as opposed to spatial time. Duration distinguishes itself from spatial time insofar as it resembles a melody: the metaphorical rapprochement on one hand allows the conceptual dissolution on the other. By showing the similarity beyond the difference, Bergson also enables differentiation to be brought within conceptual identity.

Through a linguistic analysis of what a metaphor is, it becomes manifest that the use of metaphors in Bergson's philosophy is not only a matter of esthetics; it is a way to question conceptual boundaries as they are conventionally established and ultimately to reestablish them through a conceptual invention. Instead of taking words' definitions as absolute, Bergson shows that there can be links striding over the conceptual boundaries – and that those boundaries can ultimately be traced in another way. It is clear therefore that Bergson's claim that our language is too fixed is not mere words; it is a principle effective in the way Bergson writes and thinks. If Bergson did not remain silent after criticizing the defaults of language, it is because communication is not absolutely condemned to fail. What we cannot speak about literally, we can try to suggest metaphorically –to parody Wittgenstein's famous sentence.

(Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1962).

Now it would probably not be completely accurate to put all esthetic value of Bergson's metaphors aside and reduce his use of metaphors to a step in his quest for conceptual inventions. Bergson's metaphors also have an interest and a life of their own independently from the concepts they help to generate and clarify. It should be recalled, after all, that one of Bergson's justifications for his use of metaphors is that they work in a more suggestive way than concepts and demand an effort on the part of the reader. What Bergson means by that is that metaphors leave much more to the implicit, and therefore demand a more active reading.

It is important to emphasise that Bergson's use of metaphors is not a systematic one. Although the metaphor of the melody involves, as was said earlier, a series of different significations tied to each other, those significations emerge progressively throughout Bergson's whole work and in an unanticipated way. The philosopher did not initially come up with a series of common features between metaphor and melody and then explicated them to the reader in one text, the way I have tried to do here. He rather proposed this metaphor at the beginning of his work, and explored it in later works. He has been inspired by his own metaphor, the same way an external reader could be inspired by reading Bergson's metaphors. In fact when Bergson first came up with the metaphor of the melody he himself did probably not suspect its richness. The power of a metaphor over a literal use of concepts, is that not all the meaning is given to the reader at once and explicitly. If Bergson writes that the inner life is a melody, the metaphor in itself remains somehow mysterious, and pushes the reader to ask himself: in what sense can I speak of inner life as a melody? This metaphor contains a power of suggestion that indeed goes further than what Bergson says about it – it can indefinitely be explored, appropriated, rethought and questioned. We could ask ourselves, for instance, if this inner life is produced by some kind of instrument similar to the melody; if this inner life can be written down the same way a melody can be transcribed into a score, etc. We can be seduced by this metaphor, which depicts inner life in a very serene, appeasing way, as a harmonious continuation; but we can also contest it, and ask whether there would not be a place for unexpected changes, abrupt interruptions, voids and metamorphoses, in our inner experience – this is the opinion of Bachelard, who seeks to replace the metaphor of the 'melody' with that

of 'rhythm'.[9] In any case, a metaphor asks for interpretation on the part of the reader, and always ultimately contains some mystery: because the metaphor is literally untrue, it remains ultimately unclear why it is used, and how far its relevance extends. The philosopher launches it, as an open invitation to the reader. The possible meanings of the metaphorical associations he initially made extend infinitely beyond what he himself aimed at writing. This is another sense in which metaphors show an open use of language: not only because the philosopher by a metaphorical use of terms challenges the definition set by social use, but because this gesture invites the reader to think along with him or even further than him.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems to me that Bergson's style follows two combined and somehow conflicting imperatives: that of clarity or simplicity and that of creation. Bergson wishes as stated in the introduction, to use everyday words– but in order to express something no one had expressed before. This is what leads him to use ordinary words in an unordinary way: which means inventing new metaphorical uses for them and new conceptual definitions. In Bergson's case the use of metaphors does not amount to a complete break with conceptual language but rather shows the effort to work within this conceptual language to loosen it, redefine it, open it to new significations. Therefore, although Bergson's style is often seen as very literary or even poetic, it is actually more accurate to say that he uses poetic tools but appropriates them in a philosophical way. His use of metaphors does not seek a surrealist dissonance, an esthetic shock, but is in fact harmonious with his conceptual inventions, and harmonious in a broader sense, with his conception of language.

Indeed, Bergson's way of writing stems from the awareness that our language does not possess absolute natural truth but rather is a result of conventions. Following that fundamental principle, the metaphorical use of words becomes as reasonable as their literal use. From a bergsonian perspective, in which conventional definitions are seen as habitual and rigid, to use words metaphorically is less an error than a liberation from habits of language. It indicates the effort to think outside

[9] See Gaston Bachelard, *La dialectique de la durée*, (Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 1950)

of usual frameworks. The use of metaphors has therefore to be understood within Bergson's philosophy of language: they are the effective trace, implicit in the act of writing philosophy, of Bergson's attempt to overcome the defaults he explicitly puts forward. Whenever the philosopher uses metaphors, it indicates the attempt to create, on a linguistic as well as philosophical level. By describing something in a metaphorical way, the philosopher proposes seeing it from the standpoint of difference, from the standpoint of what it is *not*, instead of aiming at fixing dogmatically what it *is*. This displacement through which the philosopher sees and commends his reader to see the same object through a new lens also helps him to reform the older concept in a way that he considers closer to his experience. In that sense metaphors are a step outside of the usual conceptual frameworks – one that will help to shift those frameworks. It is not an explosion of the literal meaning of words but rather an allowance to free oneself from them. In that sense Bergson's metaphors are at the very heart of his philosophical work, and his beautiful, picturesque style is inseparable from his philosophical critique of language and his method of conceptual division.

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The Material Literary Form of Kant's *Opus postumum*

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Introduction

Although it is far from being a mainstream concern for Kant scholars, the question of Kant's literary style is nevertheless now a well-worn one. Jean-Luc Nancy wrote the first monograph on Kant as a literary stylist, *Le Discours de la syncope: 1. Logodaedalus* (1976), closely followed by Jean-Louis Galay's *Philosophie et invention textuelle. Essai sur la poétique d'un texte kantien* (1977), for which Nancy wrote a preface. More recently, Willi Goetschel's *Kant als Schriftsteller* (1990), translated and expanded as *Constituting Critique: Kant's Writing as Critical Praxis* (1994), extends this stylistic attention to (almost) the whole of the Kantian oeuvre. Goetschel's final chapter is a literature review that shows that Kant's literary style has been consistently scrutinised in commentary, from Goethe to Cassirer and Jaspers to Henrich.

Nancy's contention is that the 'bad' writing of Kant's critical philosophy 'belongs *systematically* to the ensemble of gestures and theses that constitute critical philosophy as such' (p. 19). For Nancy, the first *Critique* marks the moment philosophy distinguishes itself from literature, but also, more importantly, signals the distinction of philosophy from the apodictic presentation of mathematics.[1] This confers on philosophical writing a 'modesty' of exposition, which Nancy claims is

[1] Nancy, *The Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus* trans. by Saul Anton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) pp. 18-19, 32-33.

inseparable from the modesty of transcendental philosophy: its famous rescinding of 'the proud name of an ontology' in favour of 'a mere analytic of pure understanding' (A247/B303).[2] Galay outlines a programme for a 'poetics of philosophy', which would reflect the two sides of the philosophical work: 'sense and textuality'.[3] Galay pursues this programme by examining the rhetorics of Kant's *Groundwork* as a study of 'the elementary gestures of philosophical enunciation'.[4] Goetschel provides a more historical account of the development of Kant's mature literary style in the pre-critical works. Like Nancy, Goetschel seeks to identify, on the one hand, the interrelation between Kant's metaphorics, stylistic fluctuations and syntax, and, on the other, the self-reflexivity of Kant's epistemological critique. The 'specific literary quality' of the critical philosophy, for Goetschel, 'mirrors' the *Critique*'s epistemological procedure on the level of its sentences.[5] Nancy, Galay and Goetschel thus make instructive connections between Kant's literary style and the content of the critical philosophy.

There is however another aspect of the 'literary' Kant that has received little or no attention in the literature. This is the question of the *material process* of Kant's writing: the nature of his manuscripts, his writing process, and the compilation of his manuscripts into finished texts for publication. The present paper addresses these processes, which we might (somewhat paradoxically) call the 'material form' of Kant's literary production. It is the late drafts towards an unfinished work, collected as Kant's *Opus postumum*, that most clearly display the material form of Kant's writing. We will explore this in detail through a single folio draft, before examining the relation that the form of the late drafts has to their philosophical content. This will enable us in closing to consider the implications for our understanding of the earlier *Critiques*, in the extent to which they share the material form of the *Opus postumum*.

The present paper therefore seeks to provide a new angle on the debates around Kant's literary style, through the evidence that the *Opus postumum* provides of his writing process. The *Opus postumum* is conspicuously absent from Goetschel's treatment of the Kantian oeuvre,

[2] Ibid., pp. 33-34.
[3] Galay, *Philosophie et Invention Textuelle. Essai sur la poétique d'un texte kantien* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), p. 11.
[4] Ibid., p. 101.
[5] Goetschel, *Constituting Critique: Kant's Writing as Critical Praxis* trans. by Eric J. Schwab (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), pp. 9, 141.

which, insofar as it extends beyond the canonical critical works, only reaches the writings on the Enlightenment. Furthermore, the existing scholarship on Kant's literary style tends to show how it is aligned with and contributes to a pre-given conception of the critical philosophy. In *philosophical* terms, this scholarship therefore tells us little that we did not already know.[6] By contrast, I will seek to show that attention to the material form of Kant's texts provides a new perspective on their philosophical content. When approached in terms of the materiality of Kant's writing, even the *Critique of Pure Reason* can be appreciated as a more open, dynamic text.

1. The *Opus postumum*: a very brief introduction

The *Opus postumum* is a large collection of drafts towards Kant's unfinished final work. It has a remarkably chequered publication history. The circuitous path taken by the manuscripts in the 130 years between Kant's death and their full publication in 1936-8 – in a problematic edition that is now being newly re-edited – has been reconstructed by Eckart Förster.[7] The interpretative fate of the text has been no less fraught. There has not even been consensus on whether the *Opus postumum* represents a *single* work: very early interpreters including Albrecht Krause and Hans Vaihinger proposed that it should be considered as two separate texts.[8] Modern scholarship, however, generally rejects this view. Indeed, the broad problematic of the *Opus postumum* drafts is remarkably coherent, even if the means by which Kant attempts to resolve it, and the philosophical directions in which he is

[6] This point echoes Stella Sandford's critique of the treatment of the 'epigenetic metaphor' in much Kant literature. See Sandford, 'Spontaneous generation: the fantasy of the birth of concepts in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*', *Radical Philosophy* 179 (2013), p. 15.

[7] See Förster's introduction to Kant, *Opus postumum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.xvi-xxiii, and Giovanni Pietro Basile, *Kants Opus postumum und seine Rezeption* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), p. 459-498. Buchenau and Lehmann's 1936-38 *Akademie* edition took the highly questionable approach of publishing the *Opus postumum* in the order of the fascicles, rather than following Adickes' dating of the manuscripts, leading to an unhelpfully convoluted text.

[8] On Krause's and Vaihinger's 'two-work' theories, see Basile, *Kants Opus postumum*, pp. 13, 37-41. For an early rejection of the two-work theory, see de Vleeschauwer, *The Development of Kantian Thought: The History of a Doctrine*, trans. by A.R.C. Duncan (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), pp. 180-1.

led in attempting to do so, vary wildly.

From the beginning of the *Oktaventwurf*, the relatively early drafts from 1796, the philosophical task at hand is designated as the 'transition [*Übergang*] from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics' (21:373, 10).[9] The so-called first fascicle, which is chronologically the latest, dating from December 1800 onwards, continues to describe the project in these terms.[10] Throughout the manuscripts, Kant repeatedly asks: what are the metaphysical foundations of natural science, what is physics, how can the transition between the two take place? Within the scope of this general problematic, however, the drafts display a vast range of approaches, both to the means by which the transition might be effected, and to the way that the two domains in question – the metaphysical foundations of natural science and physics – should be understood.

Scholarship is also divided on the significance of the late drafts. Much older commentary falls between two extremes: either dismissing the drafts as a mere product of the old Kant's senility, as Kuno Fischer influentially did, or valorising them as incomparably important for an understanding of Kant's thought.[11] This latter view found anecdotal support from Kant's first biographers – his friends and dinner companions in his final years – who report that Kant thought that the project in the *Opus postumum* drafts would be his 'masterpiece', his 'most important work', and the 'keystone of his philosophical labour'.[12] Such statements have been taken to justify the use of the late drafts in service of a range of

[9] Similarly-worded references to the transition problematic appear in two earlier leaves, prior to the *Oktaventwurf*: 21:463-4 and 21:465-6; cf. Förster's note in Kant, *Opus postumum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 257-8n7. In citing the *Opus postumum*, I give the *Akademie Ausgabe* reference followed by the page number in Förster's Cambridge edition, if translated therein. Modifications to Förster's translation are marked 't.m.'; Kant's later additions appear within angled brackets (< >). The first *Critique* is cited according to the standard A/B pagination, generally following the Cambridge translation. References to other works by Kant are given to the *Akademie Ausgabe*; translations are my own.

[10] See 21:17, 224; 21:87, 250.

[11] Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie* (Mannheim: Friedrich Bassermann, 1860), vol. 3, p. 83; see Förster's introduction in Kant, *Opus postumum*, p.xviii.

[12] See Lehmann's 'Einleitung' to the second *Akademie* edition volume of the *Opus postumum*, quoting the 1804 biographies by Hasse, Wasianski, Borowski, and Jachmann (22:754-5).

re-readings of Kant's thought.[13] A paradigmatic example is the interpretation of the first editor of the Academy edition, Erich Adickes, who considered the *Opus postumum* to reveal Kant's 'private metaphysics', of a realist account of things in themselves.[14]

The debates over the interpretation and significance of the late drafts will remain contested, but it cannot be doubted that the manuscripts provide a unique insight into Kant's daily process of philosophical production. It is these insights into what I am calling the 'material form' of Kant's writing that will concern us here: the manuscript traces of the process of literary composition. Kant's writing process, I will argue, cannot be separated from the content of the philosophy thus produced; and, furthermore, it is relevant not only to our understanding of the late notes, but to our interpretation of the whole Kantian corpus.

2. Kant's writing process in the *Opus Postumum*

The *Opus postumum* drafts are notoriously repetitive, making innumerable attempts at the same passages, as Kant searches not just for better phrases but for the philosophical solutions themselves. They thus provide an insight into the writing method that Kant had apparently long employed. In the *Philippi Logik* notes of 1772, Kant describes his method to his students as follows:

> At the beginning one mediates tumultuously [*tumultuarisch*]. One must write out that which comes to mind, [even] if occasional thoughts come to the senses that one has never had in one's life. First, one jots down all thoughts, as one had them, without order. After that one begins to coordinate and then to subordinate. One wants to produce something; so one

[13] The range of interpretations of the *Opus postumum* is too broad to be summarised here: Basile's *Kants Opus postumum* gives an extensive overview of commentary on the late drafts up to 2013.

[14] Adickes, *Kants Opus postumum. Dargestellt und beurteilt* (Berlin: Reuther und Reichard, 1920), pp. 238-40, 419-21, 852; cf. Adickes, *Kants Lehre von der doppelten Affektion unseres Ichs als Schlüssel zu seiner Erkenntnistheorie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1929). For the phrase 'private metaphysics', see Reinhold Brandt, 'Kants Vorarbeiten zum "Übergang von der Metaphysik der Natur zur Physik". Probleme der Edition' in Forum für Philosophie Bad Homburg, eds., *Übergang. Untersuchungen zum Spätwerk Immanuel Kants* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), p. 11.

> must certainly complete the skeleton of the system in general, and subsequently divide this into chapters. Thus every elaboration [*Außarbeitung*] must proceed with three tasks [*Arbeiten*]:
> 1. One jots down all thoughts, without order.
> 2. One makes a general plan.
> 3. One fleshes out [*arbeitet … aus*] all the parts. (24:484)

In this three-fold methodology, the process of 'coordination and subordination' apparently facilitates the second stage's creation of the plan, from the stream-of-consciousness notes produced in the first stage. Adickes, who spent perhaps more time than anyone with Kant's handwritten manuscripts, provides a similar account of his writing process: 'Kant thought … with a quill in his hand'; he 'did not first conceive everything (content as much as presentation), finished, in his head, but at most the train of thought is determined in advance, with the particulars then thought through with his quill in his hand'.[15] Borowski's account of Kant's method, in his recollection of his time spent with the philosopher, corroborates the *Logik* notes:

> Kant first made general outlines in his head; then he worked these out in more detail; he wrote what was to be inserted here or there, or was to be explained more fully, on little scraps of paper which he then attached to that first, hastily jotted-down manuscript. After some time had elapsed, he worked the whole over again, and copied it out neatly and clearly, as he always wrote, for the printer.[16]

This echoes the second and third stages in the description in the *Philippi Logik* notes, of the making and fleshing-out of a plan. Borowski adds to this that Kant would, after reworking the drafts on additional pieces of paper, finally make a clean copy for the printer.

There is good reason to think that Kant employed this method in

[15] Adickes, 'Die bewegenden Kräfte in Kants philosophischer Entwicklung und die beiden Pole seines Systems' and 'Lose Blätter aus Kants Nachlass', both in *Kant-Studien* 1 (1897), pp. 53, 240.

[16] Borowski, *Darstellung des Lebens und Charakters Immanuel Kants*, p. 191f., quoted in Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. by James Haden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 137.

the production of the critical philosophy.[17] By the late 1790s, he has taken to delegating to an amanuensis the final stage described by Borowski, that of producing a clean copy intended for the printer. Kant's student Kiesewetter, for example, was the amanuensis for part, if not all, of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790).[18] The *Opus postumum* contains evidence of this stage: there is an amanuensis' copy of the drafts entitled *Übergang 9*, *10* and *11*, which Kant has later heavily edited, crossing through much of the copy (22:543-55). Elsewhere, he notes down the amanuensis he would like to transcribe the text (21:44, 240; 21:72).

What is the status of the *Opus postumum* drafts, in relation to these stages of Kant's writing process? Jacqueline Karl, who leads the translation and editing of the new *Akademie* edition of the *Opus postumum*, has outlined the principles of the 'long-overlooked, genetically-oriented structural analysis' that underpins the new edition.[19] This analysis highlights three steps in the composition of the *Opus postumum* manuscript pages. Kant's first step is to write the 'main text' (which Karl calls the *Grundtext* and Lehmann the *Hauptteil*) in the middle of the page, with large margins left around the edges.[20] In the second step Kant inserts corrections and stylistic reworkings in the margins, linked to the main text by vertical marks. The third step is the addition of more substantive or contentful (*inhaltlich*) marginal notes. Importantly, Karl emphasises that the notes in this third step usually begin, chronologically, at the bottom of the page, and progress from there around the side to the top of the page.[21] Kant links notes that run on from one another with symbols. Karl identifies a number of different kinds of

[17] We will return to this and the early-twentieth century debates over the 'patchwork theory' below.

[18] See Steve Naragon, 'Johann Gottfried Karl Christian Kiesewetter (1766-1819)' in *The Dictionary of Eighteenth Century German Philosophers*, 3 vols., edited by Manfred Kuehn and Heiner Klemme (London/New York: Continuum, 2010).

[19] Jacqueline Karl, 'Immanuel Kant – der Autor, der 'mit der Feder in der Hand' denkt: Die Arbeitsweise Kants als ein Kriterium für die Neuedition des *Opus postumum*' in Annette Sell ed., *Editionen – Wandel und Wirkung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2007), p. 134.

[20] Ibid., p. 130; Lehmann, 'Einleitung', 22:783. Kant leaves margins of usually around 4 cm at the edge of the page, and in most cases also above the main text and less frequently below it (cf. Lehmann, Ibid.).

[21] Karl, 'Immanuel Kant', p. 130; Lehmann also notes that the marginal notes are written in this order: 'Einleitung', 22:784.

marginal note in this third step: 'a progression or supplementation of the main text, a replacement, an alternative, a completed remark to the main text, or an independent reflection'.[22]

Bringing together Karl's reconstruction with the methodological account in the *Philippi Logik* notes, we can propose that by the time of the *Opus postumum*, Kant's method effectively combines *all three* stages described in the 1772 lectures. That is, there is evidence of the stream-of-consciousness automatic writing, the subordination and coordination of thoughts into a general plan, and the fleshing-out of this plan into a more finished philosophical text. This can be seen if we turn to a text from the *Opus postumum*.

3. The material form of draft 'X' of fascicles X/XI

Kant wrote most of the *Opus postumum* on large sheets of paper (*Bogen*) folded once to make a folio of four sides (*Seiten*). Here, we can consider a single four-page folio. The value of this approach is made evident by Karl, who cites Vittorio Mathieu's account of the structure of the *Opus postumum* manuscript as 'cell-like [*zellenartigen*]'.[23] As Karl summarises:

> The connected [*zusammenhängende*] text is never written beyond the borders of a single sheet [*Bogen*] or a single side [*Seite*]. Consequently, according to Mathieu, the unity of a thought coincides with the pre-given formal unity of the paper (a sheet, a side), so that the sheet or the side has the synoptic function [*synoptische Funktion*] to incorporate the respective self-contained train of thought.[24]

A folio was therefore treated by Kant as a container for a sustained development of a train of thought. Karl notes that this is confirmed by the manuscript pages, in which the fourth page of a folio is in many cases written in very closely-written lines, in order to fit the thought into the folio. In the drafts of fascicles X/XI, dated August 1799 to April 1800,

[22] Karl, 'Immanuel Kant', p. 132.
[23] Karl, 'Immanuel Kant', p. 134; Vittorio Mathieu, *Kants Opus postumum* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), p. 61.
[24] Jacqueline Karl, 'Immanuel Kant', p. 134; see Mathieu, *Kants Opus postumum*, p. 62.

Kant is in the habit of designating each four-page folio with a sequential letter. The drafts of this period, designated A to Z, then AA and BB, therefore constitute twenty-five attempts at a formulation of a part of the transition project.[25] Here, we can consider the folio draft marked 'X' from this period.[26]

The format of draft 'X' is representative of many of the drafts of fascicles X/XI. It begins, in a large and flowing hand, with an attempt to state the problem to be answered: 'The doctrine of the transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics [twice underlined] contains two …' (22:496, 142).[27] Kant first writes that it contains two 'questions', then crosses this word out and writes 'steps', then crosses this out to replace it with 'progressions' (22:496). The sentence continues, 'of which each, in turn, includes two divisions as themes [*Themata*]' (22:496, 142, t.m.).[28] This sentence is then continued in smaller script in the margin, which we can skip over.[29] The doctrine of transition is thus initially presented as having two parts, with each part containing two subdivisions. This structure is then neatly laid out in the centre of the page:

I
A. What is physics?
B. What is a transition?
from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics?
II
a. How is physics (as doctrinal system)
possible?
b. How is the transition from the
metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics
possible? (22:496, 143, t.m.)

[25] There are twenty-five attempts because, as was customary at the time when alphabetising lists, letters 'J' and 'V' are not used. Kant has both a BB and BB^2, but the latter is on the third page of the same folio, so I have counted BB and BB^2 as one 'attempt' (22:448).

[26] This draft is almost completely translated, bar some marginal notes, in the Cambridge edition, pp. 142-150.

[27] Facsimiles of the Opus postumum are available at <http://kant.bbaw.de/opus-postumum/faksimiles-chronologisch/>; draft 'X' is designated in the BBAW nomenclature as Convolut XI, Seiten 25-28.

[28] Diverging from Lehmann, I read *Themata* instead of *Themate*.

[29] We also ignore here the later marginal additions above and to the right of the larger, first-written text.

A plan is here confidently outlined to address the topic of the opening sentence, namely 'The doctrine of the transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics'. The opening of the draft thus provides a coherent depiction of the problematic and of structure through which it will be addressed. The transition problematic should be broached firstly through definitions (what is physics, what is a transition from the metaphysical foundations to physics), and secondly through attention to conditions of possibility (how are physics and the transition possible).[30] The start of draft 'X' thus displays the second stage of the process described in the *Philippi Logik*: a 'general plan' is outlined. The folio then proceeds with the third stage of the process, 'fleshing out' this plan. Kant provides an opening definition of physics, answering the first question of the plan, 'What is physics?': '**Physics** is the doctrinal system of the laws of the moving forces of matter, insofar as they are given in experience' (22:497, 143). After this, three numbered notes, running from the first to the second pages of the folio, further develop aspects of the definition of physics (22:497-9, 143-5). This fleshing out also includes the working-over of the text through marginal notes. At some point, marginal notes are added to the first page, the text is heavily corrected, and substantive notes are also added.

On the bottom half of page two, further definitions of physics are proposed. Kant is rethinking his initial answer to the question posed in the first division of his plan. Notably, Kant's handwriting starts to change in the bottom half of the main text of page two. It becomes less flowing and more compressed; difficult to distinguish, in fact, from the marginal notes. On the third and fourth pages, although Kant maintains the format of a 'main' and 'marginal' text, these are now both in a very small and compressed hand, almost indistinguishable from one another. Furthermore, the main text merges with the substantive marginal notes in *content* as well as appearance. It no longer reads like the opening of a publishable work, but like a series of notes in which thoughts are being developed and philosophical work is being done.

In the last two pages of the folio, the marginal notes and the main

[30] This reconstruction of the opening of the text required close attention to the facsimile of the manuscript. In the Cambridge edition, the marginal continuation of the first sentence is included in the text without being designated as such. In Lehmann and Buchenau's *Akademie* edition, footnotes signal the marginal additions, but careful scrutiny of the notes is required to identify which parts of the sentence are additions.

text return to something like stage one of Kant's process, as described in the *Philippi Logik*: capturing the mobile process of thinking by jotting down whatever comes to mind. It is not, however, completely 'without order', as in fact, the order of Kant's text is very important. This is signalled by the signs that connect passages to one another, and which continue sentences from the main text into the margins. The text is therefore somewhere between an orderless jotting of thoughts and the fleshing-out of a plan, whilst simultaneously coordinating and subordinating thoughts in a way that can lead to a redeveloped plan. The neatly-divided three stages in the *Philippi Logik* – which even in 1772 may have been more an idealised version for Kant's listeners than a true reflection of his process – thus swirl together in the procedure of the *Opus postumum*.

4. Tracing a single theme in draft 'X': what is physics?

Having gained an overview of the material form of the *Opus postumum* and the specific instance of draft 'X', we can consider the relation of this form to the philosophical content. However, the difficulties of interpreting an unfinished, fragmentary text like the *Opus postumum* are such that we can here barely scratch the surface of the range of topics explored, even in this single draft. We can nevertheless gain a sense of the philosophical significance of the draft's form through one delimited aspect: the opening definitions of physics in the folio. The developments of this definition provide a microcosmic indication of the relationship between Kant's writing process, as captured in the material form of the drafts, and their philosophical content.

As noted above, the general problematic of the *Opus postumum* is the 'transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics'. The question of the meaning of 'physics' therefore concerns the point at which the transition project should arrive. Kant's opening definition of physics in draft 'X' is, as we have seen: '**Physics** is the doctrinal system of the laws of the moving forces of matter, insofar as they are given in experience' (22:497, 143). This reiterates the broadly Newtonian conception of material nature as a system of laws of moving forces, to which Kant had long adhered. This first definition is straightforward, but the last clause hints at the philosophical problem that Kant seeks to solve, which already animated the *Critique*: the alignment of this physical system with the structures of *experience* of the

transcendental subject.

A second opening definition of physics is added later, scrawled in a small gap above the first one. This second definition is connected to the first with a sign, suggesting that it should replace it, but the first is not crossed out, so Kant, intentionally or not, lets both definitions stand. It reads,

> [Physics is] the scientific *study of nature*, insofar as it is an object of experience. It is either investigation of nature or doctrine of nature,[31] and its principles are either given rationally *a priori* or empirically. (22:497, 143)

The first sentence of the new definition simply recaps the original one: physics is the study of nature, or the laws of the moving forces of matter, as an object of our experience. The difficulty facing the *Opus postumum*'s transition project emerges in this new definition's second sentence. Kant writes that the principles of physics are either given *a priori* or empirically. In fact, the implication is that they are *both*, as a result of the two-fold conception of physics introduced here, as the 'investigation of nature' and the 'doctrine of nature'. The former should contain empirical principles, the latter *a priori* ones.

This two-fold conception of physics is expanded upon in a note in the top margin:

> Physics is, firstly, according to concepts of the formal element of **its** principle[,] of its possibility of being a study of nature[;] 2. according to the material element, i.e. the actual [*wirklichen*] outer **objects** of experience[.] *Systema naturale* and *systema naturae*. (22:498, 144, t.m.)

Physics is split into its formal and material aspects, which are designated 'natural system' and 'system of nature' respectively. Kant glosses this distinction in another note: 'The first [the natural system] has formal principles *a priori*, the second [the system of nature] merely methodically aggregated objects of experience' (*Ibid*.). The 'form' of physics is

[31] '[E]ntweder Naturforschung oder doctrinale Naturlehre': the latter words are problematic in English as they could be 'doctrinal doctrine of nature'. Judging from the manuscript facsimile, Lehmann's reading of 'doctrinale' is questionable.

therefore its *a priori* principles; the 'matter' of physics is an aggregation of empirical appearances, arranged systematically. Later passages note that this latter 'system of nature' follows the example of Linnaeus' natural history, so it should be considered a way of organising empirical observations (2:500-1, 145).

Up to this point, Kant's accounts of physics are fairly straightforward: physics contains a formal, *a priori* part, and a material, *a posteriori* part. The former pertains to the possibility of the study of nature, and so is conceivably provided by the first *Critique*'s transcendental structures of lawfulness in general; the latter is the systematic ordering of empirically observed natural phenomena, or physics modelled on natural history. The problem, however, is the *connection* between these two parts of physics. Should physics, the destination-point of the transition, not be conceivable as a unified science? More specifically, the separation between *a priori* and *a posteriori* physics serves merely to reiterate the very transition problematic that the late drafts seek to address, namely: what is the nature of the transition from the critical, *a priori* foundations for physics, to its specific empirical results? Depicting the two poles of the transition as two aspects of physics does not accomplish the transition.

The three numbered notes that follow the opening definitions of physics explore elements of this problem, but we can jump to the developments in an important note in the bottom margin of page two. Kant writes that there 'would be no physics (doctrine of experience of nature)' without '[e]mpirical representations with consciousness (that is, perceptions)'. These perceptions 'are given through the forces which affect the subject'. He continues,

> But the aggregate of forces in a system … cannot be given as a whole otherwise than *a priori*, through a principle, which carries with it the concept of necessity: which and how many forces form the aggregate of forces in a system. (22:502-3, 146)

This note therefore problematises the separation of the two parts of physics on which Kant's initial definitions of physics relied. The aggregation of given physical forces, which constituted the material, *a posteriori* part of physics, is now considered to be impossible in its totality ('as a whole') unless it is given *a priori*, on the basis of a

necessary principle that determines the nature and number of forces in the system. The two parts of physics are thus connected. The natural-historical aggregation of empirically observed forces can only proceed on the basis of an *a priori* principle.

The bottom marginal note is then continued from page two onto the bottom of page three of the folio. Philological evidence from the manuscript signals the significance of this passage. Kant here transgresses his usual practice of squeezing passages onto a single page, in ever-smaller writing. Mathieu notes that whilst Kant never (with only one exception) extended a passage of text beyond the limits of a folio (*Bogen*), passages of text are 'even almost never written beyond the limits of a single page [*Seite*]', generally being written in an ever-smaller hand to fit into the available space.[32] This note under consideration is significant enough to be continued onto the bottom of page three. There is evidence that the continuation of the marginal note onto the bottom of page three was the first thing to be written there.[33] It was thus a marginal note that preceded the main text. This passage reads:

> In regard to matter and those of its forces which <externally> affect the subject (hence are *moving* forces), perceptions are self-moving forces combined with reaction (*reactio*), and the understanding *anticipates* perception according to the uniquely possible forms of motion – attraction, repulsion, enclosure (surrounding) and penetration. – Thus the possibility of establishing *a priori* a system of empirical representations (which otherwise appeared impossible) and of *anticipating* experience <*quoad materiale* [as material]> is

[32] Mathieu, *Kants Opus postumum*, p. 62.

[33] The 'main text' on page three seems to refer to the bottom marginal note, suggesting that the latter was written first. Kant writes, in the centre of page three, 'The understanding … stimulates *a priori* the moving forces of the object on which it acts to reciprocity … the understanding can enumerate *a priori* these actions (with their reactions) … These organisations, *referred to below*…' (22:503, 147, my emphasis). This reference to the 'organisations' of the understanding 'referred to below' must, it seems to me, be a reference to the 'uniquely possible forms of motion – attraction, repulsion, enclosure (surrounding) and penetration' in the passage in the bottom marginal note. This means the latter was written before the main text of page three.

illuminated (22:502, 146, t.m.).[34]

The end of this passage, in my view, provides an account of the task of the transition project as Kant understands it in 1799-1800: establishing 'the possibility of establishing *a priori* a system of empirical representations … and of *anticipating* experience *quoad materiale* [as material]'. This is a remarkable task, in the context of the critical limitations. The transition should establish *a priori* the system of empirically-given representations, or provide the principle on the basis of which a system of empirical physical forces could be constructed *in advance* of empirical observation. It is thus the project of a rational physics or an *a priori* science of nature. Kant notes the difficulty of this project, claiming that it would have 'appeared impossible', were it not for the proposals that he here makes. These are that 'perceptions are self-moving forces combined with reaction' and that 'the understanding *anticipates* perception according to the uniquely possible forms of motion – attraction, repulsion, enclosure (surrounding) and penetration'.

We must here suspend further discussion of these radical proposals, and of the fascinating use of (apparently rethought) notions from the first *Critique*, notably 'perception' and 'anticipation'.[35] Instead we can recap the train of thought in the folio, as it appears in the material traces of philosophising on the manuscript page. Draft 'X' began with a sketch of a plan: to define physics and the transition from the metaphysical foundations to physics, and to consider their conditions of possibility. A first attempt at a definition of physics was supplemented by a second, later one, splitting physics into an *a priori* and an *a posteriori* part. Kant's marginal notes glossed this as a division into physics' formal element and its material element. However, this comfortable division into *a priori* and *a posteriori* parts of physics comes to be undermined. The main text and

[34] My substantive departure from Förster in translating this passage is to render 'sind die Warnehmungen selbst an sich bewegende Kräfte' as 'perceptions are self-moving forces' rather than 'perceptions are themselves moving forces': this has a significantly different meaning.

[35] This would entail a comparison with the *Critique*'s Anticipations of Perception: the central change in draft 'X' is that it is no longer the mere degree of reality of empirical sensation that can be anticipated, in its distance from the absence of sensation ('through approximation to negation = 0') (A168/B210). Rather, Kant is exploring the possibility of anticipating the specific material of experience, through a reconceived physics.

marginal notes emphasise the *a priori* principle through which the totality of the empirical physics, as an aggregation of *a posteriori* forces, can be attained. Physics is therefore reunified on the basis of its a *priori* part. This leads Kant to posit forms of *motion* through which the understanding anticipates perception, in a remarkable rethinking of the activity of the transcendental subject.

A note at the top of page three, likely to be the last-written of those we have considered, finally effectively provides another definition of physics, on the basis of the developments in the draft:

> It is strange – it even appears impossible – to present perceptions *a priori* for the sake of experience; <yet, nevertheless, without this, no physics, as a system of experience, would emerge. One must be able to enumerate these reactive forces. … *Only those forces which we insert into phenomena can we extract from what is empirical, for the sake of experience*>. (22:504, 148, my emphasis)

From the anodyne opening definition of physics, as the doctrinal system of the laws of the moving forces of matter, Kant's explorations have now reached the point of defining physics as a system of experience in which empirical perceptions are presented *a priori*, on the basis of the forces that the subject inserts into empirical phenomena. This insertion (*hineinlegen*) of forces into phenomena pre-empts the so-called *Selbstsetzungslehre* or doctrine of self-positing, which the later drafts of April to December 1800 will make central.[36]

The manuscript of draft 'X' therefore shows Kant's developing response to the first question in his opening plan: what is physics? The train of thought unfolds between the initial plan, the fleshing-out in the main text, and the marginal additions and rewriting. By the bottom of page two of the folio, significant philosophical content is being developed in the marginal notes, blurring the distinction between main and marginal

[36] For introductions to the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, see Förster, *Kant's Final Synthesis: An Essay on the* Opus postumum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), chapter four, and Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 194-201. Hansgeorg Hoppe's interpretation foregrounds the concept of *Hineinlegen*: see Hoppe, *Kants Theorie der Physik: Eine Untersuchung über das Opus postumum* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1969), pp. 114-8.

text into a fluid development of ideas. Kant's 'thinking with his quill in his hand', as Adickes put it, pushes far beyond his straightforward opening definition of physics, to a proposed new conception of the subject as actively inserting moving forces into physical matter. The folio's microcosmic manifestation of the transition project thus proposes to rethink the 'metaphysical foundations' from which the transition departs, insofar as these foundations are contained in the critical conception of transcendental subjectivity as commonly understood, as well as the 'physics' at which the transition should arrive.

In sum, our focus on the development of one question in a single draft sheds light on the relation of (material) form and (philosophical) content in the *Opus postumum*. As noted in section one, the consistent topic of the late drafts is the transition (*Übergang*) from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics. Draft 'X' provides a microcosmic example of the shifting definitions of both the departure and arrival points of the transition: 'metaphysical foundations' and 'physics'. All three elements of Kant's late transition project are in flux in the explorations documented in the unfinished drafts: the metaphysical foundations, physics, and the transition between them.

5. Implications for the *Critique of Pure Reason*

The *Opus postumum*, in the state in which Kant left it, thus displays an accidental coherence of content and form. The philosophical content, a dynamic striving to effect a transition from metaphysics to physics, is echoed by the material form, in which the manuscript pages retain the trace of Kant's rethinking of his positions, through the various stages we have examined: stream-of-conscious philosophising, organising material into plans, and further development of these plans. The late drafts, as unfinished notes towards a work, are in many ways unique in the Kantian oeuvre. This would suggest that they are completely distinct from the completed canonical works of the critical philosophy.

Indeed, on the usual understanding, the *Critique of Pure Reason* is utterly distinct from the *Opus postumum* as I have presented it, in both form and content. Formally, the *Critique* is a finished work. True, this 'work' is complicated by its being a compilation of the A and B editions, not to mention the alternative presentation of its argument in the *Prolegomena* (1783), and further supplementations in letters and other texts. Nevertheless, the *Critique* does not share the radically open,

exploratory form of the *Opus postumum* manuscripts. This formal difference recurs on the level of content. Whereas the *Opus postumum*'s project is the transition from metaphysical foundations to physics, the *Critique*, as usually understood, has the very different endeavour of securing the transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience or the object in general. Far from the dynamic attempt at making a transition from one field of knowledge to another, as captured in the late drafts' philosophising, the architectonic of the *Critique* seeks to definitively outline the structures of cognition to guarantee and delimit the pretensions of pure reason.

However, against this usual understanding, there are important ways in which both the form and content of the *Critique* correspond to the *Opus postumum*.

Firstly, in terms of form, Kant's statements about his writing process remind us that the *Critique* was in all likelihood produced in a similar way to the late drafts. The early-twentieth century debates over the 'patchwork theory', for all their ultimate interpretative and philosophical failings, have the value of highlighting this. The patchwork theory contended that the *Critique* is a mosaic of texts written over Kant's 'silent decade' and hastily compiled in a matter of months. This follows comments in letters to Garve and Mendelssohn in 1783, where Kant states: 'although the book is the product of nearly twelve years of reflection, I completed it hastily, in perhaps four or five months' (10:345; cf. 10:338). Norman Kemp Smith's *Commentary* (1918) opens by citing these letters, and provides a model account of the patchwork theory:

> the *Critique* affords ample evidence of having been more or less mechanically constructed through the piecing together of older manuscript, supplemented, no doubt, by the insertion of connecting links, and modified by occasional alterations to suit the new context.[37]

This description of the *Critique*'s composition aligns with Kant's own account of his method – the stages of automatic writing, fleshing-out of a plan, rewriting, and compiling a final manuscript – and with the evidence of this process in the *Opus postumum* drafts.

[37] Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (London: Macmillan, 1918), p. xxi

The proponents of the patchwork theory took a wrong turn, however, in attempting to identify specific temporal strata in the *Critique* and to evaluate its arguments on their basis. Kemp Smith's patchwork theory follows Adickes and, particularly, Vaihinger: the latter claimed to be able to identify four distinct periods in the 'thrown-together layers [*durcheinandergeworfene Schichten*]' of the A edition's transcendental deduction.[38] As Kemp Smith puts it, when closely following Vaihinger's account of the transcendental deduction, these textual strata, '[l]ike geological deposits, … remain to record the processes by which the final result has come to be'.[39] The *Critique* therefore contains fossils of Kant's earlier views, alongside positions that supersede them. Kemp Smith borrows Vaihinger's approach to distinguish between critical, pre-critical, and even 'semi-critical' parts of the *Critique*, where the passages belonging to the properly 'critical' period of Kant's composition are the only ones worthy of being retained.[40]

The problem is that this approach is clearly circular. Kemp Smith acknowledges that Vaihinger's periodisation of the textual strata is predominantly based on '*internal* evidence, circumstantially supported by the *Reflexionen* and *Lose Blätter*'.[41] In the absence of the complete manuscripts from which the *Critique* was compiled, the assignment of parts of Kant's text to different temporal periods is mainly based on a prior judgement about what is distinctively 'critical' about the *Critique*. Passages in which Kant refers to the 'transcendental object', for example, are considered by Kemp Smith to be 'thoroughly un-Critical' in having recourse to the thing in itself, and so are designated 'pre-Critical or semi-Critical' remnants.[42] Subsequently, on the basis of this differentiation of temporal strata, Vaihinger and Kemp Smith make claims as to which passages should be retained in interpretative reconstructions of Kant's proper position. The claims for the properly 'critical' aspects of the *Critique* are thus based on arguments for temporal strata, which are themselves based on a preconception of the properly 'critical' aspects of the *Critique*. The patchwork arguments turn in a circle. No wonder, then, that H. J. Paton described the patchwork theory, referring specifically to

[38] Vaihinger, *Die transcendentale Deduktion der Kategorien* (Halle: Niemayer, 1902), p. 23.
[39] Kemp Smith, *A Commentary*, p. 202.
[40] See Ibid., pp.xxiv, 204.
[41] Ibid., p. 202, my emphasis.
[42] Ibid., p. 204.

Vaihinger, as ‘a monument of wasted ingenuity’.[43]

Nevertheless, this glance back at the patchwork theory debates reminds us that first *Critique* was to some extent produced through the writing process that we have here explored. Paton, while refuting the patchwork approach, acknowledges that Kant’s claims about the compilation of the *Critique* ‘tends to confirm Borowski's account of Kant's usual procedure’, as was cited above.[44] The futility of the patchwork theory emerges from its attempt to distinguish exact temporal strata and evaluate the properly critical parts of the text on this basis. But simultaneously broader and less ambitious claims about the content of the *Critique* can be ventured on the basis of the material form of Kant’s ‘usual procedure’ of writing. The first edition of the *Critique* is a collation of texts written and rewritten over the ‘silent decade’; it shares the manner of production with the *Opus postumum* drafts, only differing in having reached Kant’s final stage, in which a final copy is compiled for the printer. The manuscript traces of Kant’s philosophising over the silent decade are therefore superseded and ossified in the ‘work’ of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but the material form of the text is closer to the *Opus postumum* than commonly thought.

Secondly, the *content* of the *Critique* can be understood in a way that brings it closer to the late drafts’ transition project. Such a view emerges from a tradition of interpreters like Heidegger, Vleeschauwer and Davel, which has contemporary echoes in the work of commentators like Karl Ameriks, Karin de Boer, and J. Colin McQuillan: namely, interpretations that stress the metaphysical aspects and intentions of Kant’s critical philosophy. This tradition emphasises the *Critique*’s preparatory nature, as ‘*prolegomena* to any future metaphysics’, for a system of properly grounded metaphysics. Kant regularly presented the *Critique* in these terms: it should ‘clear and level a ground that was completely overgrown’ on which to found ‘a system of pure (speculative) reason I hope myself to deliver under the title Metaphysics of Nature’ (Axxi). Alongside the metaphysics of morals, this system of pure theoretical reason was to constitute the ‘doctrinal part’ of Kant’s philosophy, as promised in the preface to the third *Critique* (5:170; cf. 10:145, A841/B869ff).

[43] Paton, *Kant’s Metaphysic of Experience* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936), p. 40.

[44] Ibid., p. 46. Borowski’s account is cited in section 2 above.

As a preparatory exercise, the *Critique* is the first moment in a broader transition project, from the critical foundations of metaphysics to the full, doctrinal system of critical metaphysics. The architectural metaphor at the opening of the Doctrine of Method shows that the *Critique* seeks to provide both the 'materials' and the 'plan' for a metaphysics (as the 'sum total of all cognition of pure and speculative reason') (A707/B735). The *Critique*'s penultimate section, on the Architectonic of Pure Reason, provides a sketch of the planned system of critical metaphysics. The theoretical branch of this future metaphysics was to include, alongside ontology, rational cosmology and rational theology, a part on rational physiology, which was in turn to be divided into rational physics and rational psychology (A846-7/B874-5).

Kant asks of this rational physiology, 'how can I expect an *a priori* cognition and thus a metaphysics of objects that are given to our senses, thus given *a posteriori*?' (A847/B875). Kant's answer to this question will evolve in the texts published after the first edition of the *Critique*, but it is evident that the general problematic of the *Opus postumum* – how to effect a transition from metaphysical foundations to empirical physics – is connected to the rational physics that forms part of the full system of critical metaphysics, as sketched in the *Critique*'s Architectonic of Pure Reason.[45]

In this respect, the *Critique* and the *Opus postumum* are both part of the Kantian oeuvre's striving towards the full system of metaphysics that was to be newly grounded on the critical foundations. The difference in content, like the difference in form, between the *Critique* and the *Opus* postumum is therefore narrower than it is generally taken to be. From the perspective of the future metaphysics, both the *Critique* and the *Opus postumum* attempt parts of this grand project. The canonical work and the marginal manuscripts share a common material form, or process of philosophising. This open-ended philosophising is reflected in the common content, in which both the *Critique* and the *Opus postumum* are partial, unfinished efforts towards a transition to a future full system of

[45] The precise nature of this connection – between the *Critiques*, the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, the *Opus postumum*, and the projected full system of metaphysics – has been the subject of much debate. For an important contribution, see Peter Plaass, *Kants Theorie der Naturwissenschaft. Eine Untersuchung zur Vorrede von Kants 'Metaphysischen Anfangsgründen der Naturwissenschaft'* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965); translated as *Kant's Theory of Natural Science*, trans. by Alfred E. and Maria G. Miller (Dordrecht: Springer, 1994).

metaphysics that Kant was never able to complete, and perhaps never could have.

Conclusion

Nancy's and Goetschel's works on Kant's literary stylistics, for all their insights, ultimately reinforce a pre-given conception of Kantian critique, and a very traditional one at that: Kant's literary style aligns with the modest, epistemological aims of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In philosophical terms, these readings of Kant's literary style serve only to repeat the broad neo-Kantian interpretation of the *Critique*, which emphasises the anti-metaphysical aspects of the critical philosophy.

By contrast, attention to the material form of Kant's philosophising can shed a new light on the content of the critical philosophy. The late explorations in the *Opus postumum* display a coherence of material form and philosophical content, insofar as the writing, rewriting, amending and annotation of the manuscript reflects the text's striving towards the transition to an *a priori* system of empirical physics. This perspective allows us to recognise that the *Critique* shares aspects of both form and content with the *Opus postumum*. Kant's writing process, as the patchwork debates remind us, was in all likelihood consistent from at least the 1770s until the end of his life. And from the perspective of the full, future system of doctrinal metaphysics, both the *Critique* and the *Opus postumum* represent unfinished, partial efforts towards the transition to this system.

The late manuscripts and the canonical critical works alike therefore confirm Kant's claims that 'human reason has a natural propensity [*natürlichen Hang*] to overstep all [its] boundaries'; that there will always be metaphysics, particularly in enquiring minds; and that the 'peculiar fate' of reason is to be burdened by questions that it can neither answer nor dismiss (A642/B670; 4:367; Avii). In this light, the Kantian oeuvre is a continually rewritten, unfinished palimpsest that *exhibits* this striving of human reason at the same time that it scrutinises it.

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"Endless Specific Recoveries": on the Genre of the Essay in Cavell

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Stanley Cavell belongs to the tradition of philosophical essayists that stretches back to Montaigne and occupies the uneasy territory between philosophy and literature. The essay as it has developed in modern philosophy has a distinctly sceptical cast in its refusal both of absolute beginnings and of closure; grounded in experience, essays offer a multiplication of perspectives and frames in place of any aspiration to objectivity. In what follows, I will consider the relationship between Cavell's account of scepticism – specifically the implications of this account for communication – and his choice to write essays. Taking up the issue of scepticism as raised by 19th-century Romantic and 20th-century ordinary language philosophers, Cavell shifts the locus of discussion from the external world or the subject to the problem of human communication as such, maintaining that the sceptical impulse, at root, conceals the anxiety of beings who exist in language, an anxiety about relating to others under or within the conditions of language. His interest in the perils of communication naturally has consequences for philosophical writing, in much the same way as Kierkegaard's stylistic experiments were motivated by concerns about the ethics – even the possibility – of communicating the truth.

Cavell, like Kierkegaard, views sceptical doubt not as something to be avoided, but as an achievement—the beginning of an acknowledgement that one is not fully oneself or not fully at home in the world. But doubting is also a risk: the risk of denying the conditions within which life is possible, an image suggested in Wittgenstein's

familiar aphorism 107: "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction, and so, in a certain sense, the conditions are ideal; but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk."[1] As Cavell argues, doubting can become a demand for the perfect conditions – to begin to act, to interact with others, to make oneself known – but these conditions in no way resemble those we actually inhabit, and so they become an excuse to not take responsibility for – to not take our place in – the world around us. For Cavell, the uncanniness that doubt discovers has to be tempered by a simultaneous recognition of common ground and by the work of making ourselves at home, which exists as a task to be carried out through repetition, repeated assays within the ordinary. Wittgenstein's aphorism continues: "We want to walk: so we need *friction* [Reibung]. Back to the rough ground!"[2]

For the philosopher, rejecting the temptation to identify ideal conditions and instead thinking from within the roughness of the everyday is an endeavour largely carried out through writing, finding forms of writing that are able to maintain the "friction" of experience. The essay since Montaigne has served as the genre of experience, of becoming—defined by provisionality, heterogeneity, and circularity. The experimental spirit of the genre is well-suited to Cavell's investigation of the "human conditions of knowing and acting",[3] opposed the gesture of denial or fantasy he identifies in the sceptical "drive for the unconditioned".[4] He also exploits the essay's relationship to the commentary or the gloss as established in Montaigne, exploring the negotiation between inherited forms and texts—the anxiety of influence—and transformation in the practice of philosophy. The guiding question becomes: how can we see differently in the same? How can philosophy produce more compelling models of experience?

The prize of the ordinary

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* ed. and trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and J. Schulte, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 51-51e.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 61.
[4] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 17.

In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell offers a reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as a therapeutic response to scepticism's inevitability, opposing the more standard reading that sees Wittgenstein's critique of philosophical criteria and appeal to ordinary language as attempts to refute the sceptical problem outright. With Wittgenstein as an ally, Cavell sets out to redefine the terrain of the sceptical problem and what might count as an appropriate philosophical response. Taking Cartesian scepticism and 20th-century positivist and pragmatist attempts to solve or get around the sceptical problem as his starting point, he discusses the sceptical impulse along two related lines: a demand for certain knowledge that cannot be satisfied from within the conditions of human becoming, and a radical disappointment with the world and others for failing to correspond to some more ideal set of conditions. Scepticism as such is not just a misunderstanding of the conditions of thought and discourse but a *denial* of those conditions, one that it is not possible to remedy with philosophical argument. Since a lack of knowledge or certainty is not what gives rise to the sceptical question in the first place, shoring up knowledge philosophically cannot help the sceptic to come to terms with his doubt; on the contrary, such attempts are just another version of the sceptic's denial. "The answer to scepticism must take the form not of philosophical construction but of the reconstruction or resettlement of the everyday."[5]

Cavell wishes to distinguish his "resettlement of the everyday" from a simple defence of prevailing wisdom or practice as well as from a certain strand of pragmatism that sets out to dismiss the sceptical problem by defending ordinary beliefs or everyday kinds of criteria. In response to the efforts of some positivistic attempts to fix knowledge criteria absolutely, Fred Dretske (1970, 1971) makes the pragmatist, coherentist claim that justified true belief involves ruling out all of the *relevant* possibilities but not all of the *logical* possibilities.[6] This is, in effect, an acknowledgement that truths are provisional and that doubts within everyday life can be addressed in a satisfactory, if not absolute way. Dretske's account of justification is echoed by Donald Davidson (1983), who argues that existence in the world seems to demand a natural

[5] Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 176.
[6] Neil Gascoigne, Scepticism. (Durham: Acumen, 2002), p. 169.

credulity, in which I believe that I and others are right most of the time. In order for communication to be possible at all, it is necessary to start from the charitable assumption that most beliefs are true, that most of what other people say is true, since communication relies on a background of shared assumptions and mutual assent. Indeed, those for whom doubt or paranoia pervades all of life are considered mentally ill; they shrink into idiosyncratic meanings. In the context of ordinary language philosophy, Cavell notes that Wittgenstein seems astonished, not by how often communication fails, but how often it succeeds, given the many ways in which language can cover over and go astray.[7] The operation of language games suggests that the breakdown of agreement on common criteria, and so the breakdown of our "attunement" with one another, has to be considered within the larger frame of a system that largely goes right, which is a way of situating the anxiety of the doubter within a wider context of credulity in others. Cavell is sympathetic to this pragmatic claiming of common ground and often criticises philosophical thought experiments for treating linguistic utterances as if they took place in a vacuum, rather than acknowledging the wide variety of frames in which the things we say to one another are habitually understood.

Cavell recognises, however, that rejecting the need for absolute justification in the first place is not likely to satisfy sceptics who think such a justification is necessary, and he reads this same recognition in Wittgenstein. "Epistemologists who think to refute scepticism by undertaking a defence of ordinary beliefs, perhaps suggesting that there is a sense in which they are certain, or *sufficiently probable* for human purposes, have already given into scepticism, they are living it."[8] Although those who wield such arguments consider them an adequate safeguard against the defining movement of Pyrrhonian and Cartesian scepticism – wherein discreet instances of doubt lead to the universal doubt about any and all criteria – they fail in accepting the very terms that sceptics themselves use to justify doubt. Such arguments merely reiterate the sceptical predicament that knowledge is a matter of justification and probability and that the human subject is essentially related to the world by means of (justified or unjustified) beliefs. Cavell offers a more sophisticated conception of the relationship of subject to world which

[7] Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, and Morality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 31.
[8] IQOO, p. 4, my emphasis.

takes into account the Romantic notion of the everyday as at the same time ordinary and uncanny[9]—captured by Novalis' image at the end of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* of moving "*immer nach Hause",* always homeward [but never home]. He asserts that the task of ordinary language philosophy, and by extension his own work, is not "to reinstate vulgar beliefs, or common sense, to a pre-scientific position of eminence, but to reclaim the human self from its denial and neglect by modern philosophy".[10] Elsewhere, he formulates this task as wrestling with common sense or the natural attitude for the "prize of the ordinary".[11]

Language and others

Cavell inherits from Wittgenstein, Austin, and the tradition of ordinary language philosophy a concern for language as the principal condition under which subjects experience and relate to the world and others. His interest in language is not primarily referential – how language does or does not accurately describe a non-linguistic world – but concerns the intricate performances involved in everyday communication: the ways in which we form and are formed by what we say. One of the formulations of the sceptical problem in Cavell's work is the desire to remove oneself from the condition of being "*of* a world" and to occupy a fictional place "outside language games".[12] The operation of language games implies community, a shared frame of intelligibility that allows for meaningful exchanges. The shared frame is conventional and gains its force precisely from habit and practical necessity, rather than from any guarantee of similitude to things themselves. In language we find ourselves always already *of* a world, and, to this extent, "grammar is our fate".[13] Without the import of others' words – the existing conventions of a language – the capacity to experience a world or oneself is severely limited, since experience, even of oneself, inevitably moves through these "external" forms. The difficulty in responding to the sceptic is precisely that there can be – and frequently are – moments of breakdown in our communication and in how we "world the world together".[14] Indeed a

[9] Ibid, p. 9.
[10] COR, p. 154.
[11] IQOO, p. 4.
[12] COR, p. 224.
[13] COR, p. 40.
[14] COR, p. 126.

part of the sceptic's "discovery of the everyday" is that "criteria, for all their necessity, are open to our repudiation, or dissatisfaction [...] that our capacity for disappointment by them is essential to the way we possess language".[15] The sceptical moment calls frames into question by moving from discreet instances of doubt in a particular situation – *She is nodding, but does she really understand what I am saying?; Those are just words; That was not what I meant at all* – to a global doubt about the possibility of any common criteria. "We experience, at least in our sceptical moments, the *very things that give us access to* a common world as *barriers* to that world, seeing language, even our form of life, as empty of whatever it is we think necessary to establishing a satisfying connection to that world."[16] The sceptic, in other words, comes to regard the conventions of ordinary language not as a means of disclosing the world but as an obstacle standing in the way of a more perfect access to or perspective on the world, a surer guarantee of connection between what is said and what is.

In philosophy, this leads to ways of writing that attempt objectivity and authority by 'subtracting' the subject from discourse or by otherwise denying or supressing the conditions of their own composition.[17] Cavell understood, as his teacher J.L. Austin had, that the efforts of Ayer and other 20th-century positivists to dissolve scepticism by producing 'a species of statement that will be *incorrigible*'[18] was not, as it appeared to be, an attempt to more precisely know the world, but rather a rejection of "the human conditions of knowledge"[19] under which the world comes to be available at all. Cavell's "grammar as fate" suggests a condition of suffering that the sceptic both identifies and tries to escape. "With each word we utter we emit stipulations, agreements we do not know and do not want to know we have entered, agreements we were always in, that were in effect before our participation in them [...] [We are] victims of

[15] IQOO, p. 5.
[16] Richard Eldridge, Bernard Rhie, et al., *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies: Consequences of Skepticism*, (New York: Continuum International, 2011), p. 108 (my emphasis).
[17] T.W. Adorno, 'Essay as Form' in *New German Critique* No. 32. (Spring-Summer, 1984), p. 153.
[18] J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*. Ed. C.J. Warnock, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 103.
[19] MWM, p. 61.

meaning."[20] Through language we inherit a common world, the forms of which are decided in advance of our participation, and so in a sense not entirely "ours". The gulf that opens up in the sceptical moment between mind and world, between self and other, "originates in an attempt, or wish, to escape (to remain a 'stranger' to, 'alienated' from) those shared forms of life, to give up responsibility for their maintenance".[21] The conventions that form the basis for common ground ("attunement") or a world in common are thus rejected as inadequate, and the sceptic withdraws from the world's claim on him, locating his 'home' elsewhere. As Bertacco and Gibson note in their insightful article on the implications of Cavell for post-colonialism, the refusal to recognise another as sharing a common world with oneself drains one's relationships to others of their significance and absolves one of the ethical responsibility to care for or maintain one's environment. The consequences of such a position range from apathy or boredom to more violent forms of 'world-consuming' disappointment.

Cavell's most powerful expressions of this dynamic fall out of his discussions not of philosophical but of literary (or filmic) texts, particularly examples of suspicion and sexual jealousy in characters like Othello or Caliban, or examples of the perverse in Romantic literature that culminate in acts of violence and revenge. What becomes clear in these examples is not that the characters in question lack *knowledge* of their partners' fidelity, or love for their children or pets (Poe's black cat), but that they fail to *acknowledge* what they do in fact know, and console themselves with the fiction that this failure is one of insufficient knowledge or evidence. "What philosophy presents as doubt brought on by the (necessarily unsuccessful) quest for certain knowledge, literature interprets as tragedy and even murder, precipitated by an individual's need to deny something."[22]

> I am filled with this feeling – of our separateness, let us say – and I want you to have it too. So I give a voice to it. And then my powerlessness presents itself as ignorance—a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack (Reverse Faust, I

[20] IQOO, p. 40.
[21] COR, p. 109.
[22] Michael Fischer, *Stanley Cavell and Literary Scepticism*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 81.

take the bargain of supernatural ignorance).[23]

The masking of metaphysical finitude – the linguistic and temporal conditions under which the world can be known – as an *epistemological* lack, as though there were some other, better species of knowledge to be had, is for Cavell an all-too-human mode of repression. He notes that it is "as though we have, or have lost, some picture of what knowing another, or being known by another, would really come to – a harmony, a concord, a union, a transparency, a governance, a power – against which our actual successes at knowing, and being known are poor things".[24]The desire hidden at the root of the claim not to know others is in fact a desire for greater proximity or intimacy – to others as they are, to the world as it is – but also an anxiety of the real, disappointingly trivial, conditions under which intimacy develops.

Cavell's response to the sceptic lies in the *moral* category of acknowledgement as a rejection of the standard epistemological terms in which the sceptical problem is presented. The shift in vocabulary is meant to reveal knowledge as a way of relating oneself to the world and to suggest that turning the world and others into mere objects of knowledge threatens other, more rewarding kinds of relationship. Acknowledgement includes a sense of responsibility for the "maintenance" of our shared forms of life, including, or perhaps primarily, our ways of speaking to one another. Everyday breakdowns in communication, which the sceptic takes as evidence that the whole edifice of mutual trust must be pulled down, become, in Cavell's frame, occasions to better say what we mean,[25] or to do the difficult work of trying to overcome our sense of another's incomprehensibility. Ignorance is recast as not merely a lack of evidence but as a wilful failure to see, a failure for which one can be held accountable. "From Cavell's point of view, we are separate, as the sceptic insists. But we are nevertheless still responsible for everything that comes between us. If we can be blind to one another, we can also see (even sometimes see through) one another; if opaque to one another, also clear; if hidden, also open; and so on."[26] The sceptic's "drive to reach the

[23] MWM, p. 263.
[24] Ibid. p. 440
[25] The sceptic denies his 'responsibility for meaning [or failing to mean] one thing, or one way, rather than another' (IQOO, p. 135).
[26] Fischer, p. 68. See COR, pp. 369-370.

unconditioned"[27] is revealed as an immature response to the demands of real intimacy as they play out in ordinary interaction, often in repeated instances of frustration or embarrassment, of uttering half-truths, of pretending not to understand, of contenting oneself with superficial agreement. "From the sceptic's point of view, repetition smacks of failure, or irony; it suggests our inability to get things right once and for all."[28] In opposition to this 'once and for all', Cavell proposes a "diurnalisation" of the work of philosophy to come to terms with the everyday, or to make ourselves at home in the conditions in which we find ourselves.[29] The work of "resettlement of the everyday" takes the form of, in Romantic terms, an infinite striving, an effort daily renewed. As Michael Fischer argues, the "goal is for scepticism to give way to the acceptance of repetition"[30] through what Cavell calls "endless specific recoveries from it, endless as a circle".[31] "Instead of answering sceptical doubts, we thus undo them, 'repeatedly, unmelodramatically, uneventfully'."[32]

Reading and responsibility

Cavell uses figures of "reading" and "seeing" to work out the central theme of resettling the everyday and philosophy's role in this task. These metaphors are offered as an alternative to the purely cognitive terms in which the dilemmas stemming from scepticism are generally phrased, and they express – and promote – an element of receptivity or inheritance that scepticism, in its "drive for the unconditioned" denies. One of the most salient features of Cavell's essays is the presence of other people's texts, a particular set of texts that recurs across his writings: Emerson, Thoreau, Wittgenstein, and Austin. The link between essays and commentary on the words of others was established as early as Montaigne, whose extensive borrowing and quoting from existing texts serves as a representation – on the level of form – of the given that ineluctably

[27] DK, p. 17.
[28] Fischer, p. 130.
[29] Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein*, (Albuquerque: Living Batch Press, 1989), p. 66.
[30] Fischer, p. 130.
[31] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 30.
[32] NYUA p. 76 in Fischer, p. 130.

shapes the subject. Montaigne explicitly reflects on the relationship between text and self, sketching out a subjectivity that is constituted by the texts of others and that forms itself by interpreting and "glossing" what is already there.[33] Georgy Lukács identifies this reflection on the given as an essential feature of the essay form: "The essay is always concerned with something already formed, or at best, with something that has been; it is part of its essence that it does not draw something new out of an empty vacuum, but only gives a new order to such things as once lived."[34] Cavell's commitment to ordinary language philosophy and to a Romantic notion of a contingent – rather than an absolute beginning – adds to this general feature of the essay a specific emphasis on negotiating between what is given or inherited and what is created. This is a theme that Cavell deals with explicitly in much of his work and can be a seen as a third way between the sceptic's denial of conditionedness – a denial of common ground – and the denial of human possibility or originality that might result from an appeal to the ordinary. Cavell's vision of moral perfectionism involves the transformation of the given or contingent into that for which the subject holds herself accountable.

In *In Quest of the Ordinary*, Cavell relates this theme to the process of reading, where reading is "a way of accepting responsibility for one's own discourse".

> But suppose what is meant by argumentation in philosophy is one way of accepting full responsibility for one's own discourse. Then the hearing I require depends upon the thought that there is another way, another philosophical way (for poetry will have its way, and therapy will have its way) of accepting responsibility. This other philosophical way I am going to call reading; others may call it philosophical interpretation.[35]

Cavell's contrast between the work of reading or interpretation and argumentation calls to mind Montaigne's separation of his *essais* from arguments—both the deductive style of argument from established

[33] Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, eds. J. Balsalmo, M. Magnien, and C. Magnien-Simonin, (Paris: Bibliothèque de la *Pléiade*, 2007), p. 1115 (III:13).
[34] Georgy Lukács, 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay (1910)' in *Soul and Form*, trans. Anna Bostock, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974), p. 10.
[35] IQOO, p. 14

principles that he disliked in Scholasticism and the conventions of oral debates in which the truth tends to be distorted for the sake of vanquishing one's opponent. What Montaigne claims for his own writing, by contrast, is to "talk about [him]self" Cavell's work has the similar quality of a writer who talks to and about himself, using the words of others in the attempt to better understand his own experience. In this sense, reading others' texts, or speaking in a language passed down from others, is part of the task of autobiography or coming into one's own. One's *self* begins with a common inheritance and is expressed and realised through existing forms, as the idea of "grammar as fate" from *In Quest of the Ordinary* brings to light. Cavell raises the question of responsibility in reading, but it is not (only) a responsibility to what or to whom one is reading, as if reading were a primarily passive activity. Rather, reading means taking "responsibility for one's *own* discourse"—suggesting that reading is a way of acknowledging one's place 'in a world of other's words'[36] and that the shape of one's own words, and one's own self, is a negotiation between receiving and creating.

Cavell extends his discussion of reading by examining the theme in Emerson and Thoreau. Thoreau's suggestion in *Walden* that one can 'read' the stars:

> . . . interprets reading (dangerously invoking, to revise, the idea of the astrological) as a process of *being read*, as finding your fate in your capacity for interpretation of yourself. "Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and you walk on into futurity." What is before you is precisely not, if you catch Thoreau's tune, something in the future; what is before you, if you are, for example, reading, is a text. He asks his reader to see it, to become a seer with it. Only then can you walk beyond where you are.[37]

The co-extensiveness (Montaigne's "consubstantiality"[38]) of reading with

[36] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. C. Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 143.
[37] IQOO, p. 16.
[38] Montaigne, p. 703 (II:18). In Montaigne, the self is a co-creation of the text rather than something that exists in advance of it. *Je n'ay pas plus faict mon livre que mon livre m'a faict. Livre consubstantial à son autheur* [I no more write my book than my

the process of self-interpretation is made explicit in this passage. Thoreau presents his readers with the question they must ask themselves about their relationship both to his text and to their own: student or seer? Reading could take on the academic sense of being "a student merely", which suggests a lack of appropriation or a lack of essential interest in what one knows or in what there is to be learned. Alternatively, the reader is invited to become a seer of "what is before [her]". The temporal knot of "fate", "what is before", and "futurity" needs some unravelling. "Before" might mean prior to or it might mean in front of, an ambiguity that Cavell's reading exploits by deriving fate (which is set prior to one's reading of it) from what is in front of the subject—the conditions ("texts") given to her or inherited by her, including the agreements of language that we have always *already* entered into merely by virtue of existing.[39] "Walking into futurity" then means to realise oneself in the context of inherited social and linguistic conditions, to "take responsibility for one's own discourse". The activity of reading continues when we look up from our books, in the activity of seeing—seeing oneself and seeing a task for oneself in what is there. "That reading is a way, or a goal, of seeing, is something attested – as I found in *The Claim of Reason* – by the history of the word reading in a word for advising, which in turn contains a word for seeing."[40]

Cavell has sometimes been reproached for reading within such a narrow range of texts, particularly the American Romantics and Wittgenstein. He admits that "reformulation seems forever an essential piece of my intellectual business", referring both to the core set of texts to which he frequently returns and his many rewritings and reworkings of his own texts.[41] With a background of the essayist's commitment to reshaping in view, his remark strikes one less as an excuse for intellectual laziness and more as a genuine commitment to uncovering, by repeated attempts, what there is to be seen differently in the same, Kierkegaard's "possibility" realised in the everyday. This movement of repetition is essential to how Cavell's essays, and essays more broadly, develop what Adorno calls their "texture" and what Lukács calls their "fidelity" to the existing words or objects that they reformulate.[42] Beginning from a

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book writes me. Book and author are consubstantial]'.

[39] Ibid, pp. 39-40.

[40] COR, p. 17.

[41] IQOO, p. 175.

[42] Adorno, p. 160; Lukács, p. 10.

contingent somewhere and returning to the same contrasts with the usual sense of development in a philosophical text, which involves getting to the bottom (*Grund*) of a matter. Against this figure of development, Cavell cites Wittgenstein's fragment 126:

> Philosophy just puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view, there is nothing to explain. For whatever may be hidden is of no interest to us.[43]

This controversial claim has been read by many as the reduction of philosophical activity to a strict behaviorism, denying the dimension of the secret or private in human experience. On Cavell's reading it suggests instead that what is to be seen is already visible, if only perhaps through a glass, darkly. For Wittgenstein, and for Cavell, the material of everyday life furnishes what there is for philosophy to know, but one is led astray in the typical metaphors used to express truth: *getting to the bottom of* or *penetrating*. Literary critic John Hollander expresses the significance Cavell attaches to such descriptions.

> Cavell constantly implies that there are parables to be drawn about the way we treat the objects of our consciousness and the subjects of parts of it. What is so powerful and yet so elusive of the nets of ordinary intellectual expectation in *The Claim of Reason* is the way in which the activities of philosophizing become synecdochic, metonymic, and generally parabolic for the activities of the rest of life itself.[44]

Born out of a sense that *getting to the bottom of* a matter risks a denial of what is there to be seen for (enlightened) eyes, Cavell's gestures of returning to the same philosophical and literary material thus suggest new figures for what activities might be of value—both for philosophy and for life with others.

[43] Wittgenstein, pp. 55-55e.
[44] John Hollander, 'Stanley Cavell and *The Claim of Reason'* in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1989) p. 596.

The task of philosophical writing

Cavell's writing style develops out of a commitment to interrogating the everyday philosophically, while remaining faithful to ordinary experience: a project which he sometimes refers to as the 'task' of the everyday, or the 'quest of the ordinary'—emphasising the activity of uncovering or unconcealing what is given, for which essays are particularly suited. His notoriously long, complex, and parenthetical sentences perform precisely the activities of shifting, qualifying, comparing, and emerging into view that he describes as operating within the everyday—the opening sentence of the *Claim of Reason* is a prime example.[45] A general lack of understanding of how form might inform epistemological and moral positions has led many philosophers to dismiss Cavell's writings as insufficiently philosophical, or purposely obfuscatory. As Stephen Mulhall attests,

> [The] standard line of criticism focuses upon Cavell's style: his use of parentheses and qualification, his idiosyncratic modes of punctuation, his reliance upon complex, allusive, and endlessly reflexive rhetorical strategies, his constant foregrounding of essentially personal or biographical matters—all of these seemingly self-indulgent features of his writing are taken to derogate from his claim to be engaging in

[45] I reproduce the sentence here for the convenience of the reader. "If not at the beginning of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, since what starts philosophy is no more to be known at the outset than how to make an end of it; and if not at the opening of *Philosophical Investigations*, since its opening is not to be confused with the starting of the philosophy it expresses, and since the terms in which that opening might be understood can hardly be given along with the opening itself; and if we acknowledge from the commencement, anyway leave open at the opening, that the way this work is written is internal to what it teaches, which means that we cannot understand the manner (call it the method) before we understand its work; and if we do not look to our history, since placing this book historically can hardly happen earlier than placing it philosophically; nor look to Wittgenstein's past, since then we are likely to suppose that *Investigations* is written in criticism of the *Tractatus*, which is not so much wrong as empty, both because to know what constitutes its criticism would be to know what constitutes its philosophy, and because it is more to the present point to see how the *Investigations* is written in criticism of itself; then where and how are we to approach this text?" (COR, p. 3). For an analysis of this sentence, see the opening chapter of Mulhall's *Inheritance and Originality* (2001).

philosophically rigorous work.[46]

Breaking down these critiques, the substantive charges are that Cavell's writing is unsystematic, that it openly reflects on its own procedures, and that it is unabashedly rooted in the personal experience of the writer. These features are familiar hallmarks of essayistic writing, and each is motivated by distinctly philosophical and ethical considerations, rather than by self-indulgence. It is precisely to counter the negative element of idiosyncrasy – being doomed to follow one's own prejudices without realising it – that essayistic writing takes the self-conscious and subjective shape it does.[47] It is also the reason for the stress on particular cases and on the constant possibility of error that are expressed in Cavell's many parenthetical qualifications. Adorno contrasts these essayistic tendencies with the ambition of "scholastic" or "positivistic" philosophy to become "objective" after the manner of the sciences. "Every impulse of expression – as far as the instinct of scientific purism is concerned – endangers an objectivity that is said to spring forth after the subtraction of the subject."[48] But "if truth in fact has a temporal core, then the full historical content becomes an integral moment in truth; the *a posteriori* becomes concretely the *a priori* [...] The relation to [subjective] experience [...] is a relation to all of history".[49] On this reading, discourses that begin from the 'I' and that openly reflect on the relationship of form to ideas achieve a greater degree of reliability or truth than those that deny the contingent, historical starting point of philosophical enquiry and the meaning inherent in pre-existing linguistic forms. Mulhall, wishing to defend Cavell against critics of his writing style, contends that Cavell's "may be a species of rigour that analytical philosophers are not accustomed to, but it is no less admirable for that".[50]

[46] Stephen Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 283-84.
[47] Adorno, pp. 153; 158.
[48] Ibid, p. 153.
[49] Ibid, p. 158.
[50] Mulhall, pp. 283-84. This echoes similar comments made by Cavell about Emerson and Thoreau '[They propose, and embody, a mode of thinking, a mode of conceptual accuracy, as thorough as anything imagined within established philosophy, but invisible to that philosophy because based on an idea of rigour foreign to it establishment . . . [they say] a work like Walden has nothing in it to call *arguments*' (IQOO, p. 14).

Cavell's focus on his own experience and his return to the same themes is an attempt to guard against one of the primary ways in which philosophical inquiry can go astray: the philosopher's lack of awareness of – and so lack of responsibility for – how her thought and her means of expression are conditioned, and how they condition the practice of philosophy. This is, one the one hand, an argument against the "ideal of a context-free or neutral medium characteristic of a philosophy which models itself on scientific discourse".[51] Writing about the role of examples or paradigm cases in moral philosophy, Cavell asks:

> Is there any case about which we will feel, as we felt about 'best' cases in epistemology, that 'If *any* case is one in which we can know something to be (or agree that it is) good or bad, right or wrong, we can know this to be?' [...] [W]e might feel that any agreement about the morality of the act will turn upon some agreement about how the act *is* to be described. Was it really *breaking a promise*? Is it fair *just* to say he lied when what he did was to lie *in order to...*or *as a way of...*? [...] Apparently what is the 'case' in question forms part of the content of the *moral argument itself*.[52]

Here Cavell pushes back against the notion that there could be a neutral form of philosophical discourse for the moral concerns that most interest him—concerns which, as it turns out, accompany a whole range of problems that are generally described as purely epistemological. The promise of the philosophical example is the clarity it can bring to difficult subjects, but, as Cavell points out, this clarity, and any philosophical agreement that might issue from it, is achieved at the expense of overlooking the real philosophical – and moral – work to be done, determining the position one is taking responsibility for, which is a question of "the nature or quality of our relationship to one another".[53] Criteria then, are not merely a question of determining what can be known, as the sceptics claim, or what can be agreed upon, as the pragmatists claim, but are "terms in which I *relate what's happening*,

[51] Claire De Obaldia, *The Essayistic Spirit*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 33.
[52] COR, pp. 264-65.
[53] COR, p. 268. 'Attention to the details of cases as they arise many not provide a quick path to an all-embracing system; but at least it promises genuine instead of spurious clarity (Cavell, MWM, p. 41).

make sense of it by giving its history, say what 'goes before and after'. What I call something, what I count as something, is a function of how I *recount* it, tell it".[54] Cavell's interest in literature and film lie precisely in their ability to more richly describe the terrain of these relationships than philosophy has been able to do.[55]

For Cavell, as for Kierkegaard, "valuing underwrites asserting".[56] *Interest* underwrites talking. If, in everyday conversation or in philosophical writing, we talk about things that interest us in a way that does not interest us, that does not really say what we mean, we are not only doing ourselves a disservice but slowly "stupefying" ourselves.[57] Given that expressing ourselves amounts to making or constituting ourselves in the world with others, the fiction of the neutral text that exempts itself from the agreements into which the use of language forces us, amounts to a complicity in this stupefaction, an abandonment of the maintenance of "shared forms of life". The task of maintenance as a response to and "restructuring" of the everyday allows Cavell to maintain a place for the work of philosophy that guards against the tendency toward fantasy, understood as a denial of real constraints or conditions. In the framework established by Cavell, revelation is possible not by knowing but by *noticing*, or seeing differently what one has already seen. In everyday experience, the face to which one is indifferent can become ugly, or beautiful; an insignificant moment in childhood can become a precious memory after a parent has died. In philosophy, established questions and figures can lose their relevance. "There is a spirit in which things can be seen, as of a spirit in which words may be meant, and believed. And of course the spirit may die out."[58] Giving expression to the ways in which we fail to see what is before us is part of the moral work of taking responsibility for our separateness – from our environment and from others – which scepticism reveals. Cavell favours the form of the essay above all for its circularity, the way it recurs to the same themes from different perspectives, suggesting that the work of uncovering or

[54] COR, p. 94.
[55] 'The ability to produce more compelling models of what our moral-and even what our epistemologically and metaphysically wondrous-life is like has given major novelists and great poets, in the same three and a half centuries since Descartes, a disproportionate claim to human knowledge of the human' (Hollander, p. 582).
[56] COR, pp. 94-95.
[57] COR, p. 94.
[58] COR, p. 371.

resettling is never a settled matter, and that any flight out of the circle amounts to a refusal of the conditions within which relationships to the world and others are formed and maintained. "The direction out of illusion is not up...but down, at any rate along each chain of a day's denial. Philosophy (as descent) can thus be said to leave everything as it is precisely because it is a refusal of, say disobedient to, (a false) ascent, or transcendence."[59]

Cavell's essayism is, finally, an attempt to better express the position of inheritance or embeddedness that derives from the basic fact of being linguistic creatures, precisely the feature which gives rise to the sceptic's anxiety that our language, and so our world, is not our own. He reads the recognition of inheritance as the primary insight of Thoreau's *Walden*, which he expresses with the formulation: "dwelling comes before building".[60] When Cavell stresses that "the answer to scepticism must take the form not of *philosophical* construction but of the reconstruction or resettlement of the everyday", he suggests that the error committed in many sceptical accounts (or attempts to solve or get around the sceptical problem) is one of failing in the responsiveness to one's environment, of building without the foundation of knowing what it is to dwell (and so building structures unsuited to dwelling).[61] The element of receptivity or response in "dwelling", rather than rendering us "victims of [inherited] meaning" is crucial to how Cavell conceives of the moral task of philosophy and the kind of writing that is best able to carry out this task.[62] "Instead of leading the passive reader 'step-by-step', in a logical and orderly manner, to an already established point of certainty and clarity, the essayist requires the reader's active participation in the form of a constantly renewed evaluation, deduction, and interpretation of the matter at hand."[63] Cavell's watchword for philosophical writing – and reading – is: "Don't say 'must' *but look and see.*"[64]

[59] NYUA, p. 46
[60] IQOO, p. 175.
[61] IQOO p. 196.
[62] Ibid, p. 40.
[63] de Obaldia, p. 32.
[64] NYUA, p. 66.

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Masks and Monsters: On the Transformative Power of Art

MARINA MARREN

~Protagoras, in attacking poetry, in the name of
universal opinion, urges the city to abandon music
education and rely entirely on punishment and threats.
Protagoras the rationalist urges the brutalization of man.

~Seth Benardete, "Protagoras's Myth and Logos"[1]

Prelude:

A lover of poetry, who understands the power that image exerts over soul, speaks about visual images. He urges that images "avoid the contagion of 'secondary trauma,' that they allow … for reflection, even if there is a shock."[2] Borrowing the words of Geoffrey Hartman[3], we ask: "What happens to reflection in this increasingly ocular"[4] world? Which kind of

[1] *The Argument of the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 196.
[2] Cathy Caruth, *Listening to Trauma: Conversations with Leaders in the Theory and Treatment of Catastrophic Experience* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 226.
[3] I am referring, specifically, to Hartman's lifelong study of William Wordsworth's poetry. Hartman's work and help in founding the Yale Holocaust archive is indicative of his intimate understanding of and his dedication to the study of trauma.
[4] Ibid.

seeing is reflective and which the unnecessarily traumatizing kind? We seek to get a sense for the molding capacity of images and the different modes of seeing and, therefore, we turn to a study of a painting.[5]

The original of Paul Gavarni's[6] *Two Pierrots Looking into a Box* is at the Louvre. Gavarni's inscription reads, "*Hommage respectueux* à *Madame* Leroy." Signed by a witty and satirical Gavarni, this is not a simple dedication. Through his inscriptions, his topographical pseudonym,[7] and his satirical caricatures, which is to say—through his masks—the artist reaches for an image of our need to dissimulate. Because who knows who anyone, let alone who *one*, is! Because "That's most extraordinary! How can anybody be a Persian!"[8], or a Parisian, for that matter (Montesquieu). How can anyone be? If all that is left when the last mask comes off or when all masks come off at last is the nothingness of death?[9] To be someone, to be at all, then, we must be masked, and artfully at that.[10]

Jacques Derrida turns to Gavarni's *Pierrots* as a target for his rapid-fire remarks on dissimulation, jealousy, and death.[11] Derrida is counting on the painter's intimate understanding of the roles that masks let us play.

[5] Søren Kierkegaard's treatment of the four Abraham vignettes in *Fear and Trembling* is one of the existential literature's best examples of modal seeing, which is the seeing of the same event as yielding radically different meanings. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition* (Hong, H. and Hong, E. trans. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[6] Paul Gavarni (01.13.1804 - 11.23.1866). The original French title of the painting is "Deux Pierrots regardant dans une loge". The inscription on the painting, translated into English, reads, "Respectful tribute to Ms. Leroy".

[7] I have in mind an especially picturesque district in Southern France, Cirque de Gavarnie, where Sulpice Guillaume Chevalier (known as Paul Gavarni) traveled in 1825.

[8] Charles-Louis Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (Mauldon, M. trans. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 41. Quotation is taken from Montesquieu's Letter 28, *Rica to the Same* [Ibben] *in Smyrna*.

[9] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. "That to Philosophize is to Learn to Die" (Frame, M. D. trans. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), pp. 56-67.

[10] From Book V, Section 361 of Friedrich Nietzsche's, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Kaufmann, A. W. trans. New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 1974), pp. 316-317.

[11] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Pascale-Anne, B. and Naas, M. trans. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 73. Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* accompanied the eponymous exhibit, held at the Louvre Museum during the years 1990-1991.

As far as Derrida is concerned, Gavarni is a masking virtuoso. He draws masks on canvas and signs his works with mini masquerades, with vaudevilles of words, with witty imagistic captions.[12] We look at them and ask about playfulness of masks. With Derrida we ask about play and stay with the painting while Gavarni's Pierrots, captive to their peeping charade, play the sovereign and, even at the same time, play the beast.[13]

Act 1: An Invitation

I invite you now to look at the below painting. The masquerade depicted there extends another invitation—to revel in anonymity. The sensual and veiled advance, allowed by the masked exchange, leaves those who meet with no attachments. It is not much of a meeting, really. No names given. None to be matched with faces, at any rate. No obligations to fulfil. How wonderful to have the ring of Gyges![14] To see, to "know," so to speak, to have the power to look on without being known or seen. Does this anonymity offer a taste of the proverbial limitless power and freedom? Is there something to the insistence of Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière,[15] another couple who spend their days confronting and connecting with suffering and insanity, when they claim that where social links are actively forgone, "we go to perversion"?[16]

The white clad youths, skin smooth, no hair showing, necks strong

[12] The caption to a work from the series "Students" is an example of Gavarni's ridicule of socially awkward situations. The proper name of the lady in question, Bienaimée, in common parlance means "beloved."
- Miss Bienaimée, please.
- She's not in. What did you want?
- Oh nothing, just to talk to her. … But will you please tell her that she's awaited at rue Neuve St. George? She'll understand.
- I'm afraid I understand that too!
From: http://www.oldbookillustrations.com/references-documents/paul-gavarni-3. Accessed on June 28, 2015.

[13] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign I* (Bennington, G. trans. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 33.

[14] Plato, *Republic* (Bloom, A. trans. New York, NY: Basic Books Publishing, 1991), Book II.359c-360b.

[15] Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière are psychoanalysts and professors at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). In her interview, Caruth talks to Davoine and Gaudillière about their "work on madness and trauma … in relation to Europe's catastrophic history" (*Listening to Trauma* p. 81).

[16] Ibid., p. 90

and pliant, full parted lips, the smile bespeaks desire. They are invited to peek past the open curtain. If the curtains are drawn and the looking in is made easy, should we then look? The theater goers, the opera lovers, they are there for the performance. The staged act is for them and it is senseless without their attentive presence. The spectators make sense when the show is on. But how can Pierrots make any sense? What kind of scenery are they after? Gavarni makes them look not at the stage, but into the box. There, too, must be some kind of a performance. These boys are welcomed to it while being doubly removed from the act—hiding behind the door, hiding behind their black masks—the Pierrots double up on their pleasure. They can look into the box and then they can look at each other and confirm their excitement. They look upon what is not their own, as did Herodotus' Gyges.[17] The mythical onlooker quickly made the move from voyeurism to murder. Gyges fell prey to a tyrannical lust for power. Trusting that the transgression is made harmless through their disguise, as did Euripides' Pentheus,[18] the two Pierrots play the role of an unsuspecting victim. They know only the taste of fascinating power, but have no inkling of its workings. Can their bodies show what to their mind is yet unknown?

Let us see. Let us look now for the marks borne by the Pierrots bodies; the marks left by their peeping game. Let us consider what shapes the Pierrots' faces. Hegel studies sculpture and notes, "in the formation of the animal head the predominant thing is the mouth".[19] So if we were to look for Gavarni's suggestions about the boys' non-humanity, we would look around the mouth. If we were to look for their humanity, we would look around their eyes, or just one eye, which Gavarni leaves for us to consider because, as Hegel teaches, "the human face has a second center in which the soulful and spiritual relation to things is manifested".[20] And now we look—we combine the animal and the human marks. Look at the sensual mouth and forget about what it expresses. Forget it is a mouth. Keep in view only the two dark spots that are at each end of the figure

[17] Herodotus, *Histories* (Green, D. trans. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1988)
[18] Euripides, *Bacchae* (Esposito, S. trans. New York, NY: Classic Books International Publishing, 2010)
[19] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Knox, M. T. trans. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), Vol. 3, Part III, Section II.
[20] Ibid.

which has just been seen as a mouth. Now let go of the mouth and think about the eyes. Make these two spots into small, lidless black eye holes directed at the window of the box. Now shift the center of the face to the newly found eyes. What do you see? A tiny nose, which might belong to a cat, a monkey, or a bat. Disfigured cheeks. A chinless face. A lipless mouth open. Startled expression, but not of a human face. Yet we are not looking at an animal either. Monstrosity?

No mask could ever hide it, because no face could show it in the first place. Gavarni's brush sounds the unseen. And sounding is appropriate here, because Derrida picks this painting for his *Memoirs*, which he records as if they were an internal dialogue, or a dialogue with the reader. The *Memoirs*, he says, are the reminiscences of the blind. We are blind, for the most part, to the non-physical deformities (and beauties). It takes someone like Gavarni to give to our eyes the twists and cankers of the soul. Seeing alone does not suffice. Then what? Asks Derrida, "Shall I just listen? Or observe?" He also answers, "Both, once again, or rather between the two. I'll have you observe that reading proceeds in no other way. It listens in watching"[21]. We shall proceed in the same way. Now we know that the two Pierrots are playing both a sacrificial beast and a wild animal; both a slavish prey and a tyrannical sovereign. They are acting out that monstrous viciousness, which always ends up in a sacrifice.

Could Gavarni's playful, peeping Pierrots graduate to Montaigne's masked and very serious executioners? This is hardly a stretch. The boys will look on. While we together with Montaigne are shielded by disbelief, the executioners are looking.

> I could hardly persuade myself [says Montaigne] before I saw it with my eyes, that there could be found souls so cruel and fell, who without hatred, without profit, and for no other end but only to enjoy the pleasant spectacle of the gestures and motions, the lamentable groans and cries of a man [would condemn him to] dying in anguish. For this is the utmost point to which cruelty can arrive:—
> 'That a man should kill a man, not being angry, not in fear,

[21] Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind* p. 2

[but] only for the sake of the spectacle.'[22]

The slow rot of voyeuristic perversion. When does it take root? Pierrots look on. They look not at the games of their lovers, not at the games, which offer forgiveness and ask that one forgive oneself. These are not the self-seeking, but the self-annihilating games. The mask stays on and sticks. Held captive to the hunger for the brew, which Nietzsche calls the "witches' potion",[23] the players long for the "mixture of sensuality and cruelty".[24] Imprisoned by the mask that used to promise promiscuous freedom one becomes a slave to the play of restless dissimulation. This agitated play no longer offers security of concealment. Like Plato's tyrant, the one who used to be a master becomes forever captive to the enslavement of the impenetrable palace,[25] to the imploding place that never more gives comfort of a home. The walls fall in. The mask collapses. The startled monster shows.

Act 2: Rejection

Reject the odd pleasure alloyed with a perverse taste for uncommon and forbidden sights. Condemn frivolities for what they have now been exposed to be. See the corrupting play for what it is. Having seen, then, see to it that such corrupt, albeit playful pleasures, do not show up often. Better still, outlaw peeping. Bid that dissimulation, different masks, difference be looked down upon. Nakedness for all! If everyone is naked, no one is a voyeur, but then again, neither can anyone really see or show anything.

Derrida talks about this kind of seemingly self-proclaimed right to set the parameters of conformity. He talks about the international sovereign power as being "proportionate to its power to see, power to have under surveillance, to observe, to take in".[26] Now I, the viewer, seemingly correctly and autonomously, have decided that Gavarni portrays amoral and inhuman character. Now I say: If amoral, then harmful. Now I make what is harmful illegal. And I make sure that my

[22] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne* pp. 306-318.
[23] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Basic Writings*. *The Birth of Tragedy out of Spirit of Music* (Kaufmann, W. trans. New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 2000), p. 39.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Cf. conversations about tyranny in Plato, *Republic* Book IX.
[26] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, p. 215

many sleepless eyes report to me transgressions of the law. No Hermes' music will lull the everlasting watchfulness of the Argus that I am.[27]

What is the origin of this fervent reaction to a display of promiscuity and cunning, the rejection and the prohibition that I, playing the sovereign, instil as law? What are its roots? Is it not a superstitious fear of—precisely—that which I also am? Or is it not, at least, a fear of that which can get a hold of me? Am I spared the possibility of being cruel? Is anyone? Is my soul forever guarded against the mortifying ailments and twists? Is anyone's? Or do we, in denying ourselves the pathological potential, remain blind to the development of the diseases of the soul?

Is Jay Lifton's[28] insight into the strange workings of psychic security valid? Do we continuously, albeit not conscientiously, choose "people off whom we live not only economically … but [also] psychologically"?[29] And why is psychic vampirism so sweet and so ingrained? Lifton tells us that this odd, but all too common, desire to affirm one's own righteousness, one's own right to live at the expense of others has to do with what is "*perceived* as meaning". This meaning, says Lifton, (or rather the perception of it) is "perverse in the way that in all psychological judgment there has to be ethical judgment".[30] Condemnation of some perceived amorality in others amounts to a palpable accrual of self-worth. But Nietzsche, when he traced the genealogy of morals, had already said that.[31] In his more joyous moments, Nietzsche added that the "vulgar always comes forward just as sure and certain of itself as anything noble, lovely, and passionate. … 'The animal has its rights like man, so let it run about freely; and you, my dear fellow man, are still this animal, in spite of all!'".[32] Left on its own this is a wishful affirmation. Nietzsche, who studies the "fate of the

[27] The myth about the hundred-eyed Argus and Hermes, who lulls the monster to sleep and then kills him, is recounted by Edith Hamilton in *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Company Publishing, 1969), p. 77.
[28] Psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton studies catastrophic trauma. He focuses our attention on facing the inevitability of death and the need to reckon with, as opposed to repress, this and other catastrophic experience.
[29] Caruth, *Listening to Trauma* p. 13.
[30] Ibid., p. 14.
[31] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Basic Writings. On the Genealogy of Morals* (Kaufmann, W. trans. New York, NY: Random House Publishing, 2000), e.g., I.6, I.16, III.9.
[32] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* II.77.

soul",[33] and who exposes the sickness that parades as the fashionable sign of health, makes this claim about animality and freedom. To be an animal is to be free. But how could a human being, who "first became an *interesting animal* [when] … the human soul became *deep* … and turned *evil*" forget this acquired depth and be simple again; be simply free? Nietzsche's "in spite of all!" serves to underscore the vast difference between human and animal. Not least of all, our cruelty, our perversion, but also our longing for the otherworldly and the sublime, mark human life, and in so doing mark animal life as essentially other. I could not learn to worship or, on the contrary, to despise correctly and then give the world my best animal. This makes no sense because the animal is free from calculative spite. There is an immediacy to animal being that frees it from the need to forecast and to calculate. Matters are otherwise with us. For human beings, freedom comes from underneath a mask. Nietzsche affirms, "What is and remains popular is the *mask*".[34]

If it is true that I mistake propriety for humaneness, then in denying monstrous images their place, I am held captive to another mask—to the visage of a self-righteous moralizer. A sadly comical image: a dressed up actor, now off stage, keeps on her excessive make up. Playing some sovereign, she takes herself so seriously as to forget that it is all a game in which she too, at times, is not an actor, but a viewer of a performance, and an observer of an act. Somehow the drive to do things right, the preoccupation with what Derrida describes as an "erection toward height [that] … sign of sovereignty"[35] leaves her blind to her repressed desires—the ones she so meticulously shuns.

Act 3 (unfinished): Acceptance

Unfinished once and for all. Because who knows what might yet need be accepted? Resolve to waver. Descartes' resolve[36] to be his own most avid critic, to meditate, to keep on thinking, to be not of a weak, but of a wondrous mind[37]—a mind that cannot help itself, but wonder—that is the

[33] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* Preface p. 7
[34] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Gay Science* II.77
[35] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign* p. 215.
[36] René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*. "Dedicatory Letter to Elizabeth." *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Volume 1* (Cottingham, J., Stoothoff, R., Murdoch, D. trans. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
[37] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method of Conducting One's Reason Well and*

debt of acceptance. To seek certainty as Descartes did means to first doubt all that appears to be certain. Hence, to question, to change one's mind, and to repent. Since "to be free … from all repentance and remorse"[38] is hardly human, let alone thoughtful, but is rather a sign of brutish inhumanity, Descartes must mean that there is a difference between the "weak and wavering minds".[39] The weak cannot accept the change of perspective and the anguish that might come with it. The wavering "allow themselves the inconstancy of practicing as good the things that they afterwards judge to be bad". To wonder, to examine, then to waver; to be able to change one's mind, even if this change ushers in frightful pain, and then to accept the novel point of view—*that* is no task for the minds that are weak. That is the debt, forever outstanding debt, of acceptance. Do we not, sometimes, anxious to balance out the ledger, play the sovereign; play the beast? Precarious accounting. How could it be a simple one-for-one? A moral rule to follow for every violation done to other or to oneself? Or one blanketing, annulling forgiveness for each abominable cruelty? All set? All even? Square one? Another mask that got the better of the actor. Another image, which having been accepted as the soul's beloved, took over and became that very soul.[40] Then how are we—children of play, lovers of dissimulation—to look at images acceptingly? Have we made any headway on resolving Hartman's dilemma about the precariousness of the act of seeing in which dwells the palliative, reflective power as well as the traumatic potential summoned forthwith? Where must we seek forgiveness that mollifies the shock of seeing, transforms the scene, and gives a chance to see through to an image as it reflects ourselves?[41]

Seeking Truth in the Sciences (Kennington, R. trans. Boston, MA: Focus Philosophical Library Publishing, 2007), p. 29.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] The allusion is to images described in Plato's *Phaedrus* 245c-249d.

[41] Lifton describes a shocking, even numbing traumatization, as an occasion for the reconstitution or rejuvenation of vision, understanding, and perception of the world. He says that the "insight begins with the shattering of prior forms … it is a shattering of form, but it is also a new dimension of experience" (*Listening to Trauma* p. 9). Horrific events are not the only catalysts for the recreation of symbolic connections. However, Lifton's and Hartman's understanding of the matter suggests that reflection, which reconfigures the symbolic paradigms through which we perceive the world, is an act of violence. On violence and reflection see also Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (Spivak, C. G. trans. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press,

And once again, to Derrida for answers:

> reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source [or], a spring … what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles … What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three.[42]

Between me and me there is always a space, which I am meticulously trying to close up, to round out, and to annul. The discomfort of being "out of joint",[43] the loneliness of human non-belonging longs to be bound, at best; at worst, it wills to be extinguished. The image that became the soul, the mask that stuck forever, these are appropriately human stories. Why, then, the inborn distance from the self? What is the point of self-aware being? Could it be, then, that violence has at least two faces? One that in *Orpheus Descending*, Val calls "slow rot"[44] and then another one, which is rejuvenating; not corrupting?[45] Am I being violent when I insist on coming back to and lingering with that disjointedness from which the spring of openness flows over into reflective seeing of the world, of others, and of myself? Whose task is it to learn to see in such a way that worldly shock is curative or at least curable and not debilitating? How does one learn the craft of artful masking? Milhail Bakhtin, in his reading of François Rabelais, finds several clues:

> Masks [—] … a highly difficult and highly important motif of the folk culture. Mask signifies the joy of change and of transformation, the ease of non-finality, the happy rejection of

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1997), pp. 112 and 142. See also Lifton's analysis of image, symbolization, paradigms, and replacement of instinct in *Listening to Trauma* p. 8.

[42] Jacques Derrida, *On Grammatology*, p. 36

[43] The original line, "Time is out of joint," is from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (New York, NY: Penguin Group Publishing, 1998), Act 1, Scene 5, Line 188.

[44] Tennessee Williams, *Four Plays.* "Orpheus Descending" (New York, NY: Signet Classic Publishing, 1976)

[45] Invoking and explaining the force of instaurational, rejuvenating, and necessary violence, Heidegger reads chorus' "Ode to Man" from Sophocles' *Antigone*. See Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*. "Restriction of Being" (Fried, G. and Polt, R. trans. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000)

> simplistic identity, the rejection of fatuous coincidence with oneself. Mask is related to change of state, to metamorphoses, to violation of natural borders, to ridicule, and to nicknames (that stand in instead of names). Mask embodies the playful origin of life. At its core is an extraordinary relationship between reality and image; the kind that characterizes the ancient ritualistic-visual form. It is, of course, impossible to exhaust the multidimensional meaningfulness that is intrinsic to the symbolic power of the mask. It should be noted that such phenomena as parody, caricature, grimace, affectation and smirking are, in essence, mask derivatives. Through mask the very being of the grotesque shines brightly.[46]

Now one more time we look at our boys. In their many faces, in their many masks we see the play to which we are forever captive. It is an essential captivity. One of the many acts proper to human beings is the scene of the spectacle in which one always plays some kind of a role and where, sometimes, one has to show the mask that marks the monstrous. To hear the monstrous laugh, to laugh with it, to laugh at one's infatuation with the question of the inhumane, and to accept that this inquiry remains forever undecided. To keep one's mind, that is, to keep the precarious balance between lucidity and insanity, in tension. To keep the resolve to keep paying the debt of acceptance. To keep the question of the *Phaedrus* alive; that question being "whether I happen to be a many-coiled wild animal, like Typhon",[47] a name which to a Greek ear speaks of smoke clouds and dissemblance, "furious in spirit, or a tame and simple animal, to whom divine and modest lot is given by nature?"[48] Which am I, then? Which is my monster? And my human?

[46] Михаил Михайлович Бахтин, *Творчество Франсуа Рабле и народная культура спедневековья и ренессанса. Введение.* (Россия: Художественная Литература, 1990), p. 15, my translation.

[47] Typhon is the nominalized form of the ancient Greek verb, *τυφόω*, which in present infinitive active tense and voice means to delude. The single, present, active, masculine, nominative form of the verb, *τύφω*, means, "I raise a smoke." Cf. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1953).

[48] Plato, *Phaedrus* in *The Complete Works of Plato* (Nehamas, A. and Woodruff, P. trans. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), line 230a.

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Style without Substance, Form *qua* Function: the Non-philosophical Unilateralization of Philosophical Style

THOMAS SUTHERLAND

"…we try to make a new wine flow into the bottles of philosophy, its dominant style, its literary genre, its codes of admissibility and, quite simply, perceptibility"

—François Laruelle, *As One: "Non-Philosophy" Explained to Philosophers* [1]

The utilization of style by philosophers has remained a central (if often implicit) concern of François Laruelle's work even prior to the development of his "non-philosophical" project proper (a reminder, perhaps, of the deconstructionist line of thought from which it departs), at the same time that his own writings have been subject to frequent critiques regarding their often abstruse, sibylline stylistic tendencies. It is precisely this question of philosophical style, and the way that we might understand the philosophical usage or appropriation of style through the

[1] François Laruelle, *En tant qu'un: La «non-philosophie» éxpliquée au philosophes* (Paris: Aubier, 1991), p. 182, my translation.

lens of Laruelle's non-philosophy – which he in turn describes as "a new style of thought", external to the strictures of Western philosophy – that I wish to explore in this article.[2] More specifically, I will argue that *style* is one of the more helpful problematics through which we might understand Laruelle's non-philosophical project (albeit one that he does not often thematize in detail), and its hope of effecting within thought "an infinite opening that is not closed by a philosophical project or teleology".[3] If we take as a starting point Jean-Luc Nancy's definition of style as "the genre of philosophy – the question of how to present and expose philosophy, or, to say this in an absolute way, of philosophical exposition", I contend that non-philosophy might allow us to make *usage* of these genres and styles in a manner that decouples them from this expositional function.[4]

Differences in style (of writing, tone, argumentation, etc.) are one of the primary means of distinguishing individual philosophies from each other, and yet, this differentiation, argues Laruelle, occurs within the context of a pre-given philosophical *in*difference – that is to say, it still presumes the overall unity and supremacy of philosophy *qua* discourse and practice, and the univocity of the syntax and idiom through which such difference is expressed.[5] Following this line of argument, we might then suggest that all philosophies differ in terms of style but still ultimately conform to the totalizing *logos* of philosophy (which for Laruelle, as a Francophone writer, is of course always *la philosophie*, implying a whole or totality).[6] Even in the constructivist tendencies of a

[2] François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 19.
[3] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 26.
[4] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus*, trans. by Saul Anton (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 18.
[5] It is worth clarifying that in most cases Laruelle uses the term "indifference" in a positive sense, describing the mystical indifference of the One to the philosophical Dyad (in its manifold mutations), and thus to the world – the basis of the unilateral causality upon which his project of "non-philosophy" proper is grounded. My usage of this term in a more negative sense is drawn from his description of "the point of view of the philosopher, who surveys [*survole*] the situation, denying its radical individual finitude, its proper essence, to better ensure his mastery over others, whom he plunges back into the neutral and partially indifferent element of the relational" (François Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man: On Authorities and Minorities*, trans. by Jessie Hock and Alex Dubilet [Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2018], pp. 51-52).
[6] Ray Brassier considers this treatment of philosophy as an auto-positional totality (which appears much less self-evident in English, given that "philosophy" is not

philosopher such as Gilles Deleuze, the capacity of any individual style or concept to communicate truth might be depreciated, but the presumed truth of philosophy as a whole (viz. its ceaseless heterogenetic becoming) as coterminous with the capacities of thought still remains stable.[7] This is what François Laruelle labels the "Principle of Sufficient Philosophy": the fact that philosophy "is not just a set of categories and objects, syntaxes and experiences or operations of decision and position", but is "animated and traversed by a faith or belief in itself as in absolute reality, by an intentionality or reference to the real which it claims to describe and even constitute".[8]

The question is then: is it possible to think style without content? I will propose that within the terms of Laruelle's project this *is* possible, that doing so would be to think style as proceeding from the real without ever determining or being convertible with the real, and that this is an important first step in non-philosophical thinking. If philosophy views style as a medium for communicating the real (in whatever form it might take), and thus implicitly conceives of all individual styles as encompassed within the presupposed sufficiency of an *in*difference that encompasses all such differences), non-philosophy by contrast takes style as *material* (relative rather than absolute, and autonomous rather than reciprocal), an *a priori* that gives experience without making any claim to the real, even whilst it is determined in the last instance by the latter. This is not a celebration of "style *over* substance", so to speak, but a style

typically preceded by a definite article) to reveal "Laruelle's all too Heideggerian preoccupation with uncovering the essence of philosophy", recapitulating the Idealist conflation of the philosophical system with the world-whole (*Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007], p. 133).

[7] See, for instance, the claim that "[t]o think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought" (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton [London and New York: Continuum, 1994], p. 185). Deleuze would of course later refine this assertion, arguing that philosophy is by its very nature traversed by those exteriorities to which it typically pays no heed, suggesting that "[t]he nonphilosophical is perhaps closer to the heart of philosophy than philosophy itself" (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], p. 41). Yet in making this acknowledgement, Deleuze never cedes philosophy's overall presumed authority to appropriate these non-philosophical exteriorities, nor to establish these disciplinary demarcations within its own linguistic tropes.

[8] François Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2013), p. 12.

without substance, a style that is no longer paired with semantic content, but wherein form and function coincide without remainder.

Clarity and obscurity

When one mentions the topic of "style" in relation to the work of Laruelle, the discussion will almost inevitably move toward the problem of Laruelle's *own* style, which is often regarded as needlessly obtuse and cryptic, relying heavily upon a vocabulary largely borrowed directly from philosophy (e.g. immanence and transcendence, identity and difference, empirical and ideal, transcendental and *a priori*, etc.), but twisting and mutating these terms such that they only superficially retain their philosophical meaning. Like deconstruction before it, there is a decided attempt across Laruelle's oeuvre to challenge and subvert the identity of philosophical concepts, instantiating "a global change of perspective" regarding philosophy's "finalities and functions", inventing new practices of writing on the basis of the philosophical materials whose sufficiency it suspends.[9] As Anthony Paul Smith puts it, Laruelle's "intentionally difficult syntax aims not at confusion but at a reorganization of thought itself", being concerned not so much with "bringing down philosophy from the inside", but instead accepting "a certain homelessness, a perpetual status as a foreigner within the intellectual field".[10] Non-philosophy makes usage of philosophical concepts without ever being beholden to their traditional signification.

One of Laruelle's many notable stylistic quirks is his self-mythologizing periodization of his project into several discrete stages (Philosophy I, Philosophy II, Philosophy III, and so on…), each ostensibly representing a further step in the development of his non-philosophical thought.[11] In the introduction to one of the earliest books of

[9] Ibid., p. 126.

[10] Anthony Paul Smith, *Laruelle: A Stranger Thought* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity, 2016), pp. 2, 50. As Brassier similarly remarks, "[t]he originality of a philosopher is usually gauged in terms of *what* he thinks. By way of contrast, Laruelle's singular contribution only becomes appreciable when it is understood that he proposes to transform *how* philosophers think" (*Nihil Unbound*, p. 148).

[11] In more recent years, following his alignment of non-philosophy with the concepts of quantum physics, Laruelle has described these not as stages but as "waves", abandoning the implication of a straightforward temporal succession. See Anthony Paul Smith, *A Non-Philosophical Theory of Nature: Ecologies of Thought*

the retroactively-labelled Philosophy I stage, *Textual Machines: Deconstruction and the Libido of Writing*, Laruelle himself writes:

> [o]ne will not find an "objective" analysis on one side and an interpretation or theses on the other. Everything is conducted simultaneously for the greatest difficulty of reading: the analysis of procedures and *dispositifs*, and the permanent, militant problematization of deconstruction.[12]

In a later book of this period, *The Decline of Writing*, Laruelle would reflect further upon this question of readability, arguing that there is "an illegibility proper to theoretical construction", and claiming for himself "the right to be difficult through *excess* in analysis and *excess* in the synthesis of problems".[13] These declarations, although long preceding the formalization of non-philosophy *tout court* (and in particular, the discovery of the aforementioned Principle of Sufficient Philosophy), nonetheless provides not only an attempt to justify his recondite stylistic tendencies, but also an important hint to the trajectory of Laruelle's later work: most notably, the refusal to separate the *theory* of non-philosophy from its *practical* enunciation, even if this risks rendering his prose enigmatic.

In spite of any such justifications, it is certainly not unreasonable to express some level of hesitation regarding the density and complexity of Laruelle's prose – and in particular, to remark upon the potential performative contradiction between his pretensions to an "ordinary" mode of thought unburdened by philosophical arrogance, and the often extraordinary obscurity of his writing. The question of communication – and communicability – should not be glibly dismissed in relation to any theory, philosophical or otherwise, especially when the latter makes appeal to these egalitarian postures. Simultaneously though, we might ask exactly what it is that motivates these concerns regarding the clarity or otherwise of Laruelle's style, beyond the usual accusations of obscurantism that still accompany the reception of continental philosophy within the English-speaking world. Is there not, in the praise of clarity or

(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 74.

[12] François Laruelle, *Machines textuelles. Déconstruction et libido d'écriture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976), p. 17, my translation.

[13] François Laruelle, *Le déclin de l'écriture* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1977), p. 249, my translation.

the condemnation of opacity (or indeed vice-versa), a very classically hermeneutic presupposition that somewhere within the text, whether straightforwardly visible or hidden within its depths, there is a truth awaiting revelation?

To indict a piece of writing for its stylistic impenetrability is to presume that it is hiding something behind its textual surface (even if this "something" is nothing more than an absence of meaning – or, perhaps even more scandalously, a banal or commonsensical meaning), treating this truth as an object that must be uncovered. What else was the postmodernist fascination with the play of surfaces – the identification of depth as a mere epiphenomenon of the manifest – than the supposed discovery of an originary absence (a groundless ground) undergirding these surfaces? "The unitary or dominant way of thinking", which is to say the specifically *philosophical* mode of thinking, "is that of a *generalized hermeneutics*, a hermeto-logy".[14] In the hermeneutic mode of reading, as Alexander Galloway writes, "there is never simply a direct relationship to truth, there is always a *confrontation* with truth", and this confrontation will never fail in unearthing *something* within the text.[15] In a specifically philosophical context, we find that the accusation of obscurity occurs entirely within the rules and strictures of philosophical reason (even when it is mounted by those who would not consider themselves philosophers), according to which style is either the conduit or impediment to the truth of the real (in whatever particular form it might take). Style, and rhetoric more generally, tends to be understood in philosophy either as "ornamentation", which must be swept aside in order to get directly to the real, or as "persuasion", a tool of inveiglement that is only really appropriate for those cruder texts aimed at a mass audience.[16] In both cases, it remains peripheral or mediate to the truth that lies beneath it, a mere instrument of philosophical discourse, the "teleological usage of language in view of the essential real".[17]

[14] François Laruelle, "The Truth According to Hermes: Theorems on the Secret and Communication", *Parrhesia*, 9, 18-22 (p. 19).
[15] Alexander R. Galloway, "Love of the Middle", in *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, by Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 25-76 (p. 37).
[16] François Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012), p. 103.
[17] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 8.

Accusations of obscurity constitute a crucial element of the auto-warfare that Laruelle views as essential to the circularity of philosophical decision:

> [p]hilosophy's traditional practices, the history of philosophy, textual and philological labor, but also the invention of new philosophical decisions (language games, deconstruction and schizoanalysis) remain … enclosed in themselves, wrapped and encysted around the fundamental postulate that defines Greco-occidental thought and its most internal limitation.[18]

Put simply, whilst philosophers may attack the stylistic predilections of other philosophers, what remains unchallenged is the presumption that philosophy's *telos* is a becoming-sufficient to the real that it attempts to seize as object. Even moments that would seem to directly challenge the authority of philosophical reason (e.g. Nietzsche's transvaluation of truth as mere metaphor; Heidegger's proclamation of the death of philosophy at the hands of cybernetic instrumentalism; Deleuze's denunciation of the dogmatic image of thought; Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence, etc.), decentring or displacing the philosophical paradigm, nevertheless still presuppose the authority of the *logos*.

These debates occur for Laruelle within terms of reference that are established in advance (and remain invariant across philosophy's innumerable variations), and one might argue that they ultimately originate (at least in an overt form) in the ancient opposition between Parmenides' extolment of the need for a well-rounded exposition of the One divorced from all empirical diversion, and Heraclitus' equivalent appeal to a discourse of the *logos* that is coterminous with (rather than merely clouded by) its enigmatic and equivocal presentation. Just as the disparity between these two philosophers' conceptions of the real itself (the former as a unity purged of its contraries, the latter as a unity-of-contraries) does not compromise the overall stability of the decisional structure (the One and the Dyad) in which they are enacted, likewise, both of these stylistic extremes are happily contained within the polarities of philosophical disputation. As Nietzsche once put it, "multiplicity, which is a deception of the sense according to Parmenides, is for

[18] Ibid., p. 102.

Heraclitus the cloth, the form of appearance, of the One, in no way a deception: otherwise, the One does not appear at all".[19]

In both cases, the One is presumed to be given as an object communicable through the philosophical idiom and syntax. Yet from the non-philosophical perspective, this presupposition on the contrary exemplifies the *forgetting* of the One (*qua* One) by philosophy, its confusion of the One with Being (or the Other):

> [t]he forgetting of the One is stronger and more extensive than the forgetting of Being: it is consummated not only by the "metaphysics of presence", but by all philosophy as thought founded principally upon transcendence (even when "absolute", even when deconstructive of the authority of the *logos*). The future of thought is in the assumption of the One "itself" or *qua* One rather than Being *qua* Being.[20]

Laruelle's provocation is accordingly to propose a modality of thought, theoretical rather than philosophical, that does not attempt to seize the One (i.e. the real) as object, but instead attempts to think *according to* the One, in the latter's "*de jure* opacity, its unreflexivity".[21] In this manner, he claims, the One is "restored to its real or ante-dyadic essence", no longer treated as reciprocal, reversible, or even identical with philosophical categories and concepts.[22] The question to be explored, then, is the extent to which we might plausibly speak of a *usage* of philosophical style that is not strictly philosophical; to treat style as an *effect* of the real, rather than a means of transmitting some semblance of the real.

The (impossible) object of philosophical desire

In spite of constant disputes between individual philosophers, Laruelle perceives philosophy as effectively suspended in a state of perpetual *détente*, for each philosopher is in the end resigned to the structural invariance of philosophical decision. These philosophers "trace a

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Greg Whitlock (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 63.
[20] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 121.
[21] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 76.
[22] Ibid., p. 16.

continuous circular line in their heads, they only want compromise, unity-despite-everything as long as it is based on difference", affirming the plurality or heterogenesis of philosophy as a central component in its overall coherence.[23] The philosophical *logos* – that is to say, the linguistic framework, both idiomatic and syntactic, and irreducible to any particular natural language, through which philosophical concepts are disseminated – functions as a "universal interface", ensuring the univocity of these concepts in spite of (or perhaps by virtue of…) their difference.[24] One of the (tacit) founding principles of philosophy, writes Galloway, is the assumption that the real is "something that can be grasped and communicated beyond itself into a receiving mind, the mind of the investigating philosopher", and the *logos* is precisely the medium, in the most literal sense, on which this is grounded.[25]

This is an ideal of philosophy as a *characteristica universalis*, an aspiration "to be a universal language for regional forms of knowledge", mediating all extra-philosophical discourses and practices under the aegis of the *logos*, speaking in one and the same voice regarding all of its concepts.[26] An ideal articulated in plainly universalist, cosmopolitical terms by Alain Badiou, who declares that

> the principle that philosophy cannot renounce is that of its universal transmissibility, whatever its connection to such or such a language. Philosophy cannot renounce that its address is directed to everyone, in principle if not in fact, and that it does not exclude from this address linguistic, national, religious or racial communities. Philosophy privileges no language, not even the one it is written in. Philosophy is not enclosed within the pure formal ideal of scientific language.

[23] Laruelle, A Biography of Ordinary Man, p. 41, translation altered. I take the term *heterogenesis* from Deleuze who, in a letter to Jean-Clet Martin, argues that 'the system must not only be in perpetual heterogeneity, it must also be a *heterogenesis*' (*Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, ed. by David Lapoujade, trans. by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina [Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007], p. 361).

[24] François Laruelle, *The Non-Philosophy Project*, ed. by Gabriel Alkon and Boris Gunjevic (New York: Telos Press, 2012), 102.

[25] Alexander R. Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 10.

[26] Laruelle, *The Non-Philosophy Project*, p. 103.

> Its element is language, but, within that natural element, it institutes a universal address.[27]

Badiou's claim would seem to be positioned in direct opposition to the postmodernist obituary for metalanguage, and the resultant valorization of incommensurable language-games. In practice though, it is actually an affirmation and reinforcement of this pluralization as the very essence of philosophical thought, revealing the metastable play of identity and difference in the philosophical *logos*. Philosophy is nothing other than a series of differences, of seemingly incompatible language games, that are nonetheless ultimately unified under the rules of a structural invariant. "We are decidedly spinning in place, that is, still and always *within* philosophy".[28]

In this context, the element of *style* stands for an organon through which the philosophy-form "expresses the self-repetition and inertia of its auto-reproduction", enabling the re-utterance of its principles in diverse phraseologies or modes of expression.[29] "All philosophical thought seeks a 'form of order' [...] which is for it the ultimate rationality of the real, one that it in part helps to determine", enabling the conflation of the real with various ideal concepts that philosophy gives to itself, and style provides one of the means by which these forms of order are established, articulating the appropriate means by which the real might be presented to thought – given that the *logos* posits itself as the exclusive medium through which this (re)presentation is effectuated.[30] Put simply, style provides the capacity for philosophies to be differentiated from another, defining again and again the appropriate parlance for grasping the real, whilst at the same time ensuring the impossibility of ever actually achieving this goal, inasmuch as the very notion of style, within a

[27] Alain Badiou, *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by Oliver Feltham and Justin Clemens (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 51.
[28] François Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference: A Critical Introduction to Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Rocco Gangle (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 11. The appendant phrase "to Non-Philosophy" in the title of this book is unique to the English translation – and indeed, although within the text itself Laruelle does speak occasionally of a "non-philosophical" critique of philosophy, it is only with his next book (*Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*) that the enterprise of a non-philosophy proper (*la* non-philosophie) first manifestly arises.
[29] Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, p. 119.
[30] Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, p. 51.

philosophical context, demands the convertibility of "the real *and* language", such that the former always remains contingent upon the latter, even though it is supposed to precede and condition it.[31] This is a mixed or unitary form of style, an endlessly circular and tautological co-determination of these two terms.

Exemplary of this is Jacques Derrida's assertion that style in philosophy offers "a means of protection against the terrifying, blinding, mortal threat (of that) which presents itself", safeguarding "the presence, the content, the thing itself, meaning, truth".[32] With this conception of style as a necessary act of dissimulation (which he equates with the masculine order of representation) – not a revelation of presence, but an act of defence against the *différance* inherent in representation that simultaneously and unwittingly reinscribes this différance in the unbreachable gap between presence and its presentation – Derrida confronts the authority of traditional Western metaphysics, bringing into question its capacity to present to thought the real that it purports to master. And yet, at the very same time, does not this appeal to "a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum" (the ineradicably feminine element of style) simply repeat the standard philosophical procedure of transcendence, whereby the pre-given scission of a naïve empirical *datum* (viz. representation as an unproblematic presentation) and an ideal categorial *factum* (the différance that founds both the possibility and *im*possibility of this presentation) are sutured through a movement from the former to the latter (whilst still maintaining a reciprocal determination between them)?[33] The discovery

[31] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 8.

[32] Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. by Barbara Harlow (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 39. Derrida's argument here is at least partly dependent on the phonic similitude between *style* and *stylus*, the suspiciously phallic instrument of inscription.

[33] Ibid., p. 49. Kelly Oliver illustrates this well when she contends that Derrida "uses becoming female to fortify philosophy against the suicide that it finally commits through its long history of murdering its other which has been represented by the feminine … he forecloses any possibility of recognizing any other in the feminine because the masculine has become the feminine" (*Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the "Feminine"* [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], p. 49). Likewise, Sara Ahmed argues that, as with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "becoming-woman", Derrida's account posits the figure of "woman" as "a phantasy of the over-coming of philosophical and masculine identity, but an over-coming which is more a coming-over, in that identity comes to be figured in different terms over the body of the woman", denying this figure the embodied subjectivity of actually

of this simulacrum – the secret that the text might indeed hold no secret, "that it might only be pretending to be simulating some hidden truth within its folds" – which is intended to subvert the notion of a truth that might be uncovered within the text, is in effect only the dislocation of this truth onto the figure of the simulacral: the identity of the truth of the text is precisely its non-identity, the trace through which its presence is deferred.[34]

The "gentle war of suspicion" waged by deconstruction, Laruelle therefore argues, still remains within the circle of philocentrism, seeking out the real as a unitary object synthesizing difference and identity under the guise of an auto-differentiating/-deferring différance.[35] The foreclosure of the transcendental signified (and hence with it the fantasy of attaining the identity of the real) actually further reinforces the auto-productive character of the philosophical *logos*, both justifying and perpetuating "these games in which it reproduces itself in an ultimately limited way" by forsaking the possibility of an end-point to this reproduction, and thus finally identifying the real precisely with the ever-distending concept of difference *qua* différance and its various mutations (e.g. the trace, supplement, pharmakon, simulacrum, arche-writing, iterability, etc.) through which the truth of any *particular* identity is rendered suspect.[36] "It is a matter of its inevitable constitution in an invariant re-affirming and re-producing of itself unlimitedly in, by and through its variations".[37] In this respect, deconstruction marks yet another instance of the continuous philosophical attestations to a superior access

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existing women (*Differences That Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998], pp. 88-89).

[34] Ibid., p. 133.

[35] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 27.

[36] Ibid., p. 102.

[37] Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference*, p. 121. Such concerns regarding deconstruction first arise in the Philosophy I period, when Laruelle observes that "[i]t is difficult to practice a generalized suspicion without falling into general formulas of suspicion", bringing about "the uniform affirmation of differential heterogeneity" (*Machines textuelles*, p. 27). As Arnaud Villani writes, this latter book "is resolutely opposed to representation, opposed to structuralism, but also opposed to the infinite text (commentary upon commentary), the sort of lay Talmudic text with its play of mirrors (*mimesis* without priority given to the imitated)" ("Poststructuralist Alternatives to Deconstruction", in *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and Its Differences*, ed. by Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990], pp. 223-230 [p. 224]).

to the real – "return to the real! return to the things themselves! at last thinking the forgotten real! and so forth" – that in practice do little other than entrench the notion that philosophy as a whole is capable of exhausting the real in its totality (indeed, that the two are coterminous).[38]

The real remains the impossible object of philosophical desire, whose unattainability does not subdue the presumed authority of the philosophical *logos*, but simply provides the impetus for further production or heterogenesis. This is why philosophical critiques of style, even those outside of the deconstructive matrix, remain toothless: stylistic or linguistic analysis of individual philosophies is a "transcendentally recursive" venture, that does not so much explain these philosophies as simply reproduce the philosophical structure within a new form.[39] To critique a philosopher's style is still a thoroughly philosophical enterprise, adjudicating between philosophies on the basis of certain rhetorico-linguistic criteria in order to determine their relative efficacy in regard to the truth that they seek, and results in the production of further philosophy (insofar as the very pretence that one might have the capacity to make such judgements itself presupposes an authority *vis-à-vis* the real).

What Laruelle claims to offer, by contrast, is a non-philosophical practice of style and rhetoric that is "no longer measured by an efficacy (persuasion) or an inefficacy (the obscuring of relations of transparency to the real)", bypassing the intra-philosophical auto-warfare that would counterpose one style against another, and instead treating style as an enrichment of philosophical material detached from any question of its adequation to the real.[40] Through this unilateralization of style, whereby

[38] François Laruelle, *Theory of Identities*, trans. by Alyosha Edlebi (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 101. We might note also here the aforementioned heterogenetic becoming-of-philosophy championed by Deleuze, whereby "[a] philosophy's power is measured by the concepts it creates, or whose meaning it alters, concepts that impose a new set of divisions on things and actions" (Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. by Martin Joughin [New York: Zone Books, 1990], p. 321). Although this certainly dispenses with the need to compare concepts in terms of their adequation to the real, it does so by instituting new benchmarks for comparison: as he would later write, "[p]hilosophy does not consist in knowledge and is not inspired by truth", but instead, "it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that decide its success or failure" (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 82, translation altered).

[39] Laruelle, *The Non-Philosophy Project*, p. 96.

[40] Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, p. 105.

the latter does not provide the means for thinking the real *qua* object, but instead is thought as arising *from* and in accordance with the real, "[e]very approach will be able to be recognized as individuated", for no style will be judged as being properly or improperly philosophical in some way.[41] Each style is treated as wholly individual, shorn of all *in*difference that would allow philosophers to make such comparisons.[42]

This of course does not mean that we must dispense with philosophical language; on the contrary, non-philosophy is not intended to be anti-philosophical, as "it contains the philosophical genre as a particular case or a limited thought, it is what becomes philosophical as a genre when it is seized and transformed" via a thought that proceeds from (rather than toward) the real:

> in lieu of producing apparently non-philosophical effects (literary, psychoanalytic, etc.) with procedures that remain essentially philosophical (as is the case with deconstructions, for example), we propose to use really non-philosophical procedures to produce effects that have an ultimate likeness, a final "family resemblance" with philosophy.[43]

Non-philosophy makes *usage* of philosophical materials (in this case, the style that constitutes the identity of their presentation), but does so in a manner intended to suspend the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, making no claim to the real whatsoever, but conceiving of all such

[41] Ibid.

[42] It is for this reason that we cannot equate such a treatment of style as individual with the Deleuzian notion of the *conceptual personae*, for the latter, which constitutes "the becoming or the subject of a philosophy", is simply one part of a larger movement of becoming-philosophy that envelops it, remaining wholly relational (Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 64). Deleuze in fact represents *at one and the same time* those two tendencies that Laruelle identifies in contemporary continental philosophy: the oscillation between an "identification with a seminal author of past metaphysics" on the one hand, and a "postmodern bricolage with the debris of this same past metaphysics" on the other (Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 183). Deleuze makes unusually overt his dependence upon the styles, as well as the concepts, of prior philosophers, but also his practice of using these as the basis for new assemblages and becomings. His appeal to the novelty of the philosophical concept is founded upon an account of philosophical diachrony as a font of materials for creative reconfiguration in the name of a continued becoming-philosophy.

[43] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 188.

materials as identical with the real in the last instance. The unilateralization of style attempts to avoid inscribing the constitutive terms of any individual philosophy within a reversible duality or unity-of-contraries, but instead in "an originary dyad that is not obtained by scission and is thus not susceptible to an identification with the real" – that is, an irreversible order of determination that proceeds unilaterally from the real.[44]

Nietzschean origins in non-philosophy

We can see an obvious antecedent for this unilateralization of style in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche who, in one of his more lurid moments (a stylistic trait not atypical, of course, of his later works), declares:

> To *communicate* a state, an inner tension of pathos, with signs, including the tempo of these signs – that is the meaning of every style; and considering that I have an extraordinary number of inner states, I also have a lot of stylistic possibilities […]
> Good style *in itself* - this is *pure stupidity*, just "idealism", somewhat like "Beauty *in itself*", "the Good *in itself*", the "thing *in itself*" ... Always supposing that there are ears – that there are people capable and worthy of a similar pathos, that there are people you *can* communicate with.[45]

Nietzsche refuses to endorse any *sensus communis* through which styles are given a general equivalence (again, an *in*difference) that would enable their universal communication and by which the efficacy of such styles in facilitating said communication might be judged.

The Nietzschean understanding of style therefore marks an important precedent for Laruelle's theory of unilateralization: after all, Nietzsche demands that style be regarded not as an index of the real (such that we could judge it in terms of degrees of adequation), but as a singular production irrevocably sutured to the will of the individual.[46] It is not

[44] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 54.
[45] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. by Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 104.
[46] As Kofman puts it, Nietzsche believes it tyrannical for "any philosopher to raise his

surprising that Laruelle himself makes such a connection, noting that "Nietzsche intensifies fiction by freeing it from the residual identity of the imagination as faculty, namely by freeing synthesis from the constraint of ready-made unity".[47] In other words, Nietzsche views the creative (i.e. fictive) capacities of philosophy as unrestrained by any necessary transcendental unity or synthesis that would ensure the ultimate concordance of such fictions. In fact, in *The Minority Principle* (the first book of Laruelle's Philosophy II period, and the beginnings of what would come to be known as "non-philosophy"), Laruelle submits that it is from Nietzsche that "we learn that the transcendental is method and nothing but method", for what we find in the latter is the constitution of a universal genetic *a priori* – specifically, "Difference as universal […] the ongoing synthesis of Becoming and Being, the Real and the Ideal", by which all phenomena are conditioned and under which they are subsumed, simultaneously.[48] But whilst this universal horizon of Being as the eternal repetition of Difference "forms the highest point of passage, the highest 'pass' of the classical method, its supreme intensification", it is also "its point of decline": Laruelle comes to view Nietzsche's conception of the transcendental as still beholden to the notion of a transcendental *field* that, although not inscribed in self-consciousness or self-presence like its classical and phenomenological predecessors, is still figured as a "field of presence" which is wholly present to itself *in* its becoming or differentiation, and therefore "always transcendent in spite of its transcendental pretension […] *relatively*, and not absolutely transcendental".[49]

Put simply, by the Philosophy II stage Laruelle has come to view Nietzsche as just *another philosopher*, who pushes the transcendental

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[*sic*] spontaneous evaluation to the status of an absolute value and his style to that of a philosophical style 'in itself'", for "it is as vain to seek to impose a canonical model on writing as it is tile to seek to legislate universally in morality: each *must* do only what he *can*". In reconstructing the thought of a particular philosopher then, we must not trace her or his life (as much as it is coterminous with their thought) "with the aid of abstract general concepts", transmuting them into a mere spectre of their former selves, but must instead "use expressive and vivid metaphors to resurrect a personality in its most typical attributes". (Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. by Duncan Large [London: The Athlone Press, 1993], pp. 3, 22).

[47] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 228

[48] François Laruelle, *Le principe de minorité* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1981), p. 18, my translation.

[49] Ibid., p. 18.

method to the limits of its plasticity and creativity, but who cannot ultimately overcome the transcendence that arises from the construction of an ideal field of presence, the being of which is constituted in its becoming or difference (a presence without being present). [50] In the books that precede this stage, however, Laruelle is far more sympathetic to the Nietzschean problematic, and in fact gives Nietzsche a privileged position. In *Textual Machines*, wherein Laruelle identifies a machinic and transcendental functionality – a libido-of-writing – to be grafted onto the method of deconstruction, hoping to produce new immanent effects from within said method's procedures, he observes that

> the most powerful form of the "deconstruction" machine, that which attains a transcendental generality absolutely unconditioned in relation to the materials of the philosophical tradition, has provisionally received in history the split name of "Eternal Return" and "Will to Power".[51]

Accordingly, Laruelle explicitly sets out to displace the problematics of deconstruction onto new positions – specifically, "[t]hose which are implicated, in a latent rather than manifest state, in 'Nietzsche-thought', or in the esoteric problematic of the Eternal Return and the Will to Power", which refer respectively to a generalized repetition and intensive

[50] Indeed, Laruelle would come to argue that "[t]he Nietzschean experience of Difference … is in effect inseparable from a quasi-'auto-position', of idealist and classically metaphysical spirit, of Difference's syntax and of the moment that, at its interior, represents already the insertion of the real: the diversity of this 'distance' (forces, perspectives, etc.)" (*Philosophies of Difference*, p. 41). The Nietzschean (and Deleuzian) conception of difference is dependent upon the ultimate coincidence of syntax and experience (inasmuch as the latter is understood as the ceaseless rearticulation of the former).

[51] Laruelle, *Machines textuelles*, p. 42. The influence of *Anti-Oedipus* is easily recognizable in these early works – in particular, the former's conceptualization of schizoanalysis as a transcendental and materialist mode of analysis, "immanent to the field of the unconscious" and thus to its own criteria; "an unconscious that is material rather than ideological; schizophrenic rather than Oedipal; nonfigurative rather than imaginary; real rather than symbolic; machinic rather than structural", and ultimately "productive rather than expressive", refusing to re-establish a transcendent use of language that would reduce desire to a mere question of signification, enervating it of its productive (i.e. machinic) charge. (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane [London and New York: Continuum, 1983], p.120).

libido that together form this *dispositif* by which deconstruction as a generalized textuality indifférant to all empirical representation and signification is affirmed.[52] Eternal Return of the Other is posited as "the most *powerful* system of repetition and deconstruction", a process of production "which turns around a non-specific, non-individual, non-signifying différance".[53]

Laruelle is at this stage still committed to the deconstructive "play of language", which "excludes the categories or paired oppositions" that are usually assigned to the control of language, and thereby "disrupts the distribution of the author, the signature, the corpus, and all the appropriative procedures of a text", dismissing them as logocentric and ideological procedures. At the same time though, whilst Laruelle is undoubtedly wedded here to the authority (i.e. sufficiency) of deconstruction reconfigured as a transcendental method, we must take seriously his rejection of "both positive mastery and hermeneutic reverence", when he argues that

> the composition of "methods" and "styles" does not take the form of a process of accumulation, but that of a kind of de-multiplication of hermeneutic totalizations and small structural differences, together forming a complex instrument for inclusive and multi-stage operations, for the effects of multiplicity.[54]

Laruelle's intention is not to proffer a more "correct" reading of either Nietzsche or Derrida, but to extract new functionalities and new effects from these given materials. The status of deconstruction here as "a machinic process that is transformed with its materials and effects", its capacity to "be singularized in the protocols of reading to be defined for each text" forecloses any such possibility of a reading judged in terms of adequation, for this would be to establish in advance transcendent criteria by which such reading must proceed.[55] Indeed, the disruptive and dislocative effects of différance cannot be said to "take place on a fixed ground, constituted by all the great authors of philosophy", but must

[52] Ibid., p. 9.
[53] Ibid., p. 25.
[54] Ibid., p. 32.
[55] Ibid., pp. 62-63.

remain immanent interventions that transform these materials in order to produce new effects.[56]

The machinic syntax of Nietzsche-thought

"Authors, styles, methods are not absolutely equivalent", writes Laruelle, in an important foreshadowing of his later work, "but none of them remain or subsist as benchmarks".[57] Here we see the germinal origins of the non-philosophical unilateralization of style – a thinking of style that makes no judgement regarding its adequacy, but only seeks to produce material effects – albeit still predicated upon a presumed superiority of deconstruction (which is in itself, of course, just another style and method of philosophy). The notion of an immanent process of reading that is indifférant to any signification or *telos*, of a condition that is no broader than that which it conditions, signals the tentative beginnings of the transformative *usage* of inert philosophical materials that would come to characterize non-philosophy proper. In Laruelle's own words, he was "born into philosophy at the moment that a new scene was constituted, post-structuralist and post-Marxist: that of Difference", and at this time Nietzsche seemed to provide the tools for surveying and rethinking contemporary philosophy, "trying hard to accentuate, sharpen, overdetermine, to the point of saturation … the various modes of Difference in a 'generalized syntax'".[58] It is this "Nietzsche-thought", extracted from Nietzsche's philosophy with little regard for any kind of hermeneutic fidelity to Nietzsche's texts, that provides both the foundation and the ur-example of such usage.

Nandita Biswas Mellamphy puts it well when she writes that Laruelle "takes Nietzsche to be a theoretical object with material effects, rather than as a historical subject or interpreter expressing his thoughts", and as such, "what he means by Nietzsche's 'thinking' does not refer primarily to what Nietzsche said or wrote – or neglected to say or write –

[56] Ibid., pp. 43-44.
[57] Ibid., p. 44.
[58] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 227. On the explicit thematization of style amongst the philosophers of difference, see Isabelle Ginoux, "Effets de style en histoire de la philosophie: Ironie, humour et mascarade chez Deleuze lecteur de Nietzsche", in *Les styles de Deleuze: Esthétique et philosophie*, ed. by Adnen Jdey (Brussels: Les Impressions nouvelles, 2011), pp. 73-104.

but rather to the way in which Nietzsche's thinking functions".[59] The chief example of this occurs in Laruelle's follow-up to *Textual Machines*, the much more politically-oriented *Nietzsche contra Heidegger: Theses for a Nietzschean Politics*, in which he identifies a Nietzschean rupture in thought, comprising two entirely new, complementary disciplines ("Political Materialism" and "Machinic Materialism"), whilst also directly acknowledging that neither of these disciplines "are formulated or presented in this way in the manifest text of Nietzsche".[60] "On condition that the concept of latency is taken in the sense of resistance rather than absence or lack", Laruelle goes on to write, "we will say that these disciplines, their objects, and their categories constitute the 'latent' content of Nietzsche-thought".[61] We immediately see, therefore, that these disciplines are not concealed or buried within the Nietzschean corpus; they are, instead, those features of Nietzsche-thought that would allow it to *resist* all claims to textual mastery made upon it.[62]

In this book, Laruelle seeks to determine a thought that is *specifically* Nietzschean, in a purely philosophical and political sense, without recourse to any "historical, hermeneutic, or textual projects", because to take the approach of the historian, philologist, rhetorician, or psychoanalyst would be "to measure [Nietzsche] against objects and goals that are not his".[63] Such a determination thus inevitably coincides with "*the destruction of Nietzsche* as an individual, writer, and thinker" – it must abandon all appeals to an authenticity grounded in the life of

[59] Nandita Biswas Mellamphy, "Nietzsche's Political Materialism: Diagram for a Nietzschean Politics", in *Nietzsche as Political Philosopher*, ed. by Manuell Knoll and Barry Stocker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 77-89 (p. 78).
[60] François Laruelle, *Nietzsche contre Heidegger: Thèses pour une politique nietzschéenne* (Paris: Payot, 1977), p. 32, my translation.
[61] Ibid.
[62] There is a persistent theme in this book of Nietzsche-thought as effecting a resistance against all forms of mastery: e.g. "[s]omething in 'Nietzsche' resists the codes of the historian, the formal means of the rhetorician, the vaticinations of the fascist, the cumbersome apparatus of the classical revolutionary" (*Nietzsche contre Heidegger*, p. 15). By the Philosophy II period, "resistance" would conversely come to chiefly signify for Laruelle the operations of transcendence by which philosophy occludes the One, "the very way in which [philosophy] presents itself from the start, presenting itself only in the form of protestation, refusal, objections, etc., a resistance to the One which is *exactly the same thing as its auto-sufficiency*" (*Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 57).
[63] Laruelle, *Nietzsche contre Heidegger*, p. 67.

Nietzsche himself or in the significations of his text, turning instead toward the *functionality* of the Nietzschean syntax – and in turn seeks "to destroy any external or transcendent usage of the text of Nietzsche" that would wed his thought to extrinsic criteria of interpretation or judgement.[64] In this manner, then, the identification of this Nietzsche-thought, which is "a question of immanent syntax and of fluctuant [*fluante*] material proper to this syntax", is inseparable from its effectuation: the extraction of those Nietzschean functions that resist all transcendence.[65] Anticipating, in a more restricted fashion, his later definition of transcendence (in the Philosophy II period and thenceforth) as the basic operation by which philosophy claims a certain authority over the individual and over the real, in *Nietzsche contra Heidegger* a transcendent syntax is a code that is "destined to ensure the appropriation and domination of fluctuant machinic statements and propositions", attenuating the propulsive, creative drive of this specifically Nietzschean mode of thought.[66]

Laruelle's aim here is to "distinguish between the positivity of the statement and the positivism that its abstract practice risks inducing": whereas the former "is in a certain manner manifest, given, transparent, and does not respond to any unconscious or hidden representation", and thus cannot be reduced to the position of a signifier, and the abstraction that "gives rise to positivism as soon as the statement … is cut from its *immanent* premises, from its material determination in the last instance".[67] A distinction is made between two quite different usages of language, one of which *encodes* statements and propositions, dominating and appropriating them toward instrumental ends (thereby bestowing *meaning* upon them), whilst the other simply *functions* (producing material effects without the need for any such signification). It is the latter, this machinic syntax, that "ensures the fluctuance [*fluance*] and metamorphosis of the Nietzschean propositions, their permanent transformation and the critical destruction of their discursive, semantic, or significative interiority".[68] Put simply, the essence of Nietzsche-thought lies precisely in its irreducibility to any particular determinate concept, its

[64] Ibid., pp. 68, 70.
[65] Ibid., p. 12.
[66] Ibid., p. 73.
[67] Ibid., pp. 71-72.
[68] Ibid., p. 73.

indomitable resistance to any straightforward "reading" or interpretation of his corpus.[69]

Our task, resultantly, is "not to repeat what Nietzsche said and what he did not say, or to think only what he did and did not think, but to mount a *dispositif* both theoretical and practical that fulfils the function of thinking in a Nietzschean mode, which produces substances and even more 'Nietzschean' articulations".[70] This is a libidinal liberation of Nietzsche-thought from its transcendent interpretations: "to affirm the sovereignty of desire against its existential and existentiell, religious, hermeneutic, or signifying perversions, this is a task of the analyst (or indeed of the schizoanalyst)".[71] Although he would soon come to

[69] Throughout the Philosophy I period, Laruelle clearly views it as possible for philosophy to prevent its own stagnation, and this need to articulate a labile philosophy unencumbered by the shackles of systematicity in large part motivates his reconfigurations of contemporary philosophy: e.g. "[i]t is evident from the precipitous reduction of deconstruction to a body of homogeneous techniques of textual heterogeneity, that we have failed to preserve the analysis, the reading and rewriting of Derridean practices. Do we assign to them another purpose? Do we take the risk of ordering them into a thesis, when they are without purpose and do not have the form of any thesis?" (*Machines textuelles*, p. 27).

[70] Laruelle, *Nietzsche contre Heidegger*, p. 75.

[71] Ibid., p. 220. This characterization of interpretation as a repressive perversion of desire is comparable to Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the psychoanalytic paralogism which effects "the conversion of the unconscious to Oedipus, form and content", a metaphysical operation which extracts from the connective syntheses (the production of production) a transcendent object posited as lack (*Anti-Oedipus*, p. 83). The task of schizoanalysis, a becoming-immanent of analysis, is thus to establish a practice founded upon the immanence of the transcendental unconscious to its own criteria, rather than extracting from it a despotic signification. Such themes run throughout the Philosophy I period. In *Textual Machines*, which is very much focused on "the problem of the power or desire of the subject of writing", conceiving of deconstruction as driven by a "libidinal production and reproduction", Laruelle argues that we must avoid conceptualizing writing as "a pure, self-sufficient, *a priori* element" which is then fixed or reified in particular significative forms, for this would reconstitute writing as "a transcendent and abstract principle, too 'broad' for the given texts" – instead, we must understand "the philosophical and scientific work of domination of the values of the mark, of their selection, their placing into systems and hierarchies" as coming "'from' the pharmakon (writing) as from a genetic différantial element, a non-representational site, the potency [*puissance*] of machinic genesis traversed by technical and linguistic impotence […] a transcendental and immanent production of textual différance" (*Machines textuelles*, pp. 12, 66). Likewise, in *Beyond the Power Principle*, the final book of this period, which is premised upon an understanding of power as "a fluctuant matter, continuous, unlimited […] infinitely

renounce this framework of machinic desire inscribed within a transcendental field of immanence, we can nevertheless find some important hints here as to what would eventually become the non-philosophical account of language (and with it, a tacit account of style also): making *usage* of a philosophy as material, rather than subscribing to their particular conceptual apparatus; extracting a singular essence (or haecceity, perhaps…) from said philosophy, rather than situating it hierarchically in relation to other philosophies; attempting to think in

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divisible", Laruelle argues that political philosophy has always "confused the political meaning of power with conceptual significations, imaginary representations, or real empirical relations of power", and has consequently "made of meaning in general an object, a theme, a form, a signification, a signifier – but never a 'machine', i.e. a fractional *dispositif* capable of simultaneously producing power and its productive essence, and the relation between the two" – in short, this has resulted in a confusion of "the essence of power with transcendent or dominant forms" (François Laruelle, *Au-delà du principe de pouvoir* [Paris: Payot, 1978], pp. 4, 15, my translation). In all of these cases, the notion of the transcendental as a formal or ideal *a priori* is rejected in favour of an active and productive (machinic) field from which all such transcendent abstractions (e.g. significations, representations, etc.) are merely extracted. Such a field is immanent to its processes of libidinal production, and is thus never broader than that which it conditions. This machinic manifestation of the transcendental is patently indebted to Deleuze and Guattari's claim that the Oedipus complex is virtual, but that this virtuality is a "*derived effect*" of the actual, always dependent upon "a state of forces that is changing, yet always actual and contemporary, within *anoedipal* desiring-production", and thus should not be considered "in isolation, abstractly, independently of the actual factor that coexists with it and to which it reacts" (*Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 140-141). By the stage of Philosophy II, however, Laruelle comes to view the very notion of a transcendental field as emblematic of the philosophical conflation of the real and the whole (the basic manoeuvre of philosophical transcendence), striving instead to articulate a "new mutation" of the transcendental method that would give it "an absolute, and no longer relative or ideal, character […] an Absolute which would no longer be confused with a Whole, a Total, a Collection, a Set, a Body, a Plane", depriving it of all residual transcendence (*Le principe de minorité*, p. 13). This is made clearest though in *Theory of Strangers*, the first book of the Philosophy III period, in which he argues that schizoanalysis, as the accentuation of "the immanence of desire, desiring-production, and the syntax of difference […] ultimately of functioning and production privileged at the expense of interpretation and meaning", is little more than "a brilliant revenge of philosophy over analysis, a reaffirmation of Spinoza and Nietzsche against Freud and Lacan, and by consequence a reduction to philosophical desire as auto-position and the amphibological confusion, however 'differentiated' it might be, of the real and desire" (*Théorie des Étrangers: Science des hommes, démocratie, non-psychanalyse* [Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1995], p. 278, my translation).

accordance with the functionality rather than the signification of this philosophy, without ever suppressing or abrogating the latter. What Laruelle sees in Nietzsche is not a truth, an interpretation, or even a perspective, but a *style* of thinking, homing in on what Biswas Mellamphy describes as "the operation of an elementary and fundamentally non-signifying force-mechanics that activates the virulence of Nietzsche's thought".[72]

At the same time though, there is still a sense of philosophical sufficiency here that Laruelle would subsequently try to expunge: an implicit belief that philosophical syntax, in a specifically machinic form, is up to the task of resisting transcendent codification. Indeed, the claims he makes here are heavily reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a non-signifying "language of decoded flows" counterposed against "a signifier that strangles and overcodes the flows".[73] In the end, the appeal made to Nietzsche-thought within *Nietzsche contra Heidegger* is still an appeal to a certain kind of philosophical authenticity, a more essential usage of Nietzsche mobilized against all traditional interpretations of his work. And Nietzsche's vaunted conceptual constructivism or heterogenesis (and its aforementioned Deleuzian formalization) still finds itself caught within a covert foundationalism that would, in its identification of being with difference or becoming (a flux to which no concept can ever remain adequate), still in the end make specific claims regarding the nature of thought and its relation to the real. As Laruelle himself would later write, "[f]iction represents the real for another fiction, the real represents fiction for another real: this is the Nietzschean way of saying that the real is fictional and the fictional real".[74]

[72] Biswas Mellamphy, 'Nietzsche's Political Materialism', p. 78.
[73] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 261. Decoding, within a schizoanalytic context, is not a form of interpretation: it does not involve "the discovery of the secret of such and such a code", but instead "must undo the codes so as to attain the quantitative and qualitative flows of libido that traverse dreams, fantasies, and pathological formations as well as myth, tragedy, and the social formations", eliciting that which "is uncodable by virtue of its polymorphism and its polyvocity" (*Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 331-332).
[74] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 228.

Universality without totalization

Nietzschean constructivism is relativist, inasmuch as it purports to refuse to judge certain concepts as having a greater claim to veracity *vis-à-vis* the real (thus rendering all concepts ultimately fictive), but like all prior philosophies, it is "relativist in the bad – Greek, sophistic, and empiricist – sense of the word", whereas "true relativity is based in an absolute and unsurpassable (finite) experience".[75] In order to articulate a genuinely non-philosophical account of style then, we must endeavour to equally avoid both the treatment of style in philosophy as an index of its capacity to communicate the truth of the real *and* as an index of the equivalence between the real and its Other, such that all concepts are effectively equalized. Accordingly, what I wish to argue is that such an account would instead necessitate the treatment of each and every philosophical style as *individuated without (in)difference*, and yet identical in the last instance to the (finite, immanent) real. "Non-philosophy's plasticity and style require both an ongoing labor of internal interpretation and that of taste or affect, i.e. the sensibility of solitary terms".[76]

One of the central (and oft-repeated) principles of non-philosophy is that we should not and cannot abandon or negate philosophy proper. There is no "pure" non-philosophy, for it is always a *usage* of philosophical materials – but a usage in which these materials undergo "*a transcendental change of function*", stripped of their pretensions to sufficiency.[77] This is a performative, rather than empirical or positivist usage, "a theoretical-contemplative posture *and* practice" that "neither thinks nor describes *that which is*", but rather "produces/describes – in the same gesture – new object-statements".[78] In place of the philosophical conception of style, whereby the latter serves as a mere tool of ornamentation or persuasion, either obscuring or illuminating the real in some fashion, we have instead a unilateralization of style, which manifests the real without making any pretences of speaking to it, determining it, or transforming it. Style is here rendered an inert *a priori* material – an *a priori* of a specifically non-philosophical type, which *gives* the world (and the experience that comes with it) without

[75] Laruelle, *A Biography of Ordinary Man*, pp. 17-18.
[76] Laruelle, *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, p. 128.
[77] Ibid., p. 13.
[78] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 194. We have already seen that this approach to writing is present (and explicitly formulated) even within the Philosophy I period.

insinuating that this world is ever convertible with the real (although it is identical with it in the last instance).[79] This is an entirely positive, immanent, and irreflective presentation of style, in which "language has no other function but description, it no longer has a constitutive function": there is no truth that hides behind it, waiting to be communicated or dissimulated; there is only its identity in the last instance with the real.[80]

Laruelle refers to this as *philo-fiction*, an experimental usage (and experience) of philosophical materials that is not false or illusory (in the manner of "fiction" in its everyday sense), but is instead wholly positive, irreducible to any such dichotomy of truth and falsity. Philo-fiction is exemplary of the non-philosophical *transformation* (rather than nullification) of philosophical materials: never seeking to destroy the latter, but instead trying to put into work a "remodelling or rectification of *writing*", involving "a 'total' elaboration not only of thought, theme, or concept, but of its form or expression" and "a coherent remodelling … of the formulations of 'literary genres' and 'styles'".[81] It effects a mutation of these manifold philosophical genres and styles, without ever submitting them to the exigencies of the philosophical *logos*. It claims not to produce more philosophies; rather, it utilizes these materials in order to

[79] Although in the Philosophy II period he treats this unilateral viewpoint on philosophical materials – the Vision-in-One, as he often refers to it – as a specifically scientific modality of thought, Laruelle would later come to reject this vestigial positivism, conceiving of non-philosophy instead as a heterogeneous and non-hierarchical conjugation and transformation of various disciplines alongside philosophy. Most pertinently here, Laruelle recently proposes a non-philosophical effectuation of aesthetics that deprives the latter of its philosophical sufficiency (and thus presumed primacy) in relation to artistic practices, suspending the former's decisional structuration and codification of the latter such that it might become possible to incorporate philosophical materials into an artistic or (non-)aesthetic method that is irreducible to the totalizing strictures of the philosophical *logos*. "Art is the world without the world, the entire world but without its over-determining concept" (François Laruelle, *Photo-Fiction, a Non-Standard Aesthetics*, trans. by Drew S. Burk [Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2012], p. 63). Such a method is very much congruent with the unilateralization of style described in this article. For more on the (non-)aesthetic component of non-philosophical thought, see also: Thomas Sutherland, "Art, Philosophy, and Non-Standard Aesthetics", in *Aesthetics After Finitude*, ed. by Baylee Brits, Prudence Gibson, and Amy Ireland (Melbourne: re.press, 2016), pp. 53-68.

[80] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 48.

[81] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 181.

establish "a theoretical and practical programme of production of text-objects, which is no longer guided by the norm of what exists", arising from the real, instead of attempting to seize the real as an object of thought.

This performativity is central to the non-philosophical project, hoping to ensure not only that this project can never be completed, but that there is no possible *telos* toward which this project orients itself. In contradistinction to the Nietzschean/Deleuzian image of conceptual heterogenesis, whereby true philosophizing demands a philosophy-in-*becoming* that corresponds to the infinite speed of thought (and prevents the former's ossification), there is no sense of compulsion or imperative here: for sure, there is a labour involved in non-philosophical thinking, but this labour is not demanded by the real (for it is in no way incomplete), nor has any effect upon the real (for it can only proceed unilaterally *from* the real). Style, then, would be grasped here in a non-instrumental manner: when stripped of all claims to adequation, style does not serve a *purpose* nor convey a *meaning*, but simply *functions*, acting as an *a priori* condition for experience without ever purporting to exhaust this experience. Put bluntly, non-philosophy insists that no modality of thought should be judged as superior or inferior to another, for they are all incapable of apprehending the real, and yet at the same time are all identical with the real (viz. the finite individual; the "ordinary" person) in the last instance.[82]

This is the "democratizing" function of non-philosophy: as John Ó Maoilearca writes, whilst Laruelle is sympathetic to the aims of the philosophers of difference in their desire to flatten metaphysical hierarchies, he also acknowledges the difficulty of "practicing tolerance towards all forms of thought and even of practicing practice (rather than taking the *proclamation* of its use as equivalent to its actual use)", in the

[82] Laruelle's idiosyncratic usage of the term "ordinary" is reflective of his desire to identify a mode of thought that is wholly immanent (albeit in a finite, rather than absolute manner), and as such, can make no recourse to transcendence in any form. The ordinary "resists all historical and cultural, linguistic or sexual, etc., characterization" (Laruelle, A Biography of Ordinary Man, p. 42). Against the pure immanence posited by Deleuze, writes Marjorie Gracieuse, "Laruelle opposes the radical primacy of individuals' singular identity, as first and ultimate flesh that forever remains hermetic to, and not affected by, philosophy's various modes of idealisation of matter" ('Laruelle Facing Deleuze: Immanence, Resistance and Desire', in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. by John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012], pp. 42-59 (p. 43)).

conviction that to achieve such a levelling demands not just lip service, but a rigorous and continuous performative labour.[83] Philosophy, as already observed, aspires to be a universal language by which all regional knowledges would be mediated, but it does this by ensuring its capacity for "translating its own systems into one another, and thereby putting an end to their mutual incomprehension *without putting an end to their differences and, in a certain manner, to their inexchangeability*".[84] By positing itself as this universal mediator, philosophy maintains a hierarchy between itself and the extra-philosophical knowledges that it circumscribes and appropriates, even whilst it remains dependent upon these apparent exteriorities. In other words, this universal mediation is achieved by imposing the category of *difference* (which is always a *specific difference*) upon these knowledges, pitting them against each other whilst simultaneously maintaining their exchangeability or *in*difference (the *genus* that encompasses these differences) on philosophical terms.

We have already considered, albeit somewhat cursorily, the ways in which this equivalence manifests in relation to style. On the one hand, the communicational imperative of philosophy – that is, its inherent need to transmit meaning, to blend *aletheia* and *logos* – ensures that style will always be a matter of concern for philosophy, even if it is usually sidelined as a quasi-philosophical concern marginal to the essential functions of philosophizing (the typical place for rhetoric within post-mediaeval Western philosophy), for the discipline will always have to grapple with the problem of how best to communicate its ostensible truth. On the other hand though, this very problem makes apparent that philosophy can only speak of or to the real through the medium of its own syntaxes and idioms – which comprise a seemingly endless variety of stylistic differences, all of which though are ultimately still *philosophical* in nature – and as such, the truth of which it claims to communicate will

[83] John Ó Maoilearca, "Laruelle's 'Criminally Performative' Thought: On Doing and Saying in Non-Philosophy", *Performance Philosophy* 1 (2015), 161-167 (p. 162). Beginning with the Philosophy III period, Laruelle would come to describe non-philosophy as a radical and immanent theory of *democracy*, positing it as 'the only programme that is itself practically democratic because it is theoretically democratic, and which defines a democratic opening distinct from any political plane' (*Théorie des Étrangers*, p. 115), hoping to bring peace to thought through the flattening of all hierarchies and cessation of all conflicts.

[84] Laruelle, *The Non-Philosophy Project*, p. 103.

always involve the undecidable suturing of *two* terms into a merely apparent *one*. Again, a mixed or unitary form, a "hallucination of the real".[85] In short, the various distinctions that arise from the consideration of style (e.g. clear or opaque, literal or figural, essayistic or aphoristic, etc.) enable and perpetuate the auto-productive and circular repetition of difference that ensures philosophy will never actually grasp the desideratum that it seeks (viz. the real *qua* object as apart from any such stylistic accoutrements), and will instead remain mired in endless stylistic (as well as argumentative) disputation.[86]

The philosophical consideration of style, then, *does* acknowledge the importance of these stylistic differences, but it does so not in the name of a genuine universality, relativity, or generality, but instead in that of a universal differentiation under the aegis of philosophical decision – a totalizing *in*difference.[87] Non-philosophy seeks "a language that would finally be *genuinely* universal", rather than a *logos* that desires or presupposes its own universality.[88] In order to achieve this, individual styles must be treated entirely as such, individual (in the most literal sense: in*divisible*) without remainder, entirely unexchangeable. This unilateralization of style frees it from the constraints of the philosophical *logos*, for it no longer must comport itself in line with the expectations of philosophy – in particular, it no longer need make any claim in regard to the real, and thus comparisons between different styles cannot be made on the basis of veracity or adequation.[89] There is no exchangeability in

[85] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 29.

[86] "The Greco-Occidental style wears itself out in the infinitely varied practice of the unity of contraries, their co-belonging, their simultaneity in general and not only in its dialectical form" (Laruelle, *Le principe de minorité*, p. 68). One might say that if there is a universal style of philosophy as such (i.e. the style of all philosophically possible styles), it is precisely this formal capacity to differentiate from itself whilst still conforming to its foundational invariances.

[87] "Difference repeats the primitive couples of philosophy with the difference that it repeats them and wants them in their essence as couple. What it affirms is no longer the terms themselves, with their determinate cultural and historical content, suffering their contradiction or their combat as a necessary evil or a strange fatality. To the contrary, Difference affirms the superiority of their combat, of their coupling and hierarchy over the content of the embattled terms" (Laruelle, *Philosophies of Difference*, p. 8).

[88] Laruelle, *The Non-Philosophy Project*, p. 99.

[89] Amongst many other possible connections, we might briefly note the consonances here with the rather contentious *écriture féminine* advocated by philosophers such as Luce Irigaray, amongst others – a style of writing that "resists and explodes every

this mode of thought, only the identity of all styles with the real in the last instance: an identity without hierarchy, without disputation, proceeding from the radical finitude of the real *qua* the "ordinary" individual. This identity in the last instance is not a synthesis, a sublation, a reconciliation, or a totalization; it instead precedes (in a transcendental rather than temporal manner) any such conjunction.

Conclusion

For non-philosophy, declares Katerina Kolozova, "the truth of ourselves is never ours, whereas what is ours … is always indifferent to any truth".[90] Philosophy posits truth – the real – as an object, something to be grasped (even if this object comes in the form of a transcendental subject, etc.), whereas non-philosophy posits the ordinary human as the necessary but insufficient condition for this truth: the radically finite individual who determines such truth in the last instance, but is never affected by or convertible with it. To think non-philosophically it is necessary to engage with the problem of style, and to make usage of philosophical styles, but to do so upon a terrain that is no longer philosophical. "The concept of non-philosophy requires the practical production of new stylistic and literary codes, new 'forms' of which we do not yet know what they are and which will perhaps be of great freedom... and complexity".[91]

With this in mind, we can understand why Laruelle would come to abandon the notion of "Nietzsche-thought" as the dominant motif of his project: whilst it does in one sense closely resemble the unilateralization of style described above, it particularizes this Nietzschean style of thought in order to valorize it over and above other forms of philosophy. Throughout Laruelle's Philosophy I period, Nietzsche-thought remains the privileged modality by which difference must be cognized and

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firmly established form, figure, idea or concept", and which "cannot be upheld as a thesis, cannot be the object of a position" (*This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985], p. 79). Unlike Laruelle, however, who conceives of non-philosophical style as proceeding from a real that is devoid of all adjectival description, Irigaray's strategically mimetic affirmation of a feminine style of writing proceeds in a much more specified manner from the corporeality of the occluded female body.

[90] Katerina Kolozova, "The Figure of the Stranger: A Possibility for Transcendental Minimalism or Radical Subjectivity", *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, 11:3 (2011), 59-64 (p. 64).

[91] Laruelle, *En tant qu'un*, p. 182.

actualized, and whilst he certainly makes overtures toward a more generalized, non-hierarchical conception of philosophy, overall he produces a quasi-system amenable to philosophical reason and discourse, positing Nietzsche-thought as a *better* style of thought, a *better* philosophy.[92] In order to suspend the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, such comparison, which feeds into "a permanent activity of violent force or arbitrary decision", must first be put to rest.[93]

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle propounds that "language to be good must be clear", for "speech which fails to convey a plain meaning will fail to do just what speech has to do", arguing that effective communication should be neither exceedingly obvious (for then such communication would not be necessary in the first place), nor unnecessarily obfuscatory (for this will just puzzle, rather than enlighten).[94] This assumes, however, that the primary function of language is the transmission of a message, and style is merely the medium by which this message is most efficaciously delivered. What I am proposing here instead is not merely a reversal of these terms (such that it would be the stylistic, tonal, rhetorical, etc. elements of communication that precede or determine the message) but a total suspension (without liquidation) of the problematic of content: again, a style without substance, in that it is no longer placed in a reversible or reciprocal relation with semantic content, but in a unilateral relation of causality proceeding from the real. This non-philosophical usage of style is reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan's famous example of the electric lightbulb (which Deleuze and Guattari cite in reference to their aforementioned conception of a decoded, non-signifying language) – a "medium without a message" – in that it is intended to produce material

[92] In regard to such overtures, we might cite, for instance, his observation that '[a] quotation has never proved anything, especially in the case of Nietzsche', noting that it is always possible to use such quotations in order to 'make him serve two opposing theses, or two divergent political tendencies', namely both fascism and its subversion (Laruelle, *Nietzsche contre Heidegger*, pp. 140-141). Cf. Laruelle's foreword to *Textual Machines*, in which he describes quotation as "a repetition that sometimes – but not always – borders on parody and mimesis", and as such, "had to give way to games that generalized it and thus rendered it impracticable in its strict form" (*Machines textuelles*, p. 8).

[93] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 19, translation altered.

[94] Aristotle, Rhetoric, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume Two*, ed. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 2152-2269 (p. 2239).

effects without transmitting a semantic code.[95] Perhaps more than any other element of philosophical discourse, style allows us to imagine a transformation of philosophical materials whereby form entirely coincides with function.

This is in large part, it would seem, the intention of Laruelle's own writings: as Smith would have it, Laruelle "deploys certain forms of syntax and writing conventions throughout his work that flow from the principle that non-philosophy does what it says and says what it does".[96] It is in this context of style that we might understand Laruelle's own proclamation that non-philosophy "is the authentic, not alienated, concept of 'popular philosophy' and of anti-vulgarization", and his frequent appeals (especially in his earlier work) to the notion of an "ordinary" thought counterposed against the elitism of Western philosophical thought proper.[97] Philosophical style, and the various hermeto-logical techniques that accompany it, operates through an economy of scarcity, ensuring that its expression is never truly spontaneous, but is always mediated by a long-congealed corpus of discursive rules and expectations (even when it espouses pretensions toward a "plain" language – e.g. much of analytic philosophy – this still implies a necessary adherence to such formalisms[98]) intended to regulate the transmission of a *truth* to which philosophy supposes itself as having privileged access. By refusing

[95] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London and New York: Routledge, 1964), p. 8.
[96] Smith, *Laruelle*, p. 49.
[97] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 28.
[98] For instance, see Sandra Laugier's remarks regarding "the refusal, shared by analytic and Continental philosophy, of the procedures of ordinary language philosophy", which she considers in turn to be a "refusal of language's *publicness*, which we so easily hide under a mythology of privacy" – although her observations here touch upon very important concerns regarding the audience that philosophy presumes to address (and the universality that it tends to claim for itself), she makes this proposition of an ordinary language philosophy in order to "*recover language*, and the real along with it" (*Why We Need Ordinary Language Philosophy*, trans. by Daniela Ginsburg [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013], pp. 120-121). That is to say, Laugier conceives of the act of bringing language into question, and specifically of introducing into philosophy the question of the ordinary (the "real immanence of ordinary language", as she describes it) as providing a means of communicating the real, tacitly locating a moment of transcendence within this field of immanence whereby the real comes to be accessible and communicable through a specific modality of language (even if the formal parameters of this modality remain mutable), furnishing a mixed form of language and the real.

this communicational imperative, non-philosophy hopes to liberate itself from this economy, emphasizing instead the experiential possibilities accessible to everyone when our thought is no longer beholden to philosophical strictures of style, and their demand for adequation. In such a usage, "philosophy becomes non-philosophy's instrument *qua* absolute experience, sufficient in its order, and enjoys itself without wondering if it is useful and responsible".[99]

[99] Laruelle, *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy*, p. 225.

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The Implicative Dimension of Time: From Bergson's Duration to Deleuze's Virtuality

FLORIAN VERMEIREN

I. The Early Bergsonian Conception of Duration

Bergson's concept of duration is first developed in *Time and Free Will.* The central aim of this book is methodological. Bergson wishes, as Deleuze says, "'to return' to the things themselves"[1], by emphasizing a strict difference in nature between quality and quantity, duration and space. Bergson wishes to 'purify' time from space, quality from quantity, consciousness from matter. The dualism operative in Bergson's first book should thus be understood as a methodological tool to get a clear understanding of pure consciousness, quality, and time.

Let me begin by discussing Bergson's conception of space. Space is an invention of our intellect grounded in our practical needs. Bergson always emphasised that we are living creatures with needs; as such we are stuck in a practical approach towards reality. This is why we generalise, homogenise and solidify reality. Our intellect is constantly cutting solid static objects from the flux of reality. This is because, Bergson tells us, we feel at home among solid objects[2], among clear cut generalities and homogeneous abstractions. This is what our actions have control over, what our concepts and our logic are shaped after. But however useful

[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974,* ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 32.
[2] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillian and co.,1928), p. X.

these abstractions may be, we should always be aware that these are mere abstractions of reality and not reality itself.

The idea of an empty 'homogeneous medium' (*milieu vide homogène*) in which things can be related and distinguished in a homogenizing way, plays a central role in these abstractions. The idea of this medium constitutes the idea of space, according to Bergson.[3] "[Space is] a principle of differentiation other than that of qualitative differentiation, and consequently it is a reality with no quality."[4] Let us consider an example. When a teacher goes on an excursion with her students, certain practical arrangements, like ensuring that there are sufficient places on the bus, require consideration of the students as elements in a homogeneous space. She will not think of the specific individualities of the different students as this would only complicate the decisions she has to make. She considers the students as possible occupants of places on the bus. This spatial way of understanding is thus characterised by an ignoring of qualitative differences (considering them simply as twenty-two students) or as a neutralizing of these qualitative differences by considering only some (nine boys and thirteen girls). As such it constitutes a homogeneous continuity, a continuity of the qualitatively equivalent. Bergson also calls this a 'numerical multiplicity' (*multiplicité numérique*) in which elements only differ from each other in their number: *three students* differ from *two students*, but *two students* is equal to *two students*. A spatial or numerical understanding is thus a kind of abstraction from qualitative reality into quantity.

Now that we have some understanding of space we can better understand what duration is. Bergson often uses the example of the melody.[5] A melody takes time, a melody has a duration. Now, in contrast to the interchangeable students from the above example, the notes in the melody are heterogeneous. Although there might be notes in the melody with the exact same pitch, they occur on different moments in the melody which makes them qualitatively different form each other. This is because in each note the rest of the melody resonates. The melody has an internal organization (first this note, then this note, with this interval and so on) which produces certain qualitative differences between them. When listening to a symphony which begins with the same note with which it ends, this ending note will sound richer than the first note. The two notes,

[3] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. Frank Pogson (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2001), p. 94-95.
[4] Ibid., p. 95.
[5] Ibid., pp. 100-101; Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle Andison (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1946), pp. 18, 82, 173.

which in a quantitative approach would be considered equivalent due to having the exact same pitch, are in the duration of the symphony qualitatively differentiated according to the internal organization of the duration. As such, duration is a principle of *qualitative differentiation* in a *heterogeneous multiplicity*.

Duration is also characterised by indivisibility. When you listen to only a part of a melody, this will sound different from when this part is heard within the whole. However, when the teacher takes out four students from her class (when considering putting them on another bus, for example), the students stay qualitatively equivalent. Numerically understood, the students are not related to a whole with a specific organization, like the notes in the melody are. A succession in time is thus something radically different from a distribution in space. A duration, a succession in time, is characterised by *permeability*. The notes of the melody penetrate each other, the final note of the symphony is penetrated and enriched by all of the previous notes. In contrast with this, a distribution in space is characterised by a strict impenetrability. But this is not, Bergson writes, a characteristic of matter itself, as an independent reality, but rather of our concept of space and its intimate relation with the concept of number.[6] If impenetrability were a characteristic of matter itself, Bergson says, we would have no trouble imagining two material objects at the same place, like we have no trouble imagining a surface without resistance or a fluid without weight. We cannot imagine two material objects at the same location because impenetrability is part of the concept of number which our intellect uses. Two objects already means two objects *at different places*. Here we see how the concept of space and number are so strongly intertwined.

Our thinking in terms of space and number, and their infinite divisibility, is a form of *analysis*. Abstracting from qualitative differences in melody, we are able to quantify the notes and consider all notes with the same pitch as equivalent (all notes of 440 Hz are the note A4), and as such we are able to grasp a melody in symbols on a musical score. Duration, on the other hand, is a form of *synthesis*, a duration forms a whole in which each element is qualitatively different due to its place in that whole. Each element has a quality due to its place in the temporal succession, due to its place in this whole where it is penetrated by the other elements.

> We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and

[6] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 88.

> think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought.[7]

It is due to this continuous whole resonating in each element that these elements are qualitatively different from each other. It is because of the note's specific place in the whole of the melody, in the intimate organization of the melody, that it has a quality. Bergson thus understands quality in terms of this dependence on a continuous whole resonating in each element. In short, we have on the one hand space as a numerical, quantitative multiplicity, formed by an additive synthesis constituting an infinitely divisible continuity, and on the other we have duration as a heterogeneous, qualitative multiplicity, formed by a dynamical process of growing and self-differentiation, constituting an indivisible continuity.

In the end, the analysis of time is nothing but an analysis of time as the form of inner sense, as Kant had already understood it.[8] Bergson's inquiry in *Time and Free Will* is thus really an inquiry into pure consciousness. Consciousness is qualitative and durational and can, as such, be strictly distinguished from non-consciousness. It should therefore be noted that in Bergson's first book duration and all of its examples only refer to phenomena of consciousness.

II. The Later Bergsonian Idea of a Continuum of Durations

As we have said, in *Time and Free Will* Bergson understands duration as psychological duration, or the duration of consciousness. According to Deleuze, however, the clear determination of this psychological duration, by means of the opposition with space and quantity, is nothing but an opening into to the conception of ontological duration.[9] In later works Bergson moves, as Deleuze says, to an "ontological plane"[10], and considers reality at large as durational: "Thus, whether it is a question of the internal or the external, of ourselves or of things, reality is mobility itself."[11] As such, time and duration become truly ontological concepts.

[7] Ibid., p. 101.
[8] Ibid., p. 226-227.
[9] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 48-49.
[10] Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, p. 32.
[11] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 176; Compare this with what he wrote in *Time and*

With this step into ontology Bergson developed the idea of reality as a "continuity of durations". In *Introduction to Metaphysics* Bergson writes:

> [Intuition] puts us into contact with a whole continuity of durations which we should try to follow either downwardly or upwardly: in both cases we can dilate ourselves indefinitely by a more and more vigorous effort, in both cases we transcend ourselves. In the first case, we advance toward a duration more and more scattered, whose palpitations, more rapid than ours, dividing our simple sensation, dilute its quality into quantity: at the limit would be the pure homogeneous, the pure repetition by which we shall define materiality. In advancing in the other direction, we go toward a duration which stretches, tightens, and becomes more and more intensified: at the limit would be eternity. This time not only conceptual eternity, which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life.[12]

Now that time is understood ontologically, matter is no longer an abstraction of the intellect, but rather a different rhythm of duration, a different degree of contraction of duration. Instead of our analytic intellect dividing a whole into parts, and quantifying its elements, matter is now a relaxation, a loosening of time itself. But how should we understand matter as both a more attenuated duration (*une durée éparpillée*) and "a series of infinitely rapid repetitions"[13]? How is this not contradictory? Let us, as an example, compare our duration with that of a brick. We have understood duration as the involvement of an element within a continuous whole itself resonating in each new moment. Each moment is a contraction of a past. We, as humans, are involved in a richer and deeper past than a brick. Resonating in each of our experiences is a whole lifetime of experiences and even more, a cultural, political and biological history. Our duration has a high degree of contraction due to

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Free Will: "Outside ourselves we should find only space, and consequently nothing but simultaneities, of which we could not even say that they are objectively successive, since succession can only be thought through comparing the present with the past" (p. 116), and "What duration is there existing outside us? The present only, or, if we prefer the expression, simultaneity. No doubt external things change, but their moments do not succeed one another, if we retain the ordinary meaning of the word, except for a consciousness which keeps them in mind" (p. 227).

[12] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 220.

[13] Ibid., 108.

the large and continually growing open whole in which we are involved. But a brick is not involved in such a past, and consequentially no such qualitative differentiation occurs. All of reality is durational but matter is a very low degree of duration, it barely constitutes a whole. The brick is almost a pure repetition of moments, "a present which always begins again"[14]; a constant pulsation of equal moments, rather than a growth or development. There is almost no contraction of a past, and its duration is dilated to such an extent that its moments are constantly on the verge of falling apart.

The difference between the dilated duration of the brick and the highly contracted duration of the human consciousness is not an absolute difference. The strict difference in kind between time and space, between consciousness and matter, in Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, now becomes a gradual difference of contraction: "If we were only to divide, ideally, this undivided depth of time, to distinguish in it the necessary multiplicity of moments, in a word to eliminate all memory, we should pass thereby from perception to matter, from the subject to the object."[15] In *Creative Evolution* this idea of a continuity of durations is further developed, especially in the third chapter, where we encounter the idea of an ascending and a descending movement, as a contraction and a relaxation of time. Here matter is understood as a process instead of a thing, it is the process that moves downwards on the continuity of durations, the process of dilation or relaxation.[16] The process moves towards a limit of pure materiality and total dilation. But it is a limit. Pure matter is thus never a reality, things always incorporate a minimal temporal element. There is never a purely material part of reality, never a truly atemporal, inert, instantaneous element. Every present, every moment, already has a "thickness of time"[17], matter is always already a duration. Pure instantaneous matter cannot exist, Bergson says, because to attribute to atemporal instantaneous matter even the most minimal degree of reality is to deny duration every reality: "If movement is not everything, it is nothing; and if to begin with we have supposed that immobility can be a reality, movement will slip through our fingers when we think we have it."[18] This is because there is no passage between the instant and duration. You can try to grasp a movement as a collection of instantaneous

[14] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* trans. Nancy Paul and Scott Palmer (Boston: Digireads.com publishing, 2010), p. 176.
[15] Ibid., pp. 36-37.
[16] Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* pp. 212-214.
[17] Bergson, *Time and Free Will,* p. 36.
[18] Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* pp. 170-171.

moments, you can place as many intermediary moments between the beginning and the end of the movement, between each of those moments, but there will always remain a gap, an interval constituting the transition from one moment to the other. In other words, you can analyze a *movement* in as many *moments* as you like, there will always remain a *movement* between those *moments.*[19] Bergson compares this with trying to compose a line with points: "You could never create time out of such instants any more than you could make a line out of mathematical points."[20] This is because pure instants, like mathematical points, continually coincide, and because to place them after each other, to distinguish them, a temporal interval, a movement, is required. Instants thus cannot explain anything. If we want to attribute even the smallest portion of reality to movement, we have to take reality itself as nothing but movement. Therefore, pure materiality, pure homogeneity, pure space, pure repetition, or however we want to call it, can never be a reality. All of reality is durational, is movement: "Movement is reality itself."[21] But durations come in different degrees of contraction and dilation. As such, this idea of a continuity of durations implies a form of monism, in which everything is understood as duration.

Deleuze argues that Bergson's monism and his dualism are merely different moments in his method.[22] In this sense we can say that (1) the monism is already present in Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, and (2) that the dualism is still part of Bergson's idea of a continuum of durations in the later work.[23]

1. On different occasions in *Time and Free Will* Bergson makes it clear that quantity and space are dependent on quality and duration. He says that the heterogeneous multiplicity already includes the numerical multiplicity *in potentia.*[24] He speaks about space and quantity as an "unrolling" (*dérouler*)[25] or a "development" (*développement*)[26] of duration. Bergson writes: "Time so to speak materialised, time that has

[19] Ibid., p. 171.
[20] Ibid., p. 177.
[21] Ibid., p. 168.
[22] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 93.
[23] Ibid., p. 91.
[24] Bergson, *Time and Free Will,* p. 121.
[25] Ibid., p. 125; Bergson uses the word "*dérouler*" this is translated as "setting out", I believe my translation as "unrolling" is more accurate, as Bergson uses this word to denote something rolled up by duration being unrolled in space.
[26] Ibid., p. 122; Bergson uses the word "*développement*" this is also translated as "setting out", I believe my translation as "development" is more accurate, as Bergson uses this word to denote something enveloped being developed.

become quantity by being set out [*développment*] in space."[27] Bergson often suggests that space and matter are nothing but derivations of duration. In this sense, the dualism is also nothing but a derivation of a primary monism. As such, and as Cristian Ruby says, Bergson's dualism is not equal to the Cartesian dualism of two *substances*.[28] It is closer to Spinoza's division of attributes which find their true unity in God.

2. In the monistic idea of a continuity of durations, the idea of a strict distinction between the spiritual and the material returns as the distinction between two tendencies. These two tendencies can be understood as two directions on the continuum of durations, "one of relaxation (*détente*) that descends into matter, the other of tension that ascends into duration".[29] However, Deleuze argues that this is a "genetic dualism".[30] Matter and mind are processes instead of substances. Deleuze speaks of two lines, that of objectivity and that of subjectivity.[31] The first denotes the process of dispersion into parts, of duration being comprised of parts and being itself a part. The second denotes a fusion of duration in the past.

III. What Is the Past?

To understand the Bergsonian conception of the past we should compare it with the common understanding. In common sense the past is taken to have disappeared, it was once present, but then it passed. The passed is understood as having vanished with the exception of traces it has left in the present. The society of ancient Egypt, for example, has passed but there are some traces left in the present. Psychological memory is commonly understood in the same way. It is often though that we can remember what has passed due to traces it has left in our present brain. But the traces never exceed the present, the traces are not the past, the past as such has disappeared. Now, Bergson says that if we accurately analyse this common sense understanding of time, it already implies the affirmation of the reality of the past. For if we say that the brain holds on to past experiences, we already presuppose that the brain holds on to itself through different moments.

[27] Ibid., p. 127.
[28] Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, comm. Christian Ruby (Paris: Ellipses Marketing, 2013), p. 181.
[29] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 95.
[30] Ibid., p. 96.
[31] Ibid., p. 30.

> And that is why we imagine here and there in the brain, memory 'pigeon-holes' for preserving fragments of the past, – the brain moreover, being self-preserving. As though that were not postponing the difficulty and simply putting off the problem! As though, by positing that cerebral matter is preserved through time, or more generally that all matter endures, one did not attribute to it precisely the memory one claimed to explain by it! Whatever we do, even if we imagine that the brain stores up memories, we do not escape the conclusion that the past can preserve itself automatically.[32]

Similarly, if we take the Egyptian pyramids to be a trace of the past, we already presuppose a minimal continuity in the history of the world, in which the pyramids have held on to themselves through thousands of years. In other words, the idea of traces in the present presupposes the duration of time, the synthesis through time, and as such presupposes the reality of the past.

But this past of which we affirm the reality is not the same as that appearing in common thought. According to common understanding, the past is a moment, like the present, which is no longer present. Obviously, there are no pharaohs present today like there were four thousand years ago. But as we have seen in section 1, you cannot reduce the movement of time to a collection of moments. Therefore, the past is not this passed moment, but a duration. But which duration? A duration that has passed? No, Deleuze tells us, a duration for each duration to pass *in*.

> Although it is originary, the first synthesis of time is no less intratemporal. It constitutes time as a present, but a present which passes. Time does not escape the present, but the present does not stop moving by leaps and bounds which encroach upon one another. This is the paradox of the present: to constitute time while passing in the time constituted. We cannot avoid the necessary conclusion – that there must be another time in which the first synthesis of time can occur.[33]

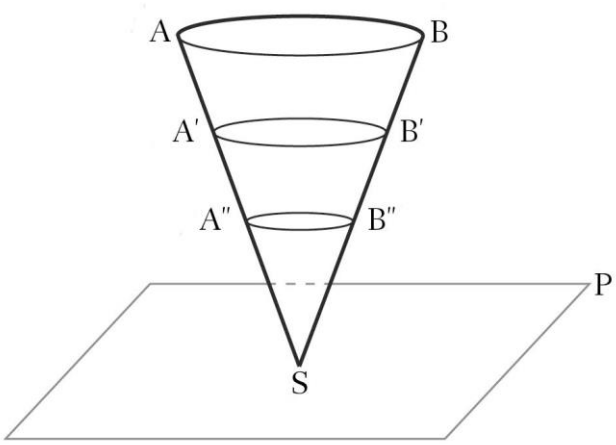
Durations pass. Each melody ends and a new song begins, but the new song can only be related to the other songs, can only be differentiated due

[32] Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* pp. 182-183.
[33] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 100.

to a whole which contracts all the songs of the evening in the duration of the concert. But the concert in its turn is implicated in even larger durations of our life, our culture, the history of man and the history of the universe. Each duration requires a bigger duration, a bigger whole, to pass in, to be related to other durations, to be qualitatively differentiated from other durations, and at the limit each duration presupposes the contraction of the whole past. The past is thus a gigantic, all-inclusive duration for every duration to pass in.

In this sense, the past is no longer a past coming after the present of which it was the past. The past is now contemporaneous with the present of which it is the past.[34] The past is a bigger whole in which the present moves, in which the present can be qualitatively differentiated from another present, a past in which the present can pass.[35] But the past is not before or after this present which it encompasses, it is contemporaneous with the present.[36] Just like this, the melody is contemporaneous with each note being played. Each note has a past, the previously played notes, which penetrate the note and produce its quality. The past is therefore not something that has passed, but something that continually coexists with the present that it produces, that it differentiates. And here, Deleuze tells us, the idea of duration shows itself from another side: "Bergsonian duration is, in the final analysis, defined less by succession than by coexistence."[37] As we have seen, in *Time and Free Will* Bergson took succession as the principle of time. It is only by succession, as an intimate organization of elements, that movement could be understood as a qualitative differentiation, that the notes of the melody express a qualitative movement. But the idea of succession is dependent on the coexistence of the whole of succession, the intimate organization. Deleuze focuses on this dimension of the whole coexisting with the succession, rather than on the succession itself: "Duration is indeed real succession, but it is so only because, more profoundly, it is virtual coexistence: the coexistence with itself of all the levels, all the tensions, all the degrees of contractions and relaxation [détente]."[38]

[34] Ibid., pp. 103-104.
[35] Ibid., p. 100.
[36] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, pp. 58-59.
[37] Ibid., p. 60.
[38] Ibid.



Succession is dependent on the whole resonating in each new note, but this whole leads to bigger and bigger wholes and eventually towards the whole of the total past. While our materiality is equal to an infinite falling apart, our interiority is equal to a fusion with the whole past. If matter is an infinite falling apart, the past is an infinite *implication*. The past is the dimension of the whole, it is itself a gigantic whole. The past is as such characterised by a coexistence of all its different contractions. This is Bergson's famous image of the past as an inverted cone (see figure).[39] The plane P is the plane of pure matter, pure perception, pure exteriority. But as we saw, each present is always already a duration, as such it is always already infused, given a 'width', by the past. The cone of the past thus always punctures the plane of pure matter enriching it with the past. We have said, each duration coexists with the whole of the past, each duration is taken up in the infinite whole of the past, so in the end the whole past is contracted in each present. But this happens in several different ways. The past resonating in the melody is different from the past resonating in a novel. The past is never just the same past recurring in each duration. The past in itself exists as the co-existence of different levels of tension (AB, A'B', A"B", etc.) different levels of contraction.[40] And each present, is implicated in, is contracted by, such a level of tension.

> Each present contracts a level of the whole, but this level is already one of relaxation or contraction. In other words, the sign of the present is a passage to the limit, a maximal contraction which comes to sanction the choice of a particular level as such, which is in itself contracted or relaxed among an infinity of other possible levels. Moreover, what we say of a life may be said of several lives.[41]

Each thing in this reality, each duration, each movement, is thus a

[39] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 89.
[40] Ibid., pp. 89-99, 91-92.
[41] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 105.

contraction of a different level of tension of the cone of memory. But each of these levels is implicated in the general past. There is thus a difference between the contraction into a present and the contraction of the past into one of its numerous levels of tension. But with such a distinction we are moving into the territory of the ontology that is particular to Deleuze.

IV. Virtuality

The most obvious Deleuzian development of Bergson's philosophy of time is an elaboration on the specific reality of the pure past, its virtuality. Bergson spoke of the differentiation of time, the duration of the melody producing qualitatively differentiated notes. But Deleuze distinguishes two types of temporal differentiation. The virtual past is "differen*t*iating" while the actualization in the present is a "differen*c*iating".[42] We are here continuing where we left off in the previous section: there is a difference between the contraction of the pure past, at different levels of tension and the contraction of such a level in an actual present. Deleuze understands this distinction as the distinction between two forms of repetition, two forms of synthesis:

> Between the two repetitions, the material and the spiritual, there is a vast difference. The former is a repetition of successive independent elements or instants; the latter is a repetition of the Whole on diverse coexisting levels (as Leibniz said, 'everything can be said to be the same at all times and places except in degrees of perfection') As a result, the two repetitions stand in very different relations to 'difference' itself. Difference is drawn from one in so far as the elements or instants are contracted within a living present. It is included in the other in so far as the Whole includes the difference between its levels.[43]

The process of differen*t*iation, the contraction in different coexisting levels of tension, in short, the development of the virtual Whole[44]

[42] Ibid., p. 261.
[43] Ibid., p. 106.
[44] From now on I will use "Whole", with a capital letter, to denote the Whole of the pure past. This is to distinguish it from the whole formed by smaller durations, like the one of the melody. With such a distinction, I am following Deleuze (Deleuze,

includes each difference. In the process of differen*c*iation, the contraction of a level of tension of the past into a present, in short, in actualization, difference is 'drawn off' (*soutirée*). What does that mean?

To better understand, let us use our previous idea of melody. We have said, in each new note, there is a resonance of the whole melody. Due to this resonance of a whole, each note has a quality, is qualitatively differentiated. As we saw in chapter one, this is not a new idea. But Deleuze is here complicating matters a bit more. He says there is a virtual differen*t*iation in the Whole different from the actual differen*c*iation in the lived present of the heard notes. How the notes are actually differen*c*iated, how the melody is actually experienced, is only a limited selection of a pre-existing and 'richer' virtual differen*t*iation. Each time you hear a melody, new qualities may arise, and it is never predetermined how the notes will be qualitatively differen*c*iated. There are several different ways in which they can be qualitatively differen*c*iated. As such, each differen*c*iation is a subtraction (difference is 'drawn off') of a richer differen*t*iation (where all difference is included).

We are tempted here to say that virtuality consists of all the possible differen*c*iations, all the possible productions. But Deleuze repeatedly emphasises that we should not confuse the virtual with the possible.[45] This is in the spirit of Bergson's rejection of the category of possibility, as it undermines the true creativity of time.[46] Virtuality does not consist of numerous ready-formed possibilities that are then actualised by a simple realization of them. Actualization is always creative, that is why virtuality should not be understood as a bundle of different, fully formed possible situations of which one is realised. It is better to understand the virtual in terms of *potentiality* instead of possibility.[47] Potentiality refers to the genetic force or energy to produce and *form* actuality. If you plan on going to visit a friend and listen to his records, you may be able to imagine what it will be like. But it is only with the actual present of visiting your friend that the visit acquires a certain form. Actualization is characterised by its continual *formation* in a certain manner. And so we return to the distinction beween differen*c*iation and differen*t*iation. Let us stick to our example of the melody. The actual lived melody is a certain creative actualization of a far richer melody-potential, capable of producing many different actualities. Both this

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Difference and Repetition, p. 106) who in his turn is following Bergson (Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 13).

[45] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 263-265.

[46] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 107-125.

[47] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 221-223.

virtual melody-potential and the actual melody evolve and grow, but they do so in different ways. Actualization is a process of *formation* in a certain manner, in which, so to say, choices are being made. Virtuality, on the other hand, differen*t*iates. It does change but not in a formative way, all choices are still open, all differences are included. The virtual, Deleuze says, is characterised by an 'envelopment' instead of a 'development', an 'involution' instead of an 'evolution', an 'implication' instead of an 'explication'. But the difference between these still comes down to the one between the movement up and the movement down on Bergson's continuity of durations.[48]

To fully grasp these distinctions we have to acknowledge the Spinozism in these ideas. Deleuze himself recognised the connection between Bergson and Spinoza: "duration is like a naturing nature [*nature naturante*], and matter is like a natured nature [*nature naturée*]".[49] Accordingly, the concepts of implication and explication are best understood in light of the concept of "expression" that Deleuze takes to be central to Spinoza's philosophy.[50] Nature, or Substance, (as *natura naturans*) expresses itself in all the concrete actual things (*natura naturata*), these are modes or expressions of nature. But this expression consists of two parts: implication and explication. Nature's modes express nature, they explicate nature in a certain way. But nature is never exhaustively expressed, there are always other explications possible. There is always more to nature than its current expressions. But this 'more' does not exist apart from its expressions, and nature is nothing but this expression[51], this production, rather than a transcendent reality.[52] Nature as the more-to-be-expressed exists as that which is implicated in each expression. As such, the expressions always both implicate and explicate the expressed. This idea also returns in the mannerism of *The*

[48] Note that this distinction is the same as the one between Deleuze's first and second synthesis of time. Deleuze writes: "The explication of extensity rests upon the first synthesis, that of habit or the present; but the implication of depth rests upon the second synthesis, that of Memory and the past" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 289). The movement upwards is a movement of implication and envelopment, the movement downwards is a movement of explication or development.

[49] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 93.

[50] Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone books, 1990), pp. 13-22.

[51] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[52] It should be noted that this applies to Deleuze's favorable interpretation of Spinoza in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Spinoza himself often seems to grant substance a form of autonomy relative to its modes. In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze criticizes Spinoza precisely on this point (p. 50).

Fold. Each thing is a manner of folding and as such it is implicated in (it is a fold in) a sheet of matter that can be folded in an infinity of ways.[53] Durations are thus always implicated in bigger durations which they explicate in a certain way. There is always more to the melody than the actual heard notes, but these actual heard notes are nothing more than a certain expression or differen*c*iation of the whole. The actual notes explicate the whole of the melody but they can only do so because they remain implicated in the whole. Now, to return to the differen*t*iation/differen*c*iation distinction, if the differen*t*iation of the virtual includes all differences it is because it is the *implicative* dimension, this implication of all durations in a gigantic Whole, a pure past. The differen*c*iation of actualization selects differences, draws off other differences, as it is the *explicative* dimension. Deleuze calls this implicative dimension "depth".[54] The actual heard melody only has quality due to its depth, due to that which remains virtual in the actual melody. The depth is that which does not surface, that which remains implicated. In short, the depth is the past resonating in each present.

V. The Depth of Time

Now, what does it mean to "be implicated", to "have a past", to "have a depth"? In his second book on cinema Deleuze quotes the filmmaker Fellini: "We are constructed in memory; we are simultaneously childhood, adolescence, old age and maturity."[55] Similarly, Bergson writes: "What are we, in fact, what is our *character*, if not the condensation of the history that we have lived from our birth – nay, even before our birth, since we bring with us prenatal dispositions?"[56] But what does that mean, to be "a condensation of history"? In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze speaks about this memory, this past, as a destiny (*un destin*).[57] But he emphasises that this should not be understood as a form of determinism. It should be understood in terms of resonance: "Rather, it implies between successive presents non-localisable connections, actions at a distance, systems of replay, resonance and echoes, objective chances,

[53] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroqu*e, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 19, 56.
[54] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 288.
[55] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 104.
[56] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 5.
[57] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 105.

signs, signals and roles which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions."[58] In the final note of the symphony, resonances are felt, as actions at a distance between the final note and the past notes. Likewise in our actions, in our thought, a personal history, a life resonates. If you take, for example, a wedding or a funeral, we can see that there is a whole personal history infusing the moment, qualifying it, intensifying it. But there are even vibrations coming from further in time, cultural and historical events, a life, a story, that we all share:

> We say of successive presents which express a destiny that they always play out the same thing, the same story, but at different levels: here more or less relaxed, there more or less contracted. […] Since each is a passing present, one life may replay another at a different level, as if the philosopher and the pig, the criminal and the saint, played out the same past at different levels of a gigantic cone.[59]

Because we are living creatures with practical needs and interests, our attention is always limited, which is why, Bergson tells us, we don't consciously experience this past, this pure memory.[60] But in certain instances our attention might expand, when we are suddenly confronted with life-threatening danger for example. The mountaineer who is dangerously hanging from a cliff, might see his past flashing by. This might sound like a cliché, but Bergson takes it to contain a significant truth.[61] Likewise, as Deleuze and Guattari notice in *Anti-Oedipus*, the thoughts of the schizophrenic are often deeply involved in history. Their delusions often contain historical figures, racial themes, theological motives.[62] Schizophrenics show how man is "*Homo historia*".[63] Rather than out of touch with reality, Deleuze and Guattari take them to be too close: too close, for practical life, to reality as the pure past, the gigantic

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 179-180; It should be noted that Deleuze does not explain the fact that we are not conscious of this past in terms of attention. The pure past is simply not representable according to Deleuze. He is more radical that Bergson on this point.
[61] Ibid. p. 180.
[62] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 85, 352.
[63] Ibid., p. 21.

memory, in which we are implicated. The schizophrenic acting like Napoleon should not be misunderstood, Deleuze and Guattari write. He does not imitate Napoleon, he does not mistake himself in thinking he is Napoleon, he simply feels the Napoleon-effect.[64] He feels the intensities, the actions at a distance, the resonances of Napoleon.

We all share this general past but not as a shared predestination. Every expression of this past is creative as each one is a contraction of a different level of tension. This is why this destiny should not be understood as a historical determination, as if the past is a shadow hanging over the present. The past is a principle of liberty: "This is why destiny accords so badly with determinism but so well with freedom: freedom lies in choosing the levels."[65] This past, this depth, should not be understood as an imprisoning *identity* that can't be shaken off but rather as a principle of *individuation*. In the philosophy of Deleuze, identity is always the secondary effect of a deeper and primary difference: "That identity not be first, that it exist as a principle but as a second principle, as a principle *become*; that it revolve around the Different: such would be the nature of a Copernican revolution."[66] As such, this depth of the past should not be understood in terms of identity, but rather, in terms of difference, as a potential for differen*c*iation. In short, the depth of time is a potential for *creating* an identity, a potential for *individuation*. This is the reason why Deleuzians who claim that freedom lies in a deconstruction of the past, or a rejection of our cultural heritage, have missed an important dimension of Deleuze's philosophy. As Peter De Graeve argues, such interpretations have confused identity with individuation.[67] The past is not an identity limiting us but a potential for individuation, a potential for freedom. This past should not be forgotten or deconstructed, but rather continuously 'reevaluated' in the Nietzschean sense.

If there is an idealist dimension to Deleuze's philosophy, it is to be found in this idea of time, as a system of resonances, signs, vibrations, as an ideal past that never was present. It implies a rejection of common sense empiricism and realism in which everything is present, in which the mind is nothing but present vibrations of matter, or present excitations of the nervous system. But as Deleuze says: "We have thus confused Being,

[64] Ibid., p. 86.
[65] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 105.
[66] Ibid., p. 50.
[67] Peter De Graeve, *Gilles Deleuze en het materialisme (*Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2012), p. 257.

with being-present."[68] In this sense Deleuze is on the side of idealists and rationalists when he says there is more to reality than actuality. Take for example, Leibniz's astonishment over the fact that Locke does not believe in any kind of virtuality exceeding the actual perceptions of the soul.[69] Of course, Deleuze will not understand this virtuality in terms of innate ideas like the rationalists have, but in terms of potentials, resonances, and most importantly: time. It is this dimension of time as implication that constitutes the line of subjectivity. But as such, this subjectivity is never really our own: "Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is the soul or the spirit, the virtual. The actual is always objective, but the virtual is subjective."[70] The quality of our sensations, our thoughts, our life belongs to a past, a system of resonances and virtual relations that is never ours. But this past should not be understood in strictly historical terms, it is the virtual whole in which we are always already implicated. We belong to a virtual system of language, power, society, history, people, money, genetics, art, and so on. We are implicated in a bigger whole, just like the weather is implicated in a system of solar cycles, lunar cycles, mountains and smog. We are implicated in an extremely vast open system. Subjectivity is not to be found in a closed room but in the world as a gigantic interpenetrating melody.

VI. Conclusion

The concept of duration already pointed towards the implicative dimension of time. In the duration of a melody, for example, the notes are implicated in a bigger temporal whole, and through this implicative dimension the notes are qualitatively differentiated. But the idea of a duration also raises the question of the relationship between the duration of the melody and the contracted notes. The notes cannot exist as pure quantities, but must themselves also be durations. Moreover, the duration of the melody cannot pass if there exists no larger duration for it to pass in. There must always be smaller durations below, and larger ones above, any particular level. As such, the idea of a continuity of durations is formed, a continuity in which everything is understood as a contraction of one gigantic duration, the past. Once the question of the difference

[68] Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 55.
[69] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 52.
[70] Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 86.

between the past that each duration contracts and the actual contracting duration itself is posed, the concept of virtuality is developed. Virtuality appears as that what exists as a resonance, "real but not actual, ideal but not abstract".[71] As such, the whole is conceptually further and further distinguished from the elements that it differentiates. Simultaneously, the focus on time as succession shifts to time as a virtual coexistence. Deleuze goes further in this movement than Bergson, by distinguishing the differen*c*iation of the actualization process and the differen*t*iation of the virtual. An actualization process is always a formative one in which difference is "drawn off". While the virtual differen*t*iates itself in a way that each difference remains included, each level of contraction remains implicated in the whole. The virtual is thus that in which we are implicated, and that which differen*t*iates itself endlessly.

[71] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 208; Deleuze is quoting Marcel Proust.

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Why Nietzsche Does Not Object to False Judgments: An Essay on *Beyond Good and Evil*'s Fourth Section

SAMUEL HONSBEEK

In this paper I offer an interpretation of an important yet enigmatic claim Nietzsche forwards in Book I (section 4) of *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The falseness of a judgment is for us not yet an objection to a judgment." In trying to make sense of this claim, my strategy is to offer a detailed analysis of the development of *Beyond Good and Evil*'s first Book – *On the Prejudices of Philosophers* – in particular of the sections immediately preceding the claim under scrutiny. I argue that when assessed in the specific context of its place within the first book, these problematics fade away. More than this, they also serve to highlight and further the work's commitment to (1) questioning the value of the will to truth by means of (2) a "morphology and *doctrine of the development of the will to power*". (BGE 23)

Certain contemporary commentators have claimed that this passage is emblematic of many claims Nietzsche makes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, *viz.* that it is a provocative yet deliberately misleading one. These commentators go as far as to say that Nietzsche intentionally deceives the reader with statements he knew to be nonsensical. This critical strain thus advocates for a reading of *Beyond Good and Evil* that seeks to worm out Nietzsche's deceptive claims, laying them bare to critical denunciation on

the grounds of incoherence and thereby arriving at his actual (concealed) views. In contrast to this so-called 'esoteric' approach, I will argue that there is no reason to believe section 4 offers us a fallacious claim. There is thus also no reason to think of Nietzsche as deliberately misleading his audience. My exegesis thus both clarifies an important but strange claim, whilst providing evidence that there is no need for the exegetical approach championed in the recent scholarship.

1. Reading Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*[1]

Structurally, *BGE* consists of nine 'books' ranging in length from a single sentence to a few pages, preceded by an enigmatic preface and followed by a concluding 'song'. Published in 1886, *BGE* is typically heralded as the first of Nietzsche's late, or 'mature' period works - and yet, it displays a striking continuity with his earlier, 'middle-period' writings, being characterized by a series of claims, questions, and arguments, without it being obvious that there is much of a coherent underlying structure. On any superficial reading of the text, then, it is likely to appear as a disjointed collection of grandiose claims and strange questions – philosophically substandard at best, utterly incoherent at worst.[2] The charitable reader, however, will echo Alexander Nehamas when he says that "we still do not know how to read the book. We simply do not understand its structure, its narrative line. Indeed we do not even know whether it has a narrative line at all."[3] The charitable reader, in short, begins by elucidating a coherent structure and strategy.

Part of the difficulties any Nietzsche-scholar encounters is that it is incredibly challenging to discern any coherent set of views and argumentative strategy among the plethora of literary tropes, rhetorical ploys, and exclamations. Fortunately, some recent scholarship on *BGE* attempts to articulate Nietzsche's substantive views on the basis of a

[1] I use the following abbreviations: *BGE* for 'Beyond Good and Evil', in *Beyond Good and Evil/ On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. by A. Del Caro (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 1-203. *GM* for 'On the Genealogy of Morality', in Ibid., pp. 205-349. GS for *Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974). Most of Nietzsche's works are divided into 'books' or 'essays', which are subdivided into several sections. Books or essays are indicated by Latin numerals, e.g. *BGE* II, or GM III. Sections are indicated by Arabic numerals (e.g. BGE 23).

[2] Rolf-Peter Horstmann, *Introduction to Beyond Good and Evil*', trans. by J. Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. vii–xxviii (p. xxii).

[3] Alexander Nehamas, 'Who Are the 'Philosophers of the Future'? A Reading of Beyond Good and Evil' in *Reading Nietzsche*, ed. by R. Solomon and K. Higgins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) pp. 46–67 (p. 46).

systematic reading. Taking their cue from *BGE* 30, two recent interpretations of the book highlight a distinction between *BGE*'s esoteric and exoteric nature. The exoteric reading is the one confronted by the novice who takes the work at face value. On such a reading, *BGE* is likely to appear as a messy ensemble of enigmatic remarks, contradictions, etc. The good reader will be tempted to make sense of this ensemble, extracting from it a coherent set of views and thus arriving at an esoteric reading. These commentators distinguish between an erroneous superficial meaning on the one hand and, on the other hand, Nietzsche's correct and intended meaning. This distinction found currency in two prominent, albeit very different readings of *BGE*, *viz.* Laurence Lampert's on the one hand, and Maudemarie Clark's and Charles Dudrick's on the other.[4]

This esoteric-exoteric reading has been extensively criticized elsewhere, but one objection in particular is relevant here.[5] Anyone who seeks to contrast a 'literal' with an 'intended, yet non-literal' meaning risks removing virtually any textual constraint from the exegetical method. When faced with a difficulty, such a reader need not entertain the possibility that her own interpretation is to blame, that the philosopher was plainly wrong, or that the text is excessively ambiguous. Worse, one may end up dismissing a statement as merely exoteric simply because it doesn't sit well with one's own philosophical commitments (or one's initial interpretation of the philosopher). Indeed, one is continuously tempted to resort to the position that 'the philosopher can't possibly mean *that*, what he really meant was…'.

One way of countering such interpretations is by carefully analysing the original text and arguing that a literal reading yields a coherent interpretation. Given the choice between two coherent interpretations of the same text, it seems to me, the more literal reading is preferable.[6] In this paper I argue for precisely such an alternative reading of *BGE*, taking a puzzling statement from *BGE* 4 as a case-study: "The falseness of a judgment is for us not yet an objection to a judgment", which I read in the context of *BGE*'s first book *On the Prejudices of*

[4] L. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task; an interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) and M. Clark and D. Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2014).
[5] Cf. R. Schacht, 'Clark and Dudrick's New Nietzsche', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (52:2, 2014), pp. 339-352; T. Stern, 'The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil', *Mind* (123: 489, 2014), pp. 198-203.
[6] On condition, to be sure, that it resonates with the views an author expresses in other places (which, in turn, one reads in the most literal sense possible).

Philosophers. On all accounts this claim is key to *BGE*, and it is often said to reflect an enduring concern of Nietzsche's throughout, at least, his later period.[7] My strategy will be to appreciate how Nietzsche arrives at his remarkable claim by following the development of Book I which opens with two questions apropos the will to truth, and closes with a statement of purpose, namely, to establish a morphology of the will to power. This morphology, in turn, allows one to answer the initial questions regarding the will to truth. The development of Book I thus serves to flesh out and justify the questions, whilst paving the way for the appropriate method to answer them. Importantly, while the text exhibits a number of odd claims and insufficiently substantiated remarks, I believe that most of these problems are contextually resolved over the course of Book I. Indeed, one often finds that a claim in section 1 is resolved in section 2, which in turn raises issues that subsequent sections develop and resolve. While there may be independent problems with Nietzsche's views, there is no reason to think he is deliberately misleading us when he says something odd like, say, 'the falsehood of a judgment is for us not yet an objection to it'.

I begin by briefly setting myself apart from the commentators I most disagree with – Leiter, and Clark and Dudrick – to illuminate my own (initial) reading of *BGE* 4. I then summarize the contents of *BGE* 1-3, articulate some exegetical questions, and try to resolve these. A careful reading of these sections, I argue, yields three justifications for the claim under scrutiny. The penultimate section of this essay relates *BGE* 4 to *BGE* 23, which serves to further flesh out the claim under scrutiny. Finally, in order to flesh out this claim, I then conclude by returning to my disagreements with Leiter, and Clark and Dudrick.

I should note that the penultimate section (on the relation between section 4 and will to power) is rather limited. First, *BGE* 1-3 require detailed analyses, something which I here cannot do for the rest of Book I. Second, and as mentioned, my ambition is to illuminate the text by following Book I's development. This approach is inspired by my belief (contra the esoteric reading) that much of what Nietzsche says in Book I can be explained simply by reading the separate claims as part of a continuous investigation, attending to the manner in which it develops and unfolds. I thus try as little as possible to rely on external material. Since the will to power receives scant treatment in Book I, and since I

[7] Cf. D. Burnham, *Reading Nietzsche; an analysis of Beyond Good and Evil* (Stockdale: Acumen, 2007) p. 21; P. Poellner *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 119; M. Clark and D. Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*. p. 30

only want to go as far as the text warrants, this discussion will be minimal.

2. Extant interpretations of *BGE* 4

Brian Leiter, as well as the aforementioned work by Clark and Dudrick, offers some of the most instructive misreadings of *BGE* 4's opening-claim: "the falseness of a judgment is for us not yet an objection to a judgment". Clark and Dudrick claim this to be an evidently flawed position. Not only is it flawed, but they believe Nietzsche supposedly *knew it* to be flawed. Hence, the statement is deliberately deceptive, a 'puzzle' that an esoteric reading must solve.

In support of the view that the opening of *BGE* 4 is nonsensical, Clark and Dudrick approvingly cite Charles Larmore: "The falsity of a judgment is so conclusive a mark against it that we cannot decide to endorse it nonetheless except by talking ourselves into regarding it as true."[8] They then refer us to G. E. Moore: "if a person insists that a proposition is false and yet claims to believe it, that person is either lying or utterly confused."[9] Hence, they read the claim as deliberatively misleading, a puzzling assertion that only a superficial 'exoteric reader' would accept. But correct as Larmore and Moore may be, their claims have no purchase in the context of *BGE* 4. Indeed, that Clark and Dudrick invoke them merely reveals a misreading of *BGE* 4; and clearly, if these claims have no purchase against *BGE* 4's opening statement, then there is no reason to therefore seek for an esoteric interpretation. Consider Nietzsche once more: "the falsehood of a judgment is for us not yet an objection to a judgment". Nietzsche clearly speaks about conditions for *objecting* to false judgments; Clark and Dudrick, however, speak of conditions for *endorsing* false judgments. Leiter, Likewise, reads Nietzsche as recommending that there may be ethical justifications for *endorsing* false judgments.[10] One of the aims of this paper is to shed some light on why it matters that Nietzsche merely speaks of *objecting* to *false* judgments. I return to this in the conclusion, but we have, for now, a first token of the commentators' flawed reading of the claim under scrutiny.

We gain a glimpse of what Nietzsche is getting at when he continues *BGE* 4 with: "The question is how far it is life-promoting, life-

[8] M. Clark and D. Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 50
[9] Ibid., p. 51
[10] B. Leiter, *Nietzsche and Morality* 2nd edition (Abingdon: Routledge), p. 130.

preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating". Instead of objecting to a false judgment, Nietzsche suggests we *question* its value to 'life'. A judgment is thought to have a particular value to the person holding a false judgment, and Nietzsche expresses an interest in understanding that value. The commentators thus fail to see that Nietzsche merely recommends an inquisitive stance towards a particular type of judgment. Leiter, for instance, reads far too much into the text when he asserts that Nietzsche recommends adopting false judgments when they are congenial to 'life'.

As for Clark and Dudrick, they ignore this part of *BGE* 4, preferring instead to discuss the point that follows it: "we are fundamentally inclined to assert that the falsest of judgments (…) are the most indispensable to us". This claim, they say, is Nietzsche *appearing* to endorse a falsification thesis – "that all our purported truths are actually false" – an appearance they, once more, judge to be deliberately deceptive.[11] While Nietzsche may or may not be committed to such a thesis, I do not think it is relevant here. Nietzsche is not saying that *all* our purported beliefs are erroneous, but rather that, given a set of false views, the falsest are most indispensable *to us*. Pace Clark and Dudrick, Nietzsche thus doesn't speak of all our beliefs, but limits his claim to those beliefs we know to be false. The implication being that the degree of falsehood is coextensive with its value to the type of person that believes it to be true.[12]

Two final remarks: first, consider that Nietzsche says that falsehood is *not yet* (*noch kein)* an objection. The commentators rely on the Cambridge Edition which translates it as "not necessarily". Notwithstanding the ambiguities with *noch kein*, translating it as *not necessarily* is definitively misleading. It implies that falsehood is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for objecting. *Not yet*, by contrast, best captures its literal meaning in suggesting that falsehood may well be a reason for objecting, albeit not a sufficient reason. Importantly, it also

[11] M. Clark and D. Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 50.

[12] This raises a number of questions. For instance, by what standard, if there is any at all, can we distinguish degrees of falsehood? Also, Nietzsche clearly understands 'indispensability' in light of 'life', but what does he exactly mean by 'life'? Finally, when Nietzsche speaks of 'the most indispensable judgments', he consistently refers to those judgments that we inevitably believe to be true (cf. BGE 11). But, one might ask, how could we entertain any doubt about those judgments? How, in other words, can we come to know these 'indispensable judgments' as false if belief in their truth is 'necessary'? Though I return to these issues towards the end of this paper, I cannot, unfortunately, explore them in any detail.

suggests that Nietzsche is not primarily interested in the truth-value of a judgment. Instead of simply dismissing false judgments in virtue of their falsehood, they should induce a particular inquisitive stance. Second, Nietzsche argues that falsehood is *for us* not yet a reason for objecting. This alerts us to the idea that Nietzsche is not making any universal claims about the appropriate response to false judgments, as the commentators imply. These misreadings, it seems to me, are fairly consequential. As it stands, then, we should try and make sense of my initial reading of *BGE* 4. If this yields a coherent interpretation of the section there will be good reason to reject the notion that Nietzsche is prompting us to pursue an 'esoteric reading', as Clark and Dudrick understand it.

3. BGE 4's context

a. Outlining Book I *On the Prejudices of Philosophers*

This section first offers a rough outline of Book I's trajectory, followed by a close reading of *BGE* 1-3. These sections yield a number of questions which I set out to resolve. I am particularly concerned with explaining how these sections are continuous with one another. Commentators typically stress that Book I articulates the prejudices that hitherto dominated philosophy.[13] While this is one theme that unifies the sections in Book I, I try to show that Nietzsche is equally articulating a novel form of analysis and evaluation. This method targets a new fundamental problem (apropos value), focuses on hitherto neglected aspects of the matter (variously called presumptions, morality, or 'the unsaid') and draws conclusions to new ends (a morphology of the will to power).

On the prejudices of philosophers famously opens with a call for investigating the will to truth.[14] This investigation proceeds by way of two questions. The first, Nietzsche claims, is a standard question in the philosophical tradition, and concerns the *cause* of the will to truth. The next questions, however, are more fundamental: "We asked about the *value* of this will." Moving on to Book I's last section, *BGE* 23, we find Nietzsche championing psychology as our best way into the fundamental

[13] Cf. D. Burnham, *Reading Nietzsche; an analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 9; and L. Lampert *Nietzsche's Task; an interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 19.
[14] 'The will to truth', can be roughly construed as a desire to pursue and obtain knowledge of the truth. The notion is most famously developed in GM III, where Nietzsche questions the quasi-divine value that modern Europeans attribute to the truth.

problems. Psychology as Nietzsche would have it is concerned with articulating a "morphology *and doctrine of the development of the will to power*." Or, which is the same, "to recognize in that which has been written so far a symptom of that which has so far remained unsaid." This morphology is supposed to shed light on the question of the value of the (will to) truth. Establishing this morphology is crucially hindered by 'prejudices', the overcoming of which requires a struggle on the part of psychologists. Given Book I's title it stands to reason that Nietzsche has in mind the prejudices of philosophers. Nietzsche will thus move, in the course of Book I, from questions about the cause and value of the (will to) truth to positing that 'a morphology and doctrine of the will to power' is the way to its answers. The sections preceding *BGE* 23 expose prejudices and offer a strategy for undermining their influence.

b. BGE 1 and 2

BGE I begins with a claim Nietzsche holds to be uncontroversial: there is a will to truth, this will trades on the philosopher's reverence for truthfulness, and leads them to investigate its cause. And indeed, many philosophers have questioned the cause of our 'will to truth'. The next question(s), however, is more fundamental: what is the value of the will to truth *and* what is the value of truth? Note that Nietzsche doesn't think the question apropos value arose by accident. Rather, the question of value follows from investigating the will to truth's cause: "The problem (…) stepped before us—or was it we who stepped before the problem?" It is as though the question is inevitable, given that we will the truth *and* given the question about causes. Now, if there is a genuine passion for truth, if we 'really will it', it stands to reason that we are led to exhaust all questions this 'will' could possibly generate, including 'what is the value of (our will to) truth?' On the other hand, its relation to the question of causes is not immediately obvious. What, we may ask, does the question 'what is the cause of the will to truth?' have to do with 'what is the value of the will to truth?' Note also that *this* question, unlike the question about causes, is said to constitute a problem, even a risk of unprecedented proportions. I return to these two issues below.

In raising the question of value, Nietzsche says: "Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?" It is with these questions that the problem 'stepped' before us.[15] Section two seems to take on a rather different problem: "The grounding faith of

[15] *BGE* 1.

metaphysicians is *the faith in the opposition of values*". Nietzsche begins by asking "How *could* something originate from its opposite? For example, truth from error? Or the will to truth from the will to deception?" The metaphysician rejects the question *tout court*, persisting in his belief that "the things of highest value" have an origin distinct from their counterpart.[16] He takes greed and error to belong to this world, to the 'human, all too human'. Truth and compassion, however, are thought to find their ground "in the lap of being, in the everlasting, in the hidden god, in the 'thing in itself'." Note that Nietzsche first addresses the prejudicial belief in distinct and opposite *things*, but goes on to characterize this prejudice as a matter of *valuation*, standing in the background of ostensibly rigorous thought: "the grounding faith of metaphysicians is *the faith in the opposition of values*." In *BGE* 2 Nietzsche thus implies that our conceptual apparatus is based on oppositions (truth-error, egotism-selflessness), which are in turn grounded in a belief in value-oppositions.

Nietzsche believes there is good reason to challenge the prejudices of opposite 'things' and value-oppositions. He thus concludes *BGE* 2 by raising *two doubts* and making *two suggestions*. The first doubt is apropos the very reality of oppositions, such as egotism and selflessness, i.e. 'are they really opposites?' The second doubt seems to contradict the first one, seeing as Nietzsche here takes for granted that these oppositions do, in fact, exist: "are [value oppositions] not perhaps mere foreground valuations, mere provisional perspectives"? Nietzsche then makes two suggestions: first, that the alleged 'higher value' of an opposition *can*, in reality, turn out to be less valuable than its ignoble counterpart. Here, he explicitly couples value to life, of which more below. Thus, even if we value 'truth' over 'falsehood', Nietzsche suggests that investigating this belief might reveal it to be erroneous. For all we know, falsehoods are (or can be) far more valuable to us than truths. Second, Nietzsche suggests that an alleged good could derive its value precisely from its relation to its ignoble counterpart. For instance, the value of truth could be contingent upon a prior deception. Nietzsche here refers to cases in which we are deceived into believing that falsehoods are true. Consider a child on Christmas Eve: her joy is presumably bound up with her belief that Santa Claus *actually* exists and comes to bring presents; the value of her belief in the truth of that judgment is evidently the upshot of a deception. Likewise, the value of compassionate behaviour might be an effect of

[16] When Nietzsche sets out to expose and undermine the philosophe's prejudices, as the title of Book I indicates, he has in mind 'the metaphysician'.

egotism, that is, it might be valuable precisely from that perspective.

On the one hand, *BGE* 2 identifies philosophical prejudices in a straightforward manner: the belief in opposites *and* the belief in value-oppositions. Nietzsche also questions the special origins of higher values. On the other hand, it raises some questions he doesn't resolve. First, Nietzsche introduces his doubts and suggestions in a puzzling way: he first doubts the *existence of opposites* altogether, but continues by asking whether *value-oppositions* are perhaps provisional valuations and perspectives. He suggests that lower values are *more valuable* than higher values, but also states that the former are constitutive of the latter. In short, how do these doubts and suggestions hang together? Second, Nietzsche opens by addressing the origins of any given *thing*. He asks how "something" arises from its opposite. However, he then shifts his attention to *value-oppositions*. This is similar to *BGE* 1, where Nietzsche approaches the will to truth as an existing 'thing', or fact, of which we question its cause, only to be led to the will to truth's *value*. What are we to make of this parallel? This leads to a third, more general question: what connects *BGE* 1's questioning of the cause and value of the will to truth, to *BGE* 2's discussion of opposites and value-oppositions? I now discuss *BGE* 3, which paves the way for answering the first question, following which I discuss the other questions.

c. *BGE* 3

The crucial remark here is that consciousness is not *decisively* opposed to instincts:

> most conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly guided by his instincts and forced into certain channels. Behind all logic and its seeming tyranny of movement there also stand valuations, or more plainly spoken, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life. (BGE 3)

As we saw with *BGE* 2, *BGE* 3 seems to take up a different issue than the preceding sections, namely consciousness and the instincts. But in fact, we here find Nietzsche illustrating and piecing together the doubts and suggestions from *BGE* 2. Firstly, he undermines opposite *things*, as in his 'first doubt': instincts and consciousness both exist, but not as opposites. Secondly, and like his 'second doubt', consciousness is said to be a foreground *valuation*, a provisional perspective. In reading a text, for instance, we only have *direct* access to 'the written', to that which the

writer consciously expressed. Consciousness is provisional in that 'there might well be something more to it', such as the instincts. Thirdly, and as in the 'first suggestion': the instinctive is fundamental, seeing as it guides consciousness. Consciousness stands *not* in opposition to, but *in the service of* the instincts. Therefore, fourthly, and as in the 'second suggestion', consciousness owes its value to the instincts. This value is its contribution to a particular type of life. As I explain below, a type of life, Nietzsche maintains, is to be identified by reference to the instincts.

Nietzsche doesn't merely identify a prejudice here (that there is no decisive opposition between instincts and consciousness), he also articulates a hermeneutic. Consciousness is a provisional perspective, and should be investigated in terms of its interplay with the instinctive: "one must still count the greatest part of conscious thinking among the instinctive activities".[17] Hence, the instincts shed light on consciousness: *what consciousness is constituted by* (in my example, a text), is not fully manifest in consciousness itself (in what the text says), but can be arrived at by investigating it as a truncated surface-effect of instinctive activity. This surface-effect should then be seen as contributing to a specific type of life, as responsive to particular physiological demands. This is why, looking ahead to *BGE* 23, Nietzsche defines a morphology of the will to power as recognizing "in that which has been written so far a symptom of that which has so far remained unsaid".

BGE 3 thus clarifies Nietzsche's doubts and suggestions apropos opposites and value-oppositions. This also reveals the rough outlines of a hermeneutic. Two questions remain, however. In the first three sections, Nietzsche moves from questions of a phenomenon's origin or cause, to its value. In *BGE* 1 it is apropos truth and the will to truth; in *BGE* 2 apropos opposites; in *BGE* 3 apropos consciousness. The parallel is remarkable, and lends initial plausibility to the idea that the problem of the will to truth's value followed from questioning its cause. I now consider this connection.

Asking for the *cause* of the will to truth, we learn in *BGE* 2, always involves questioning its *origin*. X's origin is decisive for it being X, as opposed to it being not-X; it separates truth from error, altruism from egotism, etc. This reveals a presumption about the nature of things: something's nature is essentially its opposition to something else, *in virtue of a distinct origin*. This reveals a presumption about the nature of things: we understand what something *is* in light of its opposition to something else. Now, the metaphysician is thought to reveal a prejudice

[17] *BGE* 3

that grounds this claim when he says that "the things of highest value must have a different origin, *their own*".[18] Nietzsche suggests that this belief in *value*-oppositions is the fundamental presumption: it is a "grounding faith". Hence, we have a metaphysical claim about the nature of things, rooted in the belief that things are opposed in terms of their value. The presumption about value-oppositions, in turn, is premised on the belief that 'the good' has a different origin from 'evil'.[19]

Value-oppositions are presumed, which is to say that their factual nature cannot be justifiably asserted. Still, Nietzsche acknowledges that they are operative in the metaphysician's thinking: "from this their faith", he says, "they strive for their knowledge, for something that in the end is solemnly christened as "the truth"". Even if the metaphysician's truths are ultimately grounded in a presumed belief in value-oppositions, they nonetheless reveal what the metaphysician estimates as valuable. A value-estimation just *is* the case, even if it is confused, unjustified, or erroneous. There is an analogue here with *BGE* 3, where consciousness is said to be a truncated and possibly deceptive effect of instinctive processes. Supposing that we, in our conscious lives, are somehow deceived into ignoring the role of the instinctive; for instance, by underestimating the extent to which our instincts regulate our consciousness. Deceptive as the belief might be, the deception is effective nonetheless. That is to say, the deception precludes us from investigating the fundamental role of the instincts to our lives.

d. Questioning the value of truth and the will to truth

Here we see why it is that Nietzsche moves from questions of causes and origins to questions of value: the metaphysician's question apropos causes presupposes the belief in opposite origins and value-oppositions. In asking for the cause of the will to truth, he presumes the will to truth to exists in some pure form, as distinct from an opposite (say, a will to be deceived). This presumption is coupled to another presumption, *viz*. that the will to truth is 'of the highest value', as opposed to its alleged opposite 'will to deception'. Now that these presumptions are exposed, however, Nietzsche can't continue to take for granted that there actually is a pure, supremely valuable will to truth that governs us. Nor can he presume that any belief is untainted by error and presuppositions.

[18] *BGE* 2.
[19] Cf. M. Foucault, 'Nietzsche, La Généalogie, L'histoire', in *Dits et Écrits I. 1954-1975*, ed. D. Defert and F. Ewald, (Paris: Galimard, 2001) pp. 1004-1024 (section 2).

Removing the presumptions yields a quite different focus. The metaphysician's commitments (to truth and the will to truth) now merely reveal a possibly deceptive estimation of value. Nietzsche will thus investigate the 'real value' of a particular value-estimation: 'what compels this belief, according to which we are guided by a will to truth? And why are we compelled to believe that the truth is of 'highest value'?' The issue of the value of truth and the value of will to truth thus 'stepped before us'.

How do we therefore investigate the 'real' value of truth and the will to truth without falling prey to the presumptions Nietzsche exposed in *BGE* 1-3? First, Nietzsche dissociates the metaphysician's prejudice that each side of an oppositional pair necessarily corresponds to, respectively, value and disvalue (e.g. truth is good, falsehood is evil). Second, Nietzsche investigates the factors that necessitate an estimation of value. In *BGE* 11, for instance, he substitutes the question 'why are synthetic judgments a priori necessary?' for the standard question apropos its truth. He thus takes the estimation seriously without taking it at its word: any judgment about the truth or falsity of Kant's thesis merely reflects a value-estimation, or *provisional perspective*, as Nietzsche put it in *BGE* 2. We here see the introduction of perspectivism in *BGE*, which Nietzsche elaborates in *BGE* 11: a judgment's truth only has to be *believed* to be true, "as a foreground belief and visual evidence belonging to the perspectival optics of life." Someone's belief in the truth of a judgment is merely an *indicator* of what she esteems as valuable, Nietzsche maintains. The judgment's *actual* truth, however, need not be a *standard* of value. Indeed, it might well be that substituting a true for a false belief does us more harm than good. In short, a judgment's 'real value' is not determined by assessing its truth-value. Hence, we should ask the question 'what necessitates belief in the truth of *this* judgment?'

Thirdly, we must concede that there cannot be any ideal standard of value, such as truth or altruism, seeing as this would reinstate the distinct origins and value-oppositions Nietzsche rejects in *BGE* 2. In other words, explaining the value of a judgment cannot turn on, say, its truth. The question 'why object to Kant's thesis?' can thus no longer *merely* be answered by 'because it's false'. Instead, Nietzsche introduces 'life', or "physiological demands for the preservation of a certain type of life."[20] Hence, the actual value of an X is relative to the type of life that demands that there be, or not be, an X.

[20] *BGE* 3.

4. From *BGE* 4 to will to power

a. On not objecting to false judgments; three justifications

We can now begin to understand why Nietzsche doesn't immediately object to false judgments.[21] First, to object to something is to judge its value. In disentangling truth and value, as well as falsehood and disvalue, Nietzsche can no longer object to falsehoods merely in virtue of their falsity. Second, in questioning the value of (the will to) truth, Nietzsche asks what *a particular judgment's* contribution is to the type of life that necessitates *that* judgment to be thought of as true. Nietzsche is interested in falsehoods because they allow him to gauge the extent to which a genuine will to truth is operative *in us*, and the extent to which the truth is valuable *to us*. If many of our purported truths turn out to be false, or even unjustified, then this suggests that our will to truth is rather weak. In the language of *BGE* 2: a will to deceive is more valuable, that is, more significant to *our life* than a will to truth. Likewise, it would mean that the value of truth to *our life* is limited. The contrast with the question apropos the cause of the will to truth is evident, since *that* question necessitates objecting to false judgments. The question presumes truths and falsehoods to correspond to 'valuable' and 'ignoble' respectively. This opposition obtains in virtue of their distinct origins. Hence investigating the will to truth's cause requires certainty as to a judgment's truth; false judgments inevitably lead us to 'the wrong, ignoble origin'. Third, Nietzsche is interested in ascertaining the type of life that requires a certain economy of judgments; his aim is diagnostic and descriptive. Given this ambition, it makes no sense for him to object to a judgment because of its falsity.[22] The point equally applies to Nietzsche's intention to establish a morphology of the will to power's development. How the will to power relates to *BGE* 4 is what I discuss next.

[21] Apart from suggesting that there is no rigorous truth-falsehood opposition, Nietzsche hasn't said anything controversial about falsehoods at this point. I thus understand the term in conventional ways.

[22] That being said, Nietzsche must believe that *his* judgments are true. Thus, in assessing a judgment-X to be false, he must believe that 'judgment-X is false' is a true judgment. Here we see one reason for the aforementioned misinterpretations of Clark, Dudrick, and Leiter, according to whom Nietzsche gives us reasons for *endorsing* false judgments. That Nietzsche doesn't immediately object to false judgments in no way indicates that he endorses false judgments.

b. Towards BGE 23

A brief survey of the sections following *BGE* 4 is now in order. *BGE* 5 alerts the reader to the dishonesty of philosophers: "they are all advocates who do not wish to be called that, and in fact most often they are even sly spokesmen of their prejudices, which they christen "truths"". *BGE* 6 asserts that philosophical works are "involuntary and unnoticed *mémoires*; likewise that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constitute the actual living seed from which the entire plant has grown every time." The section links up with *BGE* 3, since Nietzsche defines morality as the particular hierarchy according to which the instincts are organized, and which manifests itself in an individual's behaviour conscious beliefs: "his morality provides decided and decisive testimony to who he is".[23] At this point, Nietzsche has outlined a number of key assertions: at bottom there are nothing but drives, organized in a hierarchy, in which they continuously compete for dominance. Understanding the type of life under scrutiny thus requires a comprehensive description of this hierarchy.

Jumping ahead to *BGE* 19, Nietzsche identifies the will as a complex of (1) psycho-physiological sensations that respond to a potential state of affairs, such as the sensation of moving toward this potential state, or a move away from another. (2) A commanding thought apropos this sensation, such that the person who so moves conceives of himself as 'willing it'. (3) An affect of command: "Someone who *wills*— commands something in himself that obeys or that he believes obeys." In other words, the belief that one masters one's volitions and agency. Nietzsche emphasizes that 'a willing' is always the surface-effect of processes played out at the level of an underlying structure: there are "sub-wills" at play. Though Nietzsche is not explicit, his terminology here echoes *BGE* 3's discussion of the instincts and consciousness: "With all willing we are dealing simply with commanding and obeying, on the foundation (…) of a social structure of many "souls"".[24] He continues by saying that 'willing' should be understood *as* expressing a morality: "a doctrine of the power relations under which the phenomenon "life" emerges."[25] (*Ibid*.) It is plausible that, in speaking of *the will to truth*, Nietzsche is speaking of a particular and determinate will, as when he speaks of a particular and determinate instinct.[26] A will to truth, then,

[23] *BGE* 6.
[24] *BGE* 19.
[25] Ibid.
[26] In BGE, Nietzsche seems to employ the terms *will* and *drive* to truth

should be understood as one among many distinct instincts that together make up a particular type of life. Hence, the value of the will to truth is its role in the hierarchy of the instincts. A dominant will to truth will be more valuable, that is, impactful to a type of life than a weak, subdued will to truth.

I mentioned earlier that *BGE* Book I doesn't merely identify prejudices, but equally develops a hermeneutic. This hermeneutic doesn't look for the truth or falsehood of a judgment primarily, but moves from a particular false judgment to the physiological demands necessitating belief in the truth of said judgment. How does this relate to the morphology and doctrine of the development of the will to power that Nietzsche aims to establish? Wolfgang Müller-Lauter helpfully articulates three ways in which Nietzsche employs the term.[27] In general, "the will to power is the multiplicity of forces locked in struggle with one another."[28] These forces are continually changing, multifarious organizational structures.[29] Hence the term refers, first, to the totality of the real, and second, to the essence of any of its *general* determinations, in terms of which it is understandable, and of which life is one.[30] Importantly, these general determinations constitute the elements of the morphology of the will to power. Thirdly, Nietzsche distinguishes among *particular* wills to power: determinate will to power, or "a real entity in its reality", such as *a type of life*.[31] The latter should be understood as continuously being determined through its struggle with other wills to power. When Nietzsche speaks of a morphology and doctrine of the development of the will to power, it should be understood as (1) an ontology in historical form: the *development* of the altering multiplicity of forces must be tracked. (2) This account is organized on the basis of its *general* determinations.[32] (3) It takes stock of its historically variable *particular* determinations, such as specific life-types, in terms of their agonistic relations with other types. Nietzsche believes this morphology to be a suitable alternative to the metaphysics he critiques in Book I.[33]

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indiscriminately, e.g. in BGE 6.

[27] W. Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche; His Philosophy of Contradiction and the Contradictions of his Philosophy*, trans. by D. J. Parent (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

[28] Ibid., p. 131

[29] Ibid., p. 123ff

[30] Ibid., p. 133ff,

[31] Say, a particular person. Ibid. p. 136.

[32] Four general determinations appear in Book I: philosophy (*BGE* 9), life (*BGE* 13, 19), nature (*BGE* 22), the human psyche (*BGE* 23).

[33] Whether Nietzsche's alternative plausible is, of course, another issue which I cannot

'Life' plays an important role in Nietzsche's morphology. First, it is one of the terms by which he designates will to power: "Life itself is will to power."[34] Therefore, and second, it is one of its general determinations. Understanding 'life' involves understanding it *as* will to power by attending to, third, all types of life in terms of their agonistic development. As mentioned, life emerges "under the horizon of morality (…) understood as a doctrine of the power relations".[35] Morality, again, is the particular hierarchy of instincts in which the will to truth takes part.

If Book I focuses on (1) the will to truth, (2) life, and (3) will to power, it is because a morphology of the will to power is expected to yield an accurate description of 'our type of life' and its development. Importantly, Nietzsche is interested in the relation between the will to truth, understood as one aspect within a larger economy of instincts, and the type of life that we are, understood as the entire hierarchy of drives at a particular moment. The question then becomes, 'granted that we ostensibly will truth, what is its 'real value' to beings like us?' The will to truth – "that famous truthfulness of which all philosophers so far have spoken with deference" – is therefore accepted only as a possibly deceptive presumption about our life-type, that is, as a *provisional perspective* (*BGE* 1). As Nietzsche indicated in *BGE* 1, the will to truth now turns out to be deeply problematic. Consider Nietzsche's critique of Stoicism:

> You want to *live* "according to nature"? Oh you noble Stoics, what a fraud of words! Imagine a being such as nature, wasteful without measure, indifferent without measure, without purpose and consideration, without mercy and justice, fertile and barren and uncertain at the same time, imagine indifference itself as power—how *could* you live according to this indifference? Living—is that not precisely wanting to be different than this nature? (…) And supposing your imperative "live according to nature" means at bottom nothing more than "live according to life"—then how could you *not*? Your pride wants to prescribe and incorporate your morality and your ideal onto nature, onto nature itself; you demand that it be nature "according to the Stoa" and want to make all existence conform only to your own image of existence—as a

consider here.
[34] *BGE* 13.
[35] *BGE* 19.

> monstrous eternal glorification and universalization of Stoicism![36]

The type of life that is Stoicism, Nietzsche believes, emerged from falsifications that characterize all philosophy hitherto. These falsifications are responsive to 'physiological demands'. That is, the stoic life would have been impossible if it weren't for the belief that the Stoa could, and does, conform to an independent reality. This, in turn, deceived them into fashioning their image of reality according to what are ultimately Stoic presumptions.[37]

Nietzsche concludes *BGE* 9: "what happened back then with the Stoics still happens today just as soon as a philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image, it cannot do otherwise."[38] However, philosophers also claim to value the truth more than anything else. How can philosophers think they are animated by a will to truth *and* build their philosophies on falsifications? The idea is that philosophers are deceived into thinking that they have a dominant, unwavering commitment to truth. In reality this commitment is typically limited *to some extent*; hence, the value of truth constitutes a problem. A genuine and strong will to truth, capable of leading us to *nothing but the truth*, risks undermining those presumptions and false judgments that are necessary to the types of life we happen to be. Hence, a strong will to truth may well cause the demise of our philosophies and concomitant types of life.

4. Conclusion

I began by arguing, *contra* certain commentators, that Nietzsche's view ("the falsehood of a judgment is for us not yet an objection to a judgment") is perfectly coherent in light of Book I's development. Key to this reading is not an unorthodox 'esoteric reading', but simply involves

[36] *BGE* 9.

[37] Nietzsche discussion of Stoicism and, more generally, the notion that we falsify the world on account of 'physiological demands' raises numerous issues. I cannot get into these here, and work on the assumption that Nietzsche's views have at least some merit. In addition, recall that I'm interested in offering a reading of *BGE* that is (1) coherent and (2) without relying on a complex and problematic strategy as the 'esoteric' one defended by some commentators.

[38] A little later Nietzsche's tells us that, in order to pursue the natural sciences "in good conscience" we cannot but believe that we thereby explain nature, as opposed to offering mere descriptions; likewise, we have to presume "sensualism" (*BGE* 14-5).

taking Nietzsche at his word and carefully following the structure of the narrative. Nietzsche argues that the value of a judgment is relative, not to its truth or falsity, but to the type of life that entertains it. That we believe it to be true, moreover, may well be the result, not of its truth-value, but of the judgment's value to *us*. In short, our will to truth is capable of leading us astray.

A critic might respond that Nietzsche still endorses numerous judgments: prejudices are identified *as* prejudices, for instance, and *BGE* 4's seemingly odd remark is said to constitute a standpoint "*Beyond Good and Evil*". Surely it matters that Nietzsche believes these claims to be true? I concur, but this is where the distinction between conditions for endorsing and objecting to judgments becomes important.[39] For BGE never denies that true judgments should be endorsed. Nietzsche is merely suspicious of our alleged devotion to truth, which he investigates by taking a particular inquisitive stance to those false judgments that are believed to be true. He concludes that our championing of the truth is often a means to self-deception. Importantly, in problematizing the value of the will to truth there is little point in investigating true judgments. These judgments, after all, can do nothing but confirm the presumption that the truth is 'of highest value' to the person entertaining a true belief; that is, it cannot falsify the presumption that one 'genuinely wills truth'. Thus Nietzsche's focus on falsehoods.

Nietzsche also never recommends we endorse false beliefs. This leads me to the *noch kein* in *BGE* 4, which one should not read as 'not necessarily' but rather as 'not yet'. Falsehood is, ultimately, a reason for objecting. However, one should first understand the 'truth' about a particular falsehood, *viz.* one should seek to understand the conditions that necessitate belief in the truth of a false judgment. After exposing this condition, the new truth can be endorsed 'against' the older falsehood. This is why '*not necessarily'* is an unfortunate translation: it implies that falsehood is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for objecting. Instead, "not yet" signals that we shouldn't simply object to false judgments, as though our errors are nothing but innocent mistakes. Instead we should investigate the reasons that compelled us to fabricate and stubbornly hold on to false judgments in the first place. The notion is a familiar one from the Genealogy of Morals: the genealogy is precisely supposed to manifest the processes that generated a misconceived understanding, and practice of morality. It thus allows us to substitute a new, and presumably 'better', moral compass.

[39] Recall my earlier discussion of Leiter, and Clark and Dudrick.

Equally unfortunate is that the "for us" is sometimes overlooked. As is typical of Nietzsche, he attempts to articulate an ethos for those who are capable of enduring 'dangerous and consequential truths'. That is, the kind of truths capable of drastic existential transformations. Leiter is therefore quite wrong to read Nietzsche as arguing that falsehoods sometimes 'ought' to be endorsed to benefit life. For Nietzsche believes the opposite: we ought to strengthen our will to truth despite the enormous risks it entails.[40] This view, in fact, was already adopted in Nietzsche's middle period, and quite explicitly so: "A thinker is now that being in whom the impulse for truth and those life-preserving errors clash for their first fight (…) To what extent can truth endure incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment."[41]

[40] One may also doubt, with Clark and Dudrick, that it is possible to endorse false judgments while knowing them to be false. I take it that this is the point they're trying to make when citing Charles Larmore and G. E. Moore (see section 2 above).
[41] *GS* 110.

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Ideas on God and Immortality: Lectures on Logic and Metaphysics

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Translators' Introduction

This short piece is collected in the complete edition of Fichte's works published by the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (1964-2012), IV/1, pp. 153-167. According to the editors' foreword, it first appeared anonymously as part of a pamphlet titled "Something from Professor Fichte and for him. Published by a veracious schoolmaster" in 1799 in Bayreuth as a response to the so-called atheism dispute, which eventually cost Fichte his chair in Jena. This translation concerns a part appended to the pamphlet which is titled "Professor Fichte's Ideas on God and Immortality. Published from lecture notes". The schoolmaster who published the pamphlet was Christian Wilhelm Friedrich Penzenkuffer, who had studied theology and was at that time teaching biblical exegesis at high school. It was found that among the students who attended Fichte's lectures in the winter semester 1794 there was a Johann Friedrich Penzenkuffer, probably a brother of the pamphlet author. It seems most

plausible that the content of the pamphlet came from a student transcript of Fichte's lectures on logic and metaphysics in Jena and the anonymous publication was intended as a defence for Fichte that what he taught was not atheism but rather theism. This pamphlet has importance not only as part of its immediate context – the atheism dispute – but also for Fichte's philosophy of religion more generally.

A.

Ideas on God

It is not possible to be convinced of the existence [*Dasein*] of higher beings; for all existence is posited *by us* and for us, and since we are limited and finite beings, so we can only posit a limited and finite thing. That means, we must confer upon all existence a human form, but in this way we obtain immediately a *higher* being that contradicts our idea of it as something beyond all finitude and human limitedness. Yet as far as we want to realise [*realisieren*] this idea (which we have), and that means, as far as we want to posit the existence of one such being, it cannot be higher than the human itself because this realised idea is only a product of our activity of realising, and hence a product of our volition [*Wollen*]. But now the volition to realise the idea presupposes the idea itself necessarily, so the idea must possess subjective reality (otherwise we could not have the idea) and the following question arises: Does this idea reach us originally through a *theoretical* or a *practical* need? Does it [the idea] force itself upon us by the necessity of the act of the human mind according to theoretical laws, or by our moral consciousness? Several philosophers want to deduce this idea theoretically from the human mind's striving to track down a higher cause of the appearances, which lies beyond the sphere of this world. Since this cause cannot possibly fall under the sphere of appearances, so they [philosophers], compelled by the law of the thinking mind, posit the ground of these appearances in the will and power of an invisible being, which they envisage as the master of appearances. As a result, they make transcendental use of the categories, and without the conditions of their [the categories'] objective reality, namely *time* and *space*, they become bogged down in the realm of *things in themselves*. The God that emerges out of this line of thought is a pure might, a being which we do not ask for or after – a God which, because

he does not reach us and force himself upon us through moral consciousness, is merely for the speculative thinker who ponders the causality of appearances – a God which is not moral.

But it is not in the nature of our *volition* at all that God should be something for us as *empirical* beings either. We would contradict ourselves by first positing God as something infinite and yet determining him through an attribution of finite properties. Just as it is certain that the concept of God as an infinite being has not even the slightest objective reality, as Kant asserted long ago that it [God] is not an object of possible experience, so it remains certain as an idea which forces itself upon us so irresistibly such that we could not posit ourselves as finite beings other than by op-positing ourselves to an infinite being. We are compelled by the laws of our mind to posit something beyond all finite bounds, although we are not able to break through the bounds and always have to revert *to ourselves* if we want to make our concept comprehensible. So when the human mind wants to tie the supersensible, which it necessarily posits, down to meaning and comprehensibility, that is, when it wants to tie the supersensible to the realm of possible experience, it revolves in a perennial circle. If we ourselves were ideals of holiness, then we would certainly not need God. It is solely because we are and *remain* sensible beings (for otherwise we would not be humans but Gods) that *the demand to believe in no God cannot befall us – it has no meaning and no sense*. Since we arrive only at the concept of a mighty but not moral higher being through the path of theoretical investigation and speculation, so we must pursue the path of practical investigation, and the following results arise:

1. The intrinsic essence of humanity consists in *acting* [*Wirken*], the genuine root of the I is not thinking or representing, but *willing*. I find myself willing only insofar as I act and execute my will in the world of senses. My happiness and well-being consist in the fact that my efficacy is realised in the world of senses and hence also in the fact that what I will is taking place. But this does not always happen because it does not always depend upon our diligence and striving, and therefore, the human being must instantly notice the dependency of his well-being and existence on something outside of him.

2. That upon which a human being depends is unknown to him. He

can give this unknown no other predicate and say of it nothing other than that he is dependent on it. Were that not the case, he would try to bring it under his control. It is not subject to any conceivable laws for him, it is for him something created by chance, something contingent. Compared with himself he will deem it free and it turns into fate for him.

3. For the cultivated fate does not play much of a role, because he ascribes everything to his own imprudence. In any case we should pin nothing on fate; this idea is the most oppressive and heinous among things available to human beings – the thought that he is at the mercy of a merciless ruler is unbearable to him. Then there would arise the mission to tilt fate towards us or to uncover its disposition beforehand and the problem would be: "only if we knew the unfortunate day and hour!" All superstition and belief in miracle etc. is simply irrational because they disappear when one sees the connection [*Zusammenhang*]. This is the character of fate: it conforms to no rules.

4. The most essential character of the faith just described is that one wants only to have the causality of his lawless will carried through or, if this cannot happen, one tries to draw the interest of some unknown power. Certain means need to be found in order to please the Unknown such that it facilitates happiness (*Glückseligkeit*) and the fulfilment of wishes. In that unknown power one sees nothing but random caprice and omnipotence – and these make up the system of idolatry which, in terms of moral faith, is atheism; since a being that possesses blind caprice and omnipotence is an idol.

5. No reason can see how divinity could be affected by external ceremonies; nevertheless, not every religious exercise is thereby discarded, so long as one uses it as means to the promotion of morality.

6. No reason can see how divinity could be affected by whether one believes or does not believe, confesses or does not confess. He who deems faith beatific just *because* it is belief is an idolater. Yet certain theoretical truths may still be conveyed insofar as they are means promoting morality.

7. It is entirely unacceptable to say that virtue and faith make one happy. If that were the case, then faith would be something that could move God directly. Instead, one must assume that virtue without faith would suffice. Virtue alone, without the presence of any faith, must please God and faith is utilised only as a means of conveyance. Whoever claims that there are means of pleasing God, the linkage of which to the end is not nor should be comprehensible to reason, is advocating idolatry and a God who is capricious and wills simply because he wills. Once more, a criterion of idolatry is turning happiness into an end. "If you do not believe, then you will be cursed. Believe, so that you will become happy." So says the idolater. Hostile intolerance is also a feature of the idolaters. They want only the occurrence of what they demand. All that concerns them is that their system be true, but they can never secure the truth of their system because it contradicts reason and unreason is its principle. Only conviction of experience remains, but conviction of experience occurs only in the afterlife and it is never present in this life. Hence, they have no secure grounds and there is no other option left for them but the expectation of confirmation of their own faith by all others. The true and moral believer is tolerant; for him it does not matter at all whether others *believe*, because it is morality, and not faith, that can be an end.

8. Whoever raises himself to morality, his determination of will does not depend on mere arbitrariness [*Willkür*]. He wills this and that not *because* he wills it; but rather, he must simply follow the moral law.

9. But that this end be realised is not subject to the power of a human being. The ethical human being should nevertheless simply will that human beings always advance towards morality [*Sittlichkeit*]. Everyone has control only over his will and not over the will of another. The will of the morally good has for an end something that depends on the freedom of others outside himself.

    It is false to imagine that one can constrain another to morality internally through, for instance, proofs and reasons. I cannot convince anyone who does not admit of truth out of freedom. The free human being can determine himself only by

himself. Yet it is also not subject to the power of nature that the above-mentioned end be realised. Here the end is only freedom, and freedom elevates itself above all nature. Whenever I have to deal with free beings, there ceases all power of nature. I may get to know the human heart as I will. But insofar as it stands under laws, I know it only as natural being [*Naturwesen*] and not as free being. Freedom is not to be forced by nature and as a result, the fulfilment of the end of the morally good simply does not depend on the agent himself.

10. And yet I should still promote this end, which I cannot do if I do not believe in the possibility of its success. Since I put as my end the promotion of the reign of reason, which means I posit to myself something that will become actual in the future and I cannot posit it as actual nor undertake to realise it without positing it as possible, so faith lies already within dutiful conviction [*pflichtmäßige Gesinnung*]. Hence, there can be no command of moral law that says immediately: Believe. Instead, faith is found simultaneously in the dutiful conviction. The moral law demands faith indeed, but not in an immediate way. Rather, it demands only the moral conviction which carries faith with it in any case. The latter accompanies the former. It is thereby not necessary at all that one reflects on his faith and notes that he possesses it, because if one is to act, faith is already necessary regarding the possibility of the exercise. Whoever wills to promote the good must also believe that he can do it; whoever toils for his moral improvement believes in the possibility of it. Acting morally is the only genuine confession of faith, and whoever denies theoretically what he assumes practically is inconsistent. The theoretical disbelief is a mistake of the understanding and a lack of insight. The speculative disbelief has a bad influence on our calmness and cheerfulness, but it is not damnable because it is not harmful at all to our true moral value, which consists merely in action. It is only indecent. The true faith is the faith in the possibility of the realisation of moral law. There is no other faith and it resides with the endeavour to realise the kingdom of God.
    With this way of thinking,
    a. there is no happiness intended for us, but rather realisation of that which should come to be. This absolute postulate shares

with happiness only the common ground that what we want should appear in experience. The difference is that our will is not the first, not the source, but it is rather subordinated to the *ought* [*Sollen*]. The morally good wills this or that, *because he ought to*. We are demanded absolutely to posit our happiness in the fact that reason reign and be genuinely valid.

b. Faith is possible only through this described way. Whoever is not morally-minded [*moralisch gesinnt*] cannot believe. That faith leads to virtue is a perverse proposition because any faith which does not spring from moral conviction is superstition. Yet strictly speaking, virtue does not lead to faith of heart [*Herzensglauben*] either; faith lies already within moral disposition.

c. Insofar as faith is supposed to imply theoretical insight, then virtue alone would lead to true faith. Then, the only way to bring human beings to true faith would be to bring them to virtue, and here all theoretical proofs do not help. From this line of thought no moral God except only a mere omnipotent being emerges which we do not need and cannot inquire into, because it is only heteronomy and compels at best only legality but not morality. We behave ourselves merely according to the letter of the law because a superior being wills it.

11. The described faith is a practical faith and it is certainly possible that one possesses it without being conscious of it. The true believer says: I believe in the possibility of the realisation of the moral law. He assumes in his action this progressive improvement of the human race, and thus also an ongoing steady cause of the unimpeded advancement of the promotion of the end of reason. This cause must itself also be moral, for it is the cause of the progress in nature. It is beyond nature and has sovereignty over nature. We call this cause *God*. Substantiality and moral will are ascribed to God according to our laws of thought. Since he is the promoter of the end of reason, so he is the only genuinely sacred [*Alleinheilige*] and the only almighty [*Alleinvermögende*]. Beyond that one could only want to utilise God for an explanation of nature; but we do not really need God for that, because nature has to be explained through itself. God should intervene in nature in order to promote the moral law. But to explain how this happens

and how this is possible would be unphilosophical. *This influence is posited absolutely*; it can neither be apprehended nor explained. God is given to us immediately through the summons [*Aufforderung*] of moral law which implies the possibility of morality; and that means just as much as: There is a God.

12. Whoever acts morally believes *practically* in the possibility of the exercise of moral law, and hence in God. The immoral can have no faith because faith is only justified by improvement of the way of thought.

13. Only the morally-minded believes firmly that God will and can accomplish the end of reason. The main characteristic of the religious is hence a total submission to the will of God. The prayer of the righteous is: Lord, your will be done.[1] He [the morally-minded] wills the satisfaction of his wishes only insofar as they are just and moral; he thinks not of himself, but of the fulfilment of his duty. Religion is a corroborant but not an *everyday business* [*Alltagsgeschäft*]; it is not duty, rather it gives consolation, strength, and power for [performing] duty. Doing one's duty sincerely is the true religion, the only divine service. One might say: That should be fine. But *also* the religious practices. Why these *too*? Religious practices are only means used for an end, and where the end can be reached without the means, then the latter ceases to apply. Under what circumstances do we need them [religious practices]? Under the circumstances that one cannot act as one ought to, that one encounters in action a check [*Anstoß*], that doubts arise in us as to how this and that can be our duty and how it can fit with our feeling of duty. In these cases religion facilitates the exercise of duty. The understanding raises at times difficulties by asking: Can this really be imperative? Religion comes in and tells us: Act as you are commanded and leave the rest to God. Everything else is sophistry and superstition.

16. The belief in God should (according to the usual way of representation) be a motive for morality, but in which respect? I have to represent God as a rewarder or chastiser, and doing one's

[1] See Matthew 6:10.

duties under this representation is mere *legality*. Then it has nothing to do with morality but with reward and avoidance of punishment. Morality is rather the *principle of faith*, the latter [faith] comes from the former [morality]. There is no virtue for the sake of God, but only submission to the will of God for the sake of virtue. The latter [virtue] must be fulfilled for its own sake. To what extent can one say that the command of duty is the command of God? Our recognition of moral law precedes the belief in God. Moral law commands in a general way, but what my duty in this or that situation is, is determined by cognition. My particular duty always depends on the circumstances. Now in relation to my faith God is the governor of the world insofar as the world is determined by morality [*Sittlichkeit*]. Hence, it is fair to say: "That I should act this way in this situation is God's will. It is the will of the ruler of the world that I came into this situation." Everything that is related to morality occurs in us as the *first*. It has no premises, it is therefore *supernatural* [*übernatürlich*] and lies outside the sequence of natural appearances, but influences the nature in hindsight.

17. Religion is the consolation of suffering. But it is so only insofar as our suffering comes from the fact that we doubt whether we can achieve the end of reason. Religion is the consolation only of our *suffering of soul* [*Seelenleiden*] when we cannot realise an end of reason for the sake of duty. Only in moral adversity can the belief in God be used for consolation, beyond that the quest of consolation is *superstition*. But due to the sway of superstition only few are capable of this conception of religion.

18. One says: Religion is duty. What is true or false in this proposition? All faith derives from conviction [*Gesinnung*], and this alone cannot be said with the former proposition [that religion is duty]. Instead, it seems to demand a particular act from us through which religion should be generated. One could thereby suggest that it is a duty *to reflect on religion* and the answer on the question would be the following: One must not say that something is a duty without there being the case that something should occur; hence, duty arises only when the case [that something should occur] obtains. If the case is to perform that reflection, then I should perform it. But

such a case can obtain only if doubt arises in human being regarding his duty, that is, if the morally-minded is driven inward [*in sich selbst zurückgetrieben*]. The above proposition contains truth only in this relation and not otherwise, because it is not reasonable to want to know the nature of God, partly due to the fact that it is not possible and partly due to the fact that it is not useful for us.

B.
On our belief in eternal perpetuation

1. It is perfectly clear that that which is not cannot feel pain. Destruction, if it obtains, is in this respect not vicious at all. But one might say, the fear of destruction is vicious. There is no need for this fear because *destruction* [*Vernichtung*] cannot be thought. Then what is it that agitates human beings? That they imagine themselves as not existing, as disconcerting as it must be. It is indeed a paradoxical yet universal illusion, which could actually contain something correct. By imagining the discomfiture of destruction, one posits oneself as existing and posits at the same time the state of inspecting his own destruction. *One fears just the distressing state of the lack of efficacy and activity*. We think of ourselves as persisting in utter limitedness, and this is actually what afflicts us. The human being has no worry about the perpetuation of his I as such, he presupposes it certainly and he has the right to do so. The I has its existence in itself, it cannot be eliminated at all.

   The Mendelssohnian proof[2] is transcendent and assumes *that the I is a simple substance*. What should this mean? Is there substance in itself? By no means; substance is merely a mode of thinking of the I. Substance exists *only* if something is represented. It is due to the fact that I *represent* the soul as persisting. The I is not a thing, not a substance, not a monad; it is nothing other than *that which posits itself*. But it cannot posit the time in which it does not exist, for it posits time necessarily in addition to itself. The pure I is not in time, it is the pure eternity. Time is produced by the empirical I itself, because it is a form of our intuition, that is, the

[2] Mendelssohn, Moses, Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul in Three Dialogues. Berlin and Stettin, 1767.

way the I comprehends the finite and manifold. Within the time that it [the I] produces, it is hence necessary and there is no time in which it is not. Therefore, it cannot posit time without adding itself to it.

While our concerns lie not with the persistence of the I in itself but rather with *continual efficacy* [*Fortwirken*] *and continual perception* [*Fortempfinden*], both are conditioned by the perpetuation of our limitation. My consciousness is conditioned by the fact that I posit a world outside of me as limiting me, and thus it has to do with the proof of the persistence of the world for us. We would like to be certain of this persistence because *we ask for the same of the identity of our consciousness*[3] in which *we, as those who we now are*, want to act for all eternity and demand that our current mode of action shall have a bearing on our future. As a result, there must be a continual sequence of appearances for us.

2. But why does human being demand persistence and the reassurance of it? Why does he not stay with his thoughts in the present? Why does he go beyond the end of life for his future? There are two different reasons which emerge from one and the same common ground.

   We produce time and time does not exist for us other than as that in which we posit the fulfilment of our wishes. Now the moral human being has wishes which lie beyond all possible time. His wish is the realisation of the end of reason and for this task he sees that it cannot be solved in finite time. For merely sensuous human beings it is different. Only the moral comprehends eternity. The immoral has only earthly needs and he admits certainly that his needs will be superseded by death. For him there is no unity of purpose at all but only a restless drive and hovering, and this he might want to continue after death. The immoral has no idea of eternity and no susceptibility to it; to him there is only vexation about death. He has no determinate plans for the future, because for the plans he has he sees that he cannot execute them anymore after this life. Yet he would like to subsist as he now lives, so he wishes

[3] I am the same person I was yesterday and the day before yesterday, insofar as my current act is determined by the act from yesterday, and that is just the identity of our consciousness.

for the continuation of the sensuous existence.

Without that which it acts upon, the principle of life is simply unknown to us. The principle of life is not a principle of life if it does not animate something. A sensuous life after our death cannot be proven, as no small part of our body will remain. On natural grounds, therefore, there can be no talk of the perpetuation of human beings. Now the question emerges: To whom should the identity of consciousness be attached? Not to the body, and also not to the formative principle. Nothing other than the spirit, the I, can persist. The I is only insofar as it acts; without the fact that it acts and posits a world in consequence of its act, it is not. The appeal to God's wisdom is based on our wish to be immortal. We are thereby running in a circle, as we posit God's wisdom because we wish for immortality.

The moral human being has an end that transcends all time. What he does should endure not only in his time but should have impacts for all eternity. The meanest and basest human, if he is moral, embraces the future. The morally good is always driven inwards by his defects and always finds that he is still not what he should be; he dies always with the cognition that he has not yet achieved what he should have. The holy commandment of moral law concerns him timelessly and demands that he should become holy.[4] But we find that we are not, therefore, we must also always persist. We have to rely on God, who took care of all conditions of the realisation of moral law. God does it necessarily, if he is God. In this proof it is assumed that I want *sanctification* [*Heiligung*]. Hence, this proof is merely for the moral human being who applies his strengths to strive for it.[5]

The moral human being wants to persist, but he does so not for his own sake. It is not because he wants to *see* the fruit of his labor, but because he wishes the perpetuation as an object of his modification [*Bearbeitung*]. He should become holy and for this reason he wants perpetuation; and only insofar as he has this in vision can he hope that God permits him to persist. This faith is in

[4] See Leviticus 11: 44.

[5] The persuasive power of this proof is conditioned by the conviction that morality is so to speak the primordial matter of our entire essence. Only the moral element in us, and nothing else, is the *true* essence, everything else is only appearance in comparison to this geometrical truth.

his heart and constitutes an essential part of himself. Hence, no doubt can arise rationally regarding the possibility of infinite persistence, because God is above all nature and should do what is not possible by nature. We cannot actually understand how, but we cannot find contradiction in it either. The possibility lies within that which is above all nature and not within nature. Our current residence, the Earth, stands in an immediate connection with a totally different body, the Sun. But we cannot stand in connection with any object without there being something in us that corresponds and relates to that object. So there must be something in our body that is like the Sun corresponding to the Earth. The finite being can subsist only in an articulated and organised body through which he stands in connection with nature outside him. Finite as we are, we always stay in a body; and as all matter is dissoluble, so even in a different life we shall expect no better fortune than here. However, we will receive perpetuation in a higher sphere and it can be assumed that our next future residence will be the *Sun*.[6]

[6] Remarks by Penzenkuffer: With pleasure – we admit – we note here that Prof. Fichte concurs for the most part with our favorite idea. We also conceive of God's arrangements for our moral cultivation and education as a school divided in *classes*, whose end is to proceed through gradual progression from one class to another, so their end is *to purify* us from *sensibility* and bestiality, and at once also our clench to the physical world, and to elevate us to the dignity of free, purely moral and holy beings. We are perhaps in the lowest class where only *faith* and *hope* but not *vision* [*Schauen*] are promised. Whether the next residence after this life is the Sun we dare not conjecture.

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Art and the New Condition of Literature:

Capital: New York, Capital of the 20th Century

by Kenneth Goldsmith

LEWIS HODDER

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Kenneth Goldsmith's *Capital: New York, Capital of the 20th Century* (2015) reads like a great American novel, at times like a Beat poem, as it moves through the city streets and grand apartments of New York City; it details the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street as a mural of a future museum and gives a brief account of the largest apartment you could find, with forty-one rooms and seventeen bathrooms; of the corner of Jones and Bleecker where a Chinese restaurant replaced a bar "whose lesbian patrons kept you awake so many summer nights when, too hot to sleep, you lay together with the windows open."[1] *Capital* imagines New York as a dream city, as urban science fiction, a city of upturned ships where its blocks reproach the flaneur and Mapplethorpe is taken for its Baudelaire. The book itself is impressive; a gold tome that resembles a chocolate bar as much as it does a gold bullion, but still the most impressive aspect of the book is its ambition to shoulder the weight of

[1] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Capital: New York, Capital of the 20th Century* (London: Verso Books, 2015) p. 127

Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (2002).

Like its precursor, *Capital* is comprised entirely of quotations and is split into sections according to its subject. And where Benjamin dealt with Paris as the capital of the nineteenth century, with chapters on the ancient Paris and the city's decline, the flaneur, prostitution, gambling, Marx, and Fourier, *Capital* contains chapters of quotations on Mapplethorpe, cruising, Harlem, simulacrum, and cinema – all things that are essential to the experience of New York throughout the twentieth century. Beneath the pure, golden front cover Goldsmith outlines the premise of the book: a kaleidoscopic assemblage and poetic history of New York that reveals the 'philosophic architecture of the city' while bringing it to life. Beneath the back cover, ending the book that is not meant to be read as a book, Benjamin's words are repeated and this textual relationship is emphasised:

> Method of the project: Literary montage, I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.[2]

Goldsmith has dealt with this question of appropriation previously and repeatedly, and gives the impression that it was only a matter of time before he came to *The Arcades Project*. In his previous work *Soliloquy* (1997) Goldsmith recorded every word he said for a week, from the moment he woke up on a Monday morning to the moment he slept on a Sunday night, which manifested as a 600-page book. *Day* (2003), a 900-page book, was a retyping of issues of The New York Times from the upper left hand corner of the page to the bottom right, word for word, without differentiating between articles. Goldsmith's curatorial project 'Printing Out the Internet' (2013) then attempted the impossible task of printing out the internet, ending with 10 tonnes of paper, following which he concluded "I think we got most it."[3] This previous work then informs Goldsmith's reading of *The Arcades Project,* particularly when he states that "it took the digital age 75 years to understand the value of

[2] Walter Benjamin, quoted in Ibid. p. inside back cover
[3] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'No Such Thing as Writer's Block', Frieze Video, http://video.frieze.com/film/no-such-thing-writers-block/

[Benjamin's] project".[4] The question of the materialisation and concretisation of language is revisited once again; but, when we see *The Arcades Project* considered in terms of the facticity of language, language thrown into the world, or as a precursor to the digital – in the same terms Goldsmith curated his other projects – it becomes increasingly evident that Goldsmith misreads the antagonisms that inform both Benjamin's work and *The Arcades Project* itself. However, as Adorno writes in *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), we must look to what an artwork *has* done that others haven't rather than dwelling on what is absent in the artwork,[5] and where Benjamin looked to Nietzsche and the negation of the history of philosophy for form, Goldsmith instead looks to the condition of literature and art. And it is at this point that *The Arcades Project* must be left behind and, rather than remaining in the shadow of Benjamin's literature and philosophy, we must instead consider *Capital* as art in its own right: not for its ineluctable revelling in subjectivity, and not as something that remains immutable and beyond criticism, but as a particular development of art that largely bypassed Benjamin.

As Goldsmith himself notes, this form of conceptual literature follows from developments in conceptual art. Yet these formal laws of literature that Goldsmith utilities and develops for *Capital* had its embryos in the Dadaist manifesto but became developed later, in the 1940s, with the emergence of Lettrism in France and through détournement, through the absolute saturation of language and finally to this 'new condition of literature'.[6] Where Adorno wrote that art and anything surrounding it is no longer self-evident,[7] fifty years later we have now reached this stage with regards to literature. But this stage was reached through two vastly different means that have now come to resemble one another in their indeterminacy. While Modernist literature and art seemed to closely intersect each other in their ideas and conceptions, art was nevertheless more developed in that it did not rely on, and even negated, the isolating depth of the novel, of this new form that – to repeat Benjamin – "neither come[s] from oral tradition nor goes

[4] Kenneth Goldsmith in Sukhdev Sandhu, 'Kenneth Goldsmith interview', The Guardian, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/nov/21/kenneth-goldsmith-interview-i-wanted-to-take-walter-benjamin-off-pedestal-on-to-coffee-table

[5] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014) p. 30

[6] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'No Such Thing as Writer's Block'

[7] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 1

into it."[8] Kafka most of all embodied this introverted quality of the novel, taking it to extremes when describing his ideal writing room as a vaulted cellar beneath the ground where he would speak to no one at all, proclaiming: "And how I would write! From what depths I would drag it up!"[9] It wasn't until Isidore Isou that language and literature was isolated to its bare elements, repeating what Kasimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) had done decades earlier in art.

Whereas Heidegger's use of facticity enabled him to ontologise history, rendering it abstract, devoid of events or antagonism and so of any substance;[10] art is not an aspect or extension of Spirit but is wholly different to it. It is material and remains material, and so must be judged on altogether different criteria. Art derives its meaning and force from this distinction, from this very being in the world. It is therefore unable to complete the historicising move accomplished by other philosophical systems and methods, whether that of Hegel or Marx; its relation to Spirit and history is instead mediated through the canon of art and style as a condition of its absolute separation from any concrete or direct history.[11] Art's own formal laws become crucial in light of this. Rather than accepting the popular claim that with the advent of photography painting fled from its previous function of mimesis, this rejection of mimesis has been acknowledged in art for centuries. E.H. Gombrich recognised this in Impressionism, where he noted that as much as this movement was a rebellion against what had preceded it in art, it was nevertheless a single rebellion in a long line, a line of "scientific perspective, "*sfumato*", Venetian colours, movement and expression".[12] To view Impressionism as a flight from photography, and by extension objectivity, fundamentally ignores the tension within Impressionism itself and misplaces its importance in the history of art. While Impressionism was contemporaneous to photography, Impressionism in fact moved in the *opposite* direction supposed by this thesis; it was not *away* from reality that Impressionism moved but towards a new articulation of it, an articulation that captured fleeting glimpses of light and the movement of

[8] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico 1999) p. 87
[9] Elias Canetti, *Kafka's Other Trial* (London: Penguin Books, 2012) p. 40
[10] Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964-1965*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Polity Press, 2008)
[11] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Reconciliation under Duress' in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007) pp. 151-176, p. 160
[12] E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2013) p. 433

the city street.

Critics such as Stephanie Boland have neglected to acknowledge this form when discussing *Capital*, stating that Goldsmith himself and the text inexorably move 'out of step' to contemporary literature and poetry. When looking elsewhere, we find that contemporary literature and poetry has become politically self-conscious: Cathy Park Hong writes that, galvanised by Black Lives Matter, the 'old guard' of poetry has collapsed, and that while contemporary poetry in the US diverges in styles there is nevertheless a growing belief that poetry must engage in social practice and politics;[13] in fiction, the retellings of Albert Camus' *The Fall* in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and *The Stranger* in *The Meursault Investigation* (2014) have taken centre-stage with their refusal of a European existential malaise, having been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and winning the English PEN Award respectively. Yet this discussion of politics remains largely pre-aesthetic. Boland's insistence that Goldsmith look to contemporary poetry and recent discussions on the social use of form fails to recognise Goldsmith's text as a different project to Benjamin's, or the very fundamental facticity of art. It relies on a historicism that cannot adequately articulate the book's form. If Goldsmith did seek to comprehensively tackle a history of New York merely in literature or as a critical history, these criticisms would be appropriate and again it would be necessary to approach politics on its own terms. But discussion of the book's form itself, its most decisive feature, is absent. This is not to separate art and aesthetics from the political, however – art and aesthetics must be political – but as we have seen recently, aestheticising politics is too often mistaken as the politicisation of art. Ai Weiwei's photograph in which he lies face down on a beach posing as the refugee Alan Kurdi, a Kurdish toddler whose body was washed up on the shore of Turkey, becomes the conclusion of art's simply *being political*, and Goldsmith's own ham-fisted reading of Michael Brown's autopsy as a poem succumbs to this too (as Boland points out).[14] To inject the same political banality here would have added nothing and would have further emphasised how 'out of step' he is.

Ultimately, Goldsmith misreads the antagonisms central to *The*

[13] Cathy Park Hong, 'There's a New Movement in American Poetry and It's Not Kenneth Goldsmith', New Republic [https://newrepublic.com/article/122985/new-movement-american-poetry-not-kenneth-goldsmith]

[14] Stephanie Boland, 'Uncreative Writing for a Digital Age', Los Angeles Review of Books, [https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/uncreative-writing-for-a-digital-age/]

Arcades Project. He sees it as a statement on literature and montage rather than of history and modernity itself, insisting that it is "a Zola novel [that] offers a 360-degree examination of an urban landscape, but it tosses away the narrative structure."[15] He even threatens to reduce content of *Capital* itself to mere experience when he proclaims the confusion of modernity and postmodernity with its dizzying pace and noxious fumes. But it becomes necessary to reassert that art must not dissipate into the world as experience, journalistic repetition, or commentary because it is the negative knowledge of the world; it does not approach truth-content through its mimesis of reality or moving parallel to it, but through reality's negation, through art's own internal laws and technique. If the artworks' facticity, through its mere material existence, inevitably discards and excludes content to such an extent that this content remains immanent to the artwork and even mediated by it, where does this leave the book itself, full of innumerable quotations and excerpts?

When considered in terms of facticity and its form *Capital* instead becomes a marker of a very particular historical development: it is only with the internet that text, free from the constraint of the books, newspapers, and magazines that cluttered bookshops and homes, truly becomes immaterial – digital – and any physicality and weight is lost. Now, in the digital age, "we can scrape those words, and house those words, and move those words, and repurpose those words, suddenly makes for a brand-new condition of literature."[16] But this facticity is ceremoniously restored to literature as the depth of the novel is refused through *Capital*'s sheer gaudiness, through the complete saturation of language and the expanse of quotes. Claiming that today there is "too much data", such that "you can't read the internet" for "magnitude of language", Goldsmith reasserts the importance of the facticity of literature as "whole oeuvres of works that are not meant to be read, books that are not really meant to be read, specifically without agenda" become more and more prominent and even necessary.[17]

Capital's brazen existence is an affirmation that reflects the ambition of Dadaism that came kicking into the world in a Swiss bar in 1916, as it too reveals a maturity of form latent in Lettrism. The idiom *l'art pour l'art* begins to lose its exclusivity and with language's

[15] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'Kenneth Goldsmith interview'
[16] Kenneth Goldsmith, 'No Such Thing as Writer's Block'
[17] Ibid.

complete saturation and indeterminacy, literature now treads the same path that art had before it. And while at times *Capital* is confused about whether it is an artefact of the digital age or a decidedly analogue history of New York in the twentieth century, or Goldsmith might make us reluctant with his claims that Benjamin must be taken down a peg or his heavy-handed reading of Michael Brown's autopsy as a poem, we must nevertheless move past Goldsmith himself and towards this new condition of literature that has been set before us.

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Reopening McLuhanism: On *Understanding Media*

J E MCNALLY

By now it is something of a cliché to declare Marshall McLuhan a founding figure in contemporary media studies. Yet the question of what precisely constitutes the 'founding' of a discipline is something far less intuitive. It is a difficult affair to map out the emergence of a field, owing in no small part to the reductive tendencies by which thought is re-given its history. For example, where the specialist sees subtle distinctions between natural philosophy and biology, a layperson is likely to see both as belonging to a much older – or even timeless – enterprise in the study of life.

At times a field is accompanied by its own herald. In the early twentieth century, pioneers of artistic schools and critics of nascent technologies used the tract and the manifesto to announce and formalise innovative fields and sub-fields of thought. Elsewhere an emergence is marked by a more subtle gesture – a neologism, a repudiation, or indeed a break which only hindsight can recover. In either case, "foundation" expects basis, certainty and clarity in the prescription of how one is to think, from Comte's affirmation and delimitation of a *science* of the social, to the principles of spatio-temporal representation proposed in early cinema analysis. Yet McLuhan's central work, *Understanding Media* does not appear to do this at all. Rather than deduce rules of analysis or a philosophical ground, the work weaves tentative examinations of technological novelty between lengthy forays into

classical literature and popular discourse – all in a style more curious than assertive with regards to its subject matter. What would it mean to say that *Understanding Media* is a foundational text for its discipline, in light of this distinction? The answer, perhaps, may be found within the matter of style.

It would be easy enough to brush off McLuhan's unconventional or un-academic relationship with discursive and didactic styles as simple idiosyncrasies of his literary background. It is no secret that this student of English and of the trivium was enamoured by the figure of the artist – especially Joyce, going so far as to structure one of his books around a technologically-centred interpretation of *Finnegans Wake*.[1] Yet this would be a reductive move; as McLuhan's son and collaborator Eric McLuhan attests, the stylistically demanding composition of *Understanding Media* was not without purpose, having been

> chosen for its abrasive and discontinuous character, and was forged over many redraftings. It was designed deliberately to provoke the reader, to jar the sensibilities into a form of awareness that better complimented the subject-matter.[2]

Furthermore, interviews given by the elder McLuhan around the time of *Understanding Media*'s first publication would seem to confirm a more general suspicion from the author towards pedagogical and theoretical conventions of communication and its relation to thought. In 1968, for example, McLuhan was quick to challenge such conventions in interviewer Ken Foley's interpretation of his work:

> [Foley] I can hardly think of a man who’s attached more labels to more things than you have for more people.
> [McLuhan] But not as classifications. Classified data is fragmented and stays in place. My labels say what? The medium … or the message? These are not easy to classify, nor

[1] McLuhan, Marshall., Fiore, Quentin. *War and Peace in the Global Village.* (California: Gingko Press, 2001).
[2] McLuhan, Marshall, and Eric McLuhan. *Laws of media: the new science.* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2007.) p.viii

> do they stay in place at all. They're fast-moving entities.[3]

How, then, do we *found*, or *define* a discipline, if not by means of foundations – of principles, categories, and classifications? Can we create and communicate ways of thinking without enforcing a steadfast theoretical orientation, or indeed by provoking the thinker without prescribing the fixed existence of that which must be thought?

Against the notion of McLuhan as an exceptionally revolutionary figure in the study of media, we find that if we are to place his writings within the context of his antecedent 19th and early 20th century technological thought it becomes difficult to uphold the originality of his inquiries. Two thinkers which had already come to dominate the subject by McLuhan's time – and who were explicit influences upon his thinking – were Harold Innis and Lewis Mumford. Before McLuhan's *media ecology*, Innis's communications studies and Mumford's *technics* had already greatly explored the social and cultural changes to which the emergence of new technologies had contributed. McLuhan even noted that his *Gutenberg Galaxy* should be considered "a footnote to the observations of Innis on the subject of the social and psychical consequences" of writing and print.[4] McLuhan's novelty, rather, came from his communication of a specific object: the *problem*. To elaborate further, McLuhan's 1968 work *Understanding Media* distinguishes itself from other works on media (including McLuhan's own) in its abilities to *think* and to *express* the medium as a problem and not as merely a concept.

Let us look at this through *Understanding Media*'s most famous idea and mantra, that "the medium is the message".[5] Sooner or later any examination of McLuhan's work must come to terms with this suggestion, and yet the basic implication given here is not at all new for technological thought. As McLuhan claims,

> In terms of the ways in which the machine altered our

[3] "Marshall McLuhan in Conversation with Norman Mailer." *Marshall McLuhan Speaks Special Collection*. http://www.marshallmcluhanspeaks.com/interview/1968-marshall-mcluhan-in-conversation-with-norman-mailer/. Accessed 23 Apr. 2017.
[4] McLuhan, Marshall. "Media and Cultural Change" in *The Essential McLuhan* eds. McLuhan, Eric. And Zigrone, Frank. (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 83
[5] McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. (Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2013) p. 7

> relations to one another and ourselves, it mattered not whether it turned out cornflakes or Cadillacs. The restructuring of human work and association was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology.[6]

A technology alters its world beyond the specificity or the sum of its uses – that is, beyond its *content*. As McLuhan himself had indicated, this is something already significantly considered by Innis; in Mumford's analyses, such as that of the mechanical clock and its synchronisation of human action, we find very similar implications, albeit ones tempered by a heavier sociological emphasis[7]; and of course, this is to say nothing of the profound social disturbances of productive innovation explored by the Marxist tradition, notably in Walter Benjamin's discussions of art and reproducibility.[8] Yet McLuhan's approach to this matter expresses less of a concern in demonstrating precisely *how* media incur their transformative effects than in pushing the reader to *think* beyond the habits and preconceptions through which they consider such devices.

A simple statement such as *the medium is the message* produces more by way of its internal contradiction and its consequent dissonance than by what it designates. As a model of the essentially communicative being of technical objects, the medium-message schema gives a theoretical formulation to our most intuitive grasp of their deployment: that it is the *message*, the specific use, given to a medium by the user, which ultimately decides the impact of that medium upon its world. Even Aristotle, McLuhan's trusted classical ally, cannot help but think and speak of artefacts as projections[9] and empty vessels,[10] announcing an epistemic tendency whose existence finds its contemporary metonym in the National Rifle Association. McLuhan's first provocation is therefore to collapse this distinction, against a culture "long accustomed to splitting and dividing things as a means of control".[11]

What follows in the first chapter of *Understanding Media* is a

[6] Ibid. pp. 7-8
[7] Mumford, Lewis. *Technics and Civilization* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955) p. 14
[8] Benjamin, Walter. "The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations.* trans. Zohn, H., eds. Arendt, H. (New York: Shocken Books, 2007)
[9] Aristotle. *Politics*, 1. 1253b
[10] Aristotle. *Physics*, II.1. 192b9-192b11
[11] McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. p. 7

series of encounters with technologies which are both unassuming staples of everyday mediation, yet which also appear to escape the concept by way of an excess. This excess is the *message* of such mediums considered as their effect, where these effects effectively prevent a reduction of the technology's existence to such a binary. Mass-production technologies carry with them a disruption of human labour and consumer activities; innovations in print bring with them novel opportunities for the fragmentation and specialisation of knowledge.[12] Alternatively, there are examples to be given where a medium appears not to have a message-content at all, where it is the concept itself which asks too much of its object:

> The electric light escapes attention as a communication medium just because it has no "content."... For it is not till the electric light is used to spell out some brand name that it is noticed as a medium. Then it is not the light but the "content" (or what is really another medium that is noticed. The message of the electric light is like the message of electric power in industry, totally radical, pervasive, and decentralized. For electric light and power are separate from their uses, yet they eliminate time and space factors in human association exactly as do radio, telegraph, telephone, and TV, creating involvement in depth.[13]

It should not be surprising that technical existence is so readily distinguished between the positivity of use and the neutrality of what is used; even without the consideration of manufacturing and interest groups whose aim is to downplay the inherent impact of their devices, most technologies by design are most easily comprehended in their operational synergy. That is to say, technological understanding leans towards the ways in which technical objects are represented to those wielding them. The experience of utensils, for example, portrays the existence of shaped or formalised but also essentially empty or causeless beings which are given energy and purpose by one's intentional investments. The idea of technological *form-as-force*, as implied by McLuhan's examples, does not ordinarily come to mind given the

[12] McLuhan, Marshall. "Media and Cultural Change" in *The Essential McLuhan.* p. 83
[13] McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding media: the extensions of man. p. 7

essentially complex, non-linear, and prolonged causal interactions which characterise media-ecological transformations – nor does it need to, given the intuitive position of instrumental conceptualisation in technological thought. It is only when such intuitions become dislodged by contradiction or jarred by the incompatible that one can begin to move beyond the habits of thought.

As Eric McLuhan noted, criticisms of *Understanding Media* have tended towards expressing dissatisfaction with the work's unfocused style and lack of a scientific methodology. On the other hand, equally prominent have been the charges that McLuhan Sr.'s book was too insistent on the role of media forms in effecting vast socio-cultural transformations; it is after all not without a certain poetic insistence that McLuhan connects feudal society to the stirrup (an already controversial connection adapted from Lynn White Jr.'s *Medieval Technology and Social Change*)[14] and early European nationalism to the newspaper.[15] Accusations of a short-sighted and pernicious "technological determinism",[16] such as that of critics such as Raymond Williams and Brian Winston,[17] endure due to what appears as a tendency in McLuhan's position to disregard non-technological social-historical agencies. Yet in the case of *Understanding Media* each of these criticisms can be at least partially undermined if we grant that the purpose of McLuhan's book is not to deliver a message, but to establish a founding critique of technological experience. This critique however is inseparable from the activity of thinking – critique itself must *be thought*, rather than be given the mere thought *of* critique. Like Kant's critique of transcendental illusions, Bergson's *intellect*, Heidegger's *presence* and Deleuze's *representation*, McLuhan's portrayal of mediated experience is of that which ceaselessly imposes its own insufficiency to understand itself upon itself. Further aligning itself with this vein, *Understanding Media* not only confronts the medium/message schema with its incomprehensible excess, but warns of the "narcosis" which obscures this excess by way of the inherent *numbing* effects of media deployment.[18] While media may

[14] Ibid. p. 179
[15] Ibid. p. 215
[16] Williams, Raymond. *Television: Technology and cultural form.* eds. Ederyn Williams (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 130
[17] Winston, Brian. *Misunderstanding Media*. (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1986)
[18] McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. p. 42

extend the capacities of physical and social bodies, they equally amputate them and redefine their attentive equilibria, casting from presence that which was lost; this absence is then redoubled in the reflexive image through which the mediated body identifies itself with these augmented relations and desires, but not the media themselves.[19] While much has been made of McLuhan's humanistic tendencies, one should better understand this warning as being of a concern for the mystification of the augmentations of self and society, than fear of the augmentations themselves. It is through the critique, on the other hand, of technological experience, that one can hence safeguard technological thought from its own such illusions.

Though Marshall McLuhan would return to *Understanding Media* for some of the theoretical materials used in his final, 'Popperian-scientific'[20] writings on the subject in *Laws of Media*, it would be a mistake to consider the former as merely anticipating the latter's formalisation of technological existence. As co-author of the latter work Eric McLuhan recounts in a recent interview, the two McLuhans, driven by the demands of the former's critics, were compelled to *re-read and re-interpret* the ideas of *Understanding Media* themselves in order to find what it was that was accused to be lacking:

> And we asked ourselves. 'Okay, what general statements can we make about all media that anybody can test?' And we opened *Understanding Media* because we're looking at doing a new edition, and right there on the table of contents we spotted two or three of them. One is the last chapter in part one, 'reversal of the overheated medium' – push anything far enough and it reverses its properties, or moves in a complimentary direction. So there was a *law*, great.[21]

Yet in *Understanding Media* it is not the figure of the scientist which McLuhan tasks with preparing us for the silent revolutions of each new medium, but that of the artist. Rather than the treatise or the textbook, it is

[19] Ibid. p. 67
[20] McLuhan, Marshall, and Eric McLuhan. *Laws of media: the new science*. (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2007.) p.vii
[21] Harrison, Robert. "Eric McLuhan on Marshall McLuhan." *Entitled Opinions*, 5 July 2017, entitledopinions.stanford.edu/eric-mcluhan-marshall-mcluhan. Accessed 20 Sept. 2017.

only art which provides "advance knowledge of how to cope with the psychic and social consequences of technology", and only the artist who possesses the "awareness" required to secure such.[22] Frank Zigrone, in this vein, suggests that an easy case can be made for McLuhan being a "special sort of artist" himself, given the latter's use of a probing, aphoristic style best likened to Francis Bacon.[23]

If McLuhan was an artist, and indeed if *Understanding Media* is closer to a work of art than to one of science, a third term must still be located to account for what else it is that McLuhan's book *does*. Graham Harman, for example, has recently explored the connections between McLuhan and 20th century phenomenology, in a re-imagining of the thinker as a *philosopher*.[24] For the author of *Understanding Media*, we could perhaps say that McLuhan was an artist *in the service* of philosophy; we could also add the further caveat that, unlike in Harman's reading of *Laws of Media*, McLuhan's 1964 work was far closer to the critical philosophy and projects of Kant or Foucault (and, by extension, Kittler) than to a phenomenological investigation. *Understanding Media*'s primary project is not to find foundations in rules, but in the technological thinker themselves and within the misgivings of technological experience. For these purposes it is a work which recognises that aesthetic play holds a greater power to open up thought to the new than mere communications of concepts.

[22] McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. p. 66
[23] McLuhan, Marshall. "Introduction"' in *The Essential McLuhan* p. 4
[24] See Harman, Graham. 'McLuhan "McLuhan as Philosopher"' in *Bell and whistles more speculative realism*. (Alresford: Zero Books, 2013) for further work on the connections between the work of Marshall McLuhan and Martin Heidegger.

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