Analecta Husserliana

The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research

Volume CXV

From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics

Edited by

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

Springer

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ANALECTA HUSSERLIANA

THE YEARBOOK OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

VOLUME CXV

Founder and Editor-in-Chief:

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The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning
Hanover, New Hampshire, USA

Published under the auspices of
The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning
A-T. Tymieniecka, President

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/5621

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Hanover, NH, USA

ISBN 978-94-017-9062-8 ISBN 978-94-017-9063-5 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg New York London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014952724

Printed on acid-free paper

Springer is part of Springer Science+Business Media (www.springer.com)

Acknowledgements

This volume gathers selected studies from two international conferences: the 36th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology and Literature, *Drama Between Skies and Earth*, and the 17th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology, Fine Arts and Aesthetics, *Artistic Interpretation of the Sky Experience*. Both of the conferences were held in May 2012 at the Radcliffe Gymnasium, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

We owe a special thanks to Patricia Trutty-Coohill, the Secretary General of our International Society for Phenomenology, Fine Arts and Aesthetics. Professor Trutty-Coohill took on the role of running the 2012 conferences, which were a great success.

As always, our conference participants and authors deserve to be thanked for their precious collaboration.

We also owe thanks to Jeffrey T. Hurlburt and Louis Tymieniecki Houthakker for their contribution in the preparation and editing of this volume.

Hanover, NH, USA Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

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Clockwise, from lower left: Bruce Ross, Raymond Wilson III, Bernard Micallef, Victor Kocay, Patricia Trutty-Coohill

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Introduction: Some Remarks About Ontopoiesis as New Metaphysics

Francesco Totaro

Abstract Ontopoiesis is certainly a new metaphysics. We have to consider, previously, both the classical way and the modern way of metaphysics. It is important to recall that Parmenides declares the unconditioned positivity of being or he declares the being as unconditioned. Tymieniecka's thought is a metamorphosis of the phenomenology toward the life and the unfolding of the universal logos. In this direction, intentionality, truth and 'trascendentalia' become driving forces until the emergence of the divinity as fullness of the logos of life. My personal proposal aims to connect the ontopoiesis, taken as new metaphysics, with a development of the metaphysics of the unconditioned being. The productive effort intrinsic to the ontopoiesis could be better understood as a dynamic manifestation of all that can live in truth, goodness and beauty.

Keywords Ontopoiesis • Metaphysics • Phenomenology • Communication • Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

An Inquiry

I would like to express some remarks about phenomenology and metaphysics; better: about ontopoiesis and metaphysics. And we could finally say: about ontopoiesis as new metaphysics.

In any case, we need an inquiry into metaphysics as such. What are the main features of metaphysics? Fortunately – or unfortunately – there are many ways of metaphysical thought. Let us look at the main ways in the history, at least of the West.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_1

The Classical Way of Metaphysics

First: the old way or the classical way. I know that professor Tymieniecka loves particularly Heraclitus and his dynamic metaphysics. But I would like to remember also Parmenides and his statement that being cannot not be. This statement is very important because it says being and not being or being and nothing (if you prefer: positive and negative); and, simultaneously or immediately, it says that the being prevails against and over nothing. In other words, Parmenides declares the unconditioned positivity of being or he declares the being as unconditioned.

This is crucial also for a right interpretation of Heraclitus, if we want to read the flux, about which he speaks, as the life of the positivity itself and not as the reduction of the positivity into nothing.

Thus, Parmenides offers us the legacy of an unconditioned principle, that is, a principle that we can recognize as the condition of any conditioned being and not as a consequence or a production of what is conditioned (in time and space).

The Modern Way of Metaphysics

Second: the modern way of metaphysics. This way is, initially, the metaphysics of the subject. The best result of the modern metaphysics of the subject is the elaboration of the categories of the consciousness, an elaboration that finally arrives to the statement of the intentionality of the consciousness itself.

In the statement of the intentionality, also the overcoming of the separation between being and appearance can find a place, a separation that had been the target of Nietzsche's critique of the dualism of the so-called Platonic-Christian tradition. After this critique, we can no longer establish a meaning of the world in a way which is the devaluation of our experience.

This result, beyond Nietzsche himself, could open the possibility of a metaphysics considered – as Dilthey stated in the conclusion of his famous book *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* – as a research of the sense. Husserl assumes this notion of metaphysics as a research of the sense and we can consider that this kind of metaphysics is at the core of Husserlian phenomenology.

But let me further reflect on this issue. In the framework of modern and contemporary philosophy, the critique of metaphysical tradition, which is accused of being disembedded from life and of being an objectifying kind of thought, can be dated back at least to Nietzsche and Dilthey, and it continued – even if with different nuances – in Husserl and Heidegger. The intuitive method, opposed to the deductive one, is at the core of those philosophies, which claim their belonging to life.

Anyway I would like to stress the fact that in any version of philosophies linked to life, the idea of metaphysics does not disappear, but rather assumes new and transformed forms: in Nietzsche there is surely a metaphysics of becoming, that ought to coincide with the being, without going out from the becoming itself;

Dilthey speaks about a metaphysics as a search for the meaning that ought to take the place of the classical naturalistic metaphysics; Husserl proposes a pure eidetics with a metaphysical air, and Heidegger, focusing on the thesis of the ontological difference, re-interprets the relationship between the Being and any single being as an event – *Ereignis* – which is never saturated through its expressions. Remaining in the phenomenological stream, it must be remembered that Max Scheler's legacy, in its turn, is widely metaphysical.

Actually, at a closer look, we are in the era of the post-metaphysical thought – borrowing this expression from the title of a famous essay by Habermas – in which, among possible developments, post-metaphysics itself hints at a post-post metaphysics, that is, a regenerated metaphysics, that ought not to encounter the problems of the old or degenerate metaphysics.

The qualifying trait of the new metaphysics ought to be its intrinsic vital character: metaphysics as metaphysics of life, in the life, for the life, and anyway never without life.

The Comparison with the Phenomenology of Life as a New Metaphysics

Here the comparison with Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's phenomenology of life is open, being a phenomenology which is ontologically thought in its roots, and thus turns itself into a meta-phenomenology, or a new metaphysics.

At the heart of this thought lies a renewed inquiry into the sense. So, how to intentionate the sense, and what is or could be the sense that we have to intentionate? To answer this essential question, some fundamental concepts are to be kept in mind, in my opinion, such as the crucial notions of immanence and transcendence, totality and finalism, and all that can be useful to identify and to articulate the basic idea of ontopoiesis, in its dynamism and in its constructive perspective oriented to the creative discovery of the sense and, more deeply, to the sense of sense.

In this framework we have to limit ourselves to the analysis of a few fundamental traits of Tymieniecka's thought, that distinguish her from the phenomenological tradition, and give account of her metaphysical approach.

Intentionality

The first trait consists in a revision of Husserl's notion of intentionality. The re-modulation of intentionality proposed by Tymieniecka seeks to answer the following question: "Is intentionality really the exclusive basic factor in constituting our world as it manifests itself?".[1] To the limits of Husserl's intentionality, that

[1] Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *The Fullness of the Logos in the Key of Life. Book I. The Case of God in the new Enlightenment*, in *Analecta Husserliana*, Volume C (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), p. 21.

cannot arrive at a "crowning achievement of his quest for the certain and necessary foundation of all knowledge", that is, to a "phenomenology of phenomenology", Tymieniecka opposes a different and alternative end, crossing back the itinerary articulated through the procedures of reduction.

She thus arrives at a "specific modality of the universal logos that manifests itself to carry the inquiry along and which continues to interrogate events when the intentional vehicle fails",[2] a modality which manifests itself, in its universal play, as a *driving force*, which is progressing towards its aims by an alternation of impetus and equipoise, "so that the progress of this force is punctuated". In this way phenomenology radically turns itself into a vision of the processual dynamism, according to a specific articulation: "As this driving force 'moves onward' it reveals itself as a constructively oriented dynamis that breaks the already established current of becoming having an intrinsic endowment and answers a call already issued for the completion of the state of affairs given and that simultaneously launches a project of potential constructive continuation. With each impetus a constructive outline, articulations, links, etc. are projected. The consequent actualization brings the impetus from potentiality to a new balance in reality achieving a measure of equipoise therein as the deployed energies are constructively adjusted, attuned to their circumambient conditions".

Landing to "the creative function of constitutive consciousness", the intentionality of the *logos* realizes the instance of ultimate self-foundation as ontopoiesis, and thus as *logos of life*. Certainty and thruth of the *logos* lie in its potentiality for realization, with no need of further reductions.

Truth

This entails a redefinition of truth, that needs to be co-extensive to the whole process of the *logos*, and thus goes beyond the specifically human sphere: "although the constant search for 'truth' or adequation reaches its highest intellective modality in the specifically human sphere of the cognitive logos, without which no course of individual – and a fortiori societal – enactment could be carried out, since specifically human, cognitive, intellection is the clearest and strongest instrument of individual life enactment, this constant search for truth sustains the entire dynamic/constructive spread of the logos of life in its various spheres, using all the varied modalities of each".[3]

Consequently, the notion of truth entails a universal *generative power*. At the same time, since truth is always embedded in a plurality of spheres, none of which is prevailing, it develops itself through a variety of levels and, we could say, of prospectic partiality: "As we may see, taking into due consideration this fundamental generative notion of truth as being immersed in all spheres of sense and being appropriately qualified by them, none of the partial perspectives may claim a pre-

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 22.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 122.

ponderant validity or claim precedence over the others. Each of the abovementioned conceptions of truth – and others – may hold a claim to only partial validity. And only together can the intellective/cognitive conception, the contextual/interrelational conception, and the pragmatic/directional conception of truth adequately respond to the essential life situations of the human being from whom the question and quest for truth proceeds, for they express the three main concerns of human life involvement. Each of them plays its specific role in life situations within the sphere of sense that is in question".[4] It is also clear that the realization of truth within the entire field of the phenomenology of the ontopoiesis of life excludes the renunciation to the truth in favor of *relativism*, that on the contrary we would fall into if we gave validity only to one of the spheres of thruth, without taking the others into account.

Transcendentalia

A third trait that characterizes the ontopoietic radicalization of phenomenology is the translation of transcendentals – that had already been analyzed by Husserl – from their cognitive dimension, to a more comprehensive existential and vital one: "the transcendental situation of the living being consists not in cognitive apprehension but in the vital positional situation of the living agent as the center of a band of vital attention as it pursues functional concerns – with all of its functions stemming from and oriented outwards by a "center" – a center open to receiving reactions, nourishment, etc."[5]

Intentional horizons, that go beyond the mere cognitive dimension, are thus delineated: "We have then to recognize not only the horizons of our cognitive performances – which Husserl emphasized – *but also the horizons of the whole of experience of living beingness and of all its vital functions*". The intentional push that goes through the whole movement of the *logos of life* completes itself in the social forms of living and finally goes beyond the narrow borders of the existential dimension too: "Constantly advancing in its progress, the logos is constantly strengthened and invigorated anew by existential or presentational acts from which surge new virtually present resources of force and direction. Having reached beyond the existential/evolutionary parameters of vitally significant (survival-oriented) horizons to the spheres of experience in communal/societal life, which find their basis in existential foundations, the creative logos now throws up spiritual and, lastly, sacral horizons of experience that actually surpass the now narrow confines of the existential horizon".[6] In this way an overturning of the supremacy of mind over life is realized, together with the extension of the transcendental from the world of life to the wider geo-cosmic framework: "The world of life, which man projects around himself, is indeed transcendental but not in its fundamental origins in constitutive consciousness/mind – with its specific centrality – but rather with respect

[4] *Ibidem*, pp. 122–123.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 134.

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 135.

to its *positioning within the dynamic web of the geo-cosmic architectonics of life*. It is *life-transcendental*".[7]

Ontopoiesis, Hermeneutics and Communication

The peculiarity of Tymieniecka's thought consists in the metamorphosis of phenomenology into a metaphysical construction that unfolds itself as ontopoiesis, that is, as the constitution of being, that corresponds to the self-reflexive character of its expression, which is manifold but teleologically oriented, and thus converging toward a sense that – going through the whole geo-cosmic flow – leads to the human and to the further emergence of the divinity as fullness of the logos of life. The path of ontopoiesis cannot be deductively demonstrated, but rests on a claim for self evidence, that is nevertheless able to feed itself with the results of cognitive disciplines, and can offer them, reciprocally, a frame of full understanding.

In the frame of ontopoiesis the different domains of knowledge would be understood better than the way in which they would understand themselves by themselves alone. We could also argue that the ontopoietic method is not only intuitive, but more precisely intuitive-hermeneutical, since the ontopoietic horizon aims at providing different disciplines with the coordinates, thanks to which they could gain the highest value.

In this way, phenomenology of life arrives at an omnicomprehensive cosmological frontier, not relying on a philosophical eidetics that would provide sciences with epistemic aprioris, but on a predisposition to assume their results, even running the risk that these limited realms of knowledge go beyond the empirical prudence upon which they usually rest.

Into the unity of ontopoiesis can flow any "positive" knowledge, if it becomes aware of its integration into the flow of anything which lives and of its *intelligence*.

In order to complete this brief outline, a supplement of analysis on the relationship between ontopoiesis and communication can be useful.

Ontopoietic metaphysics, or ontopoiesis as a metaphysics of *beingness* (and not simply *being*), calls forth *centres* of self-reflection, where the constitution or expression of the being can narrate itself. This means that the *communication of the being* intrinsically belongs to the ontopoietic vision. It overlaps with the dynamism of the being, that narrates itself through conscious beings, that in their concrete empirical condition show the signs of a transcendental event, that is equivalent to the ontological flow.

In the human sphere communication gains the qualitative difference that comes from the exercise of an "*imaginatio creatrix*", open to new forms of the existing, but the creating imagination, both in the esthetical, and the existential choices to which

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 137.

it gives birth, is linked to the overall flow of the ontopoietic process, even if it produces a higher stage.

To sum up, ontopoiesis is also *communication*, and the subjects of communication mutually communicate their capacity to produce being, that is, to lead the being to manifestation and to make evident, for themselves and for others, what has manifested itself.

Once again, we could refer to Heraclitus' words. Exactly in his critique of the human beings, that are unable to understand the logos, emerges (in the first two fragments of the Diels-Kranz edition) the model of the right communication, that should consist in telling what equally goes through everyone, and therefore is riverbed and aim of a common striving. Communicating ought to be the disposition to tell the universality of the logos, from each one's own position, picking the transcendental in the part.

But it is also important not to separate the transcendental from the empirical. Therefore the attention to the methods and contents of positive inquiries regarding communication (particularly those regarding the evolutional-biological researches on language – from Maturana and Varela up to Tomasello – and the neurological studies) is consistent with the epistemology that Tymieniecka associates to the ontopoietic set-up, provided that their deterministic inclinations are corrected.

The Unconditioned Principle

From the above sketched framework, it is clear that ontopoiesis constitutes itself as a new metaphysics, because it aspires to be an active search for the ultimate sense of reality, in its dynamic articulations and in the unity of its *telos.*

What is my conclusion with regard to such an aspiration? In this frame the research of sense, if it wants to put itself as a research of *the sense of sense,* that is, of the ultimate sense, can or, better, *must* open itself to a new consideration of the unconditioned principle, which is the legacy of the old or classical metaphysics.

On this road the ontopoiesis, taken as new metaphysics, or as the renewal of metaphysics, could affirm itself as a resumption and development of the metaphysics of the unconditioned being. Certainly not a static being, but a being alive because intrinsic to the life, so a being as dynamic and performing *beingness*. A beingness not depending on our production, because origin and *telos* of any production, overall of human production in its effort to escape the logic of instrumental reduction of things and mankind itself, and intended, on the contrary, in favour of the *manifestation* of all that can live in truth, goodness and beauty.

So our experience can become more and more, in knowledge and in action, in sciences and in passions, an increasing enlightenment of Logos.

Part I

On Communicative Being in Postmodern Times

Daniela Verducci

Abstract The urgency of the anthropological question of communication stimulates the attempt to pose again the metaphysical issue and to repeat the endeavor to "save the phenomena", now that the philosophy of being of tradition seems to be at its last stage and unable to convey the transition toward the broadening of the horizon of meaning, which the new unknown mental, affective and practical experiences of Postmodernity, and even the new entities and procedures of the technological artificial-being urge. From the phenomenology of life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka significant steps have been already achieved toward the realization of a graft of a new subjectivizing metaphysics on the old objectivizing metaphysics.

Keywords Being • Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka • Communication • Postmodernity • Habermas

The present contribution was realized on the basis of some contents used by the Author to present the 3rd Post-Metaphysical Dialogue, entitled "About communicative being. In the post-metaphysical age", held on 28 March 2012, at the Department of Philosophy and Human Sciences of University of Macerata and promoted by the author Daniela Verducci, as she is Professor at the Advanced Seminar of Contemporary Philosophy, in collaboration with Francesco Totaro, President of the International Society for Phenomenology and the Sciences of Life-Centre of Macerata, who also teaches Ethics of Communication at University of Macerata. There was also the participation of: Martin Schwartz, Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Berkeley University; Olga Louchakova from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology of Palo Alto; Yan Chunyou and Lin Guowang, both from Beijing Normal University and the Confucian Centre of Macerata University; Professor Anna Arfelli, Director of the Psychology of Development Centre at Macerata University; Francesco Alfieri OFM from Bari University and the Lateran University; and Benedetta Giovanola, who is teaching Ethics and Economics and Philosophy of History at University of Macerata.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_2

The question on the communicative virtues of being's conception, that the ancient and modern traditions left us, arises spontaneously as we realize that the anthropological question on communication is intrinsic to the current condition of thought, defined by J. Habermas as post-metaphysical (Habermas 1998). In fact, since the traditional horizon of being – both in ancient substance metaphysics and in modern subject metaphysics – has been considered as a mere datum of fixed habits, a dead inheritance, stiffened and not related to the present life, it became even more unable to receive and give a sense to the new forms of experience arising in the contemporary age, consequently even communication among men, nations, generations, disciplinary sectors, and life habits, became even more disturbed and jammed (Tymieniecka 2009, p. xxv).

It is becoming increasingly necessary to restore, at the basis of every movement of our humanity impoverished by the objectifying technological rationalism, the awareness and the attention for the mysterious but also effective inter-subjective "mutual understanding" (*Verständigung*), the Habermas one, which has an almost-transcendental-performative value, and which by now has showed itself as prior and preliminary to each accomplishment of communicative intentionality (Habermas 1990, pp. 82–98). Actually it designates the proto-being of man, his constitutive being-in-communication-of-sense with his fellow creatures, which brought to every phylogenetic advancement of homination (Tomasello 2000, p. 4) and which is strongly linked to the progress of human civilization for present society of communication too.

But is the being (=εἶναι) (Parmenides of Elea 1985, Fr. 6) – such ultra-linguistic and ultra-symbolic formation, through which the theoretical integral horizon of wholeness was defined for the first time by Parmenides from Elea, and in which every phenomenon can find its place, and therefore can be preserved from dispersion – is the being of Parmenides able, in the multiple variations that the pluri-millennial philosophical tradition presents, from Parmenides' full sphere to Heraclitus' fire/becoming, from the supreme substance to the perfect being, to the unconditioned being, finally such a being that the tradition brought to us, is it able to convey the transition which is currently requested, the transition of the communicative being?

The question has a sense if we realize that both ontology or *metaphysica generalis* as the knowledge of being as such and *metaphysicae speciales* as the knowledge of things beyond the physical dimension, (Suarez 1998) have established and developed until now, taking for granted that the anthropological experience of being was pervasive and persistent, and therefore it was possible to structure on its basis the theoretical reckoning, supported by the saying of Parmenides: "For it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be" (Parmenides of Elea 1985, Fr. 3).

On the contrary, today the ontological dis-communicability affects the immediate experience (Baumann 2005), which not only has become extremely fragmentary and rambling, also causing mental pathologies which were less common in the past, but moreover it is even more unmindful and inattentive toward the communicating being, although every experience still develops on this basis. For this new disconnection of consciousness from the horizon of meaning, the ontological theorization appears as an application to a phenomenon, that is being, which became

antiquated and obsolete; in addition, there is no awareness that in the issue of the communicating being, not only the survival of philosophy comes into play, but also the possibility for the human being to control his productions and to use them to increase his being and the being of all the world.

But post-metaphysical concern cannot be satisfied by any positivistic attitude toward the abandonment of metaphysics, nor by the intention to consider it as an outdated stage of knowledge which has been supplanted by the positive scientific one (Tymieniecka 2009, p. xxiv). On the contrary, the metaphysical question is emerging again, and it is needed urgently to resume its endeavor to "save the phenomena", now that the traditional philosophy of being – of the Ancient, Christian, Modern, Enlightenment, and Romantic tradition – seems to be at its last stage, and unable to convey the transition toward the extension of the horizon of meaning, which is solicited by the new mental, affective, and practical experiences of the post-modern age, and by the new entities and procedures of the artificial technological being. Nevertheless, we must operate to avoid the risk to lose the new emerging germination of transcendence: while we complain about the end of metaphysics and get exhausted for giving an appearance of vitality to its simulacra, we run the risk of depriving the new theoretical germination of the cures it requires to become stronger and to provide us with the new communicative horizon of meaning which we are looking for.

In this context, we follow the way of the anthropological-philosophical reflection (M. Horkheimer, J. Habermas, M. Scheler), but also the cultural and anthropological-evolutionistic reflection (L. Bolk, A. Portmann, M. Tomasello), which pointed out that it is the specie-specific quality of man that of knowing/having to institute the mediation through his own common horizon of being for everything that occurs at the stage of impulse-reaction dynamics, with which both plants and animals respond, adequately and typically, to the environment's stimulations, (Scheler 1960, p. 228). According to Nietzsche, already our primitive ancestors referred to this anthropological property, when they named themselves with the word "man", which means "the measurer" (Nietzsche 1997, § 21).

After all, it is precisely in a communicative perspective that, during the age of crisis and the present post-modern age, the new philosophical instance is defined: it is critical in an eminently constructive sense, since it does not intend to wish the decline of traditional metaphysics and ontology. The interest of the current love-for-knowledge is instead to achieve the re-opening of the traditional, objectifying ontological systematization in order to promote its integration with a metaphysics of the act or a meta-anthropological metaphysics (Scheler 1975). The latter is the conveyor of the subjectivation factors, according to which being is not only contemplated, but also its unexpressed potentialities are highlighted and conducted to realization: by the specific condition of being-of-transcendence peculiar to the human subjectivity, which develops according to the *logos* that holds everything together – "in logos omnia" – an ontological communication and an inter-personal and cosmic synergy can be established for "a new Enlightenment" (Tymieniecka 2009, pp. xxiv–xxvi).

From the phenomenology of life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka significant steps have been achieved already toward the realization of a graft of a new living/subjectivizing metaphysics on the old objectivizing metaphysics. This effect is achieved by the

innovative vision about the being and the man, introduced during the last forties by the phenomenology of life, which Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka elaborated after the results obtained by the "intuitive resowing" (Verducci 2010, p. 33) of the experience which the classical phenomenologists started from. Focusing her attention on the breaking point of intentionality and re-contextualizing the universe of human existence within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka discovered that the acts of the living human individual express a specific type of constructivism, which is not merely comparable to a process-according-to-nature (Tymieniecka 1988, p. 4). In order to direct his virtualities toward a positive realization, in fact, the human individual, unlike the other living beings, needs both to find the reasons of his beingness and to avail himself of the principle of being, through which he can confer on his creations, that indispensable feature of humanly appropriate "objective" form, which makes them graspable and usable.

Of crucial importance at this point is that being so spontaneously put into play, does not limit itself to maintain the significance of "indispensable essential factor of all beingness", in the sense of classical metaphysics, inasmuch as it "concerns beingness in its finished, formed, established or stabilized state". Rather, in the measure in which it appears in the acts of the human living being, being manifests itself as "the intrinsic factor of the constructive process of individual becomings". This means that, since "becoming is a process in its own advance, in qualification", and since "the individual remains always in the process of becoming", that is, he is continually proceeding toward what is not yet, being, engaged in the creative acts from which becoming proceeds, acts as the intrinsic stabilizing forerunner of the acquisition and transformation of form, that characterizes the natural evolution of individual life (Tymieniecka 1998, pp. 4–5).

Therefore, when life attains the level of the human creative condition, it no longer stops in reproducing itself, but in the acts of the living man it always interprets itself in existence, giving rise to forms of life that are not only new and previously unimaginable, but also congruent and adequate to the becoming being of life, of which only man possesses the cipher (Tymieniecka 2004, pp. xiii–xxx). Now the human being is not only who is able – at a specific ontogenetic stage – to operate as a meaning-bestowing-agent and producer of his-world-of-life, as Husserl proposed. On the contrary, man "creates according to being" (=ontopoiesis) (Kronegger and Tymieniecka 1996, p. 15) from the initial stage of his existence: he is born as an original ontological factor, since "his very life in itself is the effect of his self-individualization in existence through inventive self-interpretation of his most intimate moves of life" (Tymieniecka 1998, pp. 3–5). In the creative human acts, more than in the "cognitive processes of the human mind", there is a manifestation of the "inward givenness of the life progress common to all living beings as such", and it emerges also the logics at its basis: an expansive and evolutionary logics, of self-individualization of life, which reproduces in an autopoietic way in the pre-human constructivism, while it creatively-produces-being in the ontopoiesis at its human level.

Now that phenomenology asserted itself as a "universal praxeology of knowledge" (Cecilia 2002, p. 694a), the ontological frame turns out to be deeply reanimated and

the *Erlebnis* can become again a resource of the prime philosophy: again the being manifests itself as a unitary logos, more precisely, the being now appears such as a unique logoic force that from the inside of all the entities acts, animates and continuously enriches of connections the Parmenidean sphere and the Hegelian absolute Spirit. Since the self-individualizing ontopoietic logos is able to produce a communicational net among the phenomena, from the inorganic level of being to the organic and human one, it also weaves a "meta-ontopoietic" net made of innumerable metamorphical stages of transcendence, according to the perspective of *philosophia perennis*. This was already outlined by G. W. Leibniz: in order to rationally understand the truth of the prepositions-of-fact, he introduced the principle of sufficient reason, which, while establishing a foundational dynamic tending toward the infinite, made it possible to construct a solid ladder of truth in order to always better rise to the fullness of the logos.

Translated by Serena Rossi

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The Logos of Life: Autopoiesis, Ontopoiesis, and Meta-ontopoiesis

Elisa Tona

Abstract The present article has the purpose to point out the role of the Prime Philosophy in answering to the anthropological and ethical problems that the contemporary society makes arising. Living in a technological world where the human beings have lost their capability for the achievement of transcendent aims thus reducing themselves to an instrument of the blind world's progress, why and how can the philosophical knowledge bring them back to their authentic essence and existence? I here maintain that only a new Prime Philosophy can give value to the human being in his dimensional interality, for he is an ethical being who can become something that he is not yet. The Phenomenology of Life, founded by A. T. Tymieniecka, replies to these contemporary anthropological and ethical questions. Seizing the intentional level, the Phenomenology of Life has opened in the human experience a new givenness, set at the level of life: it discovered the phenomenon of the corporeal-conscious and so included in the human ontological statute the growing of Life, allowing the search of the wholeness of the constitutive elements of human individuals. In fact the living human being is capable to transcend himself, other individuals and the world, seizing a unitary sense through his capability of symbolization. Because of this natural factor of transcendence, human individuals are meta-ontopoietical subjects too. In conclusion the new anthropological model based on the Meta-Ontopoietical Capability of Human Beings points out the metaphysical role of the ethical functions of individuals and their ontological responsibility toward the other human beings and the world.

Keywords Ontology • Prime philosophy • Phenomenology of life • Horizon of meaning • Anthropology • Ethics

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_3

The Need of a Prime Philosophy

A considerable progress of technologization, or technocracy, arising from the development of technical-scientific knowledge and its consequent connection with the economical apparatus, has been occurring in contemporary society. This complex and connected setting, whose unitary process overlaps with globalization, still has such an outstanding impact on human being and his existence, to completely change his state. Man is not seen as the subject of his doing, acting and being any more, but he turned out to be the object and instrument of technological progress. The human being and his specific essence of being subject are both in the service of scientific and technological knowledge and deprived of their typical and individual capacity "for controlling and directing toward an anthropological unitary purpose" (Totaro 2007, p. 193) the objective entities he elaborates and produces.

While during the course of history the technical producing and doing were anthropologically led and oriented toward the development of means for an even better and worthy life, now the τέλος has flattened on means; therefore, what before was a mean for the achievement of a wider aim including human existence, has now become the only end of life and human activity. The artifact is not considered as what is generated by the human capacity for producing and choosing the means, thus directing and enhancing nature toward its true identity. The human subject, whose complexity and anthropological richness are based on the possibility to create a specific vision of self and the world in order to start a becoming by which to arrange for himself something he does not possess, has lost the resources to achieve the ethical and ontological task of making the being happen (Totaro 2007, pp. 193–194).

Yet, only in the humans the insuppressible needs of finding a sense for the self, his existence and the surrounding reality, and of transcending toward a horizon of meaning to find the direction for his action and the order of the world are expressed. In fact the human being is an ethical subject since he embodies

> the commitment of making the positivity of being happen in the existence. Making the positivity of being happen means, more precisely, conquering and extending conditions and opportunities, which are available in history or have to be pursued beyond the present's restrictions, so that everyone can realize the project of life he brings, in the fullness of his capacities and according to the most adequate choices for the search of a good life (Totaro 2007, p. 199; our translation)

In the present age characterized by a "collapse" of ends on means and the consequent reductionism of anthropological self-consideration, the consciousness of the intrinsic human need of both a prime philosophy and a research of meaning improving the human subject in his being at the same time essence/ideal form and existence/factual condition, is basically important. In fact these dimensions are anthropologically constitutive and linked by a constructive continuity in the temporality of human life. For this reason, the consideration of their authentic meaning implies the creation of a prime philosophy, which investigates its essential constitutive elements, yet considering what has now become evident, that is they can be realizable only in corporeality and temporality. Only in this direction the philosophical

knowledge will be able to generate a new prime philosophy which can restore the vital breath to humanity and the world.

It is thus about formulating a new ontological model representing the authentic human nature/condition that is of a being which transcends and transcends itself, making its being and the being of the universe happen. Among knowledges, philosophy has to go beyond every "actual knowledge" (=*wirkliches Wissen*) (Hegel 1967, § 5), since it is research of the principle of all things, that goes endlessly, in spite of the contrary purpose of Hegel; it has a basic role in reactivating the human responsibility toward oneself, the others and the world: in fact man is never a finished subject, rather he accomplishes himself little by little all over the time of existence, thus he can take upon himself the ethical commitment to outline horizons of meaning for the whole being, where he can find the way to realize what has to be but it is not yet.

From Consciousness to Life

The phenomenology of life, which started thanks to the Polish phenomenologist Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, can be considered as the key of the philosophical and human turning point which leads to the rebirth of the humans in their philosophical authenticity. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's intention in the practice of phenomenology of life has been the discovery of a new horizon of meaning adequate to the current age: in fact today more than ever we need a prime philosophy and meaning for the human, given that only man is able to give a meaning to what he is/has and to what surrounds him, thus surpassing the limits of reality. Tymieniecka, by applying the phenomenological method of direct intuition to the intentional structure of the constituent consciousness, purchased and described by classical phenomenology, discovers a new level of givenness: from such a sowing of the previous phenomenological inquiry a new horizon of meaning blooms, showing a self-individualizing life.

> From the ancient need to "save phenomena", already raised by Plato, until Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,* many phenomenological seeds were sowed on the ground of philosophical reflection, which during the 20th century not only finally gathered the fruits of the mature phenomenological plant, but through them it also fertilized the whole cultural contemporary context. From such disseminating crossbreeding a theoretical original web is emerging; to this web, as to a Prime Philosophy, the new scientific-technological knowledges which before were self-referential, are now connected, as well as the traditional philosophical thought, for which the new phenomenological theorizing is not an antagonist, aiming at representing rather the deepening and continuation of it, beyond crisis. (Totaro 2007, pp. 11–12; our translation)

As well expressed in the citation above, the phenomenology of life together with its philosophical turning point, doesn't arise from nothing but from the seeds of previous philosophical and phenomenological analyses; it is a real germination-of-meaning which does not eliminate the precedent phenomenological ground, but rather it enhances and cultivates it, helping the *hinc et nunc* givenness

to grow. It is a horizon's opening made by Tymieniecka's phenomenological survey through her realizing that the dissemination carried out by classical phenomenology had produced the fruit of the new germination of meaning as "creative-poietic power of origin" (Verducci 2007, p. 12), for a new dissemination. Therefore the extraordinary opening of Tymieniecka has been possible thanks to her awareness that there were mature virtualities for a new germination of meaning. Only with the awareness of this recreator force felt by the phenomenology itself and looking at the current world phenomena to be understood again (psychopathological and psychosocial fantasy's phenomena), a rebirth of phenomenology itself has been possible: without re-opening of the circle of givenness phenomenology itself would have lost its vitality.

This post-Husserlian phenomenological turning point arose by practicing a true intuitive dissemination, through the intra-phenomenological, interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue. Tymieniecka attracted many phenomenology scholars and students to her *World Phenomenology Institute*. In this way a higher level of depth has been reached in the reductive constituent position of Husserlian conscience, which was likely to become a cage, a closed circle of objectivity and subjectivity, thus excluding from its horizon of meaning numerous phenomena as those deriving from the "bildende Spontanität" (formative spontaneity) of collective fantasy or dreamlike activity or imagination.

With this intuitive resowing a broadening of the horizon takes place: on the one side it includes the phenomena that classical phenomenology tended to exclude from the transcendental sphere of meaning, on the other side it emphasizes the phenomenological enquiry whose vitality was in danger. The phenomenology of life understood that there is a need to continuously enlarge the horizon of meaning in order not to lose anything about life itself, the human and the world. This exigency not to lose the meaning leads Tymieniecka to focus the immediate intuition beyond the phenomenological constituent circle toward a new givenness.

The renewed opening of givenness is based on a central discovery, that is the discovery of "das Leiblich-bewusste" (*conscious-corporeal experience*). In fact, through the contribution of phenomenological psychiatry and the new concepts coming from the evolution of psychological and natural sciences from Brentano to Husserl, it has been pointed out that the "conscious experience" is rooted "in dem Leiblichen-natürlichen" (*corporeal-natural experience*) and that even the transcendental constituent conscience lives the psychical processes in their sequence, intertwining and motivation, experimenting its peculiar way of being "being – a living body/embodiment" (*Verleibung*), through which it meets the whole "Naturgefüge" (compages of nature) (Tymieniecka 1971, pp. 4–7). Therefore for Tymieniecka it is evident that corporeality is fundamental to achieve the objective or living level of conscience.

> Indeed, the body-system can now be considered as the primary promoter of the conscious life that, supporting consciousness in its natural development, allows it to achieve the constituent level of conscience and to play its proper individualizing and freely creative role. (Verducci 2007, p. 23)

Meta-ontopoiesis

The new givenness perceived by intuition by Tymieniecka shows a horizon of meaning focused on human condition, yet intended first in a cosmological sense, rather than moral (Tymieniecka 1986, p. 3). In fact the new conscience rooted in the corporeal not only expresses itself beyond the constituent sphere, but also it is able to grasp the creative orchestration of human functioning (Tymieniecka 1988, p. 384) and to highlight "the complete meaning-bestowing apparatus of human being" Thus man appears caught up in the turmoil of a generative progress, but thanks to the autonomous creative force expressed in the *imaginatio creatrix*, the human being lives as "the vortex of the universal sense" (Tymieniecka 1986, pp. 10–11). Inside the vital vortex itself, conscience is alive, vital and creative.

Hence, the phenomenology of life, through the discovery of the corporeal conscious experience, outlines a new anthropological model adequate to humans. Man anew positioned in his living-body-being (*Leib)*, within his living experience of relationship with the world, discovers his true natural condition, that is a living bodily condition but also a condition of creative imagination, since he is now positioned as the universal vortex of life. Only man is able to go beyond the givenness toward the potential world, reaching the meaning of himself and of the present and future world; this apparatus is innate in the nature of man, and it harmonizes the human faculties.

The seizing/giving a meaning unites man in his interality: the subjective and objective levels are in this creative orchestration of the same human functions. Man, in his vital and personal being, has this creative imagination which allows a relationality and harmonization of levels: the objective and subjective one, the universal and particular one, the finite and infinite one. We talk of phenomenology of life because this approach opens toward a new horizon of offering givenness in the life of subjectivity, in human condition, in the human life itself.

Through phenomenology of life man is positioned in the auto-poietic vortex of a vital flow, and from it he rises up to the authentic ontopoietic human condition characterized by "creative virtualities" (Verducci 2008, p. 1062) which, starting from themselves, open toward the realm of human projectuality and creative forces. Only by being inside the vital flow it was possible to meet the human condition as a creative force, according to the λόγος of life. Man is characterized by the creative orchestration's function: in fact he is capable of autopoiesis because he produces the modalities of his own re-balance such as the other not human-beings; in addition he is capable of ontopoiesis because the human produces the forms of his self-interpretation. Therefore man expresses his virtuality dimension, which remains unforeseeable until it comes true, and it is also creativity as total innovation. In this dynamic of human condition the λόγος of life acts freely, while in the not-human life it is not free. The metamorphic feature of λόγος of life emerges with the human condition.

The phenomenology of life found the human condition retracing the dynamism of vital flow, and it outlined a human being who has in his condition of living the ability to understand the meaning of everything and give everything a meaning.

The metaphysical question arises in man from the awareness that his vital expansion is a fruit of "existential individualization" (Verducci and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka 2001, p. 8), according to practical, theoretical and symbolic creativity. From life itself the *imaginatio creatrix,* arises in man, that is the human liberty of going beyond the life's world structure and of the factual being itself. Therefore man is a bearer of the most radical metaphysical exigency: he is not an already-given being, rather he is posed in the vital, dynamic and metamorphic flow; he always needs to search the reasons of his existentiality if he wants to orient his actions toward a positive realization of his virtuality. It means that the human being is brought by his own ontological condition to have questions on the principle and the end of his life to confer objectivity to his enactment. For this reason he elaborates a meta-ontopoietic vision.

The phenomenology of life has opened a horizon of adequate meaning to give a human being a complete value as a living subject, who finds in his nature the capacity which makes him a special living being, that is, a living being able to go beyond every givenness and to create something unforeseen. But this free creativity implies a great responsibility for him: he can make happen what is not given yet, and in order to achieve an anthropological and cosmic positivity he must relate to the unconditioned absolute-positive level of being which all the conditioned conditions depend on. Only in this way the realization of a change in the ontological paradigm would be possible, so as to limit this technocratic horizon which substituted and reduced the infinite entire width of the being we strive for (Totaro 2007, pp. 194–195).

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Geometrical Representation of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's Phenomenology of Life

Martha Cecilia Suarez Jimenez

Abstract The starting point of the present work is the idea of human development by A.-T. Tymieniecka; a geometrical representation of phenomenology of life has been elaborated, with the use of the Riemann sphere, in order to identify the evolutionary virtualities coming from the impact between the human creative condition and the cosmic dimension of life.

Keywords Riemann sphere • Phenomenology of life • Geometry • Human condition • Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, phenomenologist of life and president of the World Phenomenology Institute in Hanover, NH, underlines in her *Tractatus Brevis* of 1986 that the field of the human condition crosses the 'phenomenology of life' perpendicularly, because it is proceeding in the description of the flow of natural life, understood as the evolutive genesis of ever more complex and individualized forms, that it arrives at the phase in which the human condition configures itself. In fact it is characterized by the presence of original, creative virtualities that, departing from themselves, that is, horizontally and on their own plane, open the vast reign constituted by the 'projectuality' of the human being and emanating exclusively from the creative powers of the latter (Tymieniecka 1986, pp. vii–viii, cit. in: Verducci 2004, p. 7).

After having been positively surprised by this flat geometrization of the relationship between man and life, I moved from bidimensionality to tridimensionality, by setting a representation of phenomenology of life on the basis of the so-called Riemann sphere; the aim is achieving an immediate vision of evolutive virtualities coming from the impact between the human creative condition and the cosmic dimension of life.

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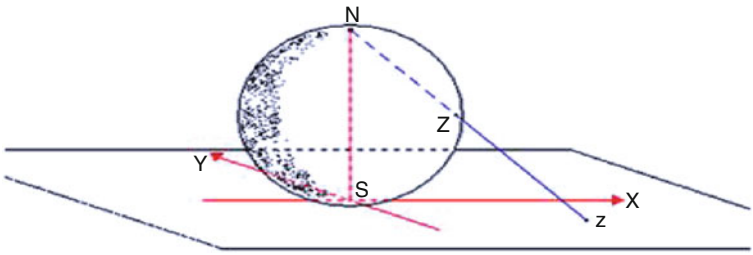
A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_4



Stereographical Projection through Riemann Sphere

N = Human condition
S = Phenomenology of life
X = Vital constraints
Y = Imaginative freedom
Z = Result of human work from the homination process on

Through the representation of *Human Condition* point (N), it is highlighted that, according to the phenomenology of life, man is "the fruit of a long line of development within the natural unfolding of life as a type. […] the human being cannot be defined by its specific nature but by the entire complex of the individualizing life of which it is vitally a part and parcel" (Tymieniecka 2007, pp. 7–8); for this reason, instead of talking about human nature Tymieniecka must switch to a conception of the *Human Condition-within-the-unity-of-everything-there-is-alive* and she has also to add a very essential specification, namely that it is about the *Human Creative Condition*.

Together with *Human Condition* a creativity of life emerges, and it is related to a "discreet continuity or disruption" with the precedent vital unfolding, through which the ingrowness of the individual existence into its circumambient existential network is kept (Tymieniecka 2007, p. 9). For this reason N, from its position of creative autonomy, goes perpendicularly, as proposed by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, on the plane of vector X or *vital constraints* where "the ontopoietic vital matrix of generation, unfolding, development of organic/vital significant of individualizing life" is expressed and the vector Y or *imaginative freedom*, "the creative matrix of the specifically human development" (Tymieniecka 2007, p. 9).

From the crossing point of human condition with vectors X and Y, the phenomenology of life S starts, with its positive and negative effects, which are the fruit of human's being and his impact with the world, in the ecological, social, cultural, ethical, economic world etc. In point S, in my opinion, there is not only a simple crossing, but also a true impact which releases the power of humanity, its ability to change the world and the whole global society, making them perfect, by following the creative virtualities it has.

If we consider Z as a limit-point of the circumference delimitating the sphere of this humanity-world generated by the evolution of life and the human decisions

from *Homo sapiens* up to today, Z will be a boundary: it will be the present. Tomorrow's task will consist in keeping the development carried out until today; yet, the topic of reflection is: how is it possible to carry on this way in the future?

An ethical-philosophical consideration on development takes place, with the aim of making the human being become aware of the implications of his own human condition so as to improve it; here it must be considered that the creative virtualities which bring man *within-the-unity-of-everything-there-is-alive* transfer him to the world of possibility and beyond the world of factuality; he is the only one who can move this world toward the direction of constructive optimality or else toward the direction of deconstruction and impoverishment. This alternative depends on the quality of the mix among positivity anthropological factors, such as friendship, integration, communication, sociality, solidarity, sustainability, and negativity factors, such as selfishness, recklessness, ignorance, and consumerism.

According also to M. Scheler, whose idea of development is partially similar to Tymieniecka's, when the human being interacts with nature he shows both, an animal-vital dimension, which starts and develops in the closed circuit animal↔environment, and the exclusive feature of reason/spirit, that is, the one which allows him to proceed in the evolutionary way, and to make the whole universe progress (Scheler 2009). It is a decision of individual and society to decide whether to follow his primordial and primitive being, or take conscious and respectful decisions which will bring him toward progress and real welfare. The growth or the regression of humanity will depend on the connection among the preferences linked to the anthropological factors of positivity/negativity. Despite its potentials, the human being has not always been able to orient and fully use his own natural and cultural resources.

In the field of tourism, during the 1970s economic boom, tourism was characterized by consumerism and evasion, based on the 3 S's of *Sun/Sand/Sex*, which did not respect the work done 35 years before by the International Convention of Geneva of 24 June 1986, which allowed the acknowledgment of paid holiday; this trend also provoked effects of environmental and moral non-sustainability, that we can still notice today (Tonini 2010, p. 24).

If our commitment is to orient tourism toward the 3 S's of *Sociality/Solidarity/Sustainability*, we must consider the anthropological factors of integration, education and culture: a good result in this sense is represented by the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET), adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization at the thirteenth WTO General Assembly (Santiago, Chile, 27 September – 1 October 1999) and based on the points environment, ethics and economy.

Today in tourism we are at the borderline represented in our tridimensional figure by point Z: Tonini invites us to walk along this imaginary line, which in a non-utopian but effective progress goes from the current limits to the future success.

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Part II

Celestial Experience of Life

Alira Ashvo-Muňoz

Abstract

> "If the whole of history is in one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience. There is a relation between the hours of our life and the centuries of time. As the air I breathe is drawn from the great repositories of nature, as the light on my book is yielded by a star a hundred millions of miles distant, as the poise of my body depends on the equilibrium of centrifugal and centripetal forces, so the hours should be instructed by the ages, and the ages explained by the hours" (Emerson www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/…/emerson/history.htm/).

The film *The Tree of Life* directed by Terrence Malick uses imageries of family experience in Texas during the 1950s combined with the universe's beginnings after the Big Bang. The main character, Jack, embarks in a life-world investigation with respect to the reality of the actual world raising questions as a Kantian skepticism. Cinematic takes are combined in circular encompassing interpretations of experiences, creating perceptions that inform on behavior. Camera angles and technical innovations capture personal and universal realities, creating a non-linear narrative in which growing up into adulthood is juxtaposed with the development of galaxies, finalizing in a Christian redemption. Music, very well integrated, plays a part as contrapuntal narration.

Keywords Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* • Cosmology • Sound and image • Light in film • Narrative structure • Transformation

The Tree of Life directed by Terrence Malick, presents a fragmentary narrative of the O'Brien family's experiences during the 1950s in Waco, Texas, by combining classical and avant-garde music scores with images of the universe's beginnings after the Big Bang, presenting cinematic inquiries on human experience, life and mortality and the bigger mystery of creation within its 15-plus billion light years.

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Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_5

Cosmic creation is tension increased in the energy field; in atoms, cells, galaxies and the beyond:

> It signifies invention, creation of forms, new continuous elaborations, and maintains the past in the present evolving into invention, conscious activity and incessant creations since life is a continuation of a single and same impulse [*elan*] divided into divergent lives of evolution (Bergson 1998).

Creation unfolds into the future in the numerous forms of beings in an ever-expanding cosmos. Movement and change is our most common world experience. In universal interactions existence is a force without an irreducible body, in autonomous units and constituents of matter, modifying perturbations and energy changes in continuous movements which has its impact on matter. Life is a movement of undivided flux. Cosmic rhythms have qualities and quantities relating to the whole, in the film temporal-spatial configurations it relates to universal borders and the dawn of existence which makes the film experimental by creating a quest searching for cosmic beginnings while later it transposes it to the future as well.

Cosmic beginning at the Big Bang is now in the process of being proven by the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) experiment, the biggest and highest energy level at 4 TeV that uses two adjacent parallel beam pipes traveling circularly in opposite paths. The cryogenic facility of liquid helium has a temperature of 1.9 K (−271.25 °C). Hadron refers to protons, neutrons and mesons such as pion and kaon that deal both with the existence of the Higgs boson and the super symmetry particles being analyzed which impact others accelerating at this high kinetic energy. The Higgs boson probably has a mass at the 115–130 GeV energy range (Greene 2008) where strong force molecules and atoms held by electromagnetic force and light connect to universal electromagnetic radiation. Therefore the film uses light symbolically for the force that creates all types of existence using also love as a metaphor for the underlying creative force behind it all; god is love.

In the film, structure has parameters with movements as signifiers using music in an unconventional plot pointing to the why and how of what has been happening in the cosmos. It portrays more than action; what the characters feel becomes the prevalent medium more than what happens to them. Cinema is a collaborative enterprise between director, crew and viewer. *The Tree of Life* challenges cinematic experience in Lacanian film theory (McGowan and Kunkle 2004) by focusing on feelings. Cinema depends on experience and the text is receptive and experiential to the reality within cinematic parameters. Malick ventures into other domains, philosophical and religious, using sound-images as according to Gadamer in which the presence of art becomes the presentation of being (Gadamer 1989, 159). A film brings alive an intelligible plastic mass with movements in non-linguistic processes and viewpoints forming an aesthetic, semiotic, syntactic and signifying enterprise. Many viewers have misinterpreted the film by not understanding its main purpose which is to convey an experience and not to follow an established plot based on someone's life.

Films operate in sequences, scenes, characters, spaces and movements and our capability to comprehend them is linked to the ability to model and simulate outside oneself:

> …the relationship with a whole which can only be thought in a superior coming-to-consciousness [*pris de conscience*]; the relationship with a thought that can only be figured in the subconscious unfolding [*diroulement*] of images; the sensori-motor relationship between the world and man, between Nature and thought. (Deleuze 1989, 170).

The *Tree of Life* promotes collective consciousness, thought in action-non action-underlined in the sensori-motor scheme; here reality varies from literal to metaphoric and experimental.

The film begins with a light that flickers when a middle-aged man is reminiscing his childhood memories. This is what one might call the eternal light representing *Lux Aeterna* or communion at the beginning of creation which could be found at the Big Bang. An artwork is also a creation, a product of the soul as one's aesthetic endeavor. Naturally the significance of art also depends on the fact that it speaks to us, that it confronts man with himself in his morally determined existence (Gadamer 1989, 51). Art presents the world as we see it.

Malick's uniqueness lies in combining sounds with cosmic images within a story line that presents cosmic transformation becoming one man's celestial experience of life on earth. The film has epic proportions reflecting on loss, love, suffering and transcendence. These images supersede the dialogue becoming extraordinary yet remaining simple in an enormous array of visual takes mixed with classical music scores. The visual creates an impressionistic effect on the spectator based on Jack's transfixing odyssey from small-town boy into an adult living in what is a nameless big city. His self-awarenes leads to the existential, to question the meaning of being from the earth to the cosmos. He recalls his past reminiscing moments from childhood trivial routines to when he became aware of life's complexities as in the tradition of Proust's *Remembrance of Thing Past* and Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. The film might be seen as stylistically fragmental but in its numerous parts recreates life's endeavors. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this was seen as education, self and human cultivation and was named a *bildung* after Bildung zum Menschen.

The earth formation is shown as a kaleidoscope of creation within creation; images-figures-sounds link the world to reality transforming the personal into immeasurable cosmic proportions. Jack perceives this magnitude then becomes confused and ambivalent as he is being submerged in Baroque music from Bach's Fugue [JS Bach, *Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565]* and François Couperin's *Pieces of clavecin, Book II* [F Couperin, *6e Ordre No.5; Les Barricades Mistérieuses*]. These sounds with the cosmic form images that manipulate what the spectator might feel about the grandiosity of and the singularity and uniqueness of man while actually being a quite small entity in the immensity of the cosmos. The pace-rhythm of the editing forces the viewer to engage and examine the relationships in human-cosmic order, questioning the reality that is being presented just as the new experiments in

astrophysics do. In one's daily endeavors one mostly ignores how one is allocated in the big scheme of the cosmic order.

A film is more than subject matter; pictures, sounds, form, substance and here images subliminally reconfigure and communicate to point to experiences within multiple varieties of the possible since the universal is so complex that it might seem unpredictable. These sounds and images contribute to focus in the phenomenological perceptions by connecting to a past in a complicated process based on original childhood awareness that conduced to his transcendentalism. Jack's life was changed by altering his life path to an opposing one; from one of nature to one of grace as in the *The Book of Job* (http; www.salon.com/2011/07/02/watching_tree_of_life/). Childhood is a subjective time and memory is a co-existing virtual past temporally pressing towards the present and future. Archibald MacLeish in 1958 wrote *J.B*, a play on the trials and tribulations of Job offering God answers to this predicament (www.salon.com/2011/07/02/watching_tree_of_life/, the tree of life, July 2, 2011). It stands as contrast to this film where none are given but produces a futuristic trans-formation at the end as an aesthetic answer that uses mostly music with abstract images portraying a scientific answer to astrophysics' current quest searching for the universe's beginnings. This for Christian believers could be viewed as a rapture, it is vague enough that it can be perceived religiously or not.

Classical and avant-garde compositions were effectively mixed with abstractions from cellular, galaxies and the universal; the allegorical and experimental contributes a non-verbal language (Metz 1974) based on life-world embodied subjects and experiences. Meaningfulness is thought from a humanistic framework above theism and atheism, reconciling the unattainable in objective meaning. Even though the family is Christian and religious this is not the film's focus becoming more amorphous and philosophical than religious as in Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, 1957, that presents a Knight and Death discussing the existence of God. Malick's undefined audio-visual images center on the meaning of a singular-existence within cosmic parameters and do not manipulate religiosity being closer to Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* or Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Its meaning embraces a love that gives form to existence which is represented by light. *The Tree of Life* is magisterial creation; the beauty of each frame exalts universal totality and evolution. *Total Film* said: "*The Tree of Life* is beautiful. Ridiculously, rapturously beautiful" ("The Tree of Life Review" *Total Film*, http://www.totalfilm/reviews/cinema/The-Tree-of-Life, July 21, 2011). The energy that sprouts life from love is transformed as a beautiful splendor of a beginning that in its magnanimous process resurges time and time again after a great loss happens; love becomes the principle that tampers the cruelty and hate by which man attains wisdom or knowledge of existence. Therefore light and love are united in a single metaphor to create and give value to existence.

The structural form in the film is integral to the editing cut-up strategies in a non-linear narration consisting of shot/reverse shot rhythm aided by sounds. Twenty minutes without dialogue goes by with minimal audio using only images simulating creation from the Big Bang to the galaxies to earth then to living cells. Off–screen sounds with extraneous cosmic simulated ones form counterpoint and support the images while Jack's past creates inter-connections between

individual human reality and that of the skies at the time when the stars were formed. Both his beginnings and that of the universe are juxtaposed ending in an endless, future vision of an afterlife that could be related scientifically or religiously. For Heidegger existence has its meaning in the future from which it derives its origin (Heidegger 2010). The future presses upon past and present realized from the future, as a continuum. … It is a fact – a transitory state of percepts of a present moment – seized in association with past feelings and meanings (Burgen 2004, 21) which serve to recreate a style of redemption using Berlioz's *Agnus Dei* (H Berlioz, *Agnus Dei*, Requiem, Op 5 *Grande Masse des Mort* like *an* eternal prayer or *Amen*). Malick relegates the forces of nature to death as a beginning within scientific parameters transforming matter into another form while non-contradictory to religious thoughts.

Malick as a Rhodes Scholar studied Philosophy at Oxford's Magdalen College. Northwestern University in 1969, published his translation of Heidegger's *Vom Wesen des Grundes* as *The Essence of Reason*; later he taught philosophy at MIT then became a freelance journalist and later began his film career. Applicable to the film is Heidegger's existential interpretation that does not relate to specificity but to self-understanding and human existence (Elliot 2005, 85). The director applies it to a celestial experience not to the plot or characters that are very ordinary beings having tragic experiences that conduce the viewer to wonder about the meaning of the skies as transcendental process by using the tree of life as nourishment that produces grace which served as the salvation or wisdom about universal reality. The film continues amorphous and allusive in a quasi-celestial-scientific prayer using astrophysics to translate agnostically the path of grace from the *Book of Job* in a universal reality preceded by goodness. Grace is achieved here by the feeling of grief caused by his middle brother's sudden death; an event that totally transformed his perspective on life. Theoretical physics unites the experimental known with the physical in one equation. These findings permit us to perceive new speculations about the infinite as experiential in the immeasurable quantitative vastness that we are immersed in, infinite is a mathematical concept that we are unable to calculate and apply. In the film structural correspondence connects to self-consciousness and self-awareness.

Light in Isaiah (*Kings James Bible*, Isaiah 60: 1–4, (www.biblegateway.com/passage?search=Isaiah+60&version=KJV) is seen as an energy force just as we see at the Big Bang, a creative force that springs life. Similarly this idea was musically transposed in John Taverner's *2001* musical score adapted from a liturgical chant that also appeared previously in Handel's *Messiah* which is based originally on *Lectio ysaye prophete: Surge et illuminare [Darkness into Light]* about the creative power of light, the hope it manifests and the glory of God it produces:

> […quia venit lumen tuum. El gloria domini super te orta est. Quia ecce tenebre operient terram el caligo populous. Super te autem orietur dominus el Gloria eius in te videtur. Et ambulabunt gentes ortus tui. Leva in circuitu oculos tuo set vide: omnes isti congregate sunt venerunt tibi] …for the light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to the

> light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee. (John Tavener, *Darkness into Light* [*Lectio ysaye prophete: Surge et illuminare*], *2001* and *Kings James Bible*, Isaiah 60: 1–4, www.biblegateway.com/passage?search=Isaiah+60&version=KJV).

The film *The Tree of Life* looks like a Vermeer painting where light plays a compositional role. While working with natural sunlight the film avoids artificial light. Light is viewed as a creation that crosses present and past, losses and gains, life and death, recapturing those memories that formed Jack's core values. The death of his young brother became a grieving process that affected the family and altered each one of them differently, death was transformed into grace. The transformative experiences became celestial moving experiences being felt from individual to universal; it is a mind-game suspending ordinary contract between viewer and film. Death is a beginning in a way that does not pertain to any of the previous ones. The film uses other premises to convey the transformation with multiple time-lines, unmarked flashbacks, focalizations, perspectives, and unexpected reversals. Other films such as *The Butterfly Effect*, 2004, and *A Beautiful Mind*, 2001 have commented on this kind of transformation by using chance, sensitivity, dependency and outcomes.

The flickering light at the beginning signifies energy that sparks all life and relates to electromagnetic radiation, symmetry, universality. It is used as a very poetic image that traverses through a plot and reaches the stars by taking the spectator back and forth to the Big Bang. In Spanish to give birth is to give light and the tree of life for the Maya is one's relation to the world. The tree of life in Hebrew is *Etz Hayim* and stands for the same idea that appears in the Book of Genesis: He (man) must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever (Genesis, 3.22, http://bibref.hehtools.com/?book=%20genesis&verse3.22&src=kjv). Here the tree of life embraces others and reaches alterity, giving life sustainable nourishment from a grieving process achieved through grace. Death takes us to the skies inciting us to enmesh in cosmic endlessness after leaving the corporeal behind. As matter the body is a trap that prohibits us to go further and pursue other realms. The tree of life has multiple meanings, philosophical, mythological and theological; for the inter-connection of living things and evolution. It is a destiny symbol in the Kabala and tarot cards, disambiguation and a sacred ten point geometrical diagram. Other conceptual and mythological trees exist from Ancient Egypt, Armenia, and Syria, Baha'i faith, China, India and Mesoamerica. It can be said that humanistically and spiritually the film shines light on transformative experiences using abstract remote glimpses to focus on the cosmos and validate the new findings in astrophysics.

The film's technical aspects have been praised as in Stanley Kubrick's *2001, a Space Odyssey*, 1968, one of cinema's greatest technical masterpieces. Malick created a different reverse journey than Kubrick, beginning from earth towards the cosmos and to endlessness. Douglas Trumbell did Kubrick's film and supervised Dan Glass, Malick's senior visual effects supervisor. Glass used non-digitalized natural and organic shots maintained with space-probe images, satellite, optical tracks, camera lenses and film speed. He photographed and experimented with liquids, paints and water at high

speed to look like interstellar clouds depicting randomness and irregularity to avoid predictability in computer graphic algorithms. Kubrick's *2001* created a new narrative style that Noémie Lvovsky used in *La vie ne me fois pas peur*, 1999, using improvised scenes connecting and inferring meaning in the storyline but Malick went further in the use of non-verbal language as an images-audio format to expand the medium. He used group-action images symmetrically harmonious and used music as the language to convey feelings. Film-takes in time-space seem free from physical form creating a visual non-verbal language cinematically translated to reveal the scientific and celestial when the spectator experiences become more important than any action in the plot. The mystical-contemplative and realistic form the celestial representation of existence from the non-religious format.

Jack embarks in life-world investigations with respect to the reality of the actual world raising questions as a Kantian skepticism on reality, the world and the sense of what is given. The father lectures Jack and his two brothers about objective versus subjective meaning which are central discussions in film theory now. The father definitely valued the creative process. He plays music and lectures Jack in following his true life passion, odd for a practical man but this was his biggest regret, a note of caution from the director himself. Cinematic styles do not have to be aesthetically tied to storylines and cannot be transformed into plot data; any film medium is subjective and symbolic in its innate quest for causality.

> Life experience …had led me….to the insight that the truth of a single proposition cannot be measured by its merely factual relationship to correctness and congruency; nor does it depend merely upon the context in which it stands… (Gadamer 1981, 44)

In the film the images flow toward the experiences, interplaying the immediate with memories. There is a point when the visual is underplayed and the sounds or music becomes prioritized. Both cinema and literature capture experiences using verisimilitude, imagination and knowledge of the possible. In the film Jack's experiences go from daily chores to achievements, to love, gain and loss, the present, past and future to demonstrate his emotions from luminous to somber forming his life's background as when his father's music was the catalyst agent to express his creativity not as musician but as listener. It is not so important what he does but how he reminisces and thinks about what happens or did happened.

Music is essential in the storytelling integrating elements from other scores in separate sections, as elements not plot twists. Music serves as a primordial force of the spirit and as such is used as a main element throughout the film. The soundtrack has 37 compositions from Ottorino Respighi, Mozart, Mahler, John Tavener, Berlioz, Brahms, Johann Sebastian Bach, François Couperin, Mussorgsky, Schumann and others. Arsenije Jovanovic weaved in voices and non-musical instruments and Alexander Desplet created 13 tracks in circular sections guiding the narrative to the future. He uses scores that have symphonic movements in contrapuntal arrangements as past-present, eternity, feminine-masculine, and human and divine to create a multiplicity of perspectives. Each note against subsequent ones forms a distinct ensemble in cause and effect bringing forth what are discoveries as invention, a universal creative phenomenon that goes on constantly since immemorial

times. Time is one; it is always the present therefore music better than any verbal language captures this abstract concept.

At the beginning a voice explains the paths of nature and grace (www.tld.org/bible/new%20testament/apoc.htm). Jack followed first his father and switched to that of grace as his mother. While hearing his father's passion for Brahm's Symphony No. 1 Jack was moved to investigate this path using music as clues in his search for self-knowledge. Life's experiences interplay in non-conventional realism by using flashbacks of the immediate and lived, articulating a plausible response to a premise of creation; creation of a universe, single life and film.

Neither the film nor the Scriptures provide closure for an apocalyptic end as Jack contemplates his life's major moments. His futuristic vision contains the beginning as the cosmic creative peak of energy that still exists and refers back to what propelled life at the Big Bang. Every experience creates new possibilities like an evolutionary path that brings forth another way not seen in online action context but in multiple time-frames that offer points of inquiry to transcend the obvious and permanence, and in many ways enlightens without giving solutions to a quest for higher meaning. The future presses upon the past and present perceiving temporality from the future which becomes the celestial felt by Jack. The transformative goodness and grace consumes the family pain and suffering just as the love and eternal light that created the heavens becomes immortality and endlessness.

"If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite" (Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" www.poemhunter.com/william-blake/quotations/page-3). This is infinity in light; *lux aeterna*, energy indicating a creative generative force of the continuous high-energy that expands the universe oddly enough found more in the nature of dark energy, dark matter and particles in super-symmetry. Light in cosmic electromagnetic radiation guides the rules relating to the LHC experiment. Quark-gluon plasma was created in May 2011 taking us a step closer to find what was there, the densest matter besides back holes. The aim of the LHC experiment is to try to find this early existence which the film conveys more or less successfully with music and abstract images and as Emerson wrote in *History* connects man to the cosmos. What we mean by representation is hard to attain in any aesthetic medium since it involves the creator and the receiver, the spectator that Gadamer perceived as coming-to-representation of being:

> What we mean by "representation" is, at any rate, a universal ontological structural element of the aesthetic, an event of being—not an experiential event that occurs at the moment of artistic creation and is merely repeated each time in the mind of the viewer… the specific mode of the work of art's presence is the coming-to-representation of being. (Gadamer 159)

Light relates to the tension in the energy field that started creation at the Big Bang and to the aesthetic force that any creative act and film has. The seen and not seen are both part of the film process, not reducible to totalizing or transcending invisible subtexts that align non-verbal narrative to scientific discoveries and Lacanian film theories. *The Tree of Life* is a film that suggests more an experience to be felt than an amorphous cinematic plot to follow.

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On the Eternal Recurrence as the Ground of Holiness in the Light of Philip Gröning's *The Great Silence*

Victor G. Rivas Lopez

Y solamente del alma,
En religiosos incendios,
Arde sacrificio puro
De adoración y silencio.
Sister Jeane of the Cross.

To Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka.

Abstract What is the most important part of sky in human existence? Doubtlessly, showing the passage of time. From morning to night and from one day to another, man contemplates how existence flows and how any unsettlement or joy dissolves into the fathomless vault in accordance with a rhythm or sense that despite its transparency always arouses our bewilderment but also our admiration, due precisely to the ceaseless flowing that prevents everyone from getting a final understanding of how the world unfolds, above all when the socio-historical background makes everyone believe that he can hold a sway over whatever kind of reality, which is what has happened more often than not during the last two centuries, when the modern ideal of a rational articulation of experience has been vulgarized and changed into the idea of an immediate exploitation of time and of the own being, which has however nothing to do with the very philosophical aims of modern thought or with that traditional vision of existence that nurtures the several forms of voluntary seclusion that have been conceived as a way of self-perfection. Of these forms, none has perhaps been more criticized than the Western monkhood, which has been denounced as an ascetic renunciation to the world and as the search of a pseudo-spirituality that belies the elemental social and bodily framework of existence, when the fact is that it could on the contrary be seen as a way to dispense with that absurd want of exploitation that characterizes the vulgar or rather worldly approach to tradition and to modernity, which is what Gröning shows in the documentary mentioned in the title of the present dissertation, whose artistic structure sets aside the normal filmic

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_6

narrative and focuses instead on how silence and quietude structure the vital forces that allow man to experience a *sui generis* sense of transcendence within immanency, which is what in accordance with my standpoint means the idea of the eternal recurrence that Nietzsche tried so eagerly to explain and whose utmost symbol is precisely the sky. Thus, we want to meditate upon the cyclic nature of existence and upon the links that monkhood and, by and large, asceticism could have with that fuller experience thereof called holiness, independently, of course, of the Nietzschean ideas concerning the matter (or rather against them). In order to develop this, we shall divide the dissertation as follows: in the first section, we shall show how the unity of being appears as the ground of our humanity; in the second section, we shall see how time regulates a conception of existence that frees man from the anguish inherent to a "productive" determination of our finitude; in the third section, we shall oppose monkhood and asceticism to a vulgar vision of isolation and discipline; in the fourth and final section, we shall make understandable how the aesthetic fabric of cinema goes hand-in-hand with a perception of all this.

Keywords Eternal recurrence • Holiness • Christianity • Asceticism • Silence

The Unity of Being

We see a feeble light in the middle of a darkness crossed by whispers and subtle noises of people moving. In the left lower angle of the screen, a light turns on while we listen to a Gregorian psalmody and perceive from above some white forms among the shadows. Little by little, other lights turn on and we realize that it is a group of monks that have joined together to pray into the small hours. One of them, a novice and the only black person of the community, stands quietly before a lectern brightly illuminated. All of a sudden, we see a starry sky while the singing goes on. On a granulated close-up, it appears the trembling light of a candle that the wind threatens to extinguish. The psalmody stops and the black monk, who is filmed obliquely from behind, starts to read a brief theological treatise by Saint Basil that deals with the mysterious unity of the Holy Trinity and that begins asserting that within the simplicity of God, the union of the three persons is the same as the common possession of a sole divinity. The Holy Ghost is not in the multiplicity of creation but in the absolute unity of God; He is like the breath of the Eternal Father but that does not mean that He is an emanation, for He is a living substance in Himself. After these abstruse reasons, the monk stops, blesses God and goes to his bench. The community retakes the psalmody and we see in a modulated succession the profile of the monks in their white habits, some plants in a sunny garden, an overcast morning sky, a cactus in the middle of the snow, a corridor of the abbey bathed in a golden evening light, and finally a general perspective of the abbey from a very great height, sheltered by the woody landscape from the winds that blow and sweep the clouds away. In the meantime, the psalmody has finished and a monk says

in a soft voice that the Ghost is given to those ones that are ready to receive Him as if He were theirs when it is actually the other way round: they are His. And this ontological unity of existence that theology has for so many centuries tried to fathom from a supernatural standpoint that modern reason has declared once and for all unsound is however within the reach of everyone that, independently of his being a believer or not, perceives how the complexity of the world unfolds before him.[1] Whatever perception of something, even the most "subjective" one (such as the solitary prayer in the middle of the night or as the poetic succession of images that brings to light the richness of the creation), takes place within the space-time framework of reality that allows the communication not only with oneself but with everyone and everything else.[2] For instance, in the filmic sequence that we have just described, every element emerges from the dark bosom of night or from the imposing beauty of landscape that simultaneously encircles and launches it to becoming in a permanent sway that is for its entering new zones of reality and reveals new aspects and links of itself and of other things, as when the white stains scattered here and there metamorphose into the community that prays at night or when the human realm is delineated and enlivened by the natural environment that acquires new shades in accordance with the different moments of the day or with the cycle of the seasons: a starry sky changes instantaneously into an overcast surface and a golden sunset into a frozen morning, but the transitions are carried away without violence, as if the new image were somehow contained already in the previous one. Thus, the appearance of every instant and of everything springs from a common origin where it gets its identity thanks to the modulations of light and to the interplay of movement and rest, of concentration and perception, as when the novice remains some moments still before the lectern as if he were absentminded when the fact is that he is very heedful of the sounds around him so as to begin to read in the right moment. Even more, his reading is so calm that you can without problem pass over the overwhelming obscurity of the text and take it as the perfect expression of the unity of existence wherewith it deals, unity that does not belie the irreducible diversity of the world but displays it through the original integration of every being and through the equally original intentionality of human consciousness.[3] It is so the ontological conjugation of man and world that allows a debatable theological lucubration to be the adequate symbol of the unmistakable belonging of everyone and everything to a world that is not, however, fathomable through the intricate argumentations but through the perception of the unity that goes hand-in-hand with the numberless and irreducible differences that the individual existence implicates, as when the flame of the candle struggles with the wind that threatens to extinguish it and becomes brighter, which corroborates that the identity of everything is determined by the interrelation with the rest of reality, interrelation that must not be mistaken with a generalization since it is, on the contrary, *the ontological concreteness of existence*,

[1] Concerning the criticism of the supernatural foundation of existence, vide E. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A445/B473 and ff.

[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménology de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 84.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 153.

as when one sees how the night prayers rise to a starry sky and how the abbey spreads in the lee of the forest. Thereat, the original darkness is not the symbol of an original confusion or indifference but of an original limitless potency that expresses itself in the existential becoming of the individual thing, just like the unity of God that theology never succeeds in clarifying reverberates in the unity of everything within existence, which is the principle that man so eagerly searches for understanding rightly in the multiplicity that bewilders him more often than not. Still more, there is a factor in all this that prevents you from taking the individual thing as an image or appearance of the whole in the deprecatory sense of the word that assimilates it to something that just seems to be, and that factor is the human presence[4]: the light of the flame, which would as such be a mechanical effect of combustion of some greasy matters, gets nevertheless its reality thanks to its appearing in a world where men act and symbolize existence; in accordance with that, the flame is not in essence the material opponent of wind, it is a potency that refers to the unity of the whole that man has endowed with a religious sense; the flame is then a being that reveals and maintains its identity despite its participating in a complex process, just like the human realm stands out from the natural one without breaking with it. We have then two extremes of the unity of being, the isolated existence of things that are subjected to the mechanical or abstract unfolding of reality and, on the other hand, the representational realm where those things are subjected to the intellectual import of ideas that are frequently simple abstractions or generalizations that hide the ontological fullness of the phenomena that they are supposed to stand for, phenomena that are instead clearly perceptible when we open the eyes and see how our presence orientates the things and the relationships towards possibilities of expression that are already in potency within them, which reminds us both of the Aristotelian concept of *entelechy*, whose philosophical richness is evident again on trying to understand how the identity of a particular thing is as real in a determined moment as that of the whole,[5] and of the Kantian concept of *the teleological judgement* as a determination that assumes a would-be final sense of nature for the sake of the rational unity of experience that would otherwise be unattainable.[6] Thus, prayer is meaningful whether God exists or not, and not because a belief is enough for something to make sense but because prayer means a whole expression of existence, a human reality that is actualized time and again and that implicates a specific link with everything, as when, for instance, we see in an other scene of the picture how the venerable monk that is the tailor of the abbey cuts out in his cell the habits of his brothers. While he works, the cut that is spread on the table, the threads and the buttons that are nearby are integrated in a new real identity, the habit that is to be made, and at the same time remain in themselves over the table, which shows that their presence is not a sheer illusion or appearance, that they have a sense of their own that man must understand to work with them. And this is why the unity of being

[4] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Eds. and Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 103 and ff.

[5] *Metaphysics*, 1071 b 24.

[6] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, A326/B330.

is not a mental abstraction, something like a delusive image, but a universal potency that expresses itself around the human presence, which, of course, must not be mistaken with the idea of the human supremacy, let alone with the individual sway over reality: the tailor works because there is a common want for what he makes, and the value of his work is in that link and not in his own outlook on the matter, so that even if no one thanked him or acknowledged his work, it would be the same worthy. The individuality of the being hinges then upon a complex relationship with the rest of the whole and implicates somehow or other a human sense that for its part has nothing to do with the subjective, mental or psychological determinations of someone, which is all the more evident when we stare at the face of a person, of a monk in this case, which appears alone on the screen and contemplates the camera for several seconds with a neutral expression. Instead of showing the force of the personality by means of an external feature or of an *ad hoc* background for enhancing the presence of the person at issue, the face reveals the unfathomable originality of the presence without the interposition of the mental or psychological frames that are instead so usually considered the sole grounds of coexistence.[7] There is here a tremendous potency at stake and the spectator perceives it not as the projection of the individual but as the way human beings bring to light the undecipherable unity of being that shines too in the nooks of the cell behind the monk, in the folds of the habit that he has on or, also, in the astonishment that one always experiences on realizing how the human face reflects inexorably the temporal framework of the world.

The Eternal Recurrence and the Hourly Care

It is again time of the night prayer and we attend it from the chancel of the church that offers the whole perspective of the community that little by little springs from darkness as the lights turn on. From the distance where we are located, the white silhouettes of the monks that move beneath seem to be flickering flames that all of a sudden disappear as the lights turn off again bar the candle that we have already seen and that throws a red halo around it while it resists the force of the wind. The psalmody resounds and we see on the score that the monks interpret that the Latin lyrics invite everyone to rejoice. In a granulated close-up, it is perceivable that the extraordinary potency of the candle has got its balance and remains motionless within the glass that contains it. At that moment, the image changes without intermission and we see the Argentine sky of a winter daybreak over which is outlined the range of the mountains. The woody landscape is covered with a fine layer of snow and the abbey looks like a mere foothill, which strengthens the ontological unity whereon we have already remarked. You note then that the clouds, which seemed to be suspended in the celestial vault, start to move forwards faster

[7] On the relevance of face in cinema, vide Jacques Aumont, *Du Visage au Cinéma* (Paris: Étoile, 1992), above all the chapters III and IV.

and faster while the lighting of the earth keeps its Argentine shade, which creates a wonderful contrast with the sky, whose bright coldness has a liquid consistence, and also with the psalmody that the monks sing, which still goes on. It is worth mentioning that despite the motionlessness and the total absence of any living being, the image does not communicate isolation or abandonment but a subtle melancholy that is doubtlessly the effect of the psalmody that encircles the landscape and that somehow or other reminds you of the overwhelming impression that reality brings about in a total solitude and how man experiences the unity of his being with the world in the hush that, for its part, belies the hustle and bustle that the inhabitants of whatever modern city know so well. We are so before an image of an existence and concretely of a temporality very different from the one that rules the people devoted to worldly goals, who are strictly regulated by the clock and by the appointment book whose abstract divisions have nothing to do with the emotional development of the consciousness. Far from that abstraction that is called "productiveness", what we see in this frozen landscape is how time, more than passing from a point of the clock to some other in accordance with the wants of a hectic conception of existence (as the modern cultural system takes it in), springs from the horizon and unfolds through the sky in a kind of passionate proliferation of forms and shades.[8] And its apparition and opening integrate the ontological differences that exist among everything and that demand to get a balance such like that of the candle in the middle of the church, which is in harmony with the wind for an instant and reorganizes the whole space. *There is so a peculiar eurythmy among the differences that the original unity expresses and the identity of every individual aspect thereof, and time is precisely the factor that makes it feasible, since it, instead of simply passing away and sinking into nothingness (as the vulgar image of the flow suggests), springs from the point of union of sky and earth and opposes and organizes its shades and possibilities within a cyclic movement that always returns to its rise*, as the image shows on reminding us of the permanent interplay of day and night that opposes an abstract succession because there are numberless variations that the presence of man brings on reality and that must be taken into account so as to have a right perception of the whole process. For independently of its chronological evenness, time always varies due to the sundry possibilities that the world reveals and that hinge upon the active condition of existence, whose very definition implies that every being participates from the unity with the rest of reality through an ontological opening that is the ecstatic condition of existence.[9] And we do not speak of the shallowest perception of the temporality, which refers to the anxiousness or the boredom that reduces a moment to nothing or makes it last eternities; bar this obvious relationship between the length of time and a certain state of mind, there is an ontological identity between time and consciousness, and that is the agreement between the ecstatic condition of the former and the intentional condition of the latter.[10] The fact that existence

[8] For a criticism of the image of time like a brook that flows endlessly, vide Merleau-Ponty, *Op. Cit*., p. 473 and ff.

[9] Martin Heidegger, *Time and Being*, paragraph 69.

[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Op. Cit.*, p. 476.

demands an endless mediation for something to be carried out means that man acts among real differences and that the oppositions that he ceaselessly faces and ought to metamorphose into possibilities of his own show the resistance that things offer to his will due to their very ontological constitution.[11] Still more, there would not be an original link between him and them if there were not a temporal dimension where their opposition could be overcome through the action and the concomitant transformation, and that is why time is simultaneously absolute and discontinuous, since it regulates every achievement in the same way but does not spring from the same conditions; for instance, it can spring from the horizon of the daybreak or from the balance of a candle and the wind, from the tyranny of the clock over a hectic working day or from a night prayer. Thus, the image of time like a flow is not as adequate as it could be assumed, because it gives the impression that any process is the same as any other; instead, the image of the rise that springs in the middle of the darkness and spreads in every direction is more adequate to the universal determination of consciousness and to its unsurpassable diversity, which is also grasped through that other image of time that is the hour.[12] Just like the rise whereon we have dwelt, the hour brings to light the essential unity that binds an action with the specific moment wherein it takes place, which is why the hour has had both for heathenism and Christianity a religious sense that lies in being ready to answer the call of the divinity, who can turn up at any moment, so that everyone must keep vigil.[13] Thereat, it is not a coincidence that the hour furnishes the elements for the communication of the divinity and the world and that it has more to do with the transcendence of every moment than with the course of 60 min that the clock regulates. Even more, this transcendent and religious sense of the hour also implicates the possibility of finding wretchedness in a bad moment, which strengthens the ontological importance thereof as well as the dramatism wherewith it articulates the individual existence among the unforeseeable possibilities that waylay everyone. Thus, the subtle diversity of the moment that is regulated by the hours is for specifying the limitless sense that spring together with time, which in the scene that is our hobbyhorse is expressed by the harmonious union of the dazzling movement of the light on the sky and the psalmody that the monks sing during a canonical hour and that is withal for carrying the latter, who are still submerged into darkness, to the luminous heights, which for their part communicate with earth thanks to the piety of the community. And since this process will be reiterated for ever and ever both on the plane of the sky and on that of the monks that pray and rejoice in their unity with the Creator (*whether He exists or not*), the final image of time is that of a perfect circle, of an eternal recurrence that embraces God and man, sky and earth in the unity of existence, which is why some people can dispense with the worries and anxiousness of the worldly men and devote themselves to make possible the recurrence, which is not a mechanical

[11] Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" in *Basics Writings*, Ed. and Trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), p. 348.

[12] For a more comprehensive exposition of the concept, vide the corresponding admission in the web site of Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/hour), accessed 09/V/12.

[13] Mt XXIV, 36–44.

or natural process and demands, on the contrary, the conscious, willing participation of man to be carried out. In other words, *the recurrence is not an inexorable law that holds down in motionlessness the multitudinous diversity of existence or that reduces it to an illusion; far from that, it takes place solely if man prepares to receive that diversity wholeheartedly*, which explains why most people never intuit it and mistake time with a linear evenness that ends up crushing them with boredom or anguish. As a matter of fact, without a personal disposition that is perceptible in every activity, the recurrence changes into a psychological reiteration like the obsession or into a routine procedure like the contemporary lifestyles that try so desperately to make up for the inevitable dullness of the individual with the endless excitation that promote the system of entertainment, which is none the less doomed to failure because it takes for granted a conception of time already disfigured, that is to say, the flow that goes on senselessly towards death, which stands for the very root of contemporary nihilism. And this problem is by no means new, for it was set out for the first time precisely by the philosopher who more than anyone else strove to fathom and make comprehensible the real sense of the eternal recurrence, *i.e.*, Nietzsche.[14] Still more, the issue is somehow or other the cornerstone of the philosophy of his, which, in view of the rabid denunciation of the Christian conception of spirituality and religiosity that it contains and that contradicts what we have so far seen in this dissertation concerning how the unity of being is fully experienced through asceticism and concretely through monkhood, demands at least a brief clarification, which could take as a basis the first and most famous formulation of the question in Nietzsche's work, that of the demon that appears in the middle of the utmost loneliness and asks you what would you do if you knew that you are sentenced to live time and again what you have lived, including boredom, sadness and sorrow, and that there will be no redemption whatsoever from that? Would that knowledge crush you and make you curse existence, or would it perhaps change you into a new being, able to love existence just the way it is and rule by it your actions?[15] Of course, these questions are in principle highly suspect since it is a demon who asks them and, above all, because an affirmative answer to them would implicate a superhuman will that is beyond the reach of the most daring man, and Nietzsche is so conscious thereof that he resorts to the image of an all-embracing will to power that rides roughshod over the human stints and over time itself, for both the individuality and the empirical diversity of existence are at the end a simple mirage that must be dispelled by means of the transformation of the whole link of existence and morals that has been sanctioned by metaphysics.[16] But this, far from solving the problem, makes it more complicated, since it makes absurd to answer the question when its final solution hinges upon something different from our conscious choices,

[14] Eugen Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, Trans. Goetz Richter (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 72 and ff.

[15] The passage agrees with the aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science*, which is the penultimate of the fourth book of the work.

[16] For a criticism of this, vide Ernst Tugendhat, "Nietzsche y la Antropología Filosófica: el Problema de la Trascendencia Inmanente" en *Problemas* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2002), p. 199 and ff.

which Nietzsche also foresaw and tried to solve by means of his theory of the aesthetical transfiguration of existence that allows everyone to feel that he is who makes the choice when the fact is that it is the transcendent will that makes it. Thereat, although the choice is at bottom an appearance (the same as the identity itself), the individual must take the responsibility for it and face its consequences, which on the other hand demands a mythic temporality to make sense, just like that of the tragedy or that of the pilgrimage of Zarathustra, which *are as a whole a reformulation of the eternal recurrence but from a standpoint that has however only to do with how the will acts through the individual and sets aside the communitarian participation in the recurrence itself*, which, as we have already emphasised, ought to be accomplished by an active acknowledgement of the unity of being and above all by the engagement with others that contradicts the hard and solitary adventure of the thinker that wanders in search of the superman and, even more, of the illuminist that speaks from heights beyond the reach of the average individual that is alien to the sublimity of ideals and instead of perceiving the ontological potency of the will to power, takes it as a justification of the limitless sway over reality and over others.[17] Thus, and without my intending to take these brief remarks as a fully fledged criticism of the Nietzschean theory of the eternal recurrence, it is evident that such a conception of temporality, at least as it was enunciated in the passage that we have hereinabove quoted, cannot go too far since it starts from the strictly psychological and "aesthetical" stance that Nietzsche adopts throughout and that he applies to a mythic vision of existence that does not agree with the phenomenological complexity thereof that starts instead from the acknowledgement of everyone else as a determination of the own being,[18] a consequence that Nietzsche himself seems to have taken into account when he accepts at the end of *Zarathustra* that men are not ready for his revelations, that they always behave like children and that the wise man must put up with their folly and their want of worshiping God, which persists even after their having discovered that He does not exist.[19] But this, instead of implying the final uselessness of the image of the eternal recurrence, simply shows the difficulties that it sets out for a really deep experience of temporality such like that of the thinker and of the person that tries to experience the unity of being within the hourly concreteness of existence; in other words, *to make sense the image of the eternal recurrence must be complemented with that of the dynamic determination of the human activities that are carried out in a specific hour and that has so by principle an objective character that allows to overcome the individual will without supplanting*

[17] John D. Caputo and Gianni Vattimo, "On the Power of the Powerless" in *After the Death of God*, Ed. Jeffrey W. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 114 and ff.

[18] Jean Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant. Essai d'Ontologie Phenoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 259 and ff.

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, Eds. Adrian del Caro and Roberto B. Pippin, Trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), p. 255 and ff. Regarding the exact meaning of the understanding of human feebleness, vide my article "Del Más Feo de los Hombres" in *Reflexiones Filosóficas sobre lo Humano*, ed. Carmen Romano (Puebla: MUP, 2003), pp. 183–198.

it with a will to power that somehow or other leads to the worst violence, as history has so outrageously shown.[20] Still more, the image of a community wherein everyone has renounced his individuality on acknowledging that it is relative, not apparent, shows that it is perfectly possible to conceive a model of the recurrence that, instead of resting upon the will that works in the world (whether metaphysical or psychological), rests upon the renunciation of their own will and the acceptation that the sole will that counts is God's, which acts however from the worldly wants of existence that never are reducible to the so-called practicalities.[21] Thereby, the question of the recurrence would not be relevant in the light of an individual choice (not even if it were asked by a demon) but in the middle of the existence that everyone shares with others and with the rest of reality, which includes, in the first place, the specific configuration of the respective situation or element, as we have said in the foregoing section on speaking of the phenomenological differences of the ontological unity. And the best way to grasp that is precisely the silent obliteration of one's own will and the humble subjection to the sense of the hour. Why? Because this sense acts by itself but in such a way that it agrees point by point with the man that wants to understand how to deal with the world without enjoining his will. The absolute obedience to the hour is not then a blind fatalism, it is, on the contrary, the careful regulation of the action in accordance with the nature of reality.[22] When we see, for instance, how a monk saws pieces of firewood with a rule that determines the exact size of each piece so that it fits in the case where the rest are kept, how another one serves out the portions of his brothers or, finally, how the members or the community enjoy themselves together in their weekly walk in the surroundings of the abbey, we realise that the dynamics of time are accomplished not *behind* the individual consciousness (as it happens with the worldly people that all of a sudden discover that they have miserably wasted time) but *through* it, and that the process is carried out so smoothly due to the hour that offers the condition for the mutual acknowledgement of man and world.

On Asceticism and Silence

We see the sundry aspects of a winter morning in the orchard of the abbey intertwined with those of some other moments of the year: a piece of cloth swinging on a corridor of the cloister, a kind of nest on the snow, a brook flowing on a bed of blue stones, trickles of rain on a blurred background, the rain falling smoothly over the earth, the roof tiles of the abbey, the cloudy sky on the top of the mountains, a nook covered with snow, and finally an old monk digging some trenches to sow

[20] Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence. The Idea of the Tragic* (London: Blackwell, 2003), p. 249 and ff.

[21] Richard Valantasis, *The Making of the Self. Ancient and Modern Asceticism* (Eugene: Cascade, 2008), p. 134 and ff.

[22] Martin Heidegger, *Serenidad*, Spanish Trans. Yves Zimmermann (Barcelona: Odós, 1999), p. 25 and ff.

vegetables in the snowy orchard. While he shovels, we perceive that he is in fact very old although he does not look weak at all, on the contrary. In a long shot of the orchard from above (the best perspective to appreciate the whole dimension of things), we see an image that reminds us at once of some of those Flemish or German winter landscapes that are so impressive, but in this case the absence of any living creature does not render an impression of desolation, perhaps because we listen to the merry tolling of the bells and we see the sunlight that all of a sudden appears as an announcement of the eternal recurrence that is perceptible in the next image, when we see a cluster of orange flowers that grows in the middle of the snow. Some other perspectives of the woods around the abbey are for confirming the permanence of the vital push of nature in the middle of the terrible cold, which is still more visible a moment later, when we see a spider on the edge of a door, the inferior part of a dish dripping after having been washed, and finally the whole profundity of one of the corridors or the cloister in one of those morning moments when the light changes from the greyness of an overcast sky to a radiant golden. The succession of images leads us then to the cell of the accountant of the abbey, who is taken while he reviews some documents, and follows to some other aspects of the life in the place, which spins around the church that we know so well, to finish in one of the most beautiful images of the picture, that of the sky above the peak of a mountain that is partially covered by a great cloud that seems to be motionless but that on a more heedful perception shows a delicate gyration. The whole series culminates then in a sign like those of the silent films wherein we read: "Here is silence: let the Lord pronounce in us a word the same as Him". What we have seen in the course of some few moments is the unfolding of a world that comprises nature, history, spirituality, worldliness, community, individuality, eternal recurrence and hourly tasks, a world whose complexity astonishes because it could have been expected that existence would be simpler in a place like the abbey and the monks would spend their time in endless prayers, in abstruse lucubrations or in sadomasochist mortifications, and there is nothing of the sort: according to what we see, the monks face the same problems as the worldly men. In other words, *renunciation has more to do with a sui generis experience of the world than with the rejection of the common fate and the search of seclusion*. And how could it be otherwise when the very ground of Christianity is the idea that Christ Himself has embodied humanity to share the toils of existence?[23] From this standpoint, it would not be so surprising that the dedication to a religious existence is as hard as any other existential possibility; what ought to be surprising is how radically existence changes when it is experienced not from a vulgar conception of the own individuality but from a fuller perception thereof that sets aside the material aspects and oddly enough privileges those ideals that in the light of the cultural tradition can be considered the real determinations of individuality, *i.e*., equanimity, clarity of thought and disposition to integrate with others for the benefit of everyone, which explains why monkhood belies by its very essence the image of an emaciated ascetic that devotes himself to mortification in the middle

[23] Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity. The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 34 and ff.

of the desert, which is however the image wherewith most people think of it, doubtlessly because most people (including most of the ascetics themselves) have not by the by the slightest idea of what "spirituality" means and take for granted the wrong Platonic stance concerning the issue, which places it on an equal footing as the supernatural transcendence of Good and that consequently considers worldly existence as a deceptive appearance whereof one should get rid the sooner the better.[24] But such an approach is not the deepest one, as Hegel and Nietzsche have shown each to his own.[25] For independently of the Platonic mystification and of the reinterpretations thereof through history, the spirit lies in that dimension of the world where man recognizes the universality of existence through his own emotional integration.[26] In accordance with this, the spirit demands not only an original or rather supernatural transcendence such as that of the Platonic idea but the integrity of its display through history, including the negative phases that are necessary to show the potency of the former to transfigure the material or particular element into an ideal universality, which in the case of man means that the individual experiences himself only in his union with everyone and everything else. Of course, such a process or universalization and consciousness demands a particular temporality, which is no other than the eternal recurrence that is the background of the hourly dedication to this or that task. On the other hand, all this is experiment on the plane of the individual temperament through a richer sensibility that opens the person to the perception of his environment like the real kernel of the world, as it happens when, for instance, a monk or someone else raises the eyes and contemplates the spiritual integration of the place where he dwells and the surroundings thereof. Then this spiritualization is above all perceptible as a state of mind, whether it is the seriousness wherewith someone digs a trench, the devotion wherewith someone reads a treatise on the Trinity or, why not, in the laugh wherewith Zarathustra resigns himself to the human foolishness.[27] But the state of mind that agrees more directly with the highest spirituality is doubtlessly that abandonment that is expressed as silence.[28] For silence, contrary to the words that saturate the world and that more often than

[24] This is why Nietzsche rejects as a whole the metaphysical tradition that is grounded on Platonism and Christianity. Vide concretely *Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, Ed. William Kaufmann, Trans. Helen Zimmern (Mineola (NY): Dover, 1997), p. 33 and ff.

[25] It is needless to say that the final aim of both philosophers is, independently of their opposition, the comprehension of the total development of existence beyond the Platonic dualism. In addition to works of Nietzsche that we have already mentioned, vide the introduction by Hegel to the *Phenomenology of the Spirit.*

[26] G. W. F. Hegel, "The Philosophy of Fine Art" in Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns (Eds.), *Philosophies of Art & Beauty. Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 391, passim.

[27] No one has carried out a more lucid vindication of the affinity of tragedy and laughter than Nietzsche himself in the final section of the "Attempt to a Self-Criticism" wherewith the *Birth of Tragedy* begins, which contradicts the usual "romantic" or rather melodramatic interpretation of the concept.

[28] Vide Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Le Langage Indirect et les Voix du Silence" in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), above all pp. 63–70.

not mislead and perturb man with the echoes that they spark off on reverberating on the pleiad of the ontological differences, always brings to light the unfathomable unity of being that is the horizon of sense. When man keeps silence, he is able to listen to the most tenuous whisper and to those hidden inflections that the permanent jabber prevents everyone from perceiving; still more, silence is the real thread of comprehension and even of logical articulation, since it furnishes the existential frame of every singular experience on making man conscious of his ontological unity with it, which is prior to whatever theoretical determination.[29] According to this, silence is the condition *sine qua non* for spirituality, that is to say, for the *whole development of the ontological unity through consciousness*, which takes place independently of the religiosity or of the philosophical setting of the person at issue (if he happens to have one at all). And that is why an existence utterly devoted to silence cannot but offer an opening to the integration of the individuality in a communion with the world alien to the average standards for determining the sense of existence and even beyond what is normally considered good and evil, which work as an exclusive alternative only on the plane of those things that have to be chosen or rejected but not on the plane of existence as such, where every election springs from the unity of being and reverts to it, an aspect that it is worth underlining because it is crucial to assess what asceticism could stand for in the context wherewith we are dealing and without the usual interpretations thereof, which stem somehow or other from the narrow-minded Platonic misconception of spirituality that has already been mentioned and that has played so much havoc with the understanding of existence. For the ascetic, contrary to the dualistic interpretation that Plato and most of philosophical and religious tradition have upheld, does not intend at bottom to renounce the world but to perceive it the way it is, i.e., as an absolute unity whose fullness allows the one that experiences it to do without the worries that distract man all the time and that even compels him to resort to the questionable image of a *post-mortem* retribution of the hardship and toil of existence. For whether there is such retribution or not, the fact is that man, above all the ascetic, has to get by and keep steady even at worst, and the best way to do it is precisely the continuous meditation upon the unity of being that runs parallel to the integration with it through work and discipline, which requires furthermore the organization of one's own emotional flux so as to eradicate aggressiveness or nonchalance before they ride roughshod over conscience, which on the other hand is not so different from what the most venerable philosophical tradition said on the matter from Socrates and above all from Aristotle onwards and practically until Nietzsche when it praised the exercise of virtue and self-restraint.[30] But if this is so, then asceticism has nothing to do with a denial of the worldly condition of existence and rather lies in a way that aims at the spiritual or inner dynamism thereof, which is moreover the most seasoned fruit that silence bears. And that is why asceticism is simultaneously a religious and intellectual phenomenon that belongs in principle to a former time (if you set it out

[29] *Ibid*., p. 72.

[30] For the current situation of the question, vide Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory* (2nd. Ed., Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 256–263.

from a historiographic standpoint) and a lifestyle with a sense of its own that challenges the current subjectivism and the concomitant materialism that, despite what their vociferous vindicators say, reduces existence to senselessness simply because it prevents man from perceiving the unity of being as the background of his actions, which is doubly evident in the gibberish that the mass media have universalised and in the odd exigency that every intellectual or cultural enterprise is amusing or, which is a lot worse, easy to learn and handle, which in the field wherein we are now leads to those terrible weaknesses of character and relativeness that are the disfigured images of the real affability and comprehension and that are the pillars of a spiritless time where everyone demands to experience everything without his overcoming the most vulgar outlooks.[31] It is needless to say that before this, the idea of devoting oneself to keep silence for life and deal with the world calmly and in retiredness seems to be utterly absurd, and with all the more reason because the rampant subjectivism demands to be expressed by all manner of means, which strengthens the psychological determinations and the relativism and leads to the image of an individual that in order to be up to the cultural vertiginousness has at the same time to impose his standpoints over everyone else and to uphold them just while they are fashionable or useful, a paradoxical and chameleonic condition that contrasts throughout with the expressionless face of the monks that in the best ascetic tradition appear before the camera with the simplest possible gesture, that of the human being that is deep in thought and blinks or deviates the sight for a moment because he is engrossed in the endless understanding of reality. That the series of portraits of the members of the community that is interpolated with the rest of the film shows how the same silent concentration goes hand-in-hand with steadiness and personal character without alluding in the least to the "personality" corroborates then that asceticism must be still vindicated as one of the most original and truly human experiences of the worldly unity of being.

On Cinema and Holiness

A monk is standing in prayer before the window of his cell, which overlooks the snowy mountains that surround the abbey. He then sits and starts to eat while he reads a book; his movements are extremely regular and we see the smooth fur of his shaven head. The camera follows slowly the floorboards of the cell, bathed in the soft morning light and crossed by the shadow of the bars of the window and of the monk himself; we perceive how he takes the spoon to his mouth, how he leans over the book in total concentration, as if eating were just an other way of being immersed in comprehension. A moment later, he washes the dishes and puts them to dry on a stone; the camera shows in full detail how one of them rocks and drips, which brings

[31] As a matter of fact, Heidegger already detected these worrying signs of cultural decadence in the first part of his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, and the most singular feature of his interpretation of the issue was to link it with the historical becoming of being. Vide *Op. Cit*., pp. 53–54.

to mind the integration of the existential elements within a balance that we have more than once underlined. The monk goes back to his cell then and starts to pray again. Oddly enough, nothing in this brief sequence reminds you of isolation, routine or mortification; quite the contrary, the sequence suggests a touching intimacy and *something as rare as intimacy: consciousness and happiness*. Without his looking pensive at all, the monk reflects the intense process wherein he participates and that is nothing but the unfolding of existence itself that comprises the same the movement of a spoon as the flow of thought that brings to light for the monk the existential whole of creation that he actualises with the synchrony of his movements that, far from what is so usually and blindly taken for granted, is alien to the introspective structuring of experience that is supposed to lead you to wisdom through a pleasant mental flow. As a matter of fact, the attitude of the monk does not owe anything to introspection, let alone to that state of mind that most people are after so eagerly, i.e., relaxation, which more often than not is the outcome of listening for some minutes to cheap canned music and does not require any real effort. But the intimacy is not in this case something of the sort; it springs instead from a concentration of energies and habits that envelop existence within a temporality that returns everlastingly to its rise, the worldly framework of our being, that the current vulgarization of the modern subjectivism sets aside without further ado on considering that existence hinges upon the particular way of thinking and that there is an immediate affinity between man and world, when the fact is that every possible identification between the two of them demands a long, careful and very frequently painful process of acceptation and reflection and also renunciation, not precisely to change you into the centre of the world but, rather, to integrate one's own existence with the world so as to overcome the frightful senselessness that haunts people so much and that the monk seems instead to ignore. For the most admiral feature of the sequence whereon we are remarking now is that it brings to light the balance of the monk and the world without interposing the least subjective stance for the part of a person that moves however all the time as if he were fully concentrated. And he is indeed, but, as we have already emphasised, his concentration does not express that subjective or psychological aspect that is so absurdly related with comprehension. And that is doubtlessly the most important link between what we see in the sequence (and in Gröning's picture throughout) and the very nature of cinema. *For independently of the genre, of the filmmaker or of the work at issue, cinema always has shown the dynamic unity of being that surrounds everyone*, whether in the cosiness of a cell or in the dizzy height of mountains, whether in the smooth skin of a monk or in the polished surface of a floorboard, whether in the pious prayer or in the humble washing of the dishes.[32] Without the aesthetical continuity of the film that makes perceptible the phenomenological unity of being and that in this case shows the richness of a monastic existence that is supposed to unfold without the world and in the middle of anachronic devotions, the elements whereof we speak

[32] For an exposition of the difference existing between cinematographic and filmic features, vide the first chapter of Dominique Chateau, *Philosophies du Cinéma* (2nd. Ed., Paris: Armand Colin, 2010), p. 9 and ff.

would very surely be taken in as the disjointed determinations of a subjective experience: what would you think, for instance, of monkhood and, by and large, of asceticism if you did not see how it grounds the existential embodiment of man and nature, of time and space, of emotional drive and of practical situation? But when you perceive sequence after sequence how the monks remain in silence and work and sustain themselves with an apparent effortlessness, you discover that asceticism (at least the kind thereof that the monks embody) has nothing to do with a rancorous denial of existence, as Nietzsche thought, or with the idealistic search of a *post-mortem* glorification such as that that Platonism is after.[33] The link, then, between cinema and the right vision of existence is in this case direct and potent enough to dissipate the questionable commonplaces of the anticlericalism and of the subjectivism, on the one hand, and, on the other, the idea that the sole way to set out a so-called "metaphysical" or rather "philosophical" theme in cinema must be the disarticulation of the space-time framework of existence or the suppression of the humdrum anecdotic continuity that is supposed to prevent everyone from a real experience of existence or, on the contrary, the presentation of a set of twisted characters that interact violently in a conflict that somehow or other ends in a would-be tragedy. But the film shows in this case something completely different from these three solutions: it is true that it does not have a chronological articulation, but its space-time framework is clear and extraordinarily cohesive; and although it does not have either an anecdote as such, it links the sundry sequences and scenes within a global vision of existence that allows to grasp a clear development of the persons that appear in it; finally, it does without the dramatism that is so oddly mistaken with tragedy but does not fall either in the abstractedness that is so usual in the films that deal with "deep subjects".[34] And all this is possible simply because the picture limits itself to actualise *the essence of cinema, i.e., showing the world the way it looks*, which breaks at one fell stroke with the subjectivism and abstractedness of the mass media, just like it breaks with the idealisation of the spirituality on showing the existence of the monks as such.[35] In other words, the work allows perceiving both how cinema lies simply in a vision of reality and how existence lies in the experience of our finitude, that is to say, of the bodily articulation of time and space.[36] Thus, in all those sequences wherein we see how a monk articulates by his activities the ontological differences of reality (when he prostrates himself and transpose the altar of a chapel, when he works in the orchard during the winter or, finally, when he slithers with his brothers on the slope of a mountain covered with snow), we appreciate the aptitude of cinema for unfolding in every sense of the word the full-

[33] Richard Valantasis, *Op. Cit.,* p. 80 and ff.

[34] For the Nietzschean criticism against the misinterpretation of tragedy as drama, vide the text mentioned in the note 27.

[35] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed. Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 17 and ff.

[36] For a clear exposition of the parallelism of these two questions, vide Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Cinéma et la Nouvelle Psychologie*, ed. Pierre Parlant, Folioplus/philosophie, 177 (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), above all p. 16 and ff.

ness of existence in a world that despite the secularization and the subjectivism there is still a possibility of changing seclusion, work and silence (above all the latter) into a deeper intimacy with others and with oneself. And the thread of this metamorphosis is precisely the human presence, which thanks to the camera multiplies in all the perspectives that show each to its own the intense concentration of the person, his undeniable balance and his mysterious spirituality in an environment wherein the odd antagonisms of nature and history, of theory and practice and of freedom and excitation seem preposterous misinterpretations. Thereat, cinema reveals a poetic potentiality that has largely been passed over due doubtlessly to that very subjectivism that deems that spirituality is just a psychological determination or that the only natural aim of existence is the immediate pleasure that is comparable with a spasm or a fit and that passes off without reconfiguring our perception. But cinema has possibilities for revealing existence that must still be discovered, just like the spirituality of a lifestyle that will very likely disappear soon because there is no room whatever for it in the subjective cultural experience where we live. Let us hope that cinema had then revealed otherwise the phenomenological unity of being. *Vale*.

Part III

Reflecting the Sky Experience in a Japanese Garden

Lena Hopsch

Abstract "When through the water's thickness I see the tiling at the bottom of a pool, I do not see it despite the water and the reflections there; I see it through them and because of them" (Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," 1964, p. 178). With these lines the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty shows us how the artist in a creative conscious act mediates sensory experiences and memories to the spectator by his work of art. In the quote the sky is reflected into the water, present and absent at the same time. In this paper an image of a Japanese garden is examined as regards the sensorial qualities of space it mediates to us.

Space and sky are examined as a part of spatiality in the landscape captured, in this essay, in photography from a Japanese garden. Through the lived body the artist is able to capture the interconnectedness and familiarity with the world that Merleau-Ponty names the 'flesh.' It is an experience mediated by the senses transformed into the image. In the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, man exists in dialog with the world and perception is a creative act. We perceive and co-create the world in every moment, being all "in-the-world." Phenomena exist before our being conscious of them.

Could the image of the sky, reflected in the water, not the actual sky itself, but present here-and-now as well as space, not present on a flat surface, be grasped by the photographic image mediated through our bodily memories, our 'flesh,' our familiarity, our interconnectedness with the world and the cosmos? Could the absence of the sky experienced be a form of presence?

Keywords Japanese garden • Reflection • Spatiality • Body • Photography

Introduction: Notation

In his essay *Eye and Mind* the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty discusses art as a conscious creative act and part of our language as humans. A language is necessary to communicate what we have lived through, our experiences and memories.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_7

Our body is the means to act in the world and "We *are* the compound of soul and body."[1] The world starts at our fingertips and space cannot be measured geometrically as distances between objects. Spatiality begins starting from the ego, as the zero point, or me as the point zero of spatiality. Space is not in front of me, rather I am immersed in space as Paul Ricoeur states about language and culture,[2] and we cannot detach ourselves from it.

When viewing the reflections in a pool, Merleau-Ponty uses expressions closely related to the sensorial experience. He describes the water in the pool as a: "syrupy and shimmering element" and at once one can immediately feel it lingering through one's fingers, heavy and light at the same time. The sky is reflected in the water and "the web of reflections is playing"[3] on a screen of cypresses. The spatial experience is in constant motion co-created in every moment by the spectator. By these lines Merleau-Ponty shows us how the artist by a creative consciousness mediates sensory experiences and memories to the spectator by his work of art. In the aforementioned citation the sky is reflected into the water, present and absent at the same time. In this paper an image of a Japanese garden is examined as regards the sensorial qualities of space it mediates to us. Space and sky are examined as a part of spatiality in the landscape captured. The sky is never visible in the photography, only its reflections, we also have to look down in order to look up. Could the absence of the sky experienced in the image be a form of presence? (Fig. 1).

The Creative Conscious – The Photographer

When imagining touching the sky by submerging our hand into the surface of the water the photograph touches our eyes in a synesthetic way, optical and haptical converge, mediate palpability, mediating the infinity of the sky experience. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes this intertwining when he says: "I don't see according to it, I see with it."[4] The artist carries with him bodily, sensorial experiences of space, water and sky. These memories are being transformed through his body and transposed into the medium of the photography's flat space. The photographer induces, from within, an image of a specific moment that hits the viewer's eye.

Perception is a creative act where the 'flesh' and the thickness of space, its depth, form an intermediation between the perceiver and the perceived world based on an

[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," *The Primacy of Perception,* ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1964), p. 178.

[2] Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred, Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Minneapolis : Fortress Press, 1995).

[3] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," *The Primacy of Perception,* ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 182.

[4] Ibid.

Fig. 1 Koko-En, a Japanese Garden, photography by Michael Hopsch

interconnectedness and a familiarity with the world. The absent sky captured by the photographer strengthens the presence of the sky experience by imaginative means and sensorial bodily intersubjective memories. The pond becomes a mirror reflecting the sky. The photograph mirrors the basin as a mirror, mirroring our previous experiences and awakening them anew.

The act of photography requires an embodied producer, the photographer. 'The photographer *thinks* while he composes a picture.' This is dependent on a closeness of sensorial experience, shifting from distanced visual observation, emanating from the artist's sensorial experiences, an intertwining of world and 'flesh.' Sensing bodies are in themselves mediating apparatuses. The body is a formative medium, not matter, nor spirit, an intelligence of the senses, the measurement of all, and a zero-point. Seeing becomes grasping the world by the measuring body. Acting and moving are the means to experiencing spatiality by this the living body participates in the configuration of sensorial space. Perception itself is embodied.

"Reading" an artwork requires an embodied spectator. The photograph contains a totality of experiences, a kinesthetic intertwining of senses carried by the photographer/artist as a creative conscious. It demands an interaction between the senses and the medium. A presence of the mirrored/reflected sky experience is grasped by a non-presence. Absence becomes presence by the reflection in the water pond. Absence of spatiality, the two-dimensionality of the photography, becomes present by the inter sensuality of the medium conveying to the spectator that there exists a three-dimensional space. Also this is an illusion.

Reflecting the Sky – The Photography

Spots of light are floating on the water surface, the light from above shimmering in the foreground of the image like a veil of lace, deepening the sense of depth in the pond. Foliage present only as shadows intertwined with the puzzle of light in the water. Positive and negative shapes fit together creating a glittering, mosaic kind of experience. The encompassing garden is present only by its shadows and reflections that is presence manifested by its absence.

The photography seducing the eye pretends a spatial depth that is non-present with the help of optical illusions such as transparency, layers and overlapping surfaces, a compository take one can find also in the design of the Japanese garden. The Japanese garden is often built to be visually considered from specific vantage points, but including peripheral vision, not the Renaissance perspectival vision from a fixed vantage point. In the European Baroque garden the viewer could take part of the whole panorama in one glance thanks to long lines of sight. During the feudal period in Japanese architecture an idea of 'space of motion' was developed and also used in promenade gardens. In the 'space of motion' the beholder's movement direction was deflected and the field of view was therefore obscured. To experience the garden was therefore dependent on movement, whether actual or intellectualized.[5] The traditional Japanese garden does not intend to imitate nature, but rather to capture its essences. The means to achieve this is largely symbolic. A few well-placed rocks can symbolize a mountain landscape, and any trees or shrubs symbolize an entire forest and become elements of a general plan or *gestalt*. It is all about creating memories of man's relation to a landscape of the mind, the sky being a part of universal being. It is then up to the viewer that in his inner enter this landscape to perceive and co-create the world in every moment thus being all "in-the world".

Often surrounded by the cities of heavy traffic, neon signs, game stores and a cacophonic, hectic, everyday life the Japanese garden make a contrast with its concentrated and silent space. The garden becomes an artwork in itself kept together by a well-composed *gestalt*.

The *gestalt* is a means to our basic concepts; it is a part of our perceptual and cognitive abilities. It is the perception of totalities. The *gestalt* is the outer border of a perceptual field, the horizon against which meaning emerges. The *gestalt* is the identity of the internal and the external (and not the projection of the internal to the external). It is a field connecting parts together.[6] "The *gestalt* of a circle is not its mathematical law but its physiognomy".[7] According to the Gestaltists, totalities can only be understood as a part of a *field*, within a context or related to an environment.

[5] Kristina Fridh, *Japanska rum : om tomhet och föränderlighet i traditionell och nutida japansk arkitektur [Japanese Spaces : Emptiness and Changeability in Traditional and Contemporary Japanese Architecture],* Dissertation (Göteborg : Chalmers University of Technology, 2001), pp. 47–50.

[6] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. xlvii (Translators Preface).

[7] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge: London, 2009), p. 70.

According to Field Theory energies attracting or repelling exist within a field. In my opinion the contour of the *gestalt* brings such a field together, inner form elements, e.g. a poem, a painting or a garden like this, is kept in balance by attracting and repelling visual forces within the overall structure experienced as an active, multi-sensorial field. By this intersubjective experiences are mediated through the *gestalt*.[8]

The photographic image, by artist Michael Hopsch, analyzed in this essay, is carried by its responsiveness for how textures are used in the Japanese garden. Contrasts in foliage, as well as the textures of different elements placed in the garden such as vivid water and harsh rock. The use of transparencies and overlapping elements creates a sense for depth made by foreclosure. To shield the experience of e.g. the sky by foliage in the garden strengthens and deepens the experience. Most Japanese gardens are shielded and fenced, but it is not just a question of delimiting their own land from the neighbour's land or the outside world. The intention is rather to recognise and limit the garden space and create within its borders. By delimiting is determined as much or as little of the outside world to be included in the total experience of the garden. Shielding creates an oasis for the senses. It also creates the outer borders of the general garden plan and its *gestalt*.

Foreclosure also creates a sense of time and distance. Shielding creates the outer border of the *gestalt* keeping the elements of the composition together. The limited area of the Japanese garden is created by means of shielding to look bigger than it is and to preserve its own scale without the need to adapt to the surrounding environment. Another method to bring a sense of greater surface area is the use of borrowed landscapes far beyond the garden's borders, as if they were part of one's own garden. The deep of the garden is achieved by creating different layers of depth that overlap each other.

The Japanese notion of *Ma* has many interrelated meanings. It refers to the experience of interval, rhythm and timing and as such it exists in the mind of the beholder. It is the distance or gap in time and space.[9] As an example, it is the silence between words in a monologue that creates tension and a sense of what is told. If the silence is too short, it may not be perceived, and if it becomes too long, it feels artificial. A similar distance is needed in space to achieve harmony between different elements.

Present in the Japanese garden is the influence of *Shinto*. Characteristic for *Shinto* is a very great respect for the nature. All nature is worthy of worship above all magnificent natural phenomena such as mountains and waterfalls have great worship. *Kami* is a Japanese term for the gods of *Shinto*. One can translate *kami*

[8] This text is part of a discussion performed within the research group CONGO, Professor Eva Lilja, Dr. Lena Hopsch, Dr. Ulf Cronqvist, and PhD Candidate Elin Johanson, Gothenburg University, Sweden.

[9] Kristina Fridh, *Japanska rum : om tomhet och föränderlighet i traditionell och nutida japansk arkitektur [Japanese Spaces: Emptiness and Changeability in Traditional and Contemporary Japanese Architecture]*, Dissertation (Göteborg: Chalmers University of Technology, 2001), pp. 25–35.

with “god”, “spirits” or “soul.” In *Shinto* nature is spiritual and all the elements of the Japanese garden recall man’s intertwining with the world and the universe. The golden jewel of the pond is the *Koi*, from the Japanese name *Nishikigoi* which means “patterned carp” a bred variant of the common carp. *Koi* have the same pronunciation in Japanese as a word for love and are therefore considered to be a symbol of love and friendship.

In the photographic images analyzed here we can experience how the *koi*, while moving through the water, create a line on the water surface, disturbing the reflected sky, dividing it into half. It is as if a brushstroke, made on the metallic, syrupy flatness, suddenly divides the illusory surface of the sky. Presence in that moment is created by absence present in the image.

Conclusion

The photographic image analyzed here is what is left of a memory of a moment in a Japanese garden. Merleau-Ponty describes the invisible threads that attach us to the world. Threads giving glance and vigor to the objects that we surround us with. When we no longer are attached to them they lose their context and the energy that they carried is suddenly lost. But, the artistic image can carry these invisible threads across time and distance. “This internal animation, this radiation of the visible is what the painter seeks under the name of depth, of space of color”.[10] The *gestalt* captured in the image carries these threads over time and distance and brings sensorial memories into the hands of the spectator, carries through time and distance a glimpse of the sky experienced in a certain moment in a Japanese garden. Despite our differences as individuals we all carry some experiences of the sky. The artist transforms such an experience into an artistic experience – of the sky – that keeps the experience alive and the recipient, the spectator is reached by the producer, the artist.

In the form of scattered shards the illuminated sky meets us through the photographic image. Like a veil of lace holding the total gestalt of the garden together in one moment. The different tones, textures and grains of the composition are held together by lines of force distributed by the veil-like structure. Like the veil-like structure, these levels and dimensions are not what we see; ‘they are that with which, according to which, we see’.

This is not the photography experienced as a window; on the contrary it is reminiscent of lived space. The image of the sky reflected in the water, not the actual sky itself, but present here-and-now, space, not actually present on a flat surface, but grasped within the photographic image. Mediated by the artwork our bodily memories are carried by a sense of being there, being ‘flesh’, being familiar, being interconnected, in this moment with the world and the cosmos (Figs. 2, 3, and 4).

[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 182.

Fig. 2 Koi, photography by Michael Hopsch

Fig. 3 Koi, photography by Michael Hopsch

Fig. 4 Koko-En, a Japanese Garden, photography by Michael Hopsch

Images by Michael Hopsch. Hopsch is represented at Gothenburg Art Museum, Sweden and in several municipalities and city councils in Sweden.

A Meditation on the Oddness of Christian Religiosity and Conception of Love Through Bergman's *Winter Light*

Victor G. Rivas Lopez

Il n'y pas de ciel.

Camus.

Abstract As far as I know, *Christianity was the first form of religiosity that centred simultaneously on sky and post-mortem transcendence*; whereas heathenism always was deeply rooted on earth (even Zeus, the king of the gods, lived in an earthly dwelling, not in a celestial one), Christianity pointed at a superior realm that more often than not implied the utter rejection of earth. (I want to emphasise this remark because although it could seem that some heathen religions had before Christianity projected somehow or other sky as the realm of divinity, Christianity was the first one to endow such a projection with a metaphysically transcendent sense that implicated an utterly new conception of existence that broke with the "natural" vision of heathenism, concretely with the Greek one. Vide G. W. F. Hegel, *The Concept of Religion*, Spanish Trans. Arsenio Guinzo (Mexico City: FCE, 1981), p. 79 y ss). For doing this, Christianity had to carry out a double displacement: firstly, from the simple topological sense of sky to the symbolical sense of "heaven" or "paradise"; secondly, from the conception of existence as an "eternal recurrence of the same" to the "elevation" or rather "overcoming" of the so-called earthly limitations that were supposed to prevent man from ascending to heaven. This double displacement is above all perceptible in the cornerstone of Christian religiosity, namely, the commandment of loving everyone, which is even the sole proof of being a disciple of Christ (Jn XIII, 35). It is needless to say that it is so hard to fulfil this apparently easily doable commandment that the most faithful persons despair at not being up to it by the simple fact that it contradicts the normal, earthly or carnal human way of feeling, whereby it seems preferable to pass over it on the pretext that it is impracticable, to bury it beneath a ritualistic practice of religion or to project imaginatively a heavenly realm where it will be fully accomplished, all of which

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Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_8

reinforces the symbolical sense of the overcoming that we have just mentioned. At any rate, this impossibility of obeying the commandment and the useless subterfuges to hide that failure lead to a very contradictory experience of religiosity that has widely been denounced through Modernity on behalf of a deeper experience of the earthly condition of existence and that Bergman opposes in the picture that I intend to analyse against a *godless want of loving* that is deemed sinful although it agrees with the way people usually love. (I think of course of Nietzsche's furious criticisms that are contained above all in *The Genealogy of Morals* and in the *Antichrist*, but we could trace a more encompassing trend in modern thought that is contrary to Christianity and that does without the ground of the philosophy of Nietzsche. Vide Michael Martin, *The Case Against Christianity* (Philadelphia: Temple University,1991), pp. 18–33). These two perspectives (the questionable ideal of a limitless love and the godless want of loving) are respectively embodied by the Lutheran pastor that has lost his faith (or that rather never got it) and by the woman that dotes on him despite his constant mistreatment, who together with the few parishioners of the neighbourhood suffer each to his or her own beneath the leaden winter light that instead of inviting to raise one's eyes towards the sky, reveals the barrenness of one's heart, a contradictory experience of spiritualization that we shall fathom in two sections: in the first one, we shall set out the main features of Bergman's film according to the phenomenological conception of religiosity that it deploys; in the second one, we shall follow the consequences thereof in the comparison of the two ways of love that we have mentioned.

Keywords Christianity • Love • Subjectivity • Finitude • Cinema

I. The Experience of Religiosity

The wintry and grey atmosphere of winter in an isolated region does not *prima facie* seem to be very propitious for an ardent spirituality: with a dreary coldness pervading every nook and cranny, the most impervious person surrenders sooner or later to the roughness of weather that would rather seem to bring about the contrary of spirituality, that is to say, desultoriness and bale. Winter atmosphere allows to grasp how the elemental unity of existence breaks under the sway of nature however much the progress of technology had furnished man with a lot of tools and amenities wherewith he can stand the natural harshness, which is all the more perceptible through the daylight, for it has oddly enough nothing to do with the clarification of reality but with an almost sinister motionlessness that compels to see the limitations of man face to nature. As a matter of fact, whereas spring light traces a white halo around the environment *and summer light submerges it into a shining pool and autumn light encircles it with a golden fluidity, winter light fixes it in a stone greyness that is just the other name of senselessness: under such a light, things appear like tenuous shadows, ghostly presences that are about to vanish into an*

all-embracing nothingness. Winter light is then far from being a simple shade, a chromatic possibility among others within the everlasting cycle of seasons, for it projects a stiff perspective around reality and makes man feel alien to it or (which is at bottom the same) ineluctably subjected to it. At any rate, what matters here is how this strangeness goes hand-in-hand with an existential framework that possesses a sense of its own that can of course be outwardly and socially palliated with artificial mediums or with the company of others but that unsettles everyone when least expected, whereby it is not surprising that it ends up strengthening that in principle absurd tendency to suicide that is perceptible in some regions where winter is particularly harsh and where light is grey enough to let people see just the desolation of the environment and in general of existence, which unfolds in spite of all those false images of winter that promote it as the season of happy celebrations and good will, an absurdity that makes it more oppressive because there is no way to express with frankness the unsettlement that it arouses and the impossibility to requite the vociferous love that everyone is supposed to feel in the middle of the greyness that spreads over sky and earth while sun is ominously absent, love that to top it all springs from God himself and vivifies the heart of hearts of everyone. There is an aberrant cultural contradiction between the sunless light of winter and the exigency of requiting a boon that one must experience, and it is not surprising that most people succumb to it and feel distressed, which can be somehow dissembled while the racket and the general shallowness reign, but must be faced as soon as the greyness of light makes perceptible the desolation of the environment. Thus, winter greyness brings literally to light the taut interplay of the natural, the cultural and the emotional frame of existence that determine the individual way of being, which is why it furthers consciousness and reflection through dejection however much these terms seems to contradict one another. *There is a strong tie between winter light and self-knowledge, but that does not imply either that such a tie leads to happiness, let alone to the experience of the divine inexhaustibleness of love that is the ground of Christian conception of spirituality*.

As we see, winter light is very adequate for showing in full detail the complex ontological framework of existence against the metaphysical idealizations that take for granted the affinity of light and spiritualization; beyond the shallow levels of illumination, winter light reveals the forlorn aspect of nature, the frailty of human sway and, last but not least, the oddness of a religiosity based on love that has nevertheless been propagated thanks precisely to that oddness, all of which supplies the philosophical ground of the film that we intend to fathom, which unfolds throughout the opposition of the winter light and of the metaphysical idealization that we have just mentioned and that is the thread of the work, whose original Swedish title, *The Communicants*, does not allude, by the by, to the condition of the light but to the sacrament of the communion that is the kernel of Christian religiosity and also of the spiritual communication that must exist among the faithful, who are supposed to make up a mystic body, the church, wherein everyone participates together with the rest of his fellow creatures of the redemption that Christ made possible through His sacrifice. Of course, the difference in the original title and its English translation, far from distorting the sense thereof, is for underlying the

aesthetical framework of the drama that the picture narrates. As a matter of fact, this framework is set out from the very beginning, when we see how the Lutheran pastor of a tiny community that dwells in an isolated wooded region leads the congregation during the most sacred moment of the liturgy, that is to say, the consecration of the host and the wine or the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ. This first scene, which works as the key of the whole picture, can for its part be divided into three sections, the first whereof shows a close-up of the severe face of Thomas, the pastor that is the protagonist of the film, while he consecrates the offerings; after some moments, the camera shows the interior of the church from behind, with Thomas kneeling and saying the Lord's prayer face to the altar while the scarce faithful disseminated through the pews listen to him. This image fades into three shots that show respectively the church from different perspectives in the middle of a desolate winter landscape, and immediately later one sees the kneeling Thomas from one side. The second section of the scene shows in close-up the different attitudes of the congregation, which comprise devotion, ritualistic care or even boredom. When Thomas stops praying, there is a momentary bewilderment because none of the members of the congregation seems ready to take the sacrament, although five of them finally go to the communion rail and receive it. During the administration of the sacrament, Thomas shows a very strange expression, a mixture of aloofness and anger that is more impressive because it is filmed from below, at the level of the kneeling communicants, and because it belies outright the religious sense of the performance. This opens the way to the third section of the scene, the end of the service, during which the camera shows successively in close-up the face of Thomas, of Martha (one of the members of the congregation that is in love with Thomas and that always acts in the work as his antagonist) and two wooden ancient images, one of the Holy Trinity with the Father crowned as a king and holding the Son, and one of Christ on the cross, whose right hand is badly damaged. This sequence is complemented with the images of the hurried exit of the congregation, which rounds off the impression of detachment and weariness that (bar the only two devout parishioners, an old lady and the hunchbacked sexton) the performance inspires to everyone, the pastor included, and that contrasts almost brutally with the intense and unfathomable expression of the latter's face, which, at any rate, has nothing to do with religious spirituality but with a very human distress, as the rest of the picture will make evident. Now, in addition to this, what is worth noticing here is that the accurate narrative linearity of the scene is interrupted at the beginning by the three images of the winter landscape, which appear precisely when Thomas says our Lord's Prayer and when the congregation is supposed to prepare to participate in the utmost spirituality; but instead of reaffirming that, the camera reminds us of how winter light immobilises everything, which is furthermore surprising because it counters to the general trend of cinema, which would interpolate these shots before or after the service, not during it.[1] Indeed, these images of a frozen, empty world agree fully with the state of mind that Thomas's face reveals but also with Christ's tortured face and mutilated

[1] Michael Joshua Rowin, "Fear and Trembling", *Reverse Shot On Line* (Spring 2004): http://www.reverseshot.com/legacy/spring04/winter.html, consulted the 19/III/12.

hand, which speak of a world where the prayers and the devotion of some rustic villagers are a shade less than pathetic superstition, above all compared with the violence of natural forces and the ineffectiveness of the symbols of spirituality, the most sacred whereof is the image of the Trinity, where the sufferings of Christ are overcome by the majesty of the Eternal Father, Whose will has been fulfilled by the sacrifice of His own son, a vision of divinity that will provoke that in a subsequent scene Thomas, while staring at the image, says blasphemously: "What an absurd". Yes, it is absurd to think that a nature subjected to the overwhelming greyness can offer happiness to man, but it is equally absurd to think that there is a supernatural providence that can make man up for the harshness of existence.

Of course, it could be argued that such desolation by no means contradicts the Christian conception of existence and that it rather agrees with the idea that the world is a vale of tears and that man deserves to be subjected to evil and wretchedness, for they are the punishment of his original disobedience against his creator. However, the situation that the picture displays belies this exegesis, for it links visually and dramatically the iciness of the winter environment with the vacuity of the rite that the congregation attends and, which is the crux of the matter, with the inward barrenness both of the pastor and of most of the parishioners, for whom religion represents just a boring wont. Whether the distress that man experiences is a punishment or simply a condition inherent to existence, Christian religiosity is equally unable to provide him with a true relief that helps him to stand the crudity of nature and the shallowness of social life, since religion seems to be solely a medium to keep a certain sociability. This critical approach to Christianity and concretely to its Lutheran version is more vividly perceptible in a later scene of the picture, when Thomas, who in the meantime has unsuccessfully tried to comfort one of his parishioners that was haunted by the obsession of committing suicide because he was crushed by the anguish of expecting a new world war (the action of the film coincides with the most tense moment of the Cold War), goes to a desolate site in the middle of the woods where the parishioner, whose name is Jonas, has finally yielded to his obsession and has shot himself. When Thomas arrives at the site, which is next to a bridge that crosses a large river that brings about a deafening roar that dominates the whole scene and prevents from listening what the characters say, he sees the corpse of Jonas on the muddy ground and remains standing beside it while the police go for a van to take the corpse to a hospital. At that moment, Thomas sees how Martha goes up to him and tells her brusquely to wait in the car. For an instant, he is alone with the corpse, but he does not give the last rites and does not pray; he simply remains motionless and communicates with extraordinary intensity the desolation felt in the presence of someone that one could not save from an unappeasable incertitude. The loneliness of Thomas is still more impressive because it appears framed by the roar of the river, by the sleet and by the ominous wood, whose trees are furiously agitated by the wind. And just like the close-up was ideal to show in full detail the innermost indifference of Thomas towards his ecclesiastic duties at the beginning of the picture, the long shot is ideal in this scene to show that his sorrow has nothing to do with religiosity but, on the contrary, with the confirmation of the uselessness thereof to really reassure man before the senseless-

ness of existence. At the end, the strength of obsession and the sway of nature were the sole determinant factors for Jonas as they are for Thomas himself, who must face them alone, and that is why winter light ends up immobilizing the whole scene into the consciousness of the own impotence. Thomas gazes at the corpse of Jonas, which so dreadfully embodies his own failure as churchman, as if he had finally comprehended that *beyond the multitudinous dynamism of nature and the ceaseless emotional upheavals, existence does not vary because it is subjected to an everlasting cycle where everything is incidental or relative, which deprives it from the transcendence wherewith Christianity endows it*. At bottom, that someone dies because he cannot endure existence is not so different from his being always anguished as Thomas himself has for so a long time been, and that is why he tells Martha laconically towards the end of the picture that he was ordained solely because his parents wanted him to be a pastor.

It is worth noticing that the consciousness that Thomas gets does not mean at all that he had overcome once and for all his doubts, let alone that he has in mind to abandon the church; on the contrary, that he had realized the falseness of his state means that he can set aside the guilt that always has haunted him and can start to live with that *sui generis* resignation that allows man to fraternize with others independently of his having religious beliefs. Unlike what is usually thought, resignation is not tantamount to a denial of existence but to an acceptation that there is neither a final sense nor a supernatural providence that will justify the constant unsettlement that waylays everyone. In the particular case of Thomas, he feels that if religion is spiritually ineffective, it nurtures at least a social dimension that is worth preserving among people that is constantly subjected to the rashness of weather and above all to isolation. As a matter of fact, the picture aims at this exegesis from the scene when Thomas tries to comfort Jonas. At the beginning of the talk, he shows his perplexity before his parishioner through a series of perfunctory questions about health and economical situation, but when the silent wretchedness of Jonas imposes over him, he stops chatting and decides to speak with his heart in his mouth. He says that 4 years before, when his wife died, he lost any reason to go on living, but that he decided to live "just to be of use" for others. He adds straightaway that he tried desperately to deceive himself and keep the illusion of a loving God against what he saw in the world around him, but that he could not do that any longer when he had to face the horrors of existence during the Spanish Civil War. It was then that he had to admit that his belief was ridiculous: "Every time I confronted God with the reality I saw, He turned ugly, hideous, a spider-God, a monster. That is why I shielded Him from life and light. I pressed Him to me in darkness and loneliness". But even that was absurd when his wife died and he had to face by himself the senselessness of existence as such. However, he continues, the fall of his illusion provided him with a new clarity, for he saw that *if God does not exist, existence must not be justified and man can release from guilt*: "It is all clear as daylight: the unexplainable suffering does not need to be explained. There is no Creator, no sustainer. No thought". This last phrase is particularly important, for most of the so-called reflections of people are in sooth mental devices to conceal their own frustrations and fear before an existence wherewith we do not know how to deal for we have lost

the links with the ancient wisdom that taught how to get the true resignation or farsightedness without bitterness.[2] Of course, it is not surprising that Jonas commits suicide after having listened to all this with a kind of tormented concentration that contrasts drastically with the exaltation of Thomas; what is instead surprising is that the whole conversation takes place in the vestry of the little church and next to a contorted image of Christ on the cross that with His bale seems to validate the terrible words of Thomas that are somehow or other the factor that pushes Jonas to death. Although man asks time and again an answer from the skies, the only answer that he can get must spring from himself or from someone else, and that is why he can oddly enough be free from anguish and learn how to behave in a world where there is no sense but there are others.

The phenomenological unity of this process unfolds through the light of the second section of the scene, which articulates the whole dramatic development thereof perhaps with more effectiveness than in any other scene of the picture. Jonas leaves the vestry immediately after Thomas has stopped speaking, and the latter leans against the barred window, through which the winter light comes into the room. We see in close-up how he stares at the crucifix that is behind the camera and next to which he was sitting during the first section of the scene. His face, which is illuminated as the rest of the room, changes of shade all of a sudden and gets an intensity that separates it from the background, as if it were somewhere else. Then Thomas murmurs as if he were deep in thought the most enigmatic words of Christ: "God, why have you deserted me?" He turns to the window and goes out of the vestry towards the church, where Martha waits for him. He falls in front of the main altar and says: "Now I am free, free at last". The meaning of this phrase is hard to fathom, for Martha starts to kiss and caress him and he tries to restrain her on the pretext that he must be ready for the evening service in another church. But at that moment the old lady that was one of the only two devout parishioners of the beginning comes into the church and tells them that Jonas has just committed suicide. The abruptness of the announcement interrupts the dramatic sequence, but that is for linking Thomas's answer to his own question with Jonas's: *if God deserts man, if existence is essentially senseless, then both the service to others and suicide are equally valid as moral choices*, an idea that is by the by not so far from what the ancient or heathen vision of existence upheld on its praising the necessity of dying when it was no longer possible to maintain the dignity of the person.[3] Thus, the odd illumination of Thomas's face is unequivocal within the aesthetical frame of the picture: the clarity of man does not arise from a supernatural wisdom, let alone from his despicable illusions, but from the acknowledgement of the elemental freedom that he has regarding that lurid potency of nature that in the lack of a better

[2] Vide Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, Trans. Britain Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), book I, aphorism 57 and ff.

[3] David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1998), p. 189.

comprehension is usually called "fate".[4] It is true that foolishness also impels man to perform deeds that are apparently heroic and that Jonas could from more than a standpoint be deemed a fool; that notwithstanding, the fact that he had taken his own life after his listening that there is no god to whom appeal in our tribulations and that that stands for a liberation from the monstrous absurdness of guilt evinces that he could made, if not the most rational choice in his circumstances, at least the less irrational one.

This also shows that although we have so far described winter light as a natural determination hostile to the expression of a lively reality, it is doubtlessly the best shade of light to reveal the active part of consciousness in the constitution of an image of nature that makes up to man for the brutality whereto he is subjected in the remoteness of some rural regions.[5] If we take into account, furthermore, the ontological function of colour and light in the configuration of experience, which consists largely in their being an introduction to a *sui generis* relationship with the total sense of the situation at issue and/or of the particular objects contained therein,[6] we shall immediately see that the greyness and the motionlessness of the atmosphere foster consciousness more than the blueness or the goldenness of the light of the other seasons, provided, of course, that both factors establish a differentiation through some cultural symbols and idealizations such as the Christian notion of providence and the dramatic conception of the individuality that goes hand-in-hand with it. Thus, winter light is the best frame for the situation that the picture shows, for it prevents everyone from daydreaming about an idyllic nature ruled by a benevolent Creator, which, as we have seen, could instil the worst distress into man if there were not the possibility of choosing, however much that possibility is ambiguous and criticisable in the light of the recurrent human unbalance.[7] Thereby, it is very meaningful that when Thomas falls before the altar and claims that he is finally free, a dazzling beam of light comes through the window and reverberates on the character's face as if he were illuminated by a celestial clarity, which is utterly impossible since he has just asserted that there is no god and that existence is unjustifiable; in other words, the beam stands rather for the new vision of reality, whose crudity allows however man to get rid of the shadows of a transcendence that is too overwhelming for a being as weak as he is.

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[4] Vide my paper entitled "On the Fourfold Ontology of Evil throughout Western Tradition and its Final Disappearance in the Present Time" in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Ed.), *The Enigma of Good and Evil. The Moral Sentiment in Literature* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), above all pp. 325–329.

[5] Concerning this, let us remember the unsettlement of the protagonist of Kubrick's *The Shining*, who also is haunted by the horror of winter and by the terrible isolation that he experiences in the hotel where he works as a caretaker.

[6] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénomenologie de la Perception*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 358 and ff.

[7] It is very meaningful that even the greatest determinist of the whole history of philosophy, that is to say, Spinoza, had upheld this thesis throughout the *Ethics*. Vide Don Garrett, "Spinoza's Ethical Theory" in Don Garrett (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), p. 279 and ff.

II. The Experience of Love

At bottom, it is not so grave that Christianity is far from the transcendent fullness that it is supposed to nurture, for, after all, it would be enough for a religion, at least "within the limits of reason alone", to sustain a moral vision of existence, a goal that has very few or rather nothing to do with happiness and with spiritual effusions.[8] But Christianity, unlike any other religion, is not solely a ritual practice that keeps a more or less tenuous link with a would-be deity such as Greco-Latin heathenism was; on the contrary, it aimed from its onset to sustain a personal experience of religiosity that was the obverse of a spiritual development in the deepest sense of the word that agrees with the affinity or final unity of God's metaphysical transcendence and man's practical immanence.[9] And this, which is valid for every Christian confession, is doubly valid for Lutheranism in particular, for it hinges upon the absolute freedom that the faithful person experiences thanks to his innermost link with God, which has to be expressed towards others through that unquenchable love that is from every point of view the touchstone of Christian religiosity.[10] Now, as we have mentioned in the introduction of this paper, it is needless to say that this "new commandment", as Christ Himself calls it,[11] contradicts the natural selfishness of man that leads everyone to care just for very few people (if he cares for anyone at all) and to disdain completely anyone else, who is relegated to the blurred realm of otherness.[12] But that is not all, for since loving is the highest obligation for a Christian, not to fulfil it is tantamount to offend God, as Christ says in that passage of the Gospel where he describes how the people that had not taken care of their fellow creatures will be sentenced to an eternal fire.[13] *There is so an obvious concatenation between the commandment of love and the metaphysical transcendence of existence that is withal focussed from a judiciary perspective, that is to say, it implicates a glorious reward or a hellish punishment that add an extraordinary dramatism to the moral conscience*, which hangs by a thread throughout, above all because none can be absolutely sure of the sincerity of his faith and has to scrutinize himself time and again so as to be on his guard against sinfulness.[14] The liberation from natural

[8] Vide the harsh criticism of Kant against any idea of an imaginative approach to religion or to the idea of a supernatural influence on man's behaviour in *Religion considered within the Limits of Reason Alone*, ed. and Spanish Trans. Felipe Martínez Marzoa (2nd. Ed., Madrid: Alianza, 1981), p. 116 and ff.

[9] G. W. F. Hegel, *Op. Cit*., pp. 190–2.

[10] Martin Luther, "Concerning Christian Liberty" in *La Cautividad Babilónica de la Iglesia. La libertad del Cristiano. Exhortación a la Paz*, Spanish Trans. Teófanes Egido (Barcelona: Planeta/Agostini, 1996), p. 118.

[11] Jn, XV, 12.

[12] One of the deepest reflections that I know on the current state of this is Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'Autre Homme,* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1972), above all p. 48 and ff.

[13] Lc X, 30 and ff.

[14] This is doubtlessly the reason why Nietzsche censured so eagerly the dramatism and linked it with the subjectivism of modern culture. Vide *The Birth of Tragedy*, section 19.

selfishness implies then so overwhelming a cost that man ought to pay it with his life if Christ had not paid in advance for the sins of everyone, which is why He has the right to impose the new commandment of the universal love. However, if there is neither God nor transcendence, the *post mortem* fate vanishes at once together with the endless self-examination and, which is a lot more important, with the necessity of an all-embracing love. Indeed, it would be preposterous to endow love with a religious sense without God, and it ought to be taken in simply as the expression of a subjective affection that could cease as soon as any of the members of the relationship wanted it, which in view of the human feebleness would be very common unless there were a powerful additional reason for keeping the bond, such as sexual appeal or economical or social conveniences. At any rate, this would be tantamount to returning to the state of nature or to the worldly determination of existence that Christianity tried to overcome with the commandment of love, a possibility that oddly enough does not mean a prehistoric barbarity but the soft, operative, global nihilism of the current time, which is the direct outcome of the dreadful possibility of a total annihilation of mankind that was attained through the development of the factor that in Bergman's film sparks off the apparently absurd unsettlement of Jonas, i.e., the nuclear bomb, which for its part refers to its immediate antecedent, World War II, which had previously devastated the transcendence value of existence on showing that the latter was disposable without further ado on behalf of a so-called ideal of man whose aberrant irrationality was not a hindrance for its propagation.[15]

The most corrosive action of nihilism lies then in reducing existence to an unsurpassable, shameful finitude that everyone has to embody because there is no way to recuperate the transcendence of the person, a drastic condition that affects the same the religious and the philosophical vision of existence, in the light whereof the human presence was instead the symbol of the metaphysical identity of God and creation.[16] Thomas and Jonas set out each to his own the effect of the fall of this fullness when they mention the anguish of living an atrocious war whether in the field of battle or under the overwhelming anguish of the total devastation. Thus, when the former says that he lost his religious faith when he had to face the horrors of the Spanish Civil War, his words are the echo of the faltering confession of Jonas that he wants to commit suicide because he does not stand knowing that the Chinese have got a nuclear bomb. Still more, both characters point one way or another to how *the fall of the metaphysical ground of existence has swept away the whole cultural and moral frame thereof*, which is why to go on living or taking one's own life is hardly differentiable from an existential perspective, for the first possibility can oddly enough stand for the worst degradation and the second one for the sole truly moral option in an epoch that prevents the most lucid people from discovering a true value in another goal, love included. Concerning this, it is very remarkable that Jonas has apparently a good relationship with his wife and that his three chil-

[15] Regarding this issue, vide the introduction to the following book: George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. vii and ff.

[16] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Op. Cit*., p. 95 and ff.

dren and the one that is soon going to be born ought to have been a powerful reason for living in spite of the threat of a devastating war. But since the transcendent link of rationality and humanity has vanished, a loving family is neither a motif potent enough to keep living: as a matter of fact, during his final talk with Thomas, Jonas looks absentminded and simultaneously deep in thought, as when one is victim of a violent emotion that one can neither check nor overcome, and that is why he is indifferent to the frightening confession of Thomas regarding how he lost his religious faith, all of which confirms that *the lack of a cultural supreme value of existence is reflected in that of the interpersonal communication*. What the others say is hardly noticeable and the same occurs with what we say, whereby it is utterly useless to dialogue, for words do not communicate anything at all and after the most heart-rending confession one acts as if nothing had happened or as if every choice had already been made and there was nothing to do about the matter, a situation that is again contrary to the Christian idealization of love as an experience of spiritual liberation and of personal overcoming that endows existence with a sense of endless progression and intensity that makes up for the worst wretchedness. But how could anyone still believe in such an idealization when everyone and everything around him reveals the most hideous senselessness, to the extent that "humanity" smacks of the worst idealism and "love" of the worst sentimentalism?

These two critical reductions of the double idealization of the human person and of its symbolical value converge in an experience of love that has to deal with the utmost carnal limitation of everyone, that is to say, the human presence as such and bereft of that transcendence that both Christianity and the metaphysical tradition took for granted on considering man a living image of God, which in the picture appears with an unsurpassable clarity in two scenes whereon it is worth remarking: in the first one, we see a close-up of Martha, who appears before the camera and on a neutral background saying the words that Thomas is for his part reading in a letter that she wrote to him. The complex interplay of space, time and emotion allows the spectator to grasp the tremendous effect of the humanity of the character, who makes evident efforts to speak convincingly to a man that has inveterately rejected her after having been her lover just because she came out in a rash in the hands that spread later to sundry parts of her body: "We had been living together for some time, almost 2 years. It was a small asset in our poverty. Our endearments, our clumsy efforts to evade the lovelessness of our relationship". Martha adds that she grew up in a loving atheist family and that it was a shock for her to come into touch with the primitiveness of Thomas's faith, with his stone indifference towards Christ. After having suffered her illness for a long time, she cried out to God although it was incongruous with her lack of faith, and she asked Him why He had given her an aimless strength. Oddly enough, her rage made her see that loving Thomas was the task she needed to make sense of her life. But that was almost useless, for she could not communicate her love at all: "Behind all false pride and acting I have only got one wish, to live for somebody. But it is hard". And although she does not say so, it is obvious that this hardness lies not so much in the refusal of Thomas as in her being conscious that he rejects her because of a sheer physical loathsomeness. It is her very flesh, her human embodiment which sickens him independent of the fear of

contagion. And that is why her loving him is so hard. Still more, her accepting the situation is tantamount to accepting unconditionally the repugnance that she rouses in him, to perceive it in every other aspect of existence and in every other relationship, which is indeed a feature of her weakness but also of the current time a contradictory approach to the individual dignity or rather indignity that everyone must face, which belies outright the Christian assumption of the metaphysical incommensurable transcendence even of the meanest people (or, rather, above all of them).

This amazing scene is the precedent, so to speak, of the final scene of the film, which takes place in the church where Thomas must celebrate the afternoon service. Between the two moments, there is a terrible encounter of the former lovers, during which Thomas finally unmasks himself and acknowledges that he is fed up with Martha's tenderness and that he considers it preposterous because he does not love her. While he speaks spitefully, the camera shows how Martha grimaces victim of sorrow and shame, so that the touching serenity that she displayed during the reading of the letter disappears completely and she looks almost monstrous or animal-like. In this case, the deformation of the face goes hand-in-hand with the devastation of the humanity that makes impossible thinking of love and happiness and is just for bringing to the icy light that floods the classroom where the characters are how humanity looks when it is perceived as such, without the idealizations of a tradition that tried to absurdly enhance existence with the supposition of a divine creation or of a transcendent spirituality and that in the particular case of women took them as the perfect embodiment of beauty and sublimity, which is why when Martha asks Thomas with a trembling voice why he had never told her that he slighted her, he answers that he was taught to see women as superior beings.[17] In other words, *what is in question here is the metaphysical identity of humanity and ideality* that Thomas cannot maintain anymore and that Martha cannot embody either, as her grimace shows unmistakably. Of course, sorrow is a fully human emotion that distorts the face and that does not mean at all that someone loses his humanity when he expresses it; what is at stake here is not then that, but the way the distortion agrees with the acknowledgement that one can tell the truth beyond or rather against the ideal value of humanity and of the so-called femininity. Is it a coincidence that the picture was shot precisely at the beginning of the 1960s, when the fall of a metaphysical vision of existence was reflected by the radical criticism of the traditional vision of woman?[18] Whatever the case, the scene leads the criticism to a very disconcerting dramatic outcome, for when one expects the characters to part company forever, Thomas asks Martha if she wants to go with him to the afternoon service whereat she replies asking him if he really wants her to or if it is just his fear that pushes him to ask it. These last words are axial, for they strengthen the relativity of the traditional values before an experience of the own finitude: love and mutual respect are

[17] It is very strange for me that no one had emphasised how the devastation of the metaphysical world leads somehow or other to the devastation of the ideality of woman in culture, which has doubtlessly been one of the props of the whole Western tradition.

[18] Concerning this, vide Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1993), above all p. 362 and ff.

perhaps unthinkable, but fear or one's own indignity to existence will always be the powerful reason to accept someone else however much he contradicts our innermost preferences.

It is needless to say that this *sui generis* resignation or rather submission to existence that betrays the idea of spirituality is all the more shocking because the characters at issue are a priest and a teacher, people who ought to be beyond the conflicts of the unwise ones, but the case is that they are not, and if they do not end up being utterly vile it is because they act in the greyness that winter light projects on everything and, above all, on the drive of an existence that demands to go on in spite of one's own weakness. Although God does not exist, fear and loneliness seize the human heart the same way and the great majority will surrender to them just like Martha and Thomas, whereby freedom, dignity or love are equally questionable. Now, this would hurl the characters into a dead end if there were not a possibility of standing the own "indignity" through the phenomenological correspondence of immanence and dependency. Oddly enough, the solution comes from the place where it could not be less expectable, from that Christianity that agreed with the worst idealization and that all of a sudden reveals itself as a way to accept the meanness of existence. This astonishing inversion of the matter takes place in the final scene of the picture, where Thomas and Martha arrive to a solitary church. In their way there, they have passed through Jonas's house so that Thomas tells the widow that her husband has committed suicide. When the woman, who is pregnant and has three little children waiting for her to dine in the next room, hears the bad news, she sits on the stairs and murmurs: "Then I am alone". No grief, no commotion, simply the consciousness of existence and of its inexorable determination. Loneliness, then, does not mean necessarily drama, and the sober attitude of the woman contrasts with the recurrent unbalance of the pastor, who, as we have already said, comments a moment later that he became ordained because his parents wanted him to. Having always lived so in the middle of abstractions, he by no means could have got the farsightedness of the woman that before the worst bale faces life the way it is. Furthermore, when they arrive to church and Thomas is alone in the vestry with the hunchbacked sexton, the latter tells him that he has been meditating on Christ's sufferings and that he thinks that they must have been above all psychological or moral, since the physical torture, although atrocious, lasted only some hours, whereas the most unbearable pain must have been "to know that nobody understands". After having lived years with His disciples, they deserted Him at the hour of His tribulation, and this awful loneliness, the sexton goes on, must have been the real reason of that famous phrase that Thomas has for his part repeated after Jonas left him: "God, why have you deserted me?" In the meantime, Martha waits alone in the nave, and in that point the organist arrives half drunk and advises her to leave the place while she still can do it and before she becomes trapped by the unavoidable greyness. When he goes to the vestry to see if there will be service, she kneels and murmurs with a vibrating voice: "If only we were confident enough to dare to show affection. If only we believe in a truth. If only we believe". Oddly enough, the sole confessed atheist of the place is who at the end evokes although with a worldly fervour the figure of the religiosity and of the love that Christianity is supposed

to stand for, which is why the winter light that falls upon her from the window and that on passing through the bars forms the image of the cross must not be mistaken with a sign of redemption, let alone with a sign of condemnation, but must be interpreted as a sign of comprehension that is mysteriously communicated to Thomas, who in the vestry also grasps it. Thus, when he comes out, kneels before the altar and before the empty church sings the praises of God wherewith the service begins, his image, which is the last one of the film, is not of a man illuminated by faith but that of a man that has seen existence for the firs time in the winter light. *Vale*.

The Moon as an Artistic Focus of the Illumination of Consciousness

Bruce Ross

Abstract In the well-know Flammarion engraving (1888) a kneeling man pushes through the threshold of the known universe, Earth, sun, moon, stars, to encounter a strange world of layers of fire, clouds, and suns, a mystical experience as well as an expression of consciousness itself. In *Zen-Brain Reflections, Reviewing Recent Developments in Meditation and States of Consciousness* (2006), James H. Austin notes that the moon, as a symbol of enlightenment, is the most frequent image in Buddhist poetry. This paper considers the Western and Eastern artistic representation of the moon, focusing on Caspar David Friedrich's "Two Men Contemplating the Moon"; Thomas Cole's "Moonlight"; Albert van der Neer's "Moonlit Landscape with Bridge"; Ando Hiroshige's "Kyoto Bridge by Moonlight" and "Autumn Moon over Tama River"; and, Shibata Zeshin's "Autumn Grasses in Moonlight," contrasting naturalistic representation with expressed aesthetic and spiritual modalities. Finally, this paper examines how both aspects of artistic representation are incorporated in the Japanese moon-viewing festival *Tsukimi* and in the rock garden of Ginkakuji Temple in Kyoto. In *Tsukimi* and Ginkakuji the harvest moon is celebrated and experienced at the nexus between the aesthetic and spiritual.

Keywords Consciousness • Enlightenment • Buddhist art and poetry • Romanticism • Moon

Eighty years and eight,
no craving, no attachment.
Let's go back home,
when the water clears,
the moon appears.
Tao-Ch'ien[1]

[1] *Zen Sourcebook, Traditional Documents from China, Korea, and Japan*, ed. Stephen Addiss, Stanley Lombardo, and Judith Roitman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2008), p. xvii.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_9

The well-known Flammarion engraving (1888) depicts a kneeling man at the edge of the known universe; a tree, plants, fields, a town, fields, an ocean, the sun, moon, and stars. On his knees and arms, as if in prayer, his head, right hand, and the top of his cane pass through the circular barrier of this universe. He views a strange other universe made up of bands of fire, clouds, a solar disc, and perhaps a full moon. He is having a mystical experience, reminiscent of Ezekiel's, with wheel-like forms at the upper left corner of this section of the other universe. The engraving moreover offers a metaphor of consciousness itself. A Zen prayer expresses the matter: "When all discrimination is abandoned, when contact with things is broken, the mind is brighter than sun and moon together, cleaner than frost and snow."[2] This paper examines, specifically, the moon as a symbol of consciousness and enlightenment. Like the sun, the moon was seen as a god or goddess and a marker of human time in the earliest cultures. The last two lines of the epigraph poem by the Chinese Taoist and Chan Buddhist Tao-Ch'ien (365–427), "when the water clears,/the moon appears", evokes the process of searching for inner truth, the moon's clarity, when mental confusion, the unclear water settles. Moreover, the moon as a phenomenological presence, has attracted emotional attention from spiritual practitioners, artists, poets, and laypersons, ancient and modern, attaching formulations of the inner workings of consciousness, the inner being, and external reality, the outer being.

James H. Austin, professor of clinical psychology and Zen practitioner, in a book on meditation and states of consciousness, suggests that the moon, as a symbol of enlightenment, is the most frequent image in Buddhist poetry.[3] In Japanese culture references to the moon are understood, unless otherwise indicated, to denote the autumn or harvest moon. The Buddhist monk Ryōkan (1758–1831) reveals a meditative state of detachment that is perhaps enhanced by such a moon in this poem:

A cold evening in my empty room.
Time flows by like incense smoke.
Outside my door, a thousand stalks of bamboo.
Above my bed, how many books?
The moon appears to whiten half my window.[4]

Ryōkan's detached state is explored further to distinguish between a form of pure objectivity and an aesthetic focus on the moon in this poem by Li Po (701–762):

Lying in bed I almost mistake
moonlight on the floor for frost.
Looking up I see the cold light,
Looking down I see only home.[5]

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[2] Zen Calendar (New York: Workman, 2011), January 10, 2012.

[3] James H. Austin, *Zen-Brain Reflections, Reviewing Recent Developments In Meditation and States of Consciousness* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 2006), pp. 403–457 and, for examples, pp. 459–463.

[4] *Zen Calendar* (New York: Workman, 2010), December 14, 2011.

[5] Doug Westendorp, *Bamboo Cottage* (blurb.com, 2010), up.

Li Po elucidates his heightened feeling by contrasting moonlight that has a literal and psychological transformative affect with the objective recording of his surroundings. The coldness of the moonlight would suggest a Taoist recluse experiencing what Zen Buddhists would call purity of mind as in this anonymous Zen poem:

My mind is
  like the autumn moon:
Shining bright, bright, reflected
  on the clear creek.[6]

The symbolism as an artistic rendering is found in the common Japanese calligraphic subject *enso* (literally "circle") that denotes Buddhist enlightenment drawn as a single-stroked circle. Thus Torei Enji (1721–1792), a disciple of the revered Zen master Hakuin and a Zen master himself from an early age, painted "Autumn Moon Enso." The *enso* is suspended in space like the autumn moon in the right side, the space reflecting stillness and the thick black *enso* expressing the inherent depth of wisdom symbolized by the moon.

Western Romanticism in its reaction to Classical rationalism and in its privileging of intuition and communion with nature analogously explored Taoist-like and Buddhist-like inspiration through moon imagery. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) in his poem "Frost at Midnight" expresses an experience similar to that of Ryōkan and Li Po:

'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme stillness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! (ll. 8–13)

; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
  Quietly shining to the quiet Moon. (ll. 70–74)[7]

European Romanticism as evidenced in the French Revolution and idealization of social structure as in the views of Rousseau underscored the freeing of individual consciousness and emphasized the almost spiritualized connection with nature, picking up issues of Neoplatonic emanation and the Logos, particularly in German thought, such as the theosophy of Jacob Boehme, which influenced Coleridge. The so-called Romantic epiphany and Wordsworthian "spots of time" emphasized a privileged moment of tranquility, such as in "Frost at Midnight." Moreover, the "interested disinterestedness" that began to characterize definitions of the aesthetic experience in some ways softened the Longinus-like sublime, where the natural world is underlined

[6] *A Zen Forest, Zen Sayings*, trans. Soiku Shigematsu (Buffalo: White Pine, 2004), p. 58.

[7] Coleridge, *Poems and Prose*, sel. Kathlene Raine (London: Penguin, 1957), pp. 74–76.

by connection to an elemental universal order. More or lesser embedding of such allegorical significance as well as extreme polarizations of artistic emotion privileged the nature of individual consciousness in heightened states like that of Coleridge's intense clarity of mind matches the absolute winter stillness of the world at midnight so that his poetic consciousness matches the serenity of the moon and moonlight shining on icicles in a kind of objective correlative. A support for an intuitive consciousness that underlies such heightened states is found in Coleridge's well-known definition of the primary imagination: "The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."[8] Modulations of such conceptions support a definite stream in the landscape painting of Europe and America.

Perhaps underlying the seeming return to nature as such of Romanticism was a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and urban landscapes overrun with the populace. These realities perhaps provoked a reinvention of an idealized past found in classical pastoral traditions and embedded with allegorical significance. Atmosphere was also accentuated by a reinvented medievalism which incorporated ruins into the landscapes as an icon of mystery. The leading figure of English Romantic landscape painting, Joseph William Turner (1775–1851), presented, additionally, meticulously detailed depictions of atmospheric effects in his paintings to also evoke grandeur and mystery. Accordingly the American Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902) evoked the grandeur of Western natural landscapes before the development of that section of the country. Approaching natural stillness as a kind of revelation of higher consciousness in Romantic landscapes, suggesting the Taoist and Buddhist clarity of mind in connection with the infinite Tao or Buddha consciousness, we find Coleridge's "infinite I AM" and Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Oversoul." The intent of this stillness is found in the often peopleless American landscapes and seascapes of John Frederick Kensett (1816–1872) and Marshfield Heade (1819–1904) in which the almost pure objectivity of treatment reflects the union of artistic imagination and the lucidity of higher consciousness. The intent here is thus beyond or underlies aesthetic issues of beauty and the picturesque.

The moon could easily be made to symbolize such consciousness. The German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) thus made at least three versions of a landscape painting featuring two figures looking at the moon. In the last version, "Two Men Contemplating the Moon" (c. 1825–1830), two men have come up a woods path to an overlook where they contemplate the moon. To their immediate right, replacing the ruin of Romantic medievalism as a symbol of temporality, is an old tree which is partially uprooted. The moon is hazy in a hazy sky with a bright crescent of light on its right side and a thin continuation of light on its left. The moon here is perhaps suggestive of the mystery of internal illumination and the possibility of higher consciousness.

Friedrich's painting may be compared to the daylight landscape "Kindred Spirits" (1849) by Asher Durand (1801–1848) a member of the American Hudson

[8] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Elizabeth Schneider (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 268.

River School. In the painting two figures, based on Thomas Cole, the leader of that group, and the poet William Cullen Bryant, stand on a small overlook surrounded by dense forest and above a river and falls, the object of their attention, exhibiting American Transcendentalism and Emerson's "fundamental unity" between human consciousness and nature. In Cole's "Moonlight" (1833–1834) the European pastoral idiom is reworked. Under a bright full moon a landscape is dominated by a distant mountain, perhaps symbolizing the remoteness of internal illumination, and a tower, the stand-in for a medieval ruin. The pastoral idiom is completed with sheep and two conversing shepherds. The moonlight illuminates the top of the tower, a patch of a small pond from which a sheep is drinking, the area in which the shepherds and sheep rest, part of a gravestone with a cross on top, a section of the mound on which the tower is built, and the distant mountain, all suggestive of the evident allegorical intent. The shepherds are not looking at the moon, but a lone tiny figure with a tiny shadow seems to have paused on a path to look at the moon. In sum this illustration of Christian allegory is not illustrative of the Hudson River School treatment of representational natural imagery and the play of light to evoke the idea of the sublime as his later paintings, like "Kindred Spirits" do, but it approaches them in the intent of illustrating the sublime.

An example from the Golden Age of Dutch painting which precedes such Romantic or quasi-Romantic attempts at evening landscapes is "Moonlit Landscape with Bridge" (c. 1648–1650) by Aert van der Neer (1603/1604–1677). The painting emphasizes the treatment of a representational scene with perhaps hints of allegory, on the right in darkness two figures with moonlit faces talking under some trees, a cemetery in almost total darkness at the lower right and left, and some figures crossing a darkened bridge toward a darkened town. None of the figures are looking at the full moon, the brightest thing in the painting aside from moonlight under the bridge. The moonlight that brightens the couple's face also brightens the façade of a building, perhaps a church. The objective detachment that dominates the painting nonetheless offers a sense of hominess that seems the subject here. The moon's presence is probably an aesthetic accent rather than an expression of higher consciousness as in Romantic landscapes.

The Eastern, particularly Japanese, representation of the moon in landscape art is embedded with as deep an underscore of intended meaning as much Western allegorical landscapes, both conveying subtexts of aesthetics bordering higher consciousness. Ando Hiroshige (1797–1858) is a renowned practitioner of *ukiyo-e* (literally"pictures of the floating world") woodblock prints. The implication behind *ukiyo-e* is the transiency of existence, often through depictions of the pleasure quarters of Japan. Hiroshige made many series of studies of well-known localities, one study in his *Eight Views of the Environs of Yedo* (1837–1838) is "Autumn Moon over Tama River." The fishermen in the foreground and mid-ground are tending to their work and do not see the bright moon which is partially covered by weeping willow branches. It is moonrise or moonset. In the distance beyond the river is a line of faint mountains. In the right foreground bending over the river is the willow tree and a line of pampas grass likewise bending over the river. In the extreme foreground a standing fisherman is bathed in moonlight. Above the scene is the moon,

the brightest thing in the scene. In Japanese traditional sensibility the cycle of life is based on seasonal occurrence. So the imagery of the full moon would automatically be associated with harvest and autumn rituals, such as moon viewing, wind festivals, the autumn equinox, and harvest festivals.[9] "Autumn Moon over Tama River" could easily represent Autumn for an artistic rendering of the four seasons so common in Oriental art. As Ezra Pound stated somewhere, the image is always the adequate symbol. This is especially true in Japan where the moon in fact is a god, Tsukuyomi, brother to the sun goddess Amaterasu and the embodiment of a complex of associations in autumn. So too, the bending grasses are a kind of synecdoche for the season. Like the people crossing a bridge in Neer's painting, the fishermen are merely doing their seasonal activities, though they are also, in Hiroshige's case, a kind of synecdoche for autumn itself as the full moon, in a sense, is the embodiment of autumn.

The traditional Buddhist representation of the moon as a symbol of enlightened consciousness appears in Japanese art, such as Shibata Zeshin's (1807–1891) screen painting "Autumn Grasses in Moonlight" (c. 1872–1891). Here darkened wild grasses hang over the full moon which dominates the work in terms of brightness and size. On the ends of some of the grasses hang insects which are highlighted by the moon. Although insects are a favored subject of Zeshin and the moon image here supplies the central decorative component for an autumn night scene, the moon's representation of Buddhist enlightened consciousness is certainly suggested.

Hiroshige's "Kyoto Bridge by Moonlight" from *100 Views of Famous Places in Edo* (1855) documents the autumn festival of moon viewing, with all the embedded symbolism inherent in the autumn moon. Various people are crossing a bridge under the full bright moon in the upper right. A fisherman is poling his boat down the river. Not one of the people is looking at the moon. Behind the bridge in relative darkness a line of tree tops creates a diagonal in the upper two thirds. The bright pale yellow moon accords with the shiny blue river and sky to define the emotion of the work, perhaps abstracting the Buddhist balance of enlightened consciousness where form and emptiness are the same. That this is a portrait of *Tsukimi* (literally "moon viewing"), the autumn moon-viewing holiday, is evidenced by the small procession of people coming from the right side of the bridge. Two of them are carrying pampas grass (*susuki*), a traditional activity during the holiday. The grasses will be displayed where the moon watching event takes place. In the home pampas grass along with chestnuts and rice dumplings serve as seasonal decoration and as an offering to the full autumn moon in support of its beauty and the harvest received. *Tsukimi*, which perhaps began in the Heian period (794–1185) when members of the court would recite poetry while moon-viewing, is also directed at Tsukiyomi (literally "moon reading"), the god of the moon and possibly the harvest.

In Japanese folklore, moreover, a rabbit is supposed to inhabit the moon. In the awning of a Shinto shrine in Matsuyama, therefore, one finds an image of a rabbit swimming in waves, symbols of the moon and moonbeams. During the festival *mochi*, fried rice cake, is also eaten. So near the same shrine is a billboard of cartoon-like rabbits preparing *mochi*. The liveliness and awe provoked by

[9] *A Handbook of Living Religions*, ed. John H. Hinnells (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 380.

the festival is expressed by the Vietnamese poet Thich Nhat Hahn in his poem "Fall Moon Festival":

> Friend, what are you waiting for?
> The bright moon shines above us.
> There are no clouds tonight.
> Why bother to ask about lamps and fire?
> Why talk about cooking dinner?
> Who is searching and who is finding?
> Let us just enjoy the moon, all night. (ll. 16–22)[10]

Recorded somewhere the Japanese haiku master Bashō who trained in Zen Buddhist meditation was asked about choosing between complete Buddhist practice and haiku writing. He responded that is was too late to choose because he was addicted to haiku. The relation between the spiritual and aesthetic in the context of the Japanese relation to the moon is explored in Kyoto in the Zen temple Ginkaku-ji. One of its gardens, a stone garden, includes cones of sand that reflect moonlight to enhance the beauty of the garden, the raked lines of stone perhaps shimmering with moonlight. The Chinese Zen poet Han-shan (730?–850?) perhaps resolves the universal aesthetic and spiritual enchantment with the moon in one of his untitled poems:

> My heart is like the autumn moon
> perfectly bright in the deep green pool
> nothing can compare with it
> you tell me how it can be explained[11]

At its simplest, the enchantment comes from the mysterious way, call it beauty or call it awe or call it enlightenment, that the moon heightens a part of our consciousness through what the Japanese call *aware*, a kind of deep pathos that draws us to the things of the world.

The preeminent Japanese critic of Japanese poetry, Ōoka Makoto, refers to such a union with the moon as "an altered state of mind" in his example of a poem by Kithahara Hakushu (1885–1942) and translated by Janine Beichman:

> Tsukiyomi-wa
> hikari sumitsutsu
> to ni maseri
> kaku omou ware ya
> mizu no goyokaru
> The moon god's light
> outside
> is bright and clear
> and I who think this
> am like water[12]

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[10] Thich Nhat Hahn, *Call Me by My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hahn* (Berkeley: Parallax, 1994), p. 145.

[11] *Cold Mountain Poems, Zen Poems of Han Shan, Shih Te, and Wang Fan*-chih), trans. J. P. Seaton (Boston: Shambhala), p. 24.

[12] Ōoka Makoto, *A Poet's Anthology, The Range of Japanese Poetry*, trans. Janine Beichman (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Katydid Books, 1994), p. 150.

Here is the aesthetic essence of a heightened poetic moment, the author fusing with the moon in this tanka, and, at the same time, expressing the spiritual connection with the Japanese moon god and the Shinto values of purity through lustration.

The Sky's the Limit: Art and the Idea of Infinity

Brian Grassom

I am free because I am the soul-bird
That flies in Infinity-Sky

– Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose (Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, "*The Soul-Bird*", The Dance of Life, 20 parts (New York: Agni Press, 1973), Part 2.)

Abstract The idea of infinity is a natural one. We know, of course, of mathematical infinity – the infinity of numbers: an idea that is familiar to mathematicians, and anathema to physicists because it is a non-answer to problems of astro-physics. Mathematical infinity here represents either an endless series of numbers, or a theoretical impasse. In philosophy, the idea of infinitude is a metaphysical concept that is linked to transcendence. For modern thought, transcendence itself is problematic, as it is implicit to logo-centrism, and therefore fundamental to the notion of a fixed position with regard to any question of truth. There is an underlying paradox here that was explored at great length by two of the last century's most innovative writers on philosophy – Derrida and Levinas. This paradox, far from indicating a conceptual impasse, and interpreted instead as *aporeia*, may be the means to open the way to infinity not as limited being or non-being, but as an essential quality of the human psyche.

Phenomenology, which inspired Derrida and Levinas both positively and critically, has at its source the notion of a human consciousness that is potentially infinite in its scope. It is this appurtenance that I wish to develop, and by relating it to art as essential paradox, to reveal in art the possibility of a means of experiencing infinity not only as a concept, but also as an inner reality.

Keywords Infinity • Eternity • Cosmology • Art • Levinas • Derrida

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_10

John Constable. *Study of Clouds*. 1822. Frick Collection, New York

When we look up at the sky during the day, we get a feeling of immensity, of vastness, and often the sensation of a beyond that we can't quite grasp. Even, or perhaps especially, when towering clouds range across the sky, we can have that feeling. If we are fortunate to be in a place where there is little artificial light pollution, then at night – if it is a reasonably clear one – we can gaze out into a vast ocean of numberless stars, and be filled with wonder. The writer, thinker, and explorer Sir Laurens Van der Post, with his dying breath whispered in his native Afrikaans: "die sterre" (the stars). What he meant by this, we cannot know, and may only imagine.

Down through the ages, humanity has interpreted the sky in a variety of ways. These interpretations in themselves are phenomena that are worth more than a little study, for if seen in a detached way, they can reveal much to us: and this revelation in turn means perceiving our consciousness – in whatever mode – not only as a given of the objective world, but arising from and directed from within.

By utilizing the phenomenological *epoché* we can suspend and examine not only whatever has conditioned our perception of the universe in the past, but also what conditions it in the present. This examination is not so much analysis, but rather a passive observation, a deeper knowing. From that point of view we soon realize that we are in a sense – and have always been – free to make of the universe everything that we have made of it. Or again, one might say we are free to perceive everything that the universe *can be*; and thereby perhaps get a glimpse of what it really *is*. This freedom used wisely, I would venture to say, is the basis not only of creativity, but of the experience of our true inner existence.

What has this to do with art? Art deals with experience. Experience might be said to be of two kinds, inner and outer. Our experience of the world and of life in general is inextricably bound up with our experience of our inner self, so much so that often we cannot tell one from the other, or perhaps cannot even perceive the existence of an 'inner self'. One might say that art moves between the inner and the outer world: it experiences one by means of the other, and moves towards resolving

their tension in a meaningful relationship. Now this relationship corresponds to another one, one that has been for centuries a philosophical theme – that of the finite to the infinite. Through critically exploring this relation, and its workings within art, both thematically and affectively, it may be possible to illumine the essence of what art *is*, and to bring infinity within reach of our conscious experience.

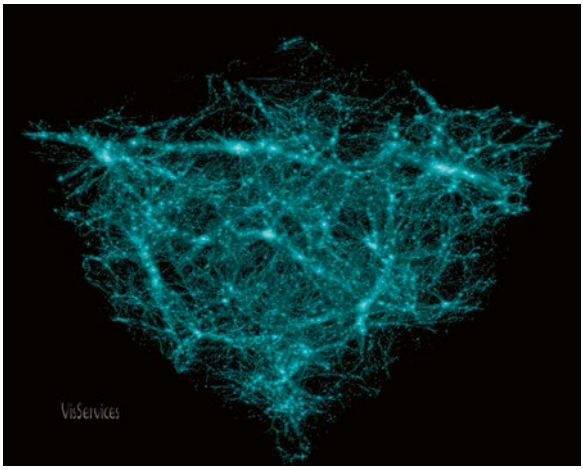
Of Specious Origin

S. Brunier. *Andromeda Galaxy*. European Southern Observatory

Contemporary astronomical physics is in a quandary. The current cosmological view is founded on the theory of the 'big bang' and the birth of space-time: the existence of space-time and the vastness of its contents of galaxy upon galaxy, eon upon eon, began in a minute point, and is still expanding – perhaps at an accelerating rate.

This view was initially challenged by some cosmologists because it seemed to allow religious concepts to re-enter scientific theory – namely, the idea of a 'genesis' of creation – when for centuries science had been moving steadily away from the idea of a God-centred material universe, as an anthropocentric and non-scientific construct. Now, the 'big-bang' theory is being superseded by the idea of the 'multiverse', a collection of 'universes' each with its own life-cycle and the ability to generate other universes before its eventual demise: a regeneration process that may occur through black holes – which it now seems are much more numerous than originally thought. This view concurs to some extent with what we know (or don't know) about quantum physics, and has led some physicists to speculate on the possible existence of many other worlds in parallel dimensions.

The paradigm shift has been caused by the discovery of 'dark matter', theoretically necessary to account for gravitational effects apparent in recent stellar observations where there is not enough visible or detectable matter to produce the gravity required. Maps have been made which show a digitally calculated universe complete with its pattern of 'dark matter' that, interestingly, makes the whole look remarkably like a painting by Jackson Pollock.



Amit Chourasia, Steve Cutchin. *Dark matter visualization*. NPACI Visualization Services

Notwithstanding the thought that Pollock may have arrived here first by way of intuition,[1] for the Western scientific mind a system of multi-verses is, despite its potential, yet a system: and a system implies wholeness, oneness, totality – indeed what we previously knew as a 'universe' – with an implied boundary, and thus essentially finite. The problem is that recent discoveries do not fit with such a model. Indeed, in a recent television documentary[2] a renowned physicist remarked that science was currently "having a nervous breakdown" in trying to cope with these developments, along with what we know (or again, don't know) about quantum physics, and the combined disruptive ramifications for what were until now solidly established principles in physics and mathematics.

The problem is that when we speak of a temporal and spatial beginning and end, and then seek to go beyond these, it seems that the edge of space and time presents an almost insurmountable obstacle to the human mind, even when scientifically construed

[1] I have written elsewhere about Pollock's abstract 'drip' paintings, and conjectured on their relationship to the concepts of totality and infinity. See Grassom, B., "Framing Totality" in: *Art as a Narrative of Alterity* (available online: https://openair.rgu.ac.uk/handle/10059/468 [Robert Gordon University]).

[2] BBC Television, *Who's Afraid of a Big Black Hole?* (2009). The scientist being interviewed was Dr. Michio Kaku of the City University of New York.

as 'space-time'. Outside of this it would appear that there is only nothingness,[3] which for the human mind is impenetrable, and is largely accepted as such. What science is really grappling with here in our modern age is the idea of a boundless material universe, without the possible horizon of an exterior 'nothing'.

It is important here to remember that in some ancient philosophies, the universe is taken to be truly boundless, a concept until now quite alien to modern scientific thought. And moreover these ancient ideas of a boundless existence resonate with some modern philosophical discourse, as well as with the present difficulties of science. It may, for example, be germane to remember what Plato has Parmenides say about the "one":

> Then the one, having neither beginning nor end, is unlimited?[4]

Parallel to this observation of Parmenides – from the Greek proto-philosophical tradition, the tradition that predates not only our Western philosophy but also our science – is the idea from the *Upanishads* of ancient India, of God, or *Brahman*, who is both creator and creation, as the "one without a second".[5]

What is actually at issue here are the concepts of infinity and eternity. The concept of a material universe without beginning and end is not a new one. The Greeks tended to see it in just this way. The philosophy of ancient India speaks of an eternal cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction. And of course in medieval scholasticism Eternity and Infinity were believed to be absolutes, comprehended only by God, and beyond the scope of human reasoning. How can these ideas – infinity and eternity – which so far in our history have a reality only in the human imagination, in religious doctrine, or philosophical speculation – be considered by the modern, sophisticated, secular or scientific mind to be realities? Perhaps the answer, for the moment, will not be established by science, but rather indicated elsewhere – as Jacques Derrida puts it – in the "margins of philosophy"[6]: And also, perhaps, both idiosyncratically and by extension, within what we know in our culture as 'art'.

I have suspended the word 'art' here because in the line that we are pursuing, what we think as being 'art' may – like the notion of a finite universe – turn out to be problematic, inasmuch as by thinking 'art' as a categorical object we fail to appreciate its significance[7] *in actu*. The true meaning of art, according to this proposal, is beyond

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[3] I have speculated elsewhere upon the idea that perhaps nothingness is after all a 'something', and as such is not at all beyond our potential experience: and I have related this idea to that of 'infinity', inasmuch as they are both indefinitely extensive and are possessed of an absolute otherness, or alterity. See note 2 above, Grassom, B., "Nothingness and Infinity" in: *op. cit*.

[4] Plato, "Parmenides", *Dialogues*, trans. B. Jowett (Chicago: William Benton, 1952), [137], p. 492.

[5] *Chandogya Upanishad. 6:2:1*.

[6] *Margins of Philosophy* is the title of a book – a collection of essays – by Derrida (trans. A. Bass, Chicago University Press, 1982) in which he examines the limits of philosophical discourse as a boundary in perpetual *aporeia*.

[7] 'Thinking' – in the context of this paper – must be seen as limited by its own economy, its own mechanics. That thought can be transcended would mean that it is indeed limited, or perhaps that there could be other ways of thinking that may extend greatly the possibilities and potential of the human mind.

even the identity 'art'; a transcendence *nonpareil*: indeed that art *is* transcendence. But let me try to explain this rationally.

Infinity Is That. Infinity Is This[8]

Putting eternity to one side for a moment (if indeed that is possible?), although the two are interrelated, for the purposes of this brief paper I would like to concentrate upon the idea of infinity: and as we shall see the word 'idea' is of some special importance. Like eternity, infinity is something that the human mind finds possible to conceptualize not only theoretically, as in mathematics, but also as a philosophical theme, through reason and imagination. It is surely reason and imagination that Descartes invokes when he meditates:

> And even though I have an idea of a substance, from the very fact that I am a substance myself, it would not, however, be an idea of an infinite substance, because I am finite, unless it originated from some substance that is genuinely infinite.[9]

Emmanuel Levinas saw in Descartes' *Meditations* a constant address to what he calls the "other" as opposed to the "same". That is to say, that Descartes allows for a perfection that is not yet attained by his own nature, in order to explain where such an idea of perfection might come from. The modern philosophical mind of Hegel saw the difficulty in this, because infinity – as a transcendent other – would therefore simply be another object of the mind, and therefore not infinite at all – as it should be – but ultimately delimited and finite. Levinas' infinity actually corresponds with this "bad infinite" as described by Hegel,[10] who reasoned that the "true" infinite must be capable of subsuming the finite, merging it with itself in a kind of positive negativity. But for Levinas, infinity is not an all-encompassing conceptual entity, nor does it subsume and consume the finite into its totality, as that would be to reduce both the finite and the infinite to the appropriation of the "same": for him it is important that the transcendent infinity actually does transcend *in actu* as the absolutely other to what is open to a concept, and outside, or beyond, being of any kind. To put it another way, Hegel proposes a kind of "infinity"[11] of "undifferentiated being", an "overwhelming" of the individual's finitude, which becomes a tiny part of infinity. For Levinas, however, it is important that the finite being maintains a *relation* to the infinite, which for its part remains absolutely other. They are indeed both part of the same thing, or more properly speaking perhaps – as we

[8] I am quoting here a text from the *Isa and Brihadarunyaka Upanishad* – "Infinity is that, infinity is this. Out of infinity, infinity has come into existence. From infinity, when infinity is taken away, infinity remains."

[9] Descartes, *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*, trans. D. M. Clarke (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 38.

[10] Wyschogrod, E., *Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics* (Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 239.

[11] Ibid.

shall see – the same person, but retain their unique characteristics of finite and infinite. This immediately implies a different way of thinking that is not based on knowledge as appropriation, but paradoxically on an essentially human – and one might say individual – relationship of *intimacy*.

Thus Levinas' infinite – like that of Descartes – is immanent to the finite whilst *at the same time*, in some way transcendent but approachable. And the finite maintains its own existence in the face of the infinite, each without binding the other. But whereas Descartes justifies his proposition by reference to a perfect God, giving equal credibility to his supposition of God's existence and perfection through what he is in other matters able to comprehend "clearly and distinctly (…) by the natural light of reason",[12] Levinas sees in Descartes' relationship of the finite and the infinite a subtle acquiescence of the human will to power. Descartes justifies the existence of God through reason – but a God, who despite or even because of His transcendent goodness and perfection, is for Levinas yet a 'Being', and therefore an extension of the human limitations of will and self-interest; thus Levinas starts with an existential atheism and reasons for the existence of something absolutely 'other' to the human will to knowledge and power, to the concept of totality implicit to Hegel, and even to the idea of God as a being. Only then can there arise the possibility of an alternative to the existential interest that will always put ontology before ethics, the will to knowledge before the gift of individuation, self before the other: which are all the subtle perpetuation of the economy of the "same".

Here we may be able to turn to Eastern philosophy to ascertain how this alternative may be thought. The play between the 'same' and the 'other', which defines the issue, is precisely that between the self and the world. Simply put:

> There is only one Being, and that is the infinite and all-pervading 'I' (…) ego comes from separativity (…) where is the ego? It is gone – vanished within our mutual, divine, and universal feeling of oneness.[13]

This may sound a little like Hegel's "true infinite", and in the use of words such as "being" is illustrative of the dangers of drawing parallels between the cultural *differends* of the East and West, but it is useful to stress here that the writer states that he sees, or feels, this oneness with the "heart's eye", and not with the mind's complicated conceptuality. The key is "oneness": and in this case the "heart's" oneness. I see you, talk to you, and feel your presence, and I can identify with you, as not only the 'same', but also as a singular differentiated 'other'. And this communication of two individuated entities cannot, according to Levinas, logically occur outside of "sameness" without the agency of something – one might say the absolute "Other" – that exists within and between us, and at the same time *is* both of us, expressed above as "the

[12] Descartes, op. cit., pp. 38–43. Descartes reasons that God is perfect and that he exists, because an obviously imperfect being such as himself could not conceive of anything perfect unless that did exist independently, and only a perfect being could initiate the idea of such a being in an imperfect one. This is similar to Levinas' notion of the "desire for the invisible" (see note 14 below) that he identifies in human nature, and is presumably derived from a critique of Descartes.

[13] Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, *Beyond Within: a collection of writings 1964–1974* (New York: Aum Publications, 1975), p. 399.

infinite and all-pervading 'I'". This would be, for Levinas, a kind of "infinity" of "proximity"[14] to the finite, and the basis of ethics and of transcendence. To truly realize this (and it is surely not that difficult, for we deal with it consciously and unconsciously every day) is to automatically transcend and confound all that we know – or think that we know – about objects that are separate in space, and bound by time. A profound and universal truth, intrinsic to the entire creation, is present and revealed – as Levinas sought to show through all his work – in the most simple and basic workings of our relationship with humanity and the world. And if we cannot find it there, it will forever remain simply a dream.

Art, Dream, and Threshold

That dream, however, is important. It is what Levinas calls "the *idea* of infinity",[15] in the sense that Descartes alludes to. This "idea" is part of the "desire for the invisible".[16] It is for Levinas an innate acknowledgement of the finitude of finite knowledge, or knowledge as possession, and that which draws us on to discover something higher and deeper.

> The production of the infinite entity is inseparable from the idea of infinity, for it is precisely in the disproportion between the idea of infinity and the infinity of which it is the idea that this exceeding of limits is produced. The idea of infinity is the mode of being, the infinition, of infinity. Infinity does not first exist, and *then* reveal itself. (…) Hence intentionality, where thought remains an *adequation* with the object, does not define consciousness at its fundamental level. All knowing qua intentionality already presupposes the idea of infinity, which is preeminently *non-adequation*.[17]

The ultimate knowledge is infinity, and infinity cannot be known: an *aporeia*. In the work of Jacques Derrida, the theme of the impasse is a recurring one. As *aporeia* Derrida sees it not as an ineluctable end, but rather as a threshold before something altogether other. For Derrida, this alterity is not a nothing, a bleak negativity, but something fecund, and full of possibility. It marks a margin, perhaps, beyond which we might be able to view all things in an affirmative light, not the 'light' of logocentric truth as opposed to opinion, or reason to the irrational, or order to chaos. But that which is in a sense an *epoché* of absolutely everything we thought that we knew up until that moment. Here, the 'idea' of infinity is arguably no longer an idea, but a light that illumines everything through the surrender of knowledge and power – a state of suspension indeed – where perhaps all thought could be likened to stars moving across a day-lit sky, a boundless universe of meaning.

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[14] Levinas, E., *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. M. B. Smith (London: Athlone Press, 1999), p. 75.

[15] My italics.

[16] Levinas, E., *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), pp. 33–35.

[17] Ibid., pp. 26–27.

> As for what begins then – beyond absolute knowledge – unheard-of thoughts are required, sought for across the memory of old signs.[18]

Where does art come into this? Beyond even its representation, as Adorno says, the work of art "desires identity with itself",[19] not with something else in the manner of all other empirical representations. It may present itself as "semblance",[20] a semblance we know cannot be real, according to Plato. And yet it is most certainly a reality of some kind. This signing of itself as something real that it cannot be draws our attention in a unique way to what it is *not*, and therefore to what it really *is*.

The sign, as Derrida maintains, always signifies another sign. An artwork may appear to signify or represent something directly, or signify only itself – neither of which is possible according to this maxim. This appearance of signification then must mean that it deliberately and consciously signifies something *other* than itself or what it represents, rather than only signifying itself or unconsciously signifying another sign. By signifying something *other* than itself, or what it may represent, one can argue that it therefore *transcends*.

Jacques Rancière makes this point in another way when he describes art's ability to "speak twice over". Here he is referring to the work of post-structuralism that has demonstrated philosophy's inability to do so. Philosophy can only speak once, and the truth it tries to capture escapes; it is "under erasure" as Derrida would say, because of the duality of propositional thought, which represents the will to possess knowledge. Art, however, has another role for Rancière:

> Critical art has to negotiate between the tension which pushes art towards 'life' as well as that which, conversely, sets aesthetic sensorality apart from the other forms of sensory experience. It has to borrow the connections that foster political intelligibility from the zones of indistinction between art and the other spheres. And from the solitude of the work it has to borrow the sense of a sensible heterogeneity which feeds political energies of refusal. It is this negotiation between the forms of art and those of non-art which makes it possible to form combinations of elements capable of speaking twice over; on the basis of their legibility and on the basis of their illegibility.[21]

Although, or perhaps because, Rancière formulates his thinking through the discourse of politics, the principle is foundationally sound.[22] Art is beyond the appropriation of any logocentric ideas or positions, because in fact its very essence – its *raison d'être* – is to transcend such conditions. Indeed, one might say that art *is*

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[18] Derrida, J., *Speech and Phenomena,* trans. D. Allison (Chicago, Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 102.

[19] Adorno, T. W., *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone Press, 1999), p. 4. See also: Baldacchino, J., *Art's Way Out: Exit Pedagogy and the Cultural Condition* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012) p. 69. Dr. Baldacchino here cites Adorno to skilfully argue a case for the alterity of art to education and culture.

[20] Adorno, T. W., *op. cit*., pp. 100–118.

[21] Rancière, J., *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. S. Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 46. I am indebted to Dr. John Baldacchino for highlighting Rancière's notion of art's "capability of speaking twice over", and to Jim Hamlyn for discussing its meaning.

[22] See also Baldacchino, J., *op. cit.* Exactly the same principle is applied in art's relation to art education.

the transcendence of those conditions by its own means. This does not mean that art is a negative movement, or a positive one in relation to what we might call 'reality': it somehow encompasses both, is immanent to them in their workings, but at the same time transcends the dual nature of immersion in that 'reality'. It does this through its ability to move between the outer world and the inner world without the constraints of the 'knowledge' that it is impossible to do so.

Back to Earth, and Art as Infinite

This may be illustrated, in a rather obvious and perhaps unlikely way, with reference to a painting by Gerard van Honthorst, a seventeenth-century Dutch artist.

Gerard van Honthorst. *Adoration of the Shepherds*. 1622. Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne

If we disregard for a moment the artistic merits or otherwise of this painting in a possible hierarchy of art, and concentrate on what it represents; and further we also accept the narrative either as real and/or mythical[23]; what we have before us is a rather homely rendition of the biblical story of the nativity of Christ, and his being encountered by local shepherds – the first people apart from his parents to be on the scene. What the artist has attempted to show is the coming of divinity to humanity in the form of a child: a human child. The only sign of his supra-natural source is the white glow emanating from him, and lighting the scene in *Caravaggisti* style. From a theological

[23] Much interesting research has been done in this area – the boundary between historical fact and myth in relation to science and religious doctrine and belief – in the work of René Girard.

point of view, it might be said that Infinity has come into contact with the finite, or God has become man. God still remains God, as the Father, but is also man as the Son. The Infinite remains infinite, but is now made manifest through its proper relation with the finite: moreover it is a relationship of intimacy, of proximity. Somehow the painter has caught just that feeling, in the intimacy of the scene. Here is not the overwhelming of individuality by a totality, however benign. It is the expression of oneness, taking into account the finitude of the finite, and its relationship with the infinite. If we can clear our minds of the prejudices we may hold for or against religion, the point is amply made here with clarity and simplicity, and a very human touch.

Now leaving aside the narrative (which is difficult to do), the painting presents us with its own qualities, and reveals infinity in another way. Light, form, and colour combine in a style we recognize pictorially as the sign and nexus of a particular historical and painterly aesthetic. This lends it a certain "aura" as Walter Benjamin would have noted, and this is true even if we exclude its generic origin in ritual, or integrate that aspect into the whole.[24] Included in this aura would be its cultural inference as high art, its belonging to a museum, its inclusion in history and its historicity, and its depiction of a story that resonates within that mode of cultural consciousness. Added to these we have the magical representation of anatomically sound figures, in a tableau of warm light and colour. The figures, in their studied realism and everydayness, are yet unique in themselves, each with their own common gesture and pose, but replete with drama for all their naturalness. The whole is well composed, and skilfully executed. All of this together gives it the aura of a work of art – and this 'art' in turn presents itself as something 'more' than empirical object, illustration, or even aesthetic medium. If we take it altogether, the artwork is an object that while relating to itself and what it represents is always also something 'other' to those relations. Our eye can wander round the painting, marvelling at this colour combination, that shadow, the paint texture, the implied depth, those clothes, faces, hands and emotions – and see them as finite indeed. Certainly, they are, but their very finitude, their familiarity, their commonality, is magnified and transfigured. It rebounds upon us in our own finitude, and opens us to infinity.

In this way art, whatever the subject might be – and here we have the subject making perhaps an unintentional or unconscious philosophical point within the liturgy and lore of religion, but importantly it could just as equally be abstract and secular – takes our finite experience, that of the everyday or of the unusual, and by turning it back upon itself and emphasising both its materiality and the impossibility of its closure, opens it up to transcendence.

Art is at once finite and infinite.[25]

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[24] Benjamin, W., "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in: *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999). As Adorno points out "Aura is not only – as Benjamin claimed – the here and now of the artwork, it is whatever goes beyond its factual givenness, its content; one cannot abolish it and still want art. Even demystified artworks are more than what is literally the case": Adorno, T. W., *op. cit*., p. 45.

[25] Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, *Art's Life and the Soul's Light* (Online: http://www.srichinmoylibrary.com/books/0151 under "Alvin" [Vasudeva Server]).

This is true of any painting or work of art: indeed, it is arguably the quality *par excellence* that qualifies it as art. It places before us our experience of the world, sensory, emotional, intelligible, intuitive, in the suspension of detachment, without judgement, but felt as experience transformed. To do this it uses finite materials, and it takes these very materials – such as paint, stone, film, plastic – and by emphasising their materiality, transforms them into something "more"[26] than their empirical reality. In other words we are introduced to the experience of the finite as party to the infinite, or infinity through the finitude of the finite. There is play here, paradox, and often irony, for without that there would be no interest. Eastern philosophy again:

> The finite wants to reach the Absolute, the Highest, which is the Infinite. The Infinite wants to manifest itself in and through the finite. Then the game is complete. Otherwise it will be only a one-sided game. There will be no true joy, no achievement, no fulfilment.[27]

This also brings to mind the thoughts of Simone de Beauvoir:

> Regardless of the staggering dimensions of the world about us, the density of our ignorance, the risks of catastrophes to come, and our individual weakness within the immense collectivity, the fact remains that we are absolutely free today if we choose to will our existence in its finiteness, a finiteness which is open on the infinite.[28]

Art through its self-conscious finitude is open to that infinity.

[26] Adorno, T. W., *op. cit*., p. 78.

[27] Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose, *Beyond Within*, *op. cit.,* p. 452.

[28] De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, (Online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/index.htm "Conclusion", [Corbett, B., Webster University]).

From the Infinitesimal to the Infinite: Rolando Briseño's *Celestial Tablescapes*

Scott A. Sherer

Abstract Rolando Briseño's paintings, photographic constructions, and public art installations disallow distinction between cultural critique and the mysteries of nature. He juxtaposes desire as a generator of individual and cultural motivations with frameworks that generate quantum activity, plant and animal reproduction, and cosmic energy. Briseño incorporates imagery of foodstuffs and pigment from actual culinary spices in order to present the rituals of commercially produced food and the shared meal relative to the consequences of centuries of global trade. The pleasures of meals extend from enjoying the fruits of the natural landscape to discussion of the cultural politics of Chicano identity. With reference to scientific knowledge and ancient and modern history, Briseño's series *Celestial Tablescapes* (2007) examines interactions in present circumstances, explores their complex historical origins, and suggests their unknown future potential. This essay considers the work of Marcel Merleau-Ponty and Michel Foucault relative to Briseño's cultural work.

Keywords Cultural history • Visual art • Tablescapes • Sexuality • Rolano Briseño

In the series of photographic constructions entitled *Celestial Tablescapes* (2007), Rolando Briseño (b. 1952) arranges mixed-race nude figures, tropical fruits and flowers, and mobile phones on tablecloths that rest on images of the heavens. The cosmos functions as metaphor for considerations of diverse themes of nature and desire. This series extends across genres of the nude and the still life and is the outcome of the interplay of discourses of sexuality and desire, colonialism and globalism, and contemporary critiques of race and ethnicity. Briseño's references to the cosmos suggest arguments that multiple social, cultural, and aesthetic experiences and investigations are as mobile, as ancient and transitory, as the lights in the night sky. This essay explores the character of a phenomenological bricolage that respects coordinates of history and experience as both specific and fractured.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_11

Briseño illustrates central problematics that are indicative of today's contemporary contexts in which critical thinking and creative activity integrate phenomenological and cultural perspectives. He presents circumstances of experience as complex negotiations of historical constellations relative to the indeterminacy embedded in variations of shifting intention among multiple comparative analyses, and he emphasizes the excess in natural dimensions of the environment that may generate unexpected situations. Briseño's work inspires investigations that respect cultural history as well as theories of subjectivity that insist upon indeterminate challenge to a broad range of pre-conditions. In short, Briseño's manipulation of historical references and his challenge to a range of discursive frameworks respect the complex situations and contexts of engaged embodiment.

In a carefully constructed essay, "Intentionality, Indirect Ontology and Historical Ontology: Reading Merleau-Ponty and Foucault Together,"[1] Duane H. Davis and Tony O'Connor discuss themes common to phenomenological and archaeological-genealogical thinking. While the relationships between embodied experience and historical circumstances vary between the philosophers at different points in their careers, Davis and O'Connor suggest that the temporal dimensions of a formalist phenomenology are nevertheless understandable in the conditions of historical experience. They write:

> We suggest that it is important to recognise that Merleau-Ponty's term 'vertical history' has an obvious 'phenomenological' sense, namely, that events and interpretations in and of history have an assigned intentional sense that arises from changing and changed circumstances where the interpretations occur. But Foucault's account of changing historical epistemes can help to develop an enriched appreciation of 'vertical history' by recognizing that cultural history also involves changes to the operative concepts through which we raise, pursue, and answer questions. Hence we must be sensitive both to changes of 'historical content' and to the very modes of understanding and interpretation through which we modify the norms, criteria and conditions of understanding and interpretation.[2]

Engagement with phenomenological and poststructural modes is simultaneously a method of cultural analysis and a mode of lived experience. Briseño suggests this complexity through manipulation of visual relationships. In *Celestial Tablescapes*, the artifice of digital composition organizes mimetic representation of iconic objects and enables Briseño to present a range of cultural references and to complicate them with shifts in the potential for subjective and intersubjective relationships.

Briseño's use of the term "tablescape" engages with a variety of themes. At once, this series functions relative to the genres of still life and landscape and the ritual of meals. In so doing, tablescapes correspond to historical trajectories of visual meaning and to conditions of social interaction. The work proves exceptionally complex, however, as we consider the contemporary meal as engaging with histories of colonization and globalization and discourses of ethnicity and gender. Further, Briseño uses the device of the tablescape to implicate the viewer in exchanges of viewing that demand the viewer's attention to the complications of present viewing within broader historical frameworks.

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[1] Duane H. Davis and Tony O'Connor, "Intentionality, Indirect Ontology and Historical Ontology: Reading Merleau-Ponty and Foucault Together," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 39.1 (January 2008), pp. 57–75.

[2] Ibid., p. 60.

Briseño's tablescapes suggest that domestic settings are extensions of broad cultural fields. Whether suggesting fine dining or popular picnicking, tablecloths organize and provide spatial and conceptual foundation for ritual meals that function apart from everyday meals. Evoking but eschewing the value of a painter's canvas, Briseño's use of tablecloths suggests the conceptual character of still life painting. Each element in his works is present as the result of articulated placement, and of course, the nude figures galvanize the scenes.

Briseño breaks traditional conventions of viewing. Both in actual use and in representation, the typical dining table welcomes the viewer to survey and appreciate ingredients and rituals. Respect for cultural and aesthetic value develops in recognition of the circumstances of foods, settings, and decorations presented and in appreciation of multiple sensory delights. By raising the line of sight of the viewer in his constructions, Briseño alters normative engagement. The invitation to participate in the ritual of a meal becomes an invitation to consider displacement. The bird's-eye view could imply comfortable ownership of the master who owns all that he surveys, but the fantastic quality of the scene instead suggests productive displacements. The *Celestial Tablescapes* are constructed reflections upon the realities of the elements of meals and of the social relationships they presuppose and create.

Removed from any realistic setting of their creation, the tablescapes are located upon the unlikely foundation of representations of night skies. In so doing, Briseño suggests that the tablescapes are elements in expansive cosmic realities. On the one hand, tablecloths are usually below the line of sight of the individual sitting at a table or standing nearby, so if the viewer stands above the scene, no structure such as an actual table could offer material support, save the energy of the heavens. If we assume the customary location of the heavens above the earth, then the viewer looks from below and the table settings float in relation to the heavens, with the fabric of the tablecloth, having gained its density as if the stars in the Milky Way had become more tightly packed.

The dislocations in point of view function to suggest the complicated location of the historical subject. For Briseño, the tablecloth has specific significance as it signifies for him family and culture. His mother was from a well-to-do Mexican family that immigrated to San Antonio after the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution. Briseño's father was from a working-class Tejano family. The presence of the tablecloth corresponds to the artist's respect for cultural history, family history, as well as the cultural history inherent within foods.

In Mexican and Mexican-American culture, the relationships between Mexican-Americans and Mexican nationals are complex relative to nationality, language use, race and class. The legacies of colonial cultures influence complex negotiations through the range of de facto and de jure discriminations across US culture. In Briseño's childhood, his mother's upper-class heritage, marked in her proper Spanish grammar and in the elegance of "old world" manners, instructed Briseño and his older brothers and sister to be aware of their negotiations of cultural difference and assimilation in mid-century San Antonio. Briseño's contemporary use of a tablecloth speaks to his mother's influence but takes on a political and cultural reference today in that it marks the complexity of Mexican heritage more complexly than current stereotypes of Mexican and Mexican-American culture. A meal with a tablecloth, for Briseño, has direct relationship to specific historic experience, critique of stereotypes, and recognition of cultural "rules" and how these rules are indications of cultural models.

In January 2010, Briseño created *Ancestral Tablescape*, a performance of a seven-course gourmet meal in commemoration of a meal served on January 27, 1910, after his grandparents' return from their honeymoon.[3] The menu featured French cuisine, then the fashion in Mexico, and Briseño re-created the meal with his grandmother's elegant china and linens and presented family photographs along with an album of postcards written during his grandparents' courtship. Briseño noted that the dinner party coincides with the 100th anniversary of the marriage as well as the start of the Mexican revolution. "At the time of this dinner, they probably didn't even know that the revolution had been declared. Maybe this was the beginning of the end of the life they knew."

The print series of tablescapes references the history of European colonization of the Americas and processes of global trade and cultural exchange. The circulation of fresh produce and flowers in today's marketplaces carries the assimilated and often occluded histories of exchange and assimilation. Like the family-based performance, Briseño's works on paper suggest the incorporation of cultural history and phenomenological experience. The series of paintings reproduced in the monograph, *Moctezuma's Table*, incorporate representations of raw fruits and vegetables, cooked foods, and a range of culinary experiences ranging from street food, fast food, and ritual meals.[4] Briseño creates many of his works with pigments and stains from a range of spices and sauces on actual tablecloths used in place of canvas. Many world cuisines are much indebted to native American plants. For many it may be nearly impossible to imagine, for example, Italian food without tomatoes and the diverse cuisines of Africa and Asia without the sharp taste of chile, all made possible after European conquest of the Americas. Plant breeding was central to pre-Hispanic cultures, and native plants of the Western Hemisphere may be responsible for "the world's largest array of nutritious foods" accounting for "three-fifths of the crops now in civilization."[5] Recent arguments suggest that American foods contributed to the African slave trade, drawing victims to slavers and providing staples for the journey to the New World.[6] The legacy of centuries-old spice trade is evident in maintenance of ethnic foods as markers of identity for diasporic groups dispersed around the globe.

An anecdote suggests the significance of food as a marker of contemporary Chicano identity. The writer Sandra Cisneros recounts a meal with Briseño and the writer/artist Ito Romo at a late-night restaurant after having attended a performance by the Mexican Lebanese singer Astrid Hadad.[7] Cisneros remembers that Ito had decided to order

[3] Jessica Belasco, "Meal is a Century in the Making," *San Antonio Express-News* (February 14, 2010), p. 1 J.

[4] Norma E. Cantú, ed., *Moctezuma's Table: Rolando Briseño's Mexican and Chicano Tablescapes* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).

[5] Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* (New York: Crown, 1988), pp. 71 and 114, quoted in Rubén C. Córdova, "Indigenous Heritage, Culinary Diaspora, and Globalization in Rolando Briseño's *Moctezuma's Table*," in Cantú, pp. 69–91.

[6] Córdova references Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1972), Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), and Arturo Warman, *Corn and Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Dominance*, trans. Nancy Westrate (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[7] Sandra Cisneros, "*El Pleito*," in Cantú, pp. 125–127.

enchiladas de pollo en mole, cooked chicken wrapped in tortillas and covered in a rich, spicy sauce. *Mole* comes from the Nahuatl word meaning concoction, and its mixture of chiles, tomatoes, squash seeds, nuts, spices, meats, sesame seeds, and chocolate has become symbolic of Mexican identity, of the cultural mixture of indigenous, European, and African heritage.[8] Cisneros recounts the good natured *pleito* (argument) between Ito and Briseño after Briseño voiced his shock that Ito would order a *mole* dish from such a restaurant as surely its base would be from a jar. Briseño remarked that he would never eat such a *mole* as he grew up in a house where his mother made mole "from scratch." Ito and Briseño argued whether Briseño's mother would have made homemade *mole*, and Cisneros remained unsure of Briseño's claim. Years later, Cisneros brought Briseño some fresh red *mole* from Mexico, but when dinner was served, the *mole* was green. Cisneros relates that when questioned, Briseño admitted he served *mole* from a jar. In the edited version of an interview for the *Smithsonian Archives of American Art Recuerdos Orales Interview of the Latino Art Community in Texas* used as the *Epilogue* for *Moctezuma's Table*, Briseño re-iterates his claim that his mother's *mole* was always made from scratch.[9] Cisneros's charming story of "the argument" illustrates the significance with which cultural identities are lived arrangements of individual and shared cultural histories. Mexican-American culture is a continuously changing amalgamation, and Briseño remains troubled that although Mexican culture is a synthesis of indigenous and Spanish traditions, the indigenous and *mestizaje* character often is ignored, denied, or rendered insignificant. Inspired by contemporary historical contexts of identity, Briseño's projects utilizing plants and foods suggest that present circumstances pertain to broad dimensions of history.

Briseño's interest in the materials and structures of meals directly speaks to the interweaving of environmental and cultural histories as they influence contemporary subjectivity. Though not part of the *Celestial Tablescapes* series, *Cosmic Mirror* (2008) locates the individual in both the cultural community and relative to broader historic and cosmic frameworks. *Cosmic Mirror* is a diptych that presents an upper image that is a constructed image of outer space with an arrangement of multiple swirling galaxies in contrast to a lower image that is Briseño's self-portrait reflected on a dinner plate. Like all self-portraits, presentation of the self exists both for the individual artist relative to his/her personal choices and as an opportunity for the viewer to imagine him- or herself in the scene. The placement of the self-portrait framed in a dinner plate with silverware surrounding it, locates the individual in a scenario that could reference the full range from everyday eating to an elegant meal. The addition of a spiral form suggests that seeing oneself in the setting of a single meal extends into broader family and community histories. The spiral implies movement that continuously shifts locations. The dinner plate with its portrait and spiral appears as an intimate image in contrast to the immense and faraway galaxies that are at the great temporal and spatial distance of light-years, and the representations of the galaxies in the upper image suggest dramatic distance between the particularities of an individual

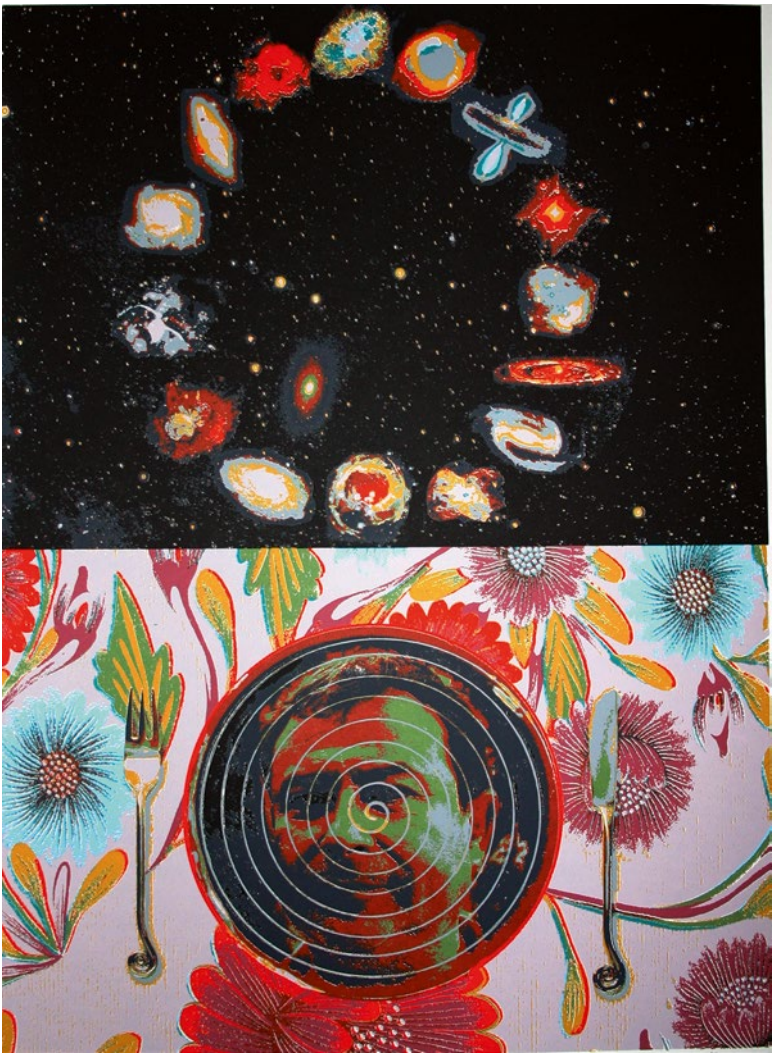
[8] Amalia Mesa-Bains, "Of *Moles* and *Maíz*: Rehistorization of Mexican and Chicano Culture," in Cantú, pp. 56–59.

[9] The Smithsonian interview may be accessed at http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-rolando-briseo-12193.

within the cultural demarcation of a patterned tablecloth and the cultural frameworks of a meal. Briseño organizes images of diverse galaxies in a circular pattern that mimics the cultural coordinates of the dinner plate and links it to potential other worlds and the open possibilities of the unimagined possibilities of deep space. The juxtaposition of the two images that present elements in artificial arrangements is evidence of the specific relation of the self relative to individual history as well as to the immensity of cultural history and to time and space beyond earthly dimensions.

In *Cosmic Mirror*, the relationship of the self-portrait to broader domains complicates any production of cultural identity. Indeed, variation among works within the series *Celestial Tablescape* attests to Briseño's insistence on the pleasures of foods, plants, and sexuality as central to lived experience. The prints *Celestial Tablescape, Cosmic Connection,* and *Celestial Goddess* each feature tablescapes with male and female nudes among the elements atop the tablecloth. *Elemental Tablescape* and *Synergetic Scent* are variations on that theme but include two male figures and no representations of dinnerware and foodstuffs. The male and female nudes in the first grouping strongly suggest the possibilities of reproduction, and *Celestial Goddess* features the female image in a prominent position as if to suggest fertility as foundational within the female. In *The Goddess of the Table*, Briseño repositions the same image of the female model and situates her as a floating image in a starscape, but he superimposes a popular red-checked pattern of tablecloth as a motif on her skin. In so doing, Briseño dilutes restriction to the domestic sphere to suggest broader concerns. In the images that feature men, Briseño places contemporary mobile phones in the figures' hands, and a field of disembodied digital communication compensates for domestic relationships. Like *The Goddess of the Table, Synergetic Scent* elaborates on the possibilities of the imagery to suggest the significance of non-terrestrial domains as imagery of swirling moons and stars extends from behind the figures to engulf them.

Rolando Briseño, *Celestial Tablescape*, giclee print, 16″ × 22″, 2007



Rolando Briseño, *Cosmic Mirror*, giclee print, 22″ × 16″, 2008

Discourses of sexuality profoundly influence Briseño's work. Briseño's social identity as a Chicano gay man surely influences his world-view, and his art reflects the trajectories of social and cultural history that are marked in his biography that takes him from the west side of San Antonio to studies in Mexico, Perú, a graduate degree at Columbia University and years of living and making art in New York, Italy, and back in San Antonio. The complexity of Latino identity merges with circumstances of gay cultural history, fostering for Briseño nuanced relationships with his family but also forging creative possibilities. The complications of history become significant for individuals who must negotiate multiple situations. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa notes that Chicanos are a heterogeneous people, speaking

multiple languages. Chicanos speak. "1. Standard English, 2. Working class and slang English, 3. Standard Spanish, 4. Standard Mexican Spanish, 5. North Mexican Spanish dialect, 6. Chicano Spanish (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California have regional variations), 7. Tex-Mex, 8. *Pachuco* (called caló)."[10] Like linguistic variation, sexuality also occurs in multiple dimensions in diverse circumstances. Briseño's use of various arrangements of models in the *Celestial Tablescapes* series attests to the variability with which individuals both present and protect themselves in exchanges that cross public and private spheres. An undeniable delight in the representations of many types of nudes, as challenge to normative depictions of the female body for the heteronormative viewer, corresponds with Briseño's undeniable delight in the pleasures of good food.

For Briseño, representations of sexuality may be experienced in particular circumstances as much as they suggest broader engagement. In *Cosmic Connection*, from the *Celestial Tablescapes* series, and in *Primordial Ritual of Table* (1999), Briseño organizes fruits in groups of three, reminiscent of the elements of molecular physics in order to suggest the theme that living things never reach complete stasis. In *At the Proton Table* (1991), acrylic on a large shaped wood panel, the imagery suggests the energy of quarks that animate the energy of protons within an atom. In *Celestial Tablescapes*, he simultaneously presents subatomic, human, and astrological realms.

Rational and scientific discourses of history, cultural politics, biology, and agriculture reproduce contemporary circumstances. Briseño considers himself a "Cultural Adjustor and Public Artist,"[11] and he uses his art to expose the multiple intersections of various discourses that generate lived relationships. In sculptural work, Briseño has experimented with using *masa*, the "mortar of Mexican culture" to create a model of the Alamo, an iconic structure that has come to signify Texas independence from Mexico, in order to suggest the Alamo as "the birthplace of the Mexican-American." For Briseño, the *MasAlamo* suggests the transformation of the Tejano *mestizaje* of indigenous and Spanish cultures and biologies into the Mexican-American, and the work functions as corrective to the denial of the significance of Mexican-American culture. The piquancy of a chile directly links an individual both to their forebears, the plants of the Aztecs, and to the contemporary contexts of fast food and the full range of Mexican-American familial and cultural transformations.

Briseño's representations are reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that "the flesh (of the world or my own) is not contingency, chaos, but a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself."[12] The insistence that the individual is a construction of both personal experiences and historical conditions seems to influence

[10] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd. edition, (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), p. 77.

[11] See http://www.rolandoBriseno.com/.

[12] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in Claude Lefort, ed., *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 146.

Briseño as it does Merleau-Ponty. "Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh? Where in the body are we to put the seer, since evidently there is in the body only 'shadows stuffed with organs,' that is more of the visible?"[13] Briseño's work suggests that contemporary investigations extend across complex histories and the actual circumstances of the activities of embodied experience. In many respects, the full range of lived experiences from the infinitesimal to the infinite are reminiscent of Michel Foucault's demand towards the conclusion of *History of Sexuality, volume 1,* to consider discursive structures but also a range of counter-discursive practices in lived experience. Foucault writes: "so we must not refer a history of sexuality to the agency of sex, but rather show how 'sex' is historically subordinated to sexuality.... It is the agency of sex that we must break away from, if we aim…to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasure."[14] Briseño is not content simply to present the historical facts of the legacies of colonialism and the effects of globalization for individuals and communities living today. Briseño's research and work brings Foucault's archaeological approach toward investigation of the deployment of discourses that approaches a phenomenological methodology. Briseño's *Celestial Tablescapes* both reference the past and the consequences of damage to environments, cultures, and individuals and remind viewers of the potential of pleasures in contemporary circumstances.

Briseño insists that a central preoccupation in his career has been "movement," and his public art projects exhibit this interest. *Macro-micro Culture* (2003) at the Austin Convention Center is a 303′ expanse of imagery that depicts the broad range of dimensions that contribute to everyday life, from the small to the large, including an image based on a PET scan of a brain listening to music and an image that situates Mayan pyramids in a starry night. *Galaxy Way* (2005), an exuberant 131′ sculpture based on image of protostars, created in colorful heat-formed Plexiglas, suspends above visitors at Houston's Intercontinental airport. *Gateways: The Four Directions* (2010) at the San Antonio International Airport demonstrates the mixed heritage of the city with hand-painted representations of 200 years of lintels from San Antonio doorways and includes a recycled glass terrazzo floor depicting Native American cardinal directions. While public art may offer artists important commissions, Briseño seizes the potential to emphasize the character of history as immanently complex and central to lived experience, even in the walkways of public spaces.

Galen A. Johnson describes Merleau-Ponty's introduction of the ideas of "vertical time" and "vertical history" as a challenge to diachronic development.[15] Johnson writes, "Against linear seriality, vertical time refers us to a variety of experiences

[13] Ibid., p. 138.

[14] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, volume 1, trans. Robert Hurley (N.Y.: Vintage, 1978), p. 157.

[15] Galen A. Johnson, ed., *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 51.

that have as their inner structure losing oneself to the world: joy, euphoria, fascination, infatuation, and artistic creation. The flow of time is stopped up…. The meanings and depths of such experiences are not plumbed by referring to backward and forward temporal references, they are understood by referring to the magnetism of the world." Johnson explains that "vertical time" describes the engagement that is genesis and growth that is central to human embodiment in lived relationships. "The history of Being is the generous explosion of the world into ever new and renewed forms. The history of cultural expression is intensifying, deepening astonishment (wonder) in the face of this 'there is.'" With uncanny resemblance to Foucault's directive to challenge the deployment of "sex-desire" through the presence of "bodies and pleasure," the transformation between the vertical moment of "simply being there" creates a vertical history that is a continuous desire within difference.

Likewise, Rolando Briseño's challenge in the arenas of cultural politics is to respect the demand to remember historic events and analyze the discourses that engender new arrangements in new contexts. *Celestial Tablescapes* encourage the viewer to value and enjoy both the pleasure and responsibility of lived engagement.

Part IV

Earth and Skies as Conflicting Complementary or Supplementary Dramas in the Eternal War Between Epistemology and Ethics

Imafedia Okhamafe

Abstract In Buchi Emecheta's sophomore novel *The Joys of Motherhood*, things fall apart in the life of protagonist Nnu Ego in the 1909–1950s Ibuza and Lagos of Nigeria, but her children-centered life manages to hold, though at devastating psychological, emotional, and economic costs. Apparently, Nnu Ego has a love-hate relationship with her chi-based theodicy education which unfolds mostly gradually, silently but insistently and eventually into an Nnu Ego chimarchy (her silent war with her chi, her god or goddess). Nnu Ego's chimarchy poses a dilemma, the Nnu Ego dilemma: how should an illiterate Ibuza-raised Igbo woman who loves being a woman, who loves being a daughter, who loves being a mother, who loves being married, and who loves being close friends with other women live her life in the face of oppressive realities of patriarchy or obligatory marriage or sexist marriage or obligatory motherhood without necessarily being anti-men or anti-marriage or anti-motherhood or anti-family? In Chapter 15, Nnu Ego poses aptly but insufficiently the question, "When will I be free?" (Emecheta 187). What about the following particular questions? When specifically will I be free? How specifically will I be free? Free specifically from what and for what? In Nnu Ego's relationship with her chi lies the eternal war between heaven-based ethics and earth-based epistemology.

Keywords Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* • Epistemology • Ethics • Chi • Freedom

Phenomenology tries to apply theory to practical matters of life without being caught up in the now of life; after all, does phenomenology at its best not also mean the science of the structures of lived or living experiences? Nnu Ego's chi theodicy involves a sky-earth drama featuring esoteric dreams, ordinary human agents or

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_12

intercessors with non-human powers (dibias, medicine men, etc.). In Nnu Ego's version of the chi-theodicy, the earth and skies have a sometimes complementary or supplementary relationship in the eternal double war between the ethics and epistemology of the lived experience of protagonist Nnu Ego Owulum (the granddaughter of Obi Umunna; the daughter of Obi Nwokocha Agbadi; the ex-wife of her first husband, Amatokwu; the wife of her second husband, Nnaife Owulum; and the mother of seven children, including three sons). "When will I be free?" (187), a decisive question Nnu Ego asks in the penultimate paragraph of Chapter 15 (the novel's second longest chapter), retrospectively triggers the consequences of her chi-based life. In the paragraph immediately preceding this paragraph in question, she tells us what motivates her question when she prayerfully and "desperately" asks, "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage? In this very same paragraph, she adds, "After all, I was born alone, and I shall die alone. What have I gained from all this [motherhood]? Yes, I have many children [seven], but what do I have to feed them on? I have to give them my all. And if I am lucky enough to die in peace, I even have to give them my soul" (Emecheta 186). She continues, "They will worship my dead spirit to provide/for them: it will be hailed as a good spirit so long as there are plenty of yams and children in the family, but if anything should go wrong, if a young wife does not conceive or there is a famine, my dead spirit will be blamed. When will I be free?" (186/187). The novel's Nnu Ego-sympathetic and empathetic third-person narrator tells us that "even in her confusion she knew the answer" to her own question "When will I be free?" Nnu Ego says she will "Never" be free, "not even in death," because "I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood." But how did she get to this position? "The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die. That's why when I lost my first son I wanted to die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband – and now I have to include my sons. But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters?" Again Nnu Ego answers the question, "We women subscribe to that law more than anyone." But why do women subscribe to this questionable law "more than anyone else"? Why does (sexist) obligatory motherhood, which lacks any natural or moral necessity, still have faithful believers or practitioners, such as Nnu Ego, even though she herself (even during her adolescence) questions it, rejects it? This dissonance or dilemma more or less echoes protagonist Efuru's dilemma in Flora Nwapa's 1966 (maiden) novel *Efuru*, the novel from which Emecheta's own novel derives its title. In *Efuru*, Uhamiri, the lake goddess, has many women followers; the novel ends with an Nnu Ego-type of dilemma; after Efuru's only child dies, the narrator tells us in the novel's concluding paragraph that "Efuru slept soundly that night," that "She dreamt" of the lake goddess, an old, happy, wealthy, and beautiful woman who "gave women beauty and wealth but she had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood." Then the novel's last sentence, a question, "Why then did the women worship her?" (Nwapa 221).

In Chapter 2, "The Mother's Mother," we witness the death of Agunwa, Agbadi's senior wife (first wife). She dies as "a complete woman," "a good woman." Her funeral feast unfolds ceremoniously and ominously. As the narrator puts it, "All the

things that she would need in her after-life were gathered and arranged in her wooden coffin," and "the medicine man" summoned Agunwa's "personal slaves." Agunwa has to be put in her grave first. "A good slave was supposed to jump into the grave willingly, happy to accompany her mistress; but this young and beautiful woman [slave] did not wish to die yet." The slave woman incessantly begged for her life to be spared, a gesture which annoyed "the men standing around." The women found this custom revolting and stood far off. The men pushed the poor slave woman "into the shallow grave," but she struggled out, fighting and pleading, appealing to her owner Agbadi," Nnu Ego's father. The woman slave's unwillingness to keep his mother company in the coffin angers Agbadi's oldest son (Nnu Ego's half-brother) and he cries out, "So my mother does not even deserve a decent burial? Now we are not to send her slave down with her, just because the girl is beautiful." With the head end of a machete, he delivers "a sharp blow" to the slave's head and commands her to "Go down like a good slave!" Agbadi orders her son to stop his action. The dying woman turns her eyes toward Agbadi and says, "Nwokocha the son of Agbadi. I shall come back to your household, but as a legitimate daughter." She repeats her promise "I shall come back," and another Agbadi relative delivers "a final blow," a deathly bow to her head. At last she falls "into the grave, silenced forever." As the dead slave's blood spurts, splashing the men standing" around, "a piercing scream" comes "from the group of mourning women standing a little way off. The scream comes not as sympathy "for the dead woman." Agbadi sees the men "holding [ill or dying] Ona up" (23). Obi Umunna (Ona's father) appears at Obi Agbadi's home to care for his sick daughter (polygynyst Obi Agbadi's mistress), whom Agbadi has been pressuring to marry him or live with him. Agbadi, having figured out "the pattern" of Ona's sickness, tells Ona, "I think I am making you into a mother. You are carrying our love child"; he adds, "What are you going to say to your father?" Ona pleads with her lover, "Oh, please, Agbadi, don't take my joy away. You know I like staying here with you, but I am my father's daughter. He has no son. Your house is full of children. Please …. Don't complicate this for me – the greatest joy of my life." Agbadi asks desperately, "But what of me? You and your father are using me as a tool to get what you wanted." Somewhat angry, Ona reminds Agbadi, "We did not force you, remember." She asks, "Is it my fault that you decided to treat me as a wife and not a lover? You know of my father's determination before you came to me. We did not use you. You used me, yet I don't regret it." When Agbadi asks Ona "So when are you leaving me?" Ona quickly says, "As soon as I feel stronger" (24). Ona is committed to raising "male issue" for her father "because he cannot do it for himself," a commitment which enables her to maintain a certain form of a status certain Igbos call a female husband but not in any lesbian or homosexual sense. Ona refuses to marry Agbadi because she wants to honor her commitment to her father to help him reproduce his paternal line. By insisting on staying single but still Agbadi's lover, Ona preserves her right as a semi-female husband. Whatever children she produces with Agbadi will not be Agbadi's but her father's. Nonetheless, Ona compromises. She tells Agbadi, "All right, my father wants a son and you have many sons. But you do not have a girl yet. Since my father will not accept any bride price from you, if I have a son he will belong to my father, but if a girl,

she will be yours." Ona considers herself "lucky for two men to want to own her" (25). Agbadi, "visibly overjoyed," wins the battle for her (25). Ona delivers a baby girl, whom Agbadi names "Nnu Ego," which means "twenty bags of cowries" – a name which befits the girl's pricelessness and beauty. Agbadi proudly and possessively declares, "she is mine" (26). Agbadi lets Ona's father know the Ona-Agbadi agreement or compromise that if Ona has a baby girl, the girl would be Agbadi's and if a boy then Umunna's. Ona reminds Agbadi that Ibuza custom does not permit her to stay permanently with him since her father did not take a bride price from him. Agbadi reluctantly accepts this part of the agreement that Ona would not live with him; he declares that he has "never forced" any woman to be his wife and "The only women I captured were slaves" (26). Ona lives with her father and 1 year after Nnu Ego's birth Ona's father (Umunna) dies. Ona laments her father's death even more because she failed to produce the son her father wanted, a failure that terminates her father's line, a failure that makes her not a failed woman since at least she has a child but an incomplete woman since she has a girl, not a boy. Blame for the failure to reproduce patriarchy or her father's line automatically falls on the woman, but if a couple fails to have a son, the man never shares the blame. "For over two years" thereafter, Agabadi tries to woo Ona to come and live with him, "You are no longer bound by your father's hopes. He is dead. But we are still living. Come and stay with me" (27). Apparently, Agbadi selectively or sexistly honors promises. Promises are for the living, not the dead. Yet he never stopped the cruel ritual of burying humans (women slaves) with the dead. His attempt to stop her slave woman from being buried alive with his dead senior wife seems feeble and late. Besides, he appears to object not to the practice itself; he objects more out of her concern for this particular woman, the beautiful slave woman. Nevertheless, both parents (Ona and Agbadi) doted on their daughter, and as the narrator says, "Nnu Ego was the apple of her parents' eyes." The narrator describes her as beautiful and "fair-skinned like the women from Aboh and Itsekiri areas." But Nnu Ego was born with "a lump on her head." Later, her "thick, curly, black hair" covered up the lump," but "suddenly one evening she started" suffering "from a strange headache that held her head and shoulder together." Panicky Ona immediately "sent for Agbadi who came tearing down from Ogboli with a *dibia*" (an Igbo healer or a traditional Igbo priest). The dibia touches Nnu Ego's head, draws in "his breath, feeling how much hotter the lump was than the rest of her body," and "He quickly set to work" with the stock of his trade or craft (kolanut, snail shells, etc.) which he "arranged on the mud floor." Falling "into a trance" and speaking "in a far-off voice, strange and unnatural," the dibia reveals to Agbadi that Nnu Ego "is the slave woman who died with your senior wife Agunwa. She promised to come back as a daughter. Now here she is. That is why this child has the fair skin of the water people, and the painful lump on her head is from the beating your men gave her before she fell into the grave." The dibia goes on, "She will always have trouble with that head. If she has a fortunate life, the head will not play up. But if she is unhappy, it will trouble her both physically and emotionally." The dibia then advises Agbadi to "go and appease the slave woman." So Agbadi threatens to take Nnu Ego away from Ona if Ona does not leave her father's home because Nnu Ego "can't worship her

chi from a foreign place" (27). He insists that Nnu Ego "must be where her *chi* is until all the sacrifices have been made."

Ona eventually gives in not because of "her love for Agbadi but because of her safety concern for her daughter, Nnu Ego. Nnu Ego's health improves when they get to Ogboli (Agbadi's village). They rebury the slave woman – this time "properly in a separate grave," and they make "an image of her" "for Nnu Ego to carry with her." Ona soon becomes pregnant again; she delivers the child, a son, who dies only one day after Ona herself dies, but before she dies, she advises Agbadi that regardless of how much she loves their daughter he should "allow her to have a life of her own, a husband if she wants one. Allow her to be a woman." The circumstances of Nnu Ego's pre-birth and birth and her recurrent point that she has always been passed from man to man all her life (from her maternal grandfather, Umunna to her father, Agbadi; from her father to her first husband, Amatokwu, and from her father again to her second husband, Nnaife Owulum, and eventually to her three sons, Oshia, Adim, and Nnamdio) haunt her throughout her life. This paper contends that Nnu Ego lived her chi-based theodicy (her chi-based life) to its logical end, an end which the last three paragraphs of Chapter 15 pose as a series of provocative and pregnant questions and answers. First, in desperation, she prayerfully asks, "God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?" She adds, "After all, I was born alone, and I shall die alone." Second, she asks, "What have I gained from all this [obligatory son-based motherhood]?"; "Yes, I have many children, but what do I have to feed them on? On my life. I have to work myself to the bone to look after them, I have to give them my all. And if I am lucky enough to die in peace, I even have to give them my soul. They will worship my dead spirit to provide/for them: it will be hailed as a good spirit so long as there are plenty of yams and children in the family, but if anything should go wrong, if a young wife does not conceive or there is a famine, my dead spirit will be blamed." Then comes Nnu Ego's climactic question, "When will I be free? I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. Is it such an enviable position? The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband – and now I include my sons." Then she asks, the ultimate question, "But who made the law that we should not hope in our daughters? We women subscribe to that law more than anyone." She urges a change, "Until we change all this [reproduction of the status quo], it is still a man's world, which women will help to build" (186/187). The narrator says that Nnu Ego's "love and duty for her children were like her chain of slavery" (186). Nnu Ego's strong belief in the chi theodicy shows in her crucial and constant invocation of this personal goddess throughout the book except in the last three or so chapters, especially the last chapter, Chapter 18, where she, for instance, says to her son (Adim) regarding her preoccupations with her son Oshia in the US, Adim's unpaid school fees, and her husband's legal woes: "O my *chi*, I wish you had told me" (212), "I have to look for money to pay for your last year at school, and with my *chi* helping me, I shall get it for you" (213). Nnu Ego encourages Adim to "go and wash, put on your clean school uniform and hold your chin up, and then she invokes Adim's chi, "son, your life is in your own hands and those of your *chi*"

(214). During the Lagos court trial of Nnu Ego's husband (Nnaife Owulum), the prosecuting lawyer manipulates Nnaife with a chi trap, "Remember, Mr. Owulum, that you have sworn by your *chi*, and your god would not like you to tell lies" (215). Next, the prosecuting attorney also uses the same chi strategy on Nnu Ego (as Nnu Ego readies to testify for her husband), "You remember, Mrs. Owulum, that you have sworn by the Bible, which is, like your *chi*, very binding." She looks "at the innocent black book" and wonders "whether it had the power to make a liar go mad, as an angry *chi* could" (216). The jury finds Nnaife guilty and sentences him to prison for 5 years. Okpo, another wife of Nnaife consoles Nnu Ego, "Senior wife, I am sorry" but Nnu Ego says, "But I don't understand it. Why were they all laughing at me? Was I saying the wrong things? Things surely have changed, but Nnaife still owns us, does he not?" Adaku (Nnu Ego's co-wife/fellow wife or Nnaife's second wife) tells Nnu Ego, "I'm afraid even that has changed. Nnaife does not own anybody, not in Nigeria today. But, senior wife, don't worry. You believe in tradition. You have changed a little, but stood firm by your belief." Nnu Ego apologizes to Adaku, "Try to forgive my condemning your leaving Nnaife when you did. I am beginning to understand now" (217). During this entire "nightmarish period" (from when the police arrests Nnu Ego's husband to when the court convicts him), Nnu Ego "allows herself to wonder where it was she had gone wrong," especially since "She had been" raised "to believe that children made a woman. She had had children, nine in all, and luckily seven were alive, much more than many women of that period could boast of. Most of her friends and colleagues had buried more children than they had alive." She credits "her god" (her chi) who "had been merciful to her," but "Still, how was she to know that that by the time her children grew up the values of her country would have changed so drastically, to the extent where a woman with many children could face a lonely old age, and maybe a miserable death all alone, just like a barren women?" In fact, "She was not even certain that worries over her children would not send her to her grave before her *chi* was ready for her." She "told herself that she would have been better off had she had time to cultivate" the friendship of "those women who offered her their "hands of friendship." She "had never had the time" for creative sisterhood or sorority with other women (especially women like her fellow illiterate but daring and proactive sister-wife or co-wife, Adak (Nnaife's junior wife), who once engineered an economic strike in the Nnaife household, a strike she Nnu Ego traitorously aborted. Furthermore, Adaku knew better not to deny education to her children (all girls). Adaku did all she could to educate her daughters. She, Nnu Ego, an illiterate but intelligent woman missed opportunities to benefit immensely from educated and sophisticated women such as the socialite mother of Abby, who never hesitated even at a moment's notice to come to the aid of Nnu Ego whenever Nnu Ego needed help. As she faces the end of her life, she regrets her failure to develop nurturing and enlightening relationships with her occasional women friends, acquaintances, neighbors, etc. Nnu Ego had no time for such sisterhood because "worrying over this child, this pregnancy" or worrying over "the lack of money" or worrying over her fear of losing her husband Nnaife or worrying over what others (her own father or her or her family-in-law or neighbors or acquaintances or friends or other Ibuza people) would say consumed much or all of her time. She hardly visited her friends; "she shied away

from friendship, telling herself she did not need any friends," and that she had enough in her family." The narrator continues, "But had she been right?" Her husband looks "at her with so much venom and continues to blame her "for what had happened to him; his people, and many of the Ibuza people in general" continue to blame "her for bringing up her children badly." Nonetheless, she thinks that if she is "still alive, she would find a way to live with her own people" (219). Even though she, in Chapter 15, identifies generally the source of her dilemma, the war in her life between her dibia-dominated Ibuza ethics and the epistemology of her Lagos lived/living experience (dominated by Nigerian and British bureaucracy and law) does not dissipate – instead it continues to gather momentum. A key to understanding the Nnu Ego dilemma lies in a genealogy of her relationship with her chi.

The very first page of the very first chapter ("The Mother") shows us a desperate Nnu Ego, 25 years old in 1934, an emotional wreck running away from something. Later in the chapter, we find out that she has become suicidal and that she runs toward the Lagos Carter Bridge in the aftermath of losing Ngozi, her first child (a boy) – a death that overwhelms her with guilt. She runs all the way from the Yaba housing estate where her husband works as a live-in laundry man for a British couple: Dr. Meers (a colonial officer and his wife). She runs away to the bridge because for her "There was only one way to rid herself" of her pain as a mother, a first-time mother who fails in motherhood. She wonders how she "would be able to face the world after" this death of her firstborn and finds no better way than to "end it" the best way, "the only good way": by suicide (8). As she nears the bridge, "pain and anger fought inside her … but the emotional pain always won," the very thing she wants "to end, very, very quickly." At the bridge, her pain will be over and "Then she would be able to seek out and meet her *chi*, her personal god, and she would ask her why she had punished her so." The narrator further tells us that "She knew her *chi* was a woman, not just because to her way of thinking only a woman would be so thorough in punishing another." Besides, "had she not been told many times at home in Ibuza that her *chi* was a slave woman, who had been forced to die with her mistress," Nnu Ego's father's senior wife? In other words, Nnu Ego's chi, "the slave woman was making sure that Nnu Ego's own life was nothing but a catalogue of disasters." Now Nnu Ego wants to go to her "unforgiving slave princess from a foreign land, to talk it all over with her, not on this earth but in the land of the dead, there deep beneath the waters of the sea." According to some chi lore, "those about to die, be it by drowning or by a gradual terminal illness, use their last moments of consciousness" to review their earthly existence "kaleidoscopically" (9).

Chapter 2 ("The Mother's Mother") provides this Nnu Ego retrospective which involves her mother (Ona Umunna), her maternal grandfather (Obi Umunna), her father (Obi Nwokocha Agbadi), and, of course, her chi, the slave goddess. The name Ona (Igbo for "a priceless jewel"), not her original name, comes from Chief Agbadi himself as a nickname for her during her toddler period – and ironically she ends up becoming the chief's mistress. Ona's father, a chief himself, marries "several wives, had few children," but "no living son at all" (11). Obi Umunna, her father, raises Ona "to fill her father's expectation" for her to "never marry," though she would be "free to have men" and "if she bore a son, he would take her father's name, thereby rectifying the omission nature had made," a situation that makes Ona play the

role of a male daughter (or a potential female husband) whose life's mission is to reproduce or extend patriarchy or her father's line or name. Usually, the terms "male daughter" and "female husband" do not in Igbo culture denote or connote homosexuality or lesbianism. (For more information, see Ifi Amadiume's 1987 book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*). Ona, a woman with an alluring figure, long legs, a long neck, and of medium height "had style" and as the narrator points out, "Agbadi would not have minded sending all his wives away just to live with this one woman" (12). This Agbadi sentiment underscores Ona's beauty but it also exposes his attitude toward other women, in this case, his wives. At the expense of his wives "who were willing to worship and serve him," Agbadi spent much of his time with Ona (12). When an elephant almost kills Agbadi during his hunt for elephants in the Ude area, Ona sits by his side as a medicine man tries to nurse him back to full life. To appease Agbadi's chi and other gods, Agbadi's household slaughters goats daily. After five or so days with Agbadi and seeing him feeling and looking better, Ona decides to return home (her father's), but Agbadi tells her, "You can't go now. You have to finish what you started." Ona fires back, "You think you have the right to play God, just because you are Agbadi? You have your wives – they can look after you. You have your slaves – they can mop up your stinking blood." Agbadi returns fire, hot fire, "My wives are too much in love with me to stand by and see me in pain. I need a heartless woman like you … a woman whose heart is made of stone to stay and watch men remove my splints and not drown me with tears. I will die if you go" (16). She denies that her heart is made of stone, but admits that she "would rather die than let" her heart "soften for the likes" of Agbadi (17). Obi Idayi, Agbadi's closest/oldest friend and adviser, sides with Agbadi as the Ona/Agbadi exchange continues; he tells her, "You need a man, Ona." Through the narrator, Ona dismisses the heart of stone charge as unfair and asks herself, "How else could she behave since she could not marry him? Because her father had no son, she had been dedicated to the gods/to produce children in his name, not that of any husband" (17/18). Ona is caught between two men (her father and her lover). We now know that Nnu Ego has a legacy of family involvement (on both mother's and father's sides) in the affairs of the gods. Obi Umunna visits Agbadi and calls for celebrating Agbadi's chi's rescuing of Agbadi. Umunna let her daughter "remember that you are not married to Agbadi" and tells her commands her to return home once Agbadi gets better. Agbadi sarcastically asks Obi Umunna, "Why do you not turn her into a man?" (18). Shortly thereafter, Agunwa (Agbadi's senior wife) dies and her personal slave and involuntarily accompanies her into the grave. Ona falls sick and Agbadi suspects she has *iba* (malaria) but soon he figures out Ona's situation, "Ona, the daughter of Umunna, I think I am making you into a mother. You are carrying our love child …. What are you going to say to your father?" Ona pleads, "Oh, … Agbadi, don't take my joy away." She to him, "I am my father's daughter. He has no son …. Don't complicate this for me – the greatest joy of my life." Agbadi shoots back, "But what of me? You and your father are using me as a tool to get what you wanted." Ona reminds him again, "We did not force you, remember. Is it my fault that you decided to treat me as a wife and not a lover? You knew of my father's determination before you came to me. We did not use you. You used me, yet I don't regret it. If you want to regret it, well, that is up to you" (24). When Ona tells him

that she would be returning home to her father, Agbadi accuses her of not even letting herself "be a woman," not focusing on motherhood but instead thinking "like a man, raising male issue for your father, just because he cannot do it himself" (25). The Agbadi/Ona rift produces a compromise: "my father wants a son and you have many sons" but no girl yet. "If I have a son he will belong to my father, but if a girl, she will be yours." This ongoing "argument between the two men" has started to irk or tire Ona though she thinks "she should regard herself as lucky for two men to want to own her." The language of ownership somewhat makes the Agbadi/Umunna controversy over which man or father would claim Ona's child seem harsher and indifferent to the concerns of women or mothers and on this occasion, Ona in particular. That Ona does not go against this tradition of male daughter makes the ownership usage less unpalatable. Eventually, Agbadi wins; Ona delivers a baby girl, Nnu Ego. Agbadi immediately claims Nnu Ego. Agbadi names his daughter, just as he named her mother, Ona ('priceless jewel'). He names the daughter, Nnu Ego (which in Igbo means "This child is priceless, more than twenty bags of cowries"). One year after Nnu Ego's birth, her maternal grandfather (Obi Umunna) dies, and Agbadi gloatingly informs Ona, "You are no longer bound by your father's hopes. He is dead. But we are still living." Nnu Ego falls sick, and Ona summons Agbadi who comes with a dibia (an Igbo diviner/herbalist or medicine man/interpreter of ritual culture/etc.) who links the etiology of Nnu Ego's "strange headache"-inducing lump on her head directly to the slave woman whom Agbadi's people killed and buried in the same grave as Agbadi's dead wife (Agunwa) for the sole purpose of honoring this senior wife who has been declared "a good woman." The slave woman honors her vow to return not as a slave woman in Agbadi's household but as an Agbadi daughter. The slave woman returns as Nnu Ego's chi. The dibia advises Agbadi to "go and appease the slave woman." Agbadi immediately issues an order: "Ona, you must leave this place, …your father's house, otherwise, I am taking my daughter from you. She can't worship her *chi* from a foreign place" (27). Put differently, Nnu Ego "must be" in Ogboli (Agbadi's village in Ibuza), "where her *chi* is until all the sacrifices" (as prescribed by the dibia) "have been made." Ona leaves her father's people for Ogboli because she thinks of the safety of her daughter first. Ona soon has one more child (a boy) who dies one day after Ona dies. Some of her last words to Agbadi insist on Agbadi letting Nnu Ego "be a woman," her own woman – and the right to have her own husband "if she wants one" (28).

In Chapter 3 ("The Mother's Early Life"), Nnu Ego marries her first husband (Amatokwu), divorces him, and readies to marry her second husband (Nnaife Owulum). First, the marriage to Amatokwu: Nnu Ego, a virgin, takes her first step toward motherhood when she marries Amatokwu (from Umu-Iso village in Ibuza), a groom her father has chosen for her. As her father's friend and counselor, Obi Idayi, notes, "She would be the senior wife." She has been fortified spiritually, "A new and more beautiful effigy of the slave woman who was her *chi* was made and placed on top of all Nnu Ego's possessions, to guard her against any evil eye" as she readies to be a wife (30). Agbadi boasts that "My daughter has been found an unspoiled virgin." On the second day of the wedding, Agbadi's family-in-law visit Agbadi and bring with them "six full kegs of palm wine" to express and celebrate their gratitude for giving them a virtuous daughter. At the celebration, he prays that

"in less than ten months our in-laws will come and thank us again for the birth of her baby." Agbadi and Idayi get heavily drunk. Agbadi confidently declares that "When a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive," and as such he expects to see soon "her children coming here to play." But months went by and no child. Nnu Ego, disappointed and desperate, asks her husband, "What am I going to do, Amatokwu?" Note the question: not what are we going to do but what am I going to do. Amatokwu replies, "Just make sacrifices to that slave woman, and pay your father a visit. He may have a suggestion." Amatokwu tells her to "pray for Olisa [God] and says that his own father has been looking at him "in a strange way, too" In fairness to Amatokwu, he does say, "I am sure the fault is on my side," and he wonders how he would face his father and tell him he has "failed" as a husband. So a husband who fails to be a father is a failed man? Soon Nnu Ego stops voicing "her doubts and worries to her husband. The child problem "had become her problem and hers alone." She secretly visits "one *dibia*" after another, and all the dibias said "the same thing – that the slave woman who was her *chi* would not give her a child because she had been dedicated to a river goddess before Agbadi took her away in slavery" (31). While home desperate Nnu Ego (with an egg, the fertility symbol) prays to the woman beseeching her to change her mind, "Please pity me. I feel that my husband's people are already looking for a new wife for him. They cannot wait forever. He is the first son of the family and his people want an heir from him as soon as possible. Please help me." Amatokwu gives her the dreaded news – he tells her "to move to a nearby hut" reserved for "older wives, because his people had found him a new wife. He adds, "My father is desperate. It is now known that your *chi* came from the people down by the river." He tells her he hates taking such measures, "but I cannot fail my people" (32). We find a similar scenario involving a young couple in Aidoo's 1965 play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, when USAmerica-born/raised wife (Eulalie Yawson) finally in desperation responds to her husband, Ato Yawson, whose Ghanaian family keeps pressuring her (and him) about when his wife would have a child. Ato never stands up to his Ghanaian relatives even when they are clearly out of line. Instead, he constantly tells Eulalie how to behave or not behave but he does so never in his name but in the name of his people. Eulalie gets tired of this "my people" routine or refrain and puts the gutless Ato in his place by caricaturing this approach, "Eulalie, my people say it is not good for a woman to take alcohol. Eulalie, my people say they are not pleased to see you smoke … Eulalie, my people say … My people …My people … Damned rotten coward …. I have been drinking in spite of what your people say. Who married me, you or your goddam people?" (Act 5, p. 44). Back to Amatokwu. He begins treating Nnu Ego as a non-wife, "ordering her about as he would his farm hand." She reminds him of when "you used to want me here with only the sky for our shelter," and she asks him, "Is it my fault that I did not have a child for you? Do you think I don't suffer too?" Amatokwu retorts, "I have no time to waste my precious seed on a woman who is infertile. I have to raise children for my line." He tells her that she does not appeal to him anymore and dismisses her as a "dry and jumpy" "nervy female who is all bones" (32). In anguish, Nnu Ego wishes she had the kind of pride people associated with her mother. Amatokwu notes that Nnu Ego is not like her mother,

and besides Agbadi "could afford an Ona as his jewel" because at the time he knew that he already "had enough sons to continue his line." He tells her that the least she can do "if you can't produce sons" would be to "harvest yams." When Nnu Ego returns home from the farm, news of a son for her husband reaches her. Whenever she visits Ogboli, she laments before her father the fact that she had been demoted from her senior woman or senior wife position and a younger woman has replaced her. Her father tells her, "Don't worry, daughter. If you find life unbearable, you can always come here to live." He notices her thinness and juiceless-ness, and asks her, "Don't you eat enough?" She promises herself to stop loading her father with her problems. She realizes that her problems are harder on him because he finds it difficult to acknowledge the fact that "anything from him can be imperfect." Yet Nnu Ego does not want to leave her husband unless he orders her out because she does not want to return to her father's "house as a failure" (33). She wants to stay with Amatokwu and one day have her own child. She gets along with her co-wives and often enjoys helping them with their babies. One evening, milk begins dripping from Nnu Ego's erstwhile "virgin breasts," and she quickly "ran to the effigy of her *chi*" and she in tears asks, "Why don't you let me have my own children? Look, I am full of milk. I can't be barren or juiceless as my father said. Why are you so wicked to me?" (34). The feeling of childlessness increasingly haunts Nnu Ego. One evening she takes the child (boy) of Amatokwu's second wife and unaware of somebody (in fact her husband) watching her, "she put the child to her breasts," and receives "a double blow from behind" She nearly died from the shock of the presence of her husband. His father came and after taking "one look" at her tells Amatokwu, "I don't blame you for beating her so badly. We will not quarrel, for we are in-laws." He adds that he will take her home, keep her there awhile, nurture her back to health, and who knows, even enable her to become fertile. Back home, many of Agbadi's wives nurse Nnu Ego back to health mentally. He "renewed his expensive sacrifices" to Nnu Ego's chi and begs "the slave woman to forgive him for taking her away from her original home." He demonstrates to the chi (through "the rising smoke of the slaughtered animals") that he no longer trades in slaves, has "offered freedom" to his household slaves, and has "adopted as his children" those slaves who choose not to leave. He even now belongs to a leadership group that encourages "slaves to return to their places of origin" (if possible). He makes these changes "for the emotional health of his beloved daughter Nnu Ego." Nnu Ego feels sorry "for bringing such shame to her family" (35). However, according to her daughter, Nnu Ego, in Chapter 4, "my father released his slaves because the white man says it is illegal" (51). Though Agbadi concedes that his self-interest (mainly the killing of the slave woman and its lifetime relationship to Nnu Ego) has motivated his anti-slavery crusade, he forgets to also point out the decisive role of British (or white) folks in the abolition of slavery. The narrator identifies Nnu Ego as a combination of her mother (Ona) and her father (Agbadi). Nnu Ego and Ona share a monomaniacal personality (or what the narrator calls "a singleness of purpose") (36). The two women differ in their ability to resist or challenge effectively men's ability to control them. Ona appears far more controllable than Nnu Ego. Agbadi thinks that the Amatokwu marriage "should never have taken place" and

points out that he does not "think much of people who illtreat a woman because she has not yet borne a child" (38). Note that he only says that he has no respect for women who have no children yet but what about women who have no children at all and cannot have children of their own. Agbadi chooses Nnu Ego's next husband just as he had done with the first marriage. He says that he would not have allowed her to marry again were it not for the promise he made to her mother to do so as long as she wants "a man and family" of her own. Here we find Nnu Ego espousing the notion of children as investments that will yield dividends in old age, "When one grows old, one needs children to look after one. If you have no children, and your parents have gone, who can you call your own" (38). Agbadi proudly gives Amatokwu back his 20 bags of cowries. Nonetheless, the men in their lives still managed more or less to control them. Nnu Ego divorces Amatokwu and prepares to marry Nnaife Owulum, an illiterate Ibuza man who works in Lagos as a laundry man for a British colonial official. Obi Idayi suggests that Nnu Ego's "*chi* may give her some peace if she leaves Ibuza" (37).

Motherhood frames the novel. Each of the novel's first four chapters has the term motherhood or mother in its title, and in all, 7 out of the novel's 18 chapters bear titles that also have the term. In Chapter 4 ("First shocks of Motherhood"), the senior Owulum (Nnaife Owulum's oldest brother) chaperons bride Nnu Ego from Ibuza to Lagos, where she at last tastes motherhood for the first time ever though short-lived. As the narrator observes, "Nnaife could tell that Nnu Ego did not approve of him. But he could not help the way he was made …. In his five years in Lagos he had seen worse situations," where "a wife brought for an Ibuza man in Lagos running away at the sight of her future husband, so that friends had to help the poor bridegroom catch the runaway bride" (43). Unlike Amatokwu, with whom she had some chemistry, Nnu Ego and Nnaife have zero chemistry. As the narrator recalls, "He demanded his marital right as if determined not to give her a chance to change her mind. She had thought she would be allowed to rest at least on the first night after her arrival before being pounced upon by this hungry man, her new husband. After such an experience, Nnu Ego knew why horrible-looking men raped women." Such men suffered from their own inadequacy. Nnaife "worked himself into an animal passion," and "She bore it, and relaxed as she had been told, pretending that the person lying on her was Amatokwu, her first sweetheart of a husband." Nnaife's insatiable appetite was so much that "by morning she was so weary that she cried with relief" and fell asleep "for the first time when she saw him leave the room to do his job as the white man's servant." Nnu Ego sees him "dressing rapidly and talking in a low voice to his brother who was sleeping only a few yards away." Nnu Ego feels "humiliated, but what was she to do?" Moreover, "She knew she must have cried all night long and that the older Owulum had been there listening, congratulating his brother in his heart." Nnu Ego "was used to her long wiry Amatokwu who would glide inside her when she was ready, not this short, fat, stocky man whose body almost crushed hers." As Nnaife finishes dressing for work, he says, "There is enough yam for all of us for some time. I shall tell the women next door to take you to the market. You can buy meat and make soup. I shall be back for the afternoon meal. I hope you slept well." Senior Owulum replies,

"Oh yes, she did." He replies "smugly, wanting" Nnu Ego "to realize he knew all that happened in the night." Nnu Ego decides "to put up with things" because "She would rather die in this town called Lagos" than return home to Ibuza and tell her father, "Father, I just do not like the man you have chosen for me." She also wonders, "suppose this man should make her pregnant, would that not be an untold joy to her people?" She then painfully rolls "to her other side on the raffia bed" and prayerfully invokes her chi and her mother for the sake of getting pregnant and having a baby, "O my *chi*. O My dead mother, please make my dream come true, then I will respect this man" (44). She vows to "be his faithful wife," to "put up with his crude ways and ugly appearance," and she urges all her ancestors to help her "become pregnant." She stares and stares until she dozes off. Exhausted, she dreams a baby-related dream. She dreams that "her *chi*" handles "her a baby boy, by the banks of the Atakpo stream in Ibuza," but "the slave woman had mocking laughter on her lips" Yet Nnu Ego wades "across the stream to take the baby from her," but as she does so, "the stream seemed to swell, the woman's laughter rang out in the dense forest." Yet "Nnu Ego stretched out her arms several times, and would almost have touched the baby" had the stream not "suddenly become deeper" and had "the woman" not "risen to a higher level." Nnu Ego cries, "Please, please let me have him, please." Nnu Ego pleads but after the woman tantalizes her "like this many times," she screams at the woman, "Have you not tortured me enough? I did not kill you! Oh, give me my child, give me my child." Someone (Nnaife's senior brother) shakes her, "New wife, what is all this shouting for? You are having a bad dream. Wake up, wake up, it is only a dream." She then asks him if he thinks she "shall be tempted" to steal other people's babies in this Lagos since she dreamt "doing so" in Ibuza. He emphatically says, "No, you will not. You are tired and over anxious, that's all." He adds, "You are very tired and my brother was very greedy. You must forgive him. You see, he did not believe his luck. He wanted to make sure you did not run away." He continues, "You know you are beautiful, and the daughter of a famous man." He advises her to "Learn to respect him." He acknowledges the difficulty of doing so. He reassures her that she "will see her hopes fulfilled." Finally, he promises to visit her again when she is "really 'mad'." And Nnu Ego asks rhetorically, "Mad? Brother-in-law, did you say mad?" (45). She reflects briefly on Lagos, "where men had bellies like pregnant women," and on senior Owulum's Ibuza, "where his people had lived for five, six, seven generations without any change at all" (46). She wonders where in a town like Lagos, she would find "a medicine man" "if she should go mad" and tells her brother-in-law that she would rather follow him back home (but to Ogwashi, her grandparents' home) if he thinks "I shall go mad" because she does not "want to be a disgrace to my father any more." Senor Owulum quickly points out that he does not "mean that kind of madness." He demonstrates the kind of madness he means by crossing "his arms, couching "his shoulders as one would do when holding a small baby." Nnu Ego is indeed mad, mad for a baby, mad to be a mother. To say that Nnu Ego is obsessed with having a child, especially a boy, would be an understatement. This hunger for a baby haunts Nnu Ego and drives whatever she does. Even Ahab's white whale-motivated monomania pales in comparison to Nnu's Ego's baby-motivated monomania.

Owulum senior leaves after a few weeks but not without first praying that "she would not be a failure." Thereafter, Nnu Ego keeps sending messages to her father, messages about "how happy she was" and "how handsome her husband was" (46). Nnaife works as a washerman (laundry man) every day except Sunday when even then he has only half a day off, working till 2 pm. So Nnaife has no time for Nnu Ego. As the narrator observes, Nnaife "had little time to take notice of Nnu Ego, and she did not look or ask for any attention from him. She had come to accept him as one of the inevitabilities of fate" (47). The narrator says that Nnu Ego and Nnaife (when work-free) usually "walk from Yaba to Ebutte Metta and then to Lagos Island where the Ibo community held their own services" and adds that Nnu Ego does not understand Christianity "but, like any bride brought from home, she simply followed in her husband's footsteps." One Sunday, Nnu Ego tells Nnaife that she would prefer "to stay at home, just for a change. After all, not only did church mean little to her, it was becoming monotonous attending week after week. She left Nnaife's food on their one table, placed the hand-washing bowl with water in it conveniently near for him and, contrary to her nature and custom, sat and watched him eat"(48). Nnaife remarks, "You stare at me as if you don't want me to eat the food you cooked. You know a wife is not allowed to do that." Nnu Ego responds, "That applies in Ibuza, not here." Nnaife replies, "Well, whether we're in Ibuza or not, I am still your husband and still a man. You should not sit there staring at me." Nnu Ego shoots back, "A man, huh? Some man." He asks her, "What did you say?" and reminds her that he paid her bride price and therefore owns her. He continues, "I know you are the daughter of Agbadi. Pity he did not marry you himself and keep you by his side forever" (48). He lets her understand that to remain his wife, she "must accept my work, my way of life," and that he "would not have it any other way." He commands her to leave and "gossip with Cordelia," Nnu Ego's fellow Igbo neighbor, associate, and wife of Ubani, the cook for the Meers for whom Nnaife also works. Nnu Ego, now angry responds in kind. She tells him that she regrets leaving Amatokwu for "a man who washes women's underwear. A man indeed!" Hurt, Nnaife realizes that "the woman was changing!" Nnaife further notes that her "ideal Amatokwu almost beat you to death because you did not bear him a son." He observes that Nnu Ego is pregnant for the first time in her life and asks her, "What else does a woman want?" (49). Nnu Ego tells Nnaife, "I will not listen to your nonsense." Once Nnaife realizes that Nnaife is pregnant, he seeks a Christian marriage so as not to lose face with the church or lose his job with Dr. Meers. But Nnu Ego says, "Me, Nnu Ego, the daughter of Agbadi of Ibuza …. I will never marry you in church." If the Meers couple "sack you, I shall go home to my father." Nnaife wonders "what good father would take his pregnant daughter back into his house, just because his son-in-law's job doesn't suit her," and he reminds Nnu Ego that her "father is well known for his traditional principles," which are principally chi-based. He also wonders how her father would take it "when you tell him you don't like the second husband he has chosen for you, especially since your *chi* has consented to the marriage by making you pregnant." He urges Nnu Ego to cooperate "now that the gods have legalized our marriage." He re-states his point that "you have to do what I say." When Nnu Ego accuses him of "not even happy to see me

pregnant," he says, "Of course I am happy to know that I am a man" (50). Nnu Ego and Cordelia compare their husbands in Lagos to slaves or men whose "manhood has been taken away from them," and that "The shame of it is that they don't [even] know it." Cordelia extends the slave analogy "to include us" (women themselves) and notes that "If their masters [whites] treat them badly, they take it out on us" (51). In other words, if whites treat black men poorly, black men in turn take it out on black women. In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie's maternal grandmother holds a similar conversation with Janie, "Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down the load and tell de nigger man to pick tuh up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see" (Hurston 14). The two Nigerian women (Cordelia and Nnu Ego) and the two USAmerican women share the phenomenon of their men transferring their physical or psychological burden to their women. Nnu Ego asks Cordelia, "Will it ever end?" Hurston's Janie says, "Ah been prayin' fuh it tuh be different wd you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd" (Hurston 14). Cordelia does not know "if it will" end. But she observes that "It has been going on for ages. I don't think it will ever end." The narrator says that Nnaife and Nnu Ego, "Like other husbands and wives in Lagos," "started growing apart, not that they were that close at the start. Now each was in a different world. There was no time for petting or talking to each other about love" (52). Romance lacking in their lives. Nnu Ego delivers a boy, and as the Owerri woman who helped her deliver the child put it, it is rare "for people to have sons for the first baby." Nnu Ego agrees and adds, "Girls are love babies." She continues, "you see, only now will I start loving this man. He has made me into a real woman – all I want to be, a woman and a mother. So why should I start hating him now?" (53). With this additional family member, Nnu Ego and Nnaife began making "changes in their one room." She accepted Nnaife as the father of her child, and the fact that this child was a son gave her a sense of fulfillment for the first time in her life. She was now sure, as she bathed her son and cooked for her husband that her old age would be happy, that when she died there would be somebody left behind to refer to her as 'mother'" (54). We noted before that each of the first four chapters of the novel includes the word "mother" or "motherhood." This mother-quad (Chapters 1–4) constitutes a novel within a novel, and this novel within a novel begins with the last two paragraphs of Chapter 4 (rather than the first paragraph of Chapter 1). In other words, begin the novel by reading the last two paragraphs of Chapter 4: "Then one morning, the morning when the story started, when Nnu Ego came to put her baby on her back before going to her stall at the railway yard to sell her wares, she saw him, her baby/Ngozi, lying there where she had laid him only a short while before, dead. Stone dead" (54–55).

"She did not scream; she did not call her husband. She simply left the room, walking gingerly backwards, until she whirled round like a fierce hurricane and ran (55). Now Chapter 1's first paragraph begins:

"Nnu Ego backed out of the room, her eyes unfocused, and glazed, looking into vacancy. Her feet were light and she walked as if in a daze, not conscious of using those feet. She collided with the door, moved away from it and across the veranda, on to the green grass that formed part of the servants' quarters. The grass was moist with dew under her bare feet. Her whole body felt the hazy mist in the air, and part of her felt herself brushing against the master's washing on the line. This made her whirl round with a jerk, like a puppet reaching the end of its string. She now faced the road, having decided to use her eyes, her front instead of her back. She ran, her feet lighter still, as if her eyes now that she was using them gave her extra lightness. She ran, past the master's bungalow, past the side garden, and shot into the untarred gravel road; her senses were momentarily stunned by the colour of the road which seemed to be that of blood and water. She hurried on beyond this short road that led to the big tarred one, ran like someone pursued, looking behind her only once to make sure she was not being followed. She ran as if she would never stop" (7). The first sentence of the second paragraph of Chapter 1 follows. Read it just to get the narrative continuity at play: "The year was 1934 and the place was Lagos, then a British colony" (7).

Chapter 5 ("A Failed Woman") continues from where Nnu Ego's suicide-attempt left off in Chapter 1, with Nnu Ego still suicidal at Carter Bridge, still suffering from her inexplicable loss of her very first child, a son, Ngozi (who lived for only 1 month) and her first attempt at motherhood and her loss of her revered. Nnu Ego wants to die by jumping into the lagoon. The narrator tells us that Nigeria does not permit suicide and that there is nothing like "After all, it's her life." Nigeria outlaws suicide "because everyone is responsible for the other person." For many Nigerians, "an individual's life belongs to the community and not just to him or her. So a person has no right to take it while another member of the community looks on. He must interfere, he must stop it from happening" (60). This kind of thinking accounts for why many tried to help or rescue her from the bridge. Nwakusor soon realizes that this woman who has been "warding off her opponent" comes not from Yoruba land but from Nwakusor's own village. He recognizes her as Nnu Ego. He begins calling her, "Nnu Ego! Nnu Ego, the child of Agbadi's love, Nnu Ego! What are you doing? What are you trying to do?" (60). Nnu Ego suddenly ceased fighting. That somebody in big Lagos in this crowd of bystanders and gawkers knows her surprises her. "Acting instinctively" and "Like an agile cat pouncing, pouncing on an unsuspecting mouse," Nwakusor rolls himself and leaps toward Nnu Ego and the two fall "on the cemented ground" His knee bleeds and she tries to break loose "like a lunatic." Now more people join to aid Nwakusor, who in Igbo, asks Nnu Ego, "What are you trying to do to your husband, your father, your people and your son who is only a few weeks old? You want to kill yourself, eh? Who is going to look after your baby for you? You are shaming your womanhood, shaming your motherhood." But Nnu Ego wonders who would "give her the energy to tell the world that she had once been a mother, but had failed? How would people understand that she wanted so desperately to be a woman like everybody else, but had now failed again?" She adds, "*Oh, God I wish these people, though they mean well, had simply let me be*" One Igbo woman finds "Nwakusor's verbal

chastisement" insufficient. The woman advances toward her and slaps her "on one side of her face" (61). The woman charges Nnu Ego with "disgracing the man who paid for" her "to be brought into this town," Lagos. The woman continues, "I don't know what our people are becoming: as soon as they step near the coast they think they own themselves and forget the tradition of our fathers." Then she says painfully (I think), "But I am not a woman any more! I am not a mother any more. The child is there, dead on the mat. My *chi* has taken it away from me. I only want to get in there and meet her…" (62). Thereafter, the audience begins to understand "the reason for her irrational behavior" Many begin to share their own stories. Even the woman slapper admits that only two children survived her six pregnancies. The woman reminds Nnu Ego that she Nnu Ego still has youth going for her and that "once babies started coming, they came in great numbers." The woman in her broken Yoruba announces to the crowd that "She is not mad after all. She has only just lost the child that told the world that she is not barren." The audience in unison agreed that "a woman without a child for her husband was a failed woman" (62). The duty to lead Nnu Ego safely back to her husband falls on her savior, Nwakusor.

In Chapter 6 ("A man Is Never Ugly"), Nnaife finds out about Ngozi's death through Ubani, an eastern Igbo, unlike Nnaife and Nnu Ego who hail from western Igbo land. The task of informing Nnaife of Ngozi's death falls on Ubani. Ubani and Cordelia, as "devout members of the Catholic church" who "lived by its laws" console Nnaife (64). Nnaife says that Nnu Ego "hates me" and thinks "I'm ugly." He suspects that "She endures me only because of this child [Ngozi]" (71). However, Ubani dismisses Nnaife's claims, "Nonsense, my friend. How can a woman hate a husband chosen for her by her people? You are to give her children and food, she is to cook and bear the children and look after you and them." Ubani continues, "A woman may be ugly and grow old, but a man is never ugly and never old." Ubani urges Nnaife "to accept my condolences," "stop talking like a woman," and "make Nnu Ego pregnant again very soon" (71). Nnu Ego has yet to reach home.

In Chapter 7 ("The Duty of a Father"), Nnu Ego has returned home; she has her second pregnancy, her second baby (Oshiaju, Oshia for short), and decides this time to follow new rules (the white man's rules). Nnu Ego keeps comparing Nnaife with Amatokwu in terms of manhood, and she wonders, is "it because grass is always greener yonder?" (72). She feels an ache in her chest and wishes her father were in Lagos to talk the ache away. She thinks she hears someone calling her, but on the other hand her imagination may be playing with her or she may be losing her mind, or going mad or crazy. She finally confirms the voice as that of Ato, her childhood friend and the wife of Nwakusor, her savior. Three months (of mourning) now since the 1 month or 4 week-old baby (Ngozi) died. Ato says, "Oh, my *chi*, it's so nice/to see you!" (73/74). Ato requests Nnu Ego to "take that lost look" from her face, otherwise such a look would induce people to say, "You know the beautiful daughter of Agbadi, the one his mistress had for him, the one who a woman slave as her *chi*, the one who tried to steal her mate's child, the one who tried to kill herself and failed on purpose so as to get sympathy – well, she is now completely mad" (74). Nnaife tells Ato that "Even Nnaife calls me a mad woman sometimes," and Ato advises her, "If he calls you mad, tell him to look in the mirror." Loudly laughing and echoing

Ubani's words in Chapter 6, Nnu Ego says, "No, he is a man, and you know men are never ugly" (75). She has another dream encounter with her chi, a dream where she "just picked up another child from the side of a stream" and she thinks that this dream signifies "a bond between her and her *chi* and her coming child" (78). She told her father of the chi dream about an abandoned dirty child. His father makes "All the required sacrifices" and sends her charms to wear to ward off evil. Nnu Ego delivers her baby boy (Oshiaju) painlessly as "her father had predicted" Nnu Ego "was overjoyed" (79). For Nnu Ego, "The voices of all the people," "The voices of the gods," and her father's messages had said and confirmed that "she deserved this child," Oshiaju. She concedes that she may lack "any money to supplement her husband's income." She recognizes that she and her husband live "in a white man's world where it was the duty of the father to provide for his family." She points out that "In Ibuza, women contribute, but in urban Lagos, men had to be the sole providers" and adds that this new environment robs "the woman of her useful role." Nnu Ego admits to herself that "the life she had indulged in with the baby Ngozi had been very risky: she had been trying to be traditional in a modern urban setting." She contends that her desire "to be a woman of Ibuza in a town like Lagos" led to the loss of her child, Ngozi. This time she vows to play by "the new rules" (81). In Chapter 8("The Rich and the Poor"), Nnu Ego faces the economic dimensions of the practical implications of her conflictions amid the cultural domestic and foreign wars (Ibuza versus Lagos, black versus white, old tradition versus modern tradition issues she raises in Chapter 7, especially in the light of her promise to adopt or follow "the new rules." In Chapter 9 ("A Mother's Investment"), Nnu Ego (in the absence of her husband Nnaife) delivers her second child, a boy (Adimabu, Adim in short). At the end of the novel, Nnu Ego has endured seven pregnancies that produced nine children (with the surviving seven consisting of two sets of twin girls and three boys).

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Master and Emissary: The Brain's Drama of Dark Energy

Rebecca M. Painter

Abstract Recent science estimates that visible matter constitutes only about 4 % of the known universe, while 73 % is composed of invisible or "dark" energy, a force that makes possible the existence of the visible universe. This paper posits that in the universe of human relations and literature, attention can be considered a comparable form of invisible but immensely influential creative energy. Scientific sources include Lisa Randall's *Knocking on Heaven's Door: How Physics and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the Universe and the Modern World* (2011), and Iain McGilchrist's *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (2009). McGilchrist's concern that modern culture is being ever more dominated by the power and control-seeking left hemisphere of the brain, as opposed to the empathic, holistic and judicious right hemisphere, is applied to two recent works of literature. Alice McDermott's short story "Someone" is seen as illustrating the hurtful effects of status seeking and uncaring attention in a failed romantic relationship. When the victim of this treatment looks up into the sky, a dramatic opening occurs in her consciousness, switching from what McGilchrist would call a left-hemispheric focus of attention, that she has been rejected as physically imperfect, to a right-hemispheric focus that is nonverbal and integrative. This depicts a human drama of the skies: between the mind's scientific, goal-oriented, detail-conscious form of reasoning—what McGilchrist's associates with our world as conceived by the brain's left hemispheric "emissary," as it competes and conflicts with the holistic, compassionate, and metaphoric capacity of the brain's right hemisphere. The discussion then moves to a science fiction piece by Carol Emshwiller, "Desert Creature." This story presents a more explicit drama between right-hemisphere-motivated humans of contemporary society and questionably more evolved humanoid extraterrestrials as harbingers of the left-hemisphere-driven beings we might well become. The paper argues for a renewed focus on the quality of attention as the ground of moral awareness, in works of the imagination and in life as we help create it.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_13

Keywords Attention • Neuroscience • Right vs. left hemisphere of the brain • Moral awareness • Metaphor

In *The Master and His Emissary*, neuroscientist Iain McGilchrist's magisterial commentary on Western culture, he makes a potent statement: *the quality of attention we bring to the world changes the nature of that world*. That makes us real partners in creation, not just in our imagination. How is that possible?

> Attention changes *what kind of* a thing comes into being for us: in that way it changes the world. If you are my friend, the way in which I attend to you will be different from the way in which I would attend to you if you were my employer, my patient, the suspect in a crime I am investigating, my lover, my aunt, a body waiting to be dissected. In all these circumstances, except the last, you will also have a quite different experience not just of me, but of yourself: you would feel changed if I changed the type of my attention. And yet nothing *objectively* has changed.[1]

To embody this idea, the author draws our attention to the root of the verb *to attend.* It refers to the hand as a bodily vehicle of touch, origin of the metaphor of 'tact'. "To attend means, precisely, to reach out a hand towards: we reach out—'ad-tend'—in order to give, as well as to take" (219).

These observations speak of the power of human consciousness to change our world—a vital form of energy that is invisible except in its effect—its gravity, in human terms. Wherever people are, there that invisible energy is, as long as they are conscious. In the universe of our life on earth, the energy of attention is ubiquitous, rather like the invisible energy in the physical universe called dark energy. It is called dark because it does not reflect or emit light and therefore cannot be seen by us, except in its effect on visible objects as they respond to the force of gravity. Similarly, we perceive attention by means of the gravity of its effect on our lives—in the giving, receiving, and the myriad results and repercussions on all levels of experience.

It has been estimated, McGilchrist notes, that there are more neural connections within the human brain than there are particles in the known universe (23). That would put the human brain up there with the most mysterious entity we could put our minds to: the universe we dwell in but are barely beginning to understand.

In the past few years scientists have discovered gravitational signs that about 23 % of the mass-energy of our universe takes the invisible form of something called dark matter, yet to be identified, while 73 % is an even more mysterious substance, also invisible, called dark energy. Our known physical visible universe comprises a thin slice of that pie, about four percent. In the words of Lisa Randall, author of *Knocking on Heaven's Door: How Physics and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the Universe and the Modern World* (2011), the discovery of dark energy "was the most profound physics wake-up call of the late 20th century. …[M]easurements of the

[1] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World,* (New York: Yale UP, 2009), electronic version, pp. 45–46. Pagination henceforth is aligned with the print edition.

characteristics of the universe required the presence of this new form of energy that is not carried by matter, [nor] carried by particles or other stuff, …doesn't clump like conventional matter[,] …doesn't dilute as the universe expands[,] but maintains a constant density." The expansion of the universe is slowly accelerating, she adds, as a consequence of this mysterious energy, which resides in space even if it is empty of matter (115).[2]

This wake-up call has led to the rigorous search for the missing key ingredient of what is known as the Standard Model of particle physics—the elusive Higgs boson—a search now centered at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in Switzerland. Randall explains that particles, therefore energy and matter, can appear in supposedly empty space if there is another field—other than time and space—in the vacuum we call space. This is now referred to as the Higgs field, named after Peter Higgs, the physicist who first theorized it. If the Higgs field exists, it would be, in Randall's terms, "essentially a distribution [like a viscous liquid] of weak charge throughout the universe that happens only when the field itself takes a nonzero value…[putting] infinite weak charge into the vacuum." As elementary particles enter this field, they would acquire various masses by a subtle process now called the Higgs mechanism. "[P]articles that interact more with the Higgs field have larger masses and those that interact less have smaller ones" (239).

The LHC's quest to find the Higgs boson[3] would confirm the existence of the Higgs field, and would provide the key to understanding how particles come into existence. One physicist called the Higgs boson the "God particle," perhaps in a sardonic manner typical of atheistic scientists. Randall is quick to discount the term as just a name the media keep using because it draws people's attention to the LHC project (244). Nevertheless, one might override Randall's disclaimer to suggest that finding the Higgs boson would be comparable to identifying a messenger or emissary from God, revealing a fundamental groundwork of Creation, how (if not why) there is something—mass and energy—rather than nothing.

The title of McGilchrist's book pointedly employs the term emissary. His thesis:

> That for us as human beings there are two fundamentally opposed realities, two different modes of experience; that each is of ultimate importance in bringing about the recognizably human world; and that their difference is rooted in the bi-hemispheric structure of the brain. …[T]he hemispheres need to co-operate, but…they are in a sort of power struggle, and … this explains many aspects of contemporary Western culture. (15)

Perhaps there is a relationship between the Higgs boson type of emissary, regarding the creation of mass-energy, and McGilchrist's metaphor. If the kind of attention

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[2] Lisa Randall, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: How Physics and Scientific Thinking Illuminate the Universe and the Modern World*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), electronic version, p. 115. Henceforth pagination will be from the e-book, which is unfortunately not aligned with the print edition.

[3] On July 4, 2012, the director general of CERN, the research consortium responsible for the LHC, announced the discovery of what appears to be evidence of the Higgs boson particle. Since absolute certainty is yet to be established, it is now being called a Higgs-like particle, although physicists are already celebrating an historic milestone. See Dennis Overbye, "Physicists Find Elusive Particle Seen as Key to Universe," *The New York Times*, 7/4/2012.

we pay actually alters our world, we participate in the world's creation. But since human attention is conscious, unlike the subatomic particles that constitute the physical universe, the process by which we pay attention carries moral consequence and can be fraught with competing world views. McGilchrist writes,

> we have a grave *responsibility*, a word that captures the reciprocal nature of the dialogue we have with whatever it is that exists apart from ourselves. …Ultimately I believe that many of the disputes about the nature of the human world can be illuminated by an understanding that there are two fundamentally different 'versions' delivered to us by the two hemispheres, both of which can have a ring of authenticity…and both…are hugely valuable; but…they stand in opposition to one another…hence the bihemispheric structure of the brain. (17)

One could ask, Is there not a metaphorical resonance between an energy field—the Higgs field—that permits particles to acquire mass in the physical universe, and another energy field—attention—that allows human perception to give energy and mass—e.g. importance, weight, or perceived "reality"—to objects in the lifeworld of human awareness and relationship with others? Especially when energy might be generated by the conflict between the two hemispheres of our brain that are asymmetrical in their ways of perceiving the world?

In this regard, we might connect McGilchrist's study of the human brain with Randall and other physicists' attempts to apply discoveries about the physical universe, to our understanding of the modern world beyond physics. Those who study literature and philosophy might sense a greater need to focus attention on the dangers McGilchrist finds in this battle for dominance of human perception. After all, if the Higgs boson is not verified, physicists can always look for another particle to validate a more workable theory. Whereas not attending to the dangers stressed by McGilchrist threatens our well-being and perhaps our survival.

McGilchrist's title comes from a story by Nietzsche of a wise and selfless master, ruler of a prosperous domain, devoted to his people. As his kingdom expanded he nurtured and trained viziers to represent him in distant parts. Eventually his cleverest and most trusted emissary began to see himself as master, to advance his own wealth and influence. He began to look upon his master's temperance and forbearance as weakness rather than wisdom, and became contemptuous, duping the master's people and turning the domain into a tyranny that eventually collapsed in ruins (30). McGilchrist equates the master in this story with the brain's right hemisphere, and the emissary with the left hemisphere. "At present," he warns, "the domain—our civilization—finds itself in the hands of the vizier, who, however gifted, is effectively an ambitious regional bureaucrat." The Master, "whose wisdom gave the people peace and security, is led away in chains…betrayed by his emissary" (30).

The ambitious vizier here, our brain's left hemisphere, is responsible for narrowly focused attention, linear reasoning, and language. It likely evolved for the purpose of getting, feeding, and picking up signals from the immediate surroundings, especially from creatures that could be predators, potential mates, foes or friends. The right hemisphere, the integrative and holistic thinker and rightful master of our perception, gives breadth and flexibility to the left's focused attention, and is the only part of our brain capable of empathy, compassion, humor, irony, and the perception of anomaly (45). The left hemisphere's principle concern is utility. It focuses on what it has made, such as tools and machines, and sees the world as a

resource to be used. "It is therefore natural that it has a particular affinity for words and concepts, for tools, man-made things, mechanisms and whatever is not alive" (77). Because its goal is power, it can tend to perceive others as means to that end.

The true master of human perception, the right hemisphere, places whatever details the left provides into a global perspective of self-awareness, identification with others, and inter-subjective processes in general. It gives us our concern for and awareness of the Other (79). Only the right understands metaphor, which McGilchrist emphasizes. Metaphor, he states, "*underlies all forms of understanding whatsoever*, science and philosophy no less than poetry and art" (97). As artists well know, language is not capable of expressing everything; words fail to capture the richness and subtlety of experience, or their very acuity foils and distorts real meaning. As McGilchrist notes, the touch of a shoulder, handshake or look tells more than can be expressed in a long monologue, "not because our speech is not accurate enough" but rather "its accuracy and definiteness…make speech unsuited for expressing what is too complex, changeful and ambiguous" (98).

Patients with right-hemisphere strokes, he explains, lose the capacity to interpret others' thoughts and feelings—a capacity also missing in autism. Whatever meaning there is that goes beyond words is perceived by the right hemisphere (98). Given current brain research, he states, the left hemisphere is "the equivalent of the sort of person who, when asked for directions, prefers to make something up rather than admit to not knowing." This is a far from harmless trait, he notes, because the left hemisphere can make mistaken choices and set up rules that are wrong. Only the right hemisphere has the scope to interpret the truth, plausibility, or humane application of the left's choices and rules (108). The right is able to maintain ambiguous mental representations in the face of the left's tendency to premature over-interpretation. Its tolerance of uncertainty "is implied everywhere in its subtle ability to use metaphor, irony and humour, all of which depend on not prematurely resolving ambiguities" (109). The right tends to correlate with sadness and empathy, as well as feelings of guilt, shame and responsibility. "Psychopaths," he states, "have no sense of guilt, shame or responsibility, [having] deficits in the right frontal lobe…." (112).

While it is clear that both hemispheres of the brain need each other, our very act of living, it seems, forces us into a limiting option, like that of Schrödinger's famous cat in quantum physics: "It seems that we cannot achieve specificity in observation," McGilchrist asserts, "and at the same time preserve the other characteristics of the object of our attention, much as a light wave (a process) collapses and behaves like a particle (an isolated entity) if it is pinned down by detailed observation" (267). In fact, the right hemisphere needs *not* to know all the specifics of what the left observes, for that would destroy its ability to understand the whole. But while the left cannot manage the holistic perception of the right, it is dangerously competitive by nature, motivated to seek power, and inclined to compete with the right for dominance:

> Despite the asymmetry in their roles, in favour of the right hemisphere, there is an important opposing asymmetry of power, in favour of the left hemisphere. The Master makes himself vulnerable to the emissary [not having access to language or other tools like mathematics and technology], and the emissary can choose to take advantage of the situation, to ignore the Master. It seems that its nature is such that it is prone to do so, and it may even, mistakenly, see the right hemisphere's world as undoing its work, challenging its "supremacy". (280)

The significance for philosophy, especially phenomenology, of these distinctions of perception, may lie first in what McGilchrist delineates as the two different worlds our brains perceive and bring into being. In that of our right hemisphere, we experience "the live, complex, embodied, world of individual, always unique beings, forever in flux, a net of interdependencies, …a world with which we are deeply connected" (49). In the world perceived by the left hemisphere, we experience a represented version of our experience, one of "static, now separable, bounded, but essentially fragmented entities, grouped into classes, on which predictions can be based. This kind of attention isolates, fixes and makes each thing explicit by bringing it under the spotlight of attention" in such a way that "renders things inert, mechanical, lifeless" but also enables us to learn how to make things and to acquire power. "These are not different ways of *thinking about* the world," McGilchrist insists, "they are different ways of *being in* the world" (50). It is a fundamentally asymmetrical difference, and therein lies the challenge to human culture. It follows, in terms of significance to philosophy in general and phenomenology in particular, that "the abstract, impersonal, sequentialist approach of philosophy distinguishes it from all other humanities subjects (e.g. literature, history)" and that approach is dominated by the left hemisphere. This is most evident in scientific materialism, which has assumed the dominant position today of being considered our most reliable arbiter of truth. But therein lies a threat to the realm of philosophical inquiry in general, and its ability to place in broader perspective the implications of science in particular.

Using the example of M.C. Escher's drawing of one hand drawing another, McGilchrist writes, "Unfortunately, according to this position [that science is our most reliable arbiter of truth], one of the hands [i.e. attention to an object in the world] …must come first. …What science is actually doing when it delivers its revelations goes unexamined: the scientific [process] and the meaning of its findings is generally taken for granted…[so] what it tells us becomes the truth. And since the brain is equated with the mind, the mind too becomes a mechanism." When philosophy takes up this mechanical model, what he calls "a spectacular hijack" takes place. "Instead of a mutually shaping process, whereby philosophy interrogates science, and science informs philosophy," we get a "naïve world view of science [that] has tended by default to shape and direct what has been called 'neurophilosophy'." This "default approach of philosophy" he claims, is governed by the left hemisphere, "since it is via denotative language and linear, sequential analysis that we pin things down and make them clear and precise." This is then equated with "seeing the truth, as far as the left hemisphere is concerned" (175–176). He argues that this has become "evident in the work of the most influential philosophers of our age" (176). And though he does not name names, he seems to be referring to philosophers of the analytic tradition.

The major exceptions McGilchrist identifies are French and German phenomenologists. For example, Husserl's emphasis on empathy, the shared experience of embodied individuals called intersubjectivity, and context—without knowledge of the brain's hemispheres—asserts the primacy of the right hemisphere's essential role (187). McGilchrist holds that Merleau-Ponty's influence on philosophy, psychology, and art criticism from the latter half of the twentieth century onwards, is

hard to overstate. Of particular importance to neuroscience is the philosopher's concept of the 'lived body,' the body not as an extension of ourselves or an object we live inside, but a fundamental aspect of our being and consciousness. Anyone who has cared for stroke patients, McGilchrist observes, would recognize the validity of Merleau-Ponty's concerns with relations between the subject and his body, and between one's body and the world (192).[4] In addition, Merleau-Ponty's "emphasis on the work of art as bringing into being something entirely new, not just a redeployment of what already exists," along with his emphasis on the lived body and intersubjective experience, are, in McGilchrist's view, "expressions of the stance or disposition towards the world of the right hemisphere" (194).

The clinical discovery of the intersubjectivity of consciousness has made phenomenology very relevant to neuroscience, McGilchrist writes, especially given the realization that one's consciousness of oneself as embodied in the world is founded on empathy (188). If philosophy is to understand the world, he claims, it has to take into account that things are always embedded in a context of relation with other things that alter them, and we cannot understand them by taking them out of context. On this he quotes Dewey: "[O]ur every utterance is so saturated with context that it forms the significance of what we say and hear," and remarks that Dewey was referring to the "implicit nature of the right hemisphere's world, its insistence on context" in arriving at meaning in what we say and hear, and the fact that "context implies change and process" (184). We would add, concurring with McGilchrist, that seeing and hearing in context places our attention in a moral realm, where interaction with others requires responsibility to their feelings and needs.

McGilchrist's analysis goes far deeper, mentioning more philosophers, literary lights, and neurological examples than this paper can summarize. Let it suffice here to note his analogy of the Cartesian and phenomenological approaches to philosophy, as they align with the left and right hemispheres' dichotomy in ways of perceiving reality:

> For Descartes, truth is determined and validated by certainty. Certainty, in turn, is located in the *ego*. The self becomes the hub of reality and related to the world outside itself in an exploratory, necessarily exploitative, way. As knower and user, the *ego* is predator. For Heidegger, on the contrary, the human person and self-consciousness are *not* the centre, the assessors of existence. Man is only a privileged listener and respondent to existence. The vital relation to otherness is not, as for Cartesian and positivist rationalism, one of "grasping" and pragmatic use. It is a relation of audition. We are trying "to listen to the voice of Being". It is or ought to be, a relation of extreme responsibility, custodianship, answerability to and for. (198)

Thus he argues that the basic left-right hemispheric dichotomy is commensurate with the radical distinction between Cartesian and phenomenological approaches to human perception. The way we attend to the world, and to works of the imagination,

[4] McGilchrist mentions that when stroke damages the right hemisphere, the patient cannot carry out an action, even with no impairment of sensory or motor function, because the right hemisphere gives one the sense of the whole, relating visceral and emotional experience to what we know about the world. If damage is to the left hemisphere, however, patients usually have problems with how to use objects (193).

in some way creates it anew to each human consciousness and to each relationship of shared awareness. Thus it seems fair to say that listening for the voice of Being, in literature and other arts, as well as in embodied experience, requires a holistic form of attention that is a creative energy in itself.

Let us apply some of the above philosophical and clinical insights—or metaphors—about the divided brain to two illustrative works of recent literature: "Someone" by Alice McDermott[5] and "Desert Child" by Carol Emshwiller.[6]

McDermott's short story takes place in 1937 Brooklyn, New York, as remembered by the former girlfriend of a young man named Walter Hartnett (who, his name suggests, caught her heart in a net). Marie now has grown daughters who became tired of hearing about him. Walter was her first love, a man inordinately concerned with appearances. Both were children of widowed mothers who lived on rented top floors of modest townhouses. Their mothers were friends, and their families attended the same church. Before he began dating her, Walter noticed that Marie had a wandering right eye as she squinted in the sun. "What's wrong with your eye?" he demanded. When Marie answered that nothing was wrong, it was just a reaction to the sun, he told her not to let it do that because it made her whole face look funny (61).

Two details about Walter signify in the story's outcome. He was born with one leg shorter than the other, requiring one of his shoes to be platformed. Unable to join the other boys playing stickball in the street, Walter used to stand behind the boys' blind umpire, Bill Corrigan—who'd been gassed in the Great War—nodding appreciatively when Bill made impossibly accurate calls.

When Walter took Marie, then seventeen, to have a soda with him at the candy store, he looked repeatedly over her head, his attention focusing on whoever was coming in. If he knew them, he'd say "Hiya," and "How are you?" even if Marie was in midsentence. If he didn't, he'd stare at them brazenly, assessing and calculating as if he was alone.

> And then his gray eyes would drop to her face once more. There would be a second of utter indifference, boredom, perhaps, and then a slow dawning—*oh, yeah, you*—a slow warming as his attention returned to her—*well, I'm happy to be here with you*—sometimes even as much as a smile entering those dark-lashed eyes, before they flicked upward again (61).

This disturbing passage follows Marie's more recent memory of warning her daughters, when they began dating, to get rid of any man who looks over their head while they're talking, followed by their exasperated response: "Jesus, Mom, no more Walter Hartnett stories" (61).

Keeping in mind McGilchrist's observations about the pervasive dominance of the brain's left hemisphere in contemporary society, it is hard to miss Walter Hartnett's absence of empathy, fixation on physical appearance, and competitive desire to be noticed by others, unconcerned about the lack of attention he was paying to his date. As McGilchrist makes clear, all are traits of the left hemisphere, with

[5] Alice McDermott, "Someone", *The New Yorker*, 1/30/2012, which was expanded and published as the novel *Someone* (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux 2013)

[6] Carol Emshwiller, *Report to the Men's Club and Other Stories* (Brooklyn, NY: Small Beer Press, 2002), 193–210.

its narrow focus on utilitarian goals. Walter seems to have them to an autistic or borderline psychopathic degree. Walter uses Marie to acquire his first experience of sexual groping, and to show the world that he is capable of having a girlfriend. That summer he brags about how lucky he is to have a good job while so many others do not, and tells Marie that when she finishes school she should work in Brooklyn rather than commuting to Manhattan. After the groping incident, Walter routinely pauses on the street in front of Marie's place on his way home from work, where she sits on the stoop waiting for him, and brags about his job. He talks about their future wedding, and they go to the movies, where he puts his arm on the back of her seat and shows no further erotic interest in her. Once they picnic at a judge's house, where they are allowed inside only to use the bathroom. Driving her home, he says they should get a house like that someday.

Marie is characterized by other concerns: her connectedness with Walter or the lack of it. The one time he invites her into the top floor apartment he shared with his mother, she studies the photographs in his living room, feeling envious of "the widowed mother who had known Walter all his life, who had heard his first words, dried his first tears—had they been for the shortened leg? She…envied every happy moment Walter had lived that had no trace of her in it" (62). Marie longs for Walter's attention, feels compassionate affection for his shorter leg, and sees his entire life in a context jealously steeped in love for him. Her world is, in McGilchrist's terms, a vivid example of one envisioned by the right-hemisphere—empathic, all-embracing, whose only goal is relationship.

At summer's end Walter invites Marie to lunch in a classy downtown restaurant. For this she wears new shoes, new gloves, a new slip, and a new hat with red trim to match her shirtwaist dress. As their meal is served Walter informs her that he and the judge's daughter were getting married:

> It wasn't just that Rita's family had money, he explained while he ate and the food he had ordered for [Marie] sat untouched on her plate. Although that made it better than the two of them, he and Marie—with their widowed mothers ending up alone in their top-floor aviaries if they got married. It was simply that Rita was better-looking. No flaws that he could see. Not, he said, like you and me.
>
> "Blind you," he said. "Gimpy me."
>
> He said as the lunch wore on, "Don't kid yourself that everybody's equal in this country. It's the best-looking people who have the best chances."
>
> "I'm giving my future children the best chance I can give them. What kind of father would I be if I didn't?"
>
> In her recollection, the tears churned like the sea behind her thick glasses.
>
> He said, "You've been swell. I wanted to give you a nice lunch." (64)

The brain's left hemisphere world as described by McGilchrist fits Walter Hartnett to a T. He is goal- and detail-oriented, obsessed with appearances, driven toward success in terms of money and status, and ready to rationalize his behavior to suit his purposes rather than admit any shortcomings. The above scene reeks of materialistic social striving at the expense of compassion, empathy, and moral responsibility. The lunch Walter gives Marie at a tony restaurant seems more like payback for temporary usefulness rather than anything arising from care and concern. And of course, it would be rude to question whether lucre factored into Walter's vision of Rita's flawless looks.

When Marie goes home and is discovered, weeping, by her brother Gabe, we witness what McGilchrist identifies as a right hemisphere essential, the importance of context. Her brother was by then an ex-priest, who'd returned home after deciding that he was not cut out for the ministry. This meant that he occupied the bedroom they had once shared as children, while Marie had to sleep with her mother in the bed her parents once shared. Gabe hears the sad news clutching his breviary close to his chest, then quietly steers his sister outside for a walk. It was a blazing hot day, and they took refuge on a park bench. He spoke without turning to look at her, but this time we know that Marie has someone's full attention:

> "He's more to be pitied," he said softly. "That bad leg. Affliction like that. It can sometimes make a person compassionate. You'd expect it would. But more often than not it makes them cruel. Makes people resent God. They figure, If he formed me, then why did he choose to form me this way? Why burden me with all this needless pain?"
>
> She put her glasses back on and looked up at the trees, the thick landscape of them *against the colorless sky*.[7] She had loved Walter Hartnett for the hitch in his walk, the built-up shoe, as much as she'd loved him for his clever smile and his gray eyes. (66)

Gabe gives Marie a broader context in which to place Walter's affliction and his possible—perhaps projected—resentment of God for giving it to him, and tries to warn her that people with such afflictions can more often be cruel than kind. Next we have perhaps the only clear example of drama between sky and earth that this paper will afford: when Marie looks up at a colorless—to her, in that moment, perhaps indicating intense suffering that drains the color out of things—sky. She possibly contemplates, in some wordless Bergsonian gap in time, the anomaly of her love for someone with an affliction she does not share, but surely would have if allowed. We imagine that this right hemisphere girl attends to something vast, beyond her own misery, that she reaches out in longing, if not to Walter, then to her self who must survive this heartache.

Readers who wonder why Gabe gave up the priesthood if he could give such profound, compassionate advice, soon learn about his own affliction. He tells Marie about a time when he was playing stickball as a boy, with Walter standing behind Bill Corrigan the blind umpire. An ambulance arrived in front of Bill's house. A nurse ran out the Corrigans' door, shouting "She's here, over here," and the ambulance went next door instead, to old Mrs. Cooper's place. The boys sized up the situation and returned to play on the street. They were taken aback, though, when Bill, "big tears running down his face," asked them if it was his mother. Something about the sight of a grown man's vulnerability made them cruel, Gabe told her.

> "We said, 'Yeah, Bill. It was your mother. She's dead.' And then we just stood there. Bill dropped his head. It was only a matter of seconds, but for a few seconds we saw him wrecked. His whole life, the rest of his life, however he had foreseen it, blasted. Just for a few seconds. We saw that we had done this. Easily. Casually. Made him suffer." He shook his head. "For a few seconds," he said, "we savored it." (66)

Gabe said it was Walter, just a small boy then, who finally told Bill that they were kidding, it wasn't his mother in the ambulance, it was the old lady next door. "Which

[7] My emphasis.

got us all slapping Bill on the back and laughing at how we'd had him fooled. It took him a while to get the joke," Gabe said, gazing out into the park. "Some joke."

Marie, the narrator tactfully remarks, still loved Walter, so she assumed her brother was telling her this "not to admit that he, too, had once been cruel but to prove that Walter had once been kind" (66). At the time Marie may not have heard the self-loathing in her brother's voice when he said "Rescue me from my enemies, my God." Nor the shame arising from Gabe's next remark: "I never much liked playing ball after that. With Bill Corrigan always there." But the story is, after all, one of hindsight. Thus we are drawn into Marie's world of connection, context, and compassion, when "across a lifetime," she comes to see that her brother "bore in those days his own blasted vision of a lost future." Perhaps he'd given up his vocation, having judged himself forever tainted by that episode of cruelty. Fortunately, his compassion does not fail for his sister.

As they head home, Marie asks Gabe, "Who's going to love me?" He replies, "Someone. Someone will" (66). Thus ends the story titled "Someone."

In the integrative, intersubjective, contextual understanding of our brain's right hemisphere, we tend to perceive that the subject of "Someone" is everyone. And we are probably relieved, courtesy of our brain's left hemisphere, that the author allows some hope, because of the linear detail already provided, that Marie has grown daughters. Thus the master takes this information from its emissary, to use McGilchrist's and Nietzsche's metaphor, and wagers that someone other than Marie's children must have loved her, perhaps still does.

McDermott's powerful, compassionate story illuminates how attention changes what it sees, and changes us by the way we see things. Walter Hartnett's arrogant, image-obsessed way of seeing Marie's wayward eye rather than the beauty of her devotion to him is one example. Another is Marie's loving attention that finds his afflicted leg as endearing as his handsome gray eyes. There is the more subtle compassion for his sister shown by Gabe, who in telling her about his boyhood cruelty and Walter's compassion for Bill Corrigan, reveals that he may have wrecked his vocation to the priesthood by denying himself the mercy of forgiveness.

Ultimately words fail to capture what this writer has conjured by way of art, though her story is conveyed through words.

We are drawn back to McGilchrist's contention that our brain's right hemisphere, because its nature is to give attention to the world, towards the Other, to something that lies beyond itself and its material desires, and is one of care rather than control. For these reasons it deserves to be the Master in this metaphor—or reality—of master and emissary. Looking back over the years since 1937, we see a world that has become dangerously dominated by the spirit of power-seeking, getting and spending, and the gradual destruction of our environment as well as our better selves. McDermott's story implies that no matter how successful Walter was to become, he was the poorer for his loss of Marie. In the real world, a person like Walter—calculating, competitive and goal-driven as so many are—would come to reflect what McGilchrist deduces from various statistical surveys: that most people today who have experienced an increase in prosperity, find themselves less happy (553), and that "no relationship can be found between happiness and economic growth" (554).

Indeed, as Robert Putnam elucidated in his extensively researched work, *Bowling Alone* (2000),[8] what most produces happiness is "the breadth and depth of one's social connections" (McGilchrist 554).

What lingers in this reader's mind is McDermott's image of Walter Hartnett gazing over Marie's head on their first date, searching for recognition by others and for what they might do to advance or threaten his ambitions, disregarding the humanity of his interlocutor. In this he resembles those of our contemporaries who scope out a room full of people at a party, aiming for either the most beautiful or the most powerful, paying scant attention to those they deem insignificant on their path to those who serve their purposes. McGilchrist—as did Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch before him—points out that, unlike the passive eye of a camera, one's gaze is active and capable of real agency for good or ill. "[I]n the real world we bring a lot of ourselves to the party…[our] gaze alters what it finds. This used to be expressed in the idea, prevalent in the Ancient World, and again in the Renaissance, of the rays that come from the eye, from a deep source of life and energy within." In looking at someone, "we enter into a reciprocal relationship: the seeing and the seen take part in one another's being." He remarks that Plato, in the *Timaeus*, "for once seems to anticipate the phenomenologists when he writes that a smooth, dense stream of gentle light from the purest fire within us merges with the light from what it sees, so that 'one body' is formed between ourselves and the object of our vision, conveying the 'motions' of what is seen into every part of our own body and soul" (214). The above formulations suggest a basically benevolent function of the gaze.

On the opposing end of the spectrum, McGilchrist recalls that Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History,* described a belief current until the Renaissance, of a venomous reptile, the basilisk, that could kill with its gaze (214). To this one could add the still-current folk belief in the destructive power of the "evil eye," and the popular expression "If looks could kill…." In other words, people have long registered awareness of the negative power of a cold, uncaring, or hostile gaze. "This embodies a truth about attention," McGilchrist asserts, elaborating:

> The focused but detached attention of the surgeon, with intent to care, may easily mimic the focused but detached attention of the torturer, with intent to control; only the knowledge of the *in*tention[9] changes the way in which we understand the act. And, if I am its recipient, it changes my self-experience, too. It is in fact the detachment with which the detailed plans of the extermination camps were developed, often relying on the expertise of engineers, physicians and psychiatrists, that makes the Holocaust so particularly chilling. (214)

A reader's knowledge of what was to happen in the Second World War would color McDermott's story set shortly before it, rendering more chilling the significance of Walter Hartnett's gaze over the head of the young woman he was to treat as a stepping stone to higher social status. That Marie's memory of Walter's uncaring gaze begins the story imparts significance to a lifelong wound as well as the effort required to heal from it. Not for nothing is it mentioned that Marie risked her daughters'

[8] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

[9] McGilchrist's emphasis; herewith his further emphases will not be noted.

boredom drilling into them that such looks spell poison to romance. Their response, 'Not another Walter Hartnett story,' suggests that she used her experiences with Walter repeatedly to teach her children—implicitly or not—about the nature of evil. In her case, evil came first in the negative energy of an uncaring gaze, a vivid illustration of attention's power to enhance as well as to damage another's well-being.

Detachment, when it comes to attention, is deeply ambiguous, McGilchrist writes. There is no such thing as neutral objectivity: "Objectivity *requires* interpretation of what one finds," and interpretation "depends on imagination for its achievement." By imagination we assume he includes judgment and moral concern, for he adds that "the cool, detached stance of the scientific or bureaucratic mind ultimately may lead where we do not wish to follow" (215). It is critical here that he describes, citing clinical evidence, the connection between left-hemisphere limited perception and mental illness. "The disintegrating stare that Wittgenstein noticed" and wished to abolish from philosophy "is a characteristic of schizophrenia" (503). In schizophrenia, McGilchrist explains, there is "a lack of seeing *through,* to whatever there is beyond" (501).

By contrast, the brain's right hemisphere produces a gaze that is "intrinsically empathic" and "acknowledges the *inevitability* of 'betweenness';…it is the fact of [our] gaze normally being an empathic process that makes the detached stare so destructive" (215).

We find McGilchrist's concern with detachment persuasive, and would extend it to suggest that *the quality and intention of one's attention, in itself, must be attended to as the very ground of moral awareness*. Engagement with others, and with the value of any subject, animate or inanimate, receiving the focus of one's consciousness, is attention writ active. Without engagement we do not have morality, or any basis for ethics. Detachment, therefore, must be handled with care, and kept within a context of seeking fairness to oneself and others. This is the glaring inadequacy—and the cruel anomaly—in Walter Hartnett's pretense of detachment telling Marie that he owed it to his children to marry someone with flawless looks.

When McGilchrist warns that in a left-hemisphere world, "Exploitation rather than co-operation would be…the default relationship between human individuals, and between humanity and the rest of the world" (549), we have to concede that far too many Walters abound in contemporary society. It follows that we take seriously his neurological and philosophical view, that "following the left hemisphere's path has already involved the destruction and despoliation of the natural world, the erosion of established cultures, …justified in terms of its utility in bringing about human happiness." When he asks, "Is a greater capacity to control and manipulate the world for our benefit leading to greater happiness?" citing studies indicating it does not, he has reason to say that "it is hard indeed to see what its justification could be" (553). And yet exploitation not only of our natural environment but of other people is flourishing in today's world, to such an extent that a recent announcement by our Secretary of State estimates that slavery worldwide is now more widespread than in so-called slavery times.

This seems a good place to imagine a parallel universe, a place where beings with bihemispheric brains similar to ours have achieved technological mastery, but have all but destroyed the intersubjective concerns of their right hemispheres. The science

fiction writer Carol Emshwiller provides an opportunity in her short story "Desert Child." It begins with this quotation: *"An unbeliever once wrote: God is alive and well and living in the desert. She wrote, 'Surely if he's anywhere at all…."*[10]

The unnamed narrator is a woman in perhaps late middle age, hired to cook and do laundry for the men who work mining tungsten and live with their families in a small desert village in California. Her God seems to be the spirit of the desert itself:

> You can smell him, strong and bitter. He pricks and bites. There's either too much of everything or not enough. When water, too much water, when dry, too dry. Too cold at night, too hot in the daytime. …Whatever God—He, She, or It (laughing, ah *ha*! ah *ha*!) …whatever's out there—brings, it's never reasonable. …You'd think we wouldn't live here. You'd think we'd let the ragged, mangy creature slither back, fill our huts with sand, return our little oasis to the desert that It owns and won't let go. (193)

The reason she stays may well be an older man known as Red, who's been dried out and scarred, "stretched to nothing but skin and bone" (194). He keeps a wary distance, but does things without being asked to help her, building a coyote-proof pen for her goats and a gopher-proof fence for her vegetable garden. "Though he was here before we came, he always acts as if it's he who doesn't belong. I suppose he has squatter's rights," she muses. Unbidden, Red also does things for the children of the miners' families—putting up a swing and a teeter-totter for them, and making a small dam in the fast-flowing creek so the children can get water by themselves (194).

By choice, she and Red keep their huts farther away from the river where the others live, but near the playground. That is where she heard the squeak of the swing late at night, and saw from her window what appeared to be a runaway girl: "Who ever heard of a child alone out here in our playground swinging in the moonlight? Though I expect she goes into the goat pen to be safe, maybe cuddles up with the kids to keep warm. There's no place for her to have come from. We're a long way from anywhere. It's as if she dropped from the sky" (196). Indeed. The children saw her first, and said that she was dirty, had funny eyes, and had marks on her where she'd been whipped. So, since our narrator is "the one who looks after all the orphaned and wounded creatures (including poor old Red)" (196), she goes out at night and puts a piece of cornbread for her on the teeter-totter, makes a loop in her lariat and waits to catch her. Instead, Red shows up and warns that she might not be easy to take in, since she's been badly treated. The woman is sure that he's talking about himself. He says the girl will have to be tamed first, before she will come. That remark, too, seems to have dual significance. The woman would like Red to open up to her, but the only way seems to be through their shared strategy as to how to win this orphan girl's trust.

Unfortunately, there are a couple men in the village who like to shoot things. They killed her tame raven, but she was afraid to run out and stop them because they already called her an old witch and might have shot her as well. Two nights after she set out the cornbread for the girl, somebody shot at the girl right outside the woman's window, and ran off. Red appears, picks her up, and takes her into the woman's hut to extract the bullet. The girl is not dead, but

[10] Attributed to Susan Coulson, the author's daughter.

> She's not a cute child. Stringy. Starving. …wearing a sort of sack and nothing else. Scratchy. Not burlap but might as well be. There's something odd with her eyes. The iris is striped both black and green, and there's a membrane at the corner that isn't supposed to be there. As if she were a lizard. Tied around her neck with a blue cord there's…a thing. …Smooth, gray—looks to be basalt with green streaks of copper across it. You can find rocks like that around here, but this one is polished and shaped and contains a square chunk of magnetite. (199)

The girl refuses to drink the wine intended to knock her out while Red cuts out the bullet, but reaches up to the woman and says "Ah. Bah," which she hears as "Ma." She makes no sound during the extraction, no expression on her face. At this point the reader is more charmed by the old woman's guilelessness and childlike observation than held in not-so-great suspense about the identity of this alien. The woman hears her crying late at night, wants to console her, but knows she cannot let on that she's heard. The girl stays in the woman's hut to recover, and while she is away at work Red tells her stories and tries to teach her the names of household objects. But all she can utter is "Ah. Bah." The woman begins to wonder if she can speak at all.

What is striking about the tale, in light of what we've learned about the brain's two hemispheres, is that the narrator and Red are completely driven by compassion and concern for this strange creature. To continue McGilchrist's metaphor, they are personifications of those deserving to be Masters in their societies. Instead, in accord with his dire prediction about wayward dominator emissaries, the narrator and Red are already terribly marginalized and nearly powerless in contemporary society. Though wise, capable and benevolent, Red is scarred by the abuse of others, reputedly for trying to protect the natural environment in some way that infuriated those in power. The woman, though shrewd, kindly, and useful as a cook and laundress, is soon called a witch and an old crow for taming wild creatures, making folk remedies, and keeping a small herd of goats which she raised from when they were orphan kids. If not exactly gods of the desert, they seem to embody the kind of oppressed and disrespected persons who possess wisdom and compassion that threatens the left-hemisphere driven 'emissary' types driven by material goals—in this case tungsten. And amongst them are two thugs carried away with the power of their manmade tools: in this case guns.

It is quite a desert scenario, when we consider that the desert tends to strip away all trappings of culture and refinement, exposing the brute forces of survival as well as whatever integrity an individual can muster in the survival process. Western religious tradition has given us the Desert Fathers. This story gives us a Desert Father and Mother, as it were, as well as a Desert Child. But this time the child is a different kind of emissary, from another galaxy or a parallel universe. As she recuperates she steals and hides knives and scissors, matches, and food that she carefully wraps and does not eat, which the woman finds only by the odor when it spoils. Because the girl has also stolen from the village people, they drive her up a tree and are about to shoot her when she lets out a terrifying non-human shriek. The woman rescues her but they are both driven away at gunpoint, followed shortly after by Red. The woman notices that the girl runs on her hands and feet, and wonders whether she's a girl after all. Red doesn't think so, and names her Sage.

Finally Sage leads them to the edge of a large crater in the desert, where a spaceship has crashed. The stone around Sage's neck buzzes insistently, and the woman and Red

give each other a look. At the bottom of the crater they see a twisted, shattered vessel the size of two or three houses, white on one side and black on the other. Sage squats down beside them and hugs herself, afraid to return. The woman reports what they saw:

> They lived for a while. Four of them. They had barrels of things to drink, but some were broken. …They're chubby, soft, with big stomachs and thin legs. I wonder if they'd have been able to climb out of the crater if they tried. They sat in the shade of the wreckage on hammock-like things of wire and cloth, their empty barrels beside them. They moved as the sun turned. You can see the back-and-forth marks in the sand…[wearing] bits of metal and cloth for hats. If they're anything like us, they wouldn't last long without their drinks. (208)

Red looks into one of their mouths and sees that they have tongues like humans, realizing that Sage has had most of her tongue cut off. The woman concludes that they sent their thin little slave "to do the hardest, most dangerous work of going for help," that her masters considered themselves "too high-class to do it," and that the marks they'd seen on Sage's back really were from beatings (209).

It is a squirmingly prescient image of a master class of "evolved" humanoids, overfed and underexercised, from a civilization advanced enough to build spaceships but complacent and cruel enough to mutilate and torture others to serve them. No need to note that two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, and that power-seeking interests with vast amounts of wealth are able to influence and in some ways control our system of government. We've already mentioned our world's flourishing slave trade. If McGilchrist's metaphor is correct, the emissary is already taking over much of what the Master should be allowed to rule benevolently, with equal concern for all.

Emshwiller's story offers a twist to McGilchrist's metaphor of Master and emissary, while sending the same kind of warning. Rather than an ambitious left-hemispheric emissary, Emshwiller's messenger is a female slave from a not-so-alien civilization, a victim of left-hemispheric hijacking. She gravitates to the only source of succor she finds in our world: two people who show her compassion and respect, and who try to understand her, to feel for her—exhibiting all the intersubjective traits McGilchrist and other neuroscientists locate in our brain's right hemisphere. What resonates forebodingly is that the narrator of "Desert Child" and her companion Red are, because of harboring this creature rather than punishing or driving her out, exiled from the small community in which they had always been suspect, their wisdom and good works taken for granted or held in suspicion. People like the narrator and Red, whose compassion for others and respect for nature is at odds with the power-hungry, may well be destined to become the enslaved rightful masters of our civilization. That is, if we do not reverse the direction of our left-hemisphere-driven oligarchs and overlords who utilize human and natural resources for material gain and control. Those who would be capable of leading society wisely and fairly seem to lack the language skills and strategies to compete with viziers who now hold the reigns.

At the end of Emshwiller's story, Red cuts the cord that holds the buzzing stone hanging from Sage's neck, throws it high over the top of the crater. He and the woman plan to hide out for a while, teach Sage how to read and write, and eventually take her with them to "the big town" (209). Meanwhile, they drink the last of their water and climb out of the crater toward the mountain river that will sustain them until they are ready for that big move. The God of the desert seems pleased: "For once the desert takes us in as if we belong to it, everything luminous, numinous. …Radiant. Stars. …

Turning, turning. The Big Dipper swinging round the Little Dipper. North over our right shoulders. Shooting stars as if for luck" (210). We are tempted to say, They'll need a lot of it. But if the desert is where God dwells—if God stands for wisdom, compassion, and love—they may have luck on their side.

They are up against steep odds, including these that McGilchrist formulates:

> Today all the available sources of intuitive life—cultural tradition, the natural world, the body, religion and art—have been so conceptualized, devitalized and "deconstructed" (ironised) by the world of words, mechanistic systems and theories constituted by the left hemisphere that their power to help us see beyond the hermetic world that it has set up has been largely drained from them. (309)

He points to three escape routes from the left-hemisphere-generated world of modernism,[11] post-modernism,[12] and scientific materialism[13] suggested above, all of

[11] McGilchrist writes that modernity has been marked by "a process of social disintegration…clearly derived from the effects of the Industrial Revolution" producing "an aggregation of essentially atomistic individuals. The drift from rural to urban life…led to a breakdown of familiar social orders, and the loss of a sense of belonging, with far-reaching effects on the life of the mind. The advance of scientific materialism…and of bureaucracy…helped to produce what Weber called the disenchanted world. Capitalism and consumerism, ways of conceiving human relationships based on little more than utility, greed, and competition, came to supplant those based on felt connection and cultural continuity. …And there were worrying signs that the combination of an adulation of power and material force with the desire, and power (through technological advance) to subjugate, would lead to the abandonment of any form of democracy, and the rise of totalitarianism" (495).

[12] Regarding post-modernism, McGilchrist opines: "With post-modernism, meaning drains away. Art becomes a game in which the emptiness of a wholly insubstantial world, in which there is nothing beyond the set of terms we have in vain used to 'construct' meaning, is allowed to speak for its own vacuity [as in deconstructionism]. The set of terms are now seen simply to refer to themselves. They have lost transparency; and all conditions that would yield meaning have been ironised out of existence. …If words have no referent, we are all absolutely impotent to say or do anything that has meaning, raising the question why the [post-modern, deconstructionist] critic wrote in the first place. …The author becomes a sort of puppet, whose strings are pulled by social forces behind the scenes. He is 'placed'. Meanwhile the work of art gets to be 'decoded', as if the value of the work lay in some message of which the author was once more unaware, but which we in our superiority can now reveal" (538–539).

[13] McGilchrist refers to the rise of scientific materialism as the Second Reformation, based on "a view that science is the only foundation for knowing and understanding the world" (487). "By driving a wedge between the realms of sensory experience and the realm of ideas [and spiritual beliefs], the whole realm of ideas became suspect. Ideas were what led us to believe that things we could not see with our eyes and touch with our hands – like God – were real, whereas they must, so went the logic, be our own inventions. Worse, endowed with such independent existence, they kept us in a state of indignity and humility. The denial of the divine was as important to them as the elevation of matter." So the materialists made a super-human authority, a new divinity, out of science. "Both scientific materialism and the dialectical materialism of Engels and Marx emerged from the view that science was the only authority" (488). "At the same time, science preached that it was exempt from the historicisation or contextualization that was being used to undermine Christianity in the nineteenth century, a way of enabling science to criticize all other accounts of the world and of human experience while rendering itself immune to criticism. This doctrine of the infallibility of science is also a result of the Enlightenment failure to understand the contextual nature of all thought…." (490).

Although the above terms are familiar to most readers, I offer these summaries of McGilchrist's views to indicate the depth of the connections he makes with them as produced by the brain's left-hemisphere-directed manner of perceiving the world.

which having been attacked by it in our time. These are respect for the body, the spirit, and art, "all vehicles of love" and different aspects of the same phenomenon: "for love is the attractive power of the Other, which the right hemisphere experiences, but the left hemisphere does not understand and sees as an impediment to its authority" (567). What he calls the right hemisphere's disposition to the world—seeing others and things in a metaphoric manner, in a relationship of between-ness or semi-transparency, simultaneously seen and not seen—is akin to what Keats called negative capability, the tolerance of our not-knowingness. Or, it can be seen as intuiting what Kurt Gödel discovered—that rationalistic goals cannot be achieved by rational means. In earlier times, this disposition to the world could be experienced as the essence of religious humility—the feeling that God is unknowable except as love, and that all are made in God's image and unknowable to one another except through whatever is revealed in an atmosphere of love.

McGilchrist claims that our brain's right hemisphere makes it possible for us not only to see others in a caring capacity, what he calls 'betweenness,' but to take note of what we are attending to and how: "How we see the world alters not just others, but who *we* are. We need to be careful what we spend our time attending to, and in what way" (216). This is a point raised earlier by Murdoch in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992), and in Wayne C. Booth's classic study of the moral influence of literature, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (1988). But if, as McGilchrist and his predecessors claim, what we attend to and how we attend to it has the power to change it and us, and is natural and good when empathic and destructive and pathological when not, then not only is attention the ground of moral awareness but it is also *an invisible and powerful force of energy in our universe.* But unlike the dark energy of the physical universe—at least as far as we are able to detect it by scientific means, the human creative energy of attention carries with it the charge of intentionality, for good or ill.

The intentionality of attention is what McGilchrist refers to as its disposition, which he connects with spirituality, and which we would also connect with moral awareness and concern for the Other. He writes that spirituality and belief are right-hemisphere functions. Belief, he states,

> Is not reducible to a question of a factual answer to the question "does God exist?", assuming for a moment that "a factual answer" has a meaning. It is having an attitude, holding a disposition towards the world, whereby that world, as it comes into being for me, is one in which God belongs. The belief alters the world, but also alters me. Is it true that God exists? Truth is a disposition, one of being true to someone or something. One cannot believe in nothing and thus avoid belief altogether, simply because one cannot have *no* disposition towards the world, that being in itself a disposition. …Truth and belief, …as in their etymology, are profoundly connected. It is only the left hemisphere that thinks there is certainty to be found anywhere. (220–221)

McGilchrist's commentary on the history of Western culture as seen from the perspective of the asymmetry of the brain's left and right hemispheres provides deep insights on religious history, especially the Protestant Reformation, whose vision he characterizes as arising from a left-hemispheric reaction to the symbolism and rituals—not just the errors and corruption of various representatives—of the

Catholic Church.[14] However, for our purposes here we will focus on his above idea of belief as a disposition toward truth, one that places the self in relationship with a mysterious but loving God, or at the very least a belief in the power of love, and in relationship with others, and the importance of being true—or kind, or fair, or respectful—to others.

McGilchrist makes a very telling distinction between love and desire and love as a form of longing. Today the latter term is associated with sentimentality and an ironic idea of the 'Romantic', although Odysseus longed for his native Ithaca, and the Hebrew psalms proclaim the soul's longing for God. The Anglo-Saxon roots of the verb *to long*, he notes, in the sense of "to yearn for", relate to the word meaning "to seem, or be, or grow long," and hence "to reach out" or "to extend towards". It is impersonal grammatically, putting the person who is longing for something into the accusative form; thus not "I long for" but literally "it longs me [of]" whatever it might be. This form, he suggests, differentiates longing from wanting or desiring:

> Wanting is clear, purposive, urgent, driven by the will, always with its goal clearly in view. Longing, by contrast, is something that 'happens' between us and another thing. It is not directed by will, and is not an aim, with the ultimate goal of acquisition; but instead is a desire for union—or rather it is experienced as a desire for *re*-union. There is no simple explicit vision of what it is that is longed for, which remains in the realms of the implicit or intuitive, and is often spiritual in nature. …[It is] something that 'happens' or 'comes about' between ourselves and an Other…. This reaching out to something beyond what humans have made or can make, to something Other than ourselves…is the mode of the right hemisphere. (389–390)

In longing for Ithaca Odysseus was longing implicitly and intuitively for a totality of reunion with his family and community, the comfort and freedom of belonging to and being in his homeland, and of reclaiming his rulership. Likewise what we long for is not exactly ownership but union with, as implied in the related term *belonging*. And our desire to belong is not to own or possess a friend, family, or community, but to be part of and embraced by those Others whose company and

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[14] A brief example: "Luther perceived that the inner and outer realms,…the realm of the mind/soul and that of the body,…needed to be *as one*, otherwise the outward show had nothing to say about the inward condition. …But his followers took it to mean that the outer world was in itself empty, and that therefore the only authenticity lay in the inner world alone. …The Reformation is the first great expression of the search for certainty in modern times. As Schleiermacher put it, the Reformation and the Enlightenment have this in common, that 'everything mysterious and marvelous is proscribed. Imagination is not to be filled with airy images'" (399). "In fact the supposed 'idolators' never had believed they were worshipping statues – that self-serving fiction existed only in the minds of the iconoclasts, who could not understand that divinity could find its place *between* one 'thing' (the statue) and another (the beholder), rather than having to reside, fixed, in the 'thing' itself. Luther himself said as much: 'I believe that there is no person, or certainly very few, who does not understand that the crucifix that stands over there is not my God – for my God is in Heaven – but rather only a sign.'" (400)

> "These different ways of looking at the world – 'proclamation' of the word versus 'manifestation' of the divine – are aligned with hemisphere differences. As Ricoeur demonstrated, the 'emergence of the word from the numinous is…the primordial trait that differentiates proclamation from manifestation.' For 'emergence of the word from the numinous' read the triumph of the left hemisphere over the right" (405).

love we need to thrive and be happy. Perhaps McGilchrist's most evocative example of longing is in our relationship with beauty, which he claims is different from our relationship with things we desire. "It is more like longing, or love, a betweenness, a reverberative process between the beautiful and ourselves, which has no ulterior purpose…and is non-acquisitive" (567). When he says that longing is often spiritual in nature, it comes to mind that the longing for beauty was once associated with the desire to be holy, to live in a state of grace or acceptance or belongingness with God. In our secular age, this longing for beauty and for union with God can take the form of a longing for happiness and fulfillment, or even an indistinct and illusive idea of personal success. Nevertheless, longing is always there. I suggest that whether or not we consider ourselves lovers of beauty or of God or even of goodness, our lives are infused with longing. Perhaps this longing is itself the dark energy that sparks our attention. Whatever it is, it flows within the living, human universe. And it provides the impetus to create and to appreciate art and all works of the imagination. Who can deny that Marie's love for Walter is driven by her longing to unite her life with his? What else predisposes the narrator of "Desert Child" and the older man she hopes to know better to reach out toward the strange female creature that resembles a runaway girl? We could say they are moved by compassion, but what moves compassion? Likely, it is a form of longing—perhaps for understanding, for kindness and justice, for belonging in relationship, for the joy of interaction with others—but words fail to capture what we long for in reaching toward all forms of intersubjectivity.

I suggest that the longing, reverberative relationship to which McGilchrist refers in each of the three abovementioned realms of escape from the tyranny of linear, mechanistic thinking and power seeking are all qualities and modes of attention. These realms of escape—"respect for the body, the spirit, and art", all of which he identifies as "vehicles of love", he claims to be different aspects of the same phenomenon. Love, aroused by the attractive power of the Other, is, he says, the very essence of attention. McGilchrist claims that to truly see anything as it is, one's attention "needs to rest on the object and pass *through* the plane of focus.…Metaphoric meaning depends on this semi-transparency, this being-seen-and-not-seen" (234–235). In a small way, we can see this in the titles of our two short stories. "Someone" becomes everyone who has suffered unrequited love made more painful by the beloved's blindness to one's real merits and lovability. (In trying to summarize just this metaphor I am uncomfortably aware of what McGilchrist aptly calls the "Gorgon stare" of language.) "Desert Child" evokes, among other things, the alien child in all of us, unable to express ourselves, stranded in a harsh world we do not understand, dependent for survival on the few who show us mercy, while power-crazed gunslingers ostracize and shoot at us, figuratively or actually. And so on.

To this writer, holistic caring attention is perhaps a clearer term for love, as it is surely the ground of all moral consciousness. It may be, in its ideal form, all that we long for, to give and receive. It is also what we find missing in all forms of evil in human perception and conduct.

In order to overcome modernity's crippling self-regard, McGilchrist asserts, we must try to return to an adult form of innocence—childlike, open, and vulnerable—

even if, like Wordsworth, it makes us subject to ridicule, because we have given up our "self-protective carapace of ironic knowingness and cynicism" (574). In McDermott's "Someone," Marie may not have been subject to ridicule, but the heartlessness of Walter Hartnett's rejection of her seems close to it. The narrator of "Desert Child" endures ridicule, being called a witch and an old crow. Both protagonists lack the carapace of irony and cynicism of postmodern sophistication. Their vulnerability alone exposes the malevolent power of society to alienate those who remain childlike, open and caring of others.

To McGilchrist's call for an adult form of innocence I would add a qualification. This form of innocence needs to make a conscious attempt to combine self-awareness with reaching out to the Other—the betweenness and semi-transparency the author has mentioned as functions of the right hemisphere—in a more enlightened, morally alert quality of attention. It is the unstated but compelling implication of both short stories analyzed above. In McGilchrist's view, we receive this implication through our right hemisphere's metaphoric understanding, through our betweenness as readers of narratives about characters we find ourselves caring about.

In closing, McGilchrist confesses that even if the hijacking of the right hemisphere's rightful role as master of our world by a perfidious left hemispheric way of perceiving the world is not taken as literal truth, he will be happy if it turns out to be "just a metaphor." He has a high regard for metaphor, he states. "It is how we come to understand the world" (590). We who study literature and the arts can only agree. Those of us who combine this with a search for moral understanding might see his far-reaching study as proof that attention itself is the ground of moral awareness, our greatest weapon against what would destroy humane culture. Attention is our dark energy of hope, compassion, and potential for understanding the mysteries of the universe. It is the means by which we reach for what we long for.

More than a Common Pest: The Fly as Non-human Companion in Emily Dickinson's "I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died" and Samuel Beckett's *Company*

Mary F. Catanzaro

Abstract The appearance of an ordinary fly in Emily Dickinson's poem, "I heard a Fly buzz when I died," and in Samuel Beckett's short novel, *Company*, is a noteworthy example of the subtlety with which an everyday insect can offer nonhuman companionship to individuals in times of stress. In both works, the fly's entrance provides a calming presence without overt symbolism or meaning. The nonhuman companion is a potent force of strength as the subject in Dickinson's poem investigates the physical process of her dying. In Beckett's tale, an elderly subject invokes a fly as a source of company as he muses on melancholy episodes from his past. In both works, the relationship of the speaker to the fly is communicated through paradoxical images that offer solace.

Keywords Emily Dickinson's "I heard a Fly buzz when I died" • Samuel Beckett's *Company* • Nonhuman companions • Flies • Presence

In her poem, "I heard a Fly buzz when I died" (ca. 1862), Emily Dickinson recounts a woman's emotional musings immediately preceding her death. When she hears the buzz of a fly overhead, the moment is all the more poignant because she shares her ordeal with a non-human companion. A fly also makes a shadowy appearance in Samuel Beckett's prose-text, *Company* (1980), in which an older man, reclining in darkness in a garden house, recalls events of his past – as a child, adolescent and adult. The fly's entrance into his reveries provides comfort when his memories arouse troubling emotions.

Accounts of experiencing a supportive presence in extreme situations – sometimes called the 'third man phenomenon' or syndrome[1] – are common in stressful situations or near-death experiences. Among those who have felt a

[1] The third man factor refers to reported situations where an unseen presence (human or nonhuman) provides comfort in stressful circumstances, such as in documents of explorers who experience an incorporeal presence on their treks.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_14

nonhuman or ghostly companionship, those who survive an exceptional ordeal tell of the experience of the non-human companion as a helper, or as sympathetic. In a passage in "The Waste Land," T. S. Eliot wrote also about a silent, other presence: "Who is the third who walks always beside you?"[2] Eliot's speaker never defines whether the other is human or not. An occurrence of this kind suggests a radical idea: that we are never truly alone and that nonhuman presences can comfort us in extreme environments.

Theories for explaining the third-man experience vary, according to J. Geiger (2009). Some believe that a guardian angel is by one's side and a spiritual interpretation is common. Alternately, scientists can evoke the sensation of a shared presence by stimulating the brain with electricity. Others lean toward the idea that the companion phenomenon is a survival strategy hard-wired into the brain. This phenomenon is not limited to humans *in extremis*. Children and older persons often experience companionship in pets and lesser creatures. Whatever the nonhuman companion is, the companion often represents an energizing agent. The ability to access this power is a factor determining who will succeed against seemingly insurmountable odds, and who will not.

There are deeply fatalistic ideas concerning flies, to be sure. They are seen in cults of death. Yet the presence of flies in both Dickinson and Beckett is no accident. For both writers, the fly's ephemeral nature provides intimations of natural human death and social isolation, unclouded by egotism. In no way hallucinatory, the fly is an active presence in a time of stark encounters with nature's forces. The explicit action of the fly's presence lies in its ability to comfort without intrinsic meaning or symbolism. The anxiety felt by the subjects in both works, if any anxiety is felt at all, is that of an absolute, physiological event or psychological experience without overt significance.

The appearance of an insignificant fly in Dickinson's poem (1958) may startle the reader initially. But by the end of the poem, the fly acquires an elevated status as being the last witness, and hence companion, to the subject as she expires. The room is silent except for the fly. In the lull between the "heaves of storm" (l. 4) and her deathbed willing of keepsakes, there is otherwise only "stillness in the air" (l. 3). The humans observing her dying hover about the room mournfully. The only perceived sound in the room is the fly's buzzing, yet the speaker's tone is calm and her narrative is factual. The fly is a fact and a reality, and represents life rendered to its lowest terms. Zen-like, the fly provides a final active life presence, and thus its stature as a companion is one of privilege. While Dickinson's dying subject understands that the human mourners have witnessed her dying, the reader realizes that the mourners are unaware that part of the dying person's consciousness is in tune with the fly's presence, as she comments to herself the facts of the fly's buzzing at the time of her death.

Colleen Boggs (2009) has noted Dickinson's kinship with animals. She observes that the focus of the poem comes from a nonhuman, where "the incessant buzzing and alliterative sounds invoke the impersonal fly whose intervention in the first line separates the I of literal subjectivity from an undefined I" (539). Moreover, the fly's

[2] T. S. Eliot (1922), *The Waste Land,* Canto V., l. 359.

blue luster provides a dramatic but natural aura to the gloomy room. This fly interposes itself as though it does not actively belong with the others in the room, yet its presence asserts itself purposefully. The line, "With Blue - uncertain stumbling Buzz - Between the light - and me -" (ll. 13–14) suggests that, while the fly is not summoned by the dying speaker and simply appears, the fly acts as a powerful catalyst for her last movement in life, when she no longer is able to see and appears to lose consciousness: "and then/I could not see to see" (ll. 15–16). The fly is aurally recognized by the speaker after the "breaths and gathering" (l. 6) of the mourners around her subside. The fly's presence provides a mental space wherein the speaker can depart life unencumbered by the melancholic, perhaps even selfish, concerns of others.

Where Dickinson emphasizes the more benign aspects of solitude, Beckett tunnels into its dark, dystopian underside. But the greater unknown is the fate of the fly itself. The fly, a visually potent image, is all but invisible in Beckett's *Company*. Tucked away in the text, the fly does not even make an appearance. This makes any attempt to survey the fly's origin difficult unless we examine the fly from the speaker's perspective. In *Company*, an inner voice speaks to the narrator as though he were a separate subject: "A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine" (7). This voice points out what is before the scene of the man's inner gaze rather than what is visible to his senses. He observes himself creating company for himself: "Another devising it all for company. In the same dark as his creature or in another" (33). Implied in the idea of creating company for oneself is the sense of survival and discipline in the face of isolation. Here, suffering implies sufferance, the ability to survive one's woes.

The intricate and subtle deployment of the fly relates to the subject's need to control the anguish of his isolation. He is liable to distressing soliloquies and mutters abuse of himself for his supposed shortcomings. Combined with his own intellect and a rare ability to remember events from the past, is a determination to welcome sorrow through his "voice." He is tempted to conjure up a mere fly in order to brush it away:

> The temptation is great. Let there be a fly. For him to brush away. A live fly mistaking him for dead. Made aware of its error and renewing it incontinent. What an addition to company that would be! A live fly mistaking him for dead. But no. He would not brush away a fly. (Beckett, 28)

The narrator also wonders if there would be the faintest relief in smelling "a rat long dead" (51). Later, he imagines himself to be a creature crawling on all fours in the dark. He also imagines whether the voice is speaking to him or "To another of that other. Or of him. Or of another still" (11). He wonders: "Is he not perhaps overhearing a communication not intended for him? If he is alone on his back in the dark why does the voice not say so?" (9). No other figure in Beckett so deliberately conjures up animals as the narrator in this work does. No other figure conjures up creatures for the sole purpose of self-investigation, or pure company. Steven Connor (2012) suggests that a "sentimental reading might be that the fly indeed provides company in the darkness and silence, another living creature. But that 'let there be

a fly' flutters between the permissive and the directive, since in Beckett's cosmos there may be as much cruelty in the *fiat musca* as charity" (Connor, 4). Few writers have been as attentive to the fate of lowly creatures as Samuel Beckett, the chronicler of disregarded lives.

The same dynamic of affect animates the movement of the images in Dickinson's poem. Dickinson's poem weighs the value of a heightened perception at the moment of death. "I heard a Fly buzz when I died" covers not only time delineated by a lifetime, but also examines the minutiae of the delicate nuances of the underappreciated insect. Beckett and Dickinson understand the contradictions of the fly, and it can be argued that they actually saw themselves at the end of their careers as the prone figures lying within the purview of death's grip or in permanent isolation. With the concentration of poetry and the expressiveness of prose, both works depict the landscapes of the dispossessed. Especially elusive is the buzz of the fly, which distances itself from the group of mourners in Dickinson's poem. Beckett's prose description of a scene in which the subject decides not to brush away a fly demands a close range viewing.

Yet even more than the melancholy that fills the air in both works is the current of energy that buoys them. For centuries, flies and other pests were perceived to dwell on the edges of good and evil. They destroy our homes, disrupt our concentration, and are feared to be the carriers of disease. In recent years, the field of dream psychology has given credence to the dreamer's images and the role that the imagination plays in the dreamer's interpretation. When one looks closely at the position of the subjects in both texts, and sees the fly in each case as though in the distance, what one detects appears to be a script, set almost like a musical score.

In Dickinson's poem, the dying subject's observation of the room's activity is a document of effort. The strain and anxiety Dickinson was under as she adhered to the rudiments of her individual style of foretelling was actually the reassembling of nearly 20 years of work. Despite its reputation as a carrier of filth, the fly in both works is a figure that transcends all that is repulsive, an achievement for which it is both admired and reviled. Beckett and Dickinson have no other equals in poetic miniatures, brevity, their imaginative handling of melancholy, their accurate portrayal of nature, their use of light and, especially, their rendering of night scenes. Both writers summon all those strengths to produce an ignored theme: the fly as companion, and a description of the beauties of the common insect. As an unlikely companion, the fly is seen as a force for good.

"I heard a Fly buzz" is a story within a story. It is just 16 lines, yet the sharp rendering of aural details intensifies the overarching theme of the subject's death. In the first line, set in a darkened chamber, the subject lies a few seconds before death. She hears the fly buzz and recounts other mundane facts of her passing. She comments on the facts of her own ceasing to be, heralded by the fly, whose blue buzzing is more comforting than the sighs of those gathered around her deathbed. To the side are the mourners whose moans have been replaced by the louder buzzes of the fly, who dominates the chamber. The fly is settling in for the duration and takes center stage. In the poem, Dickinson references the fly's companionability in contrast to humans.

What Dickinson depicts in her poem is a biologic landscape. The fly's dark blue color and its musical buzz overtake all other details and dominate the poem. The personal facts reflected here – the spiritual anticipation of meeting God and the willing of her personal effects – are not merely symbols but rather speak the actual activities of a subject in Victorian times who discovers that the fly and its buzz are more significant than the presence of humans. Dickinson's intricate wording about the fly is intentional: the fly's living presence at a human death signifies the hard reality of death's biologic fact. Perhaps the clearest indication that the fly's buzzing constitutes companionship may be found in the fact that the fly's buzzing eclipses all other aural sources in the environment. The elevation of an aural animal utterance – the insect's buzzing – to a public stature in the mind of the speaker, far from eliminating the fly's buzz as a mere insect process, on the contrary liberates the speaker from the usual associations of insects with pests and transforms the fly into a companion, one that changes her outlook.

Dickinson composed "I heard a Fly buzz" around 1862, while caring for her parents at home. Animals – her dog Carlo in particular – fascinated her and thus she was familiar with finding companionship in nonhuman friendship since her entire life was consumed with letters and a life of solitude. The extent to which an encounter with a fly and being able to comment on its physical attributes depend not upon her ability to distance herself from the present tense but on her own perceptions at the point of death. It is the difficulty of seeing and being seen that Dickinson explores relentlessly in her poems, as David Sullivan (1995) notes, where she can form a transcendent narrative of spiritual completeness "outside of time" (Sullivan, 101).

Apart from other fallacies concerning filth and pests, a fly's companionship concerns a change in the psychology of human beings. A psychological interpretation, for which the absence or presence of humans is irrelevant, bespeaks a deeper reality. The fly's presence and audibility add to an awareness of its companionship for the dying subject. It enables her to become more actively in tune with herself to the degree that she can contemplate what will take place immediately after the fly "interposed" itself "Between the light and me": namely, that she will encounter God.

Closely connected with the evaporation of the human sounds in the poem is the association of a human presence as being an intrinsic source of comfort. Historically, the assumption that the presence of other humans is the origin of companionship is more than doubtful; but the fact that we humans already live under conditions where our only reliable companions are the creatures sharing our immediate atmosphere, it is more than likely that a fly or other insect will become physically close to us. The absence of the human voice increases the volume of the fly's buzz. The subject "refrains from overt editorializing and allows the fly to speak," as T. W. Ford (1975) observes. The fly is not an "interposition," but a truth, so far as human senses can perceive the truth (Ford, 499).

To understand how compelling a non-human presence can be, we must overcome our tendency to ascribe vileness to insects. Nonhuman beings have always eased the cares and loneliness of humans. The dog, the mule, and the ox were the first modern human companions, as they worked alongside humans in their

agricultural and transportation endeavors. Used exclusively for the purpose of assisting humans with their physical labors, once their practical working usefulness became apparent, other, more social, uses of animals for humans changed the whole rhythm of human life.

Nowadays, we are less dependent on notions of divine causality in realizing our mental limitations. A main concept in Dickinson's poem can be directly related to Nietzsche's philosophy of the "eternal return of the same," the need to affirm the value of one's life in every single detail as something to be repeated through time. This helps explain the central role that the fly plays in Dickinson and Beckett. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), "something very important transpires at the level of relationships." Natural history conceives of the "relationships between animals in two ways: series and structure" (Deleuze and Guattari, 234). Does a human have more intrinsic value than an animal? Deleuze and Guattari observe, "man is now no longer the eminent term of the series; that term may be an animal for man" (235). They cite Jung's remark that just as mimesis brings nature and culture together, animals will occupy the middle position, as archetypes of "analogical representations" (236).

Dickinson and Beckett devise strategies for controlling the threatening aspects of aloneness, as in Beckett's work; and for death, in Dickinson's poem. Writing about an encounter with a fly becomes an event in which both subjects are involved; it concerns "alliance" (Deleuze and Guattari, 238). These encounters take place in a space where the subjects put themselves in the position of being seen. The language in both works suggests a reciprocity that is not possible between persons. Inasmuch as these works insist on the failure of reciprocity with humans, they achieve a transcendent spirituality with the entrance of the fly.

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Flutter of a Butterfly

Alira Ashvo-Muñoz

Abstract

…porque fue como el aleteo de la mariposa […because it was like the flutter of a butterfly] (Pérez-Reverte, *El pintor de batallas*, Alfaguara, Madrid, 2006, 55).

The novel *Painter of Battles* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte (*El pintor de batallas*, Alfaguara, Madrid, 2006) uses the Butterfly Effect (Lorenz 1993), to examine war chaotic dramatic nature or, its relation to individual and universal principles, human consciousness intentionality and transcendentality of being. War is viewed as calamity, dramatically altering forever the characters' lives. Physics' cosmic laws permit to seize experiential concepts within an immensurable quantitative vastness leading to a conscious realization of existence; a modal determination of possibilities between man and observation.

Hay algo que, a falta de otro nombre, llamaremos el sentimiento trágico de la vida, que lleva tras sí toda una concepción de la vida misma y del Universo, toda una filosofía más o menos formulada, más o menos consciente. [There is something that, for lack of another name, we can call the tragic feeling of life, that carries with it the whole conception of life itself and the universe, a complete philosophy more or less formulated or more or less conscious] (de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, Alianza, Madrid, 1986, 34)

Keywords Butterfly effect • Chaos • Arturo Pérez-Reverte's *Painter of Battles* • Cosmic laws • Photography

Painter of Battles, a novel by Arturo Pérez-Reverte (2006) uses the Butterfly Effect (Lorenz 1993), to examine war's chaotic dramatic nature, its relation to individual and universal principles, consciousness, intentionality and transcendentality of being, in life's cosmic equilibrium; the real, physical, immense and small in the universe becomes known as activated logos.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_15

> … es una formula científica: si una mariposa mueve sus alas en Brasil, o por ahí, se desencadena un huracán, en el otro extremo del mundo…se conoce como Efecto Mariposa. [… is a scientific formula: if a butterfly moves its wings in Brazil, or anywhere, a hurricane is set loose at the other side of the world… is known as the Butterfly Effect.] (Pérez-Reverte, 54)

A Butterfly Effect creates in an entire scale of mutually dependent living forms, a revealing harmony in diatonic and inclusive sequences ingrained in seemly chaotic patterns. Chaos results from the endemic and unavoidable, reconstituted in opposites and contradictions; the differentiation inevitably creates internal conflicts, resulting in perfectly fitting concave and converse jigsaw puzzles.

The same happens in war where man constantly struggles for survival using reflexes more than thoughts, contrary to human ideals dealing with alterity and history.

> La guerra como subliminación del chaos. Un orden con sus leyes disfrazadas de casualidad…. casi una ciencia exacta. Como la metereología. [War as sublimation of chaos. An order with its laws masked by casualities… just like an exact science. Like metereology.] (Pérez-Reverte, 202)

A systemic organizational order permeates the structure of chaos, determines interrelation and intrinsically adapts and adjusts the whole. Opposing elements confront differences, conflicting with each other. Violence technologically enhanced in war causes most damage which replicates certain human interactions in modern society as in the Balkan wars.

> _En las guerras resulta más evidente. Después de todo, no son sino la vida llevada a extremos dramáticos… Nada que la paz no contenga ya en menores dosis. [In wars result more evident. After all, is not but life taken to dramatic extremes … Nothing that peace does not contain in small doses.] (Ibid., 203)

Being as presence is juxtaposed to the chaos of war representing the Butterfly Effect as humanity's delicate perversion in its enormous capacity for hate, destruction, vengeance and death. Given facts and its consequences makes one remember Hamlet's soliloquy to be or not to be and the questions it poses: what is it to experience and survive war with its consequences and responsibilities? Is man victim, perpetrator or both? Textual dialogues and monologues in Pérez-Reverte's novel involve the characters' state of affairs, thoughts, perceptions, experiences and language's relation to thoughts, dealing with meanings and principles of universality.

Conditioned by thought language potentializes content of consciousness. Thought contains one's most distinctive capacity for understanding which manifest in consciousness and makes necessary the inclusion of the other and the universal. Cultural constructs in linguistic communications aids the cognitive process, explaining the world in the evident and intentional. These experiences are being transformed in the novel as in Joyce's *Ulysses*. In physical impulses the corporeal dialectically transmit consciousness through the senses, revealing the sentient through perception, reflection and comprehension. Conscious experience depends on brain functions where actions and perceptions intertwine with the body and what is perceived depends on social, ideological and political formation, personal and

human history, including biological and cosmological evolution. The sentient as corporeal registers organic activities which are integral to the biosphere. One's mental functioning, logic, intentionality, structure, interrelations, and inquiries depends on psychology and neurophysiology, whose structures are made of differences in coherent unities. Infinity is a mathematical formulation of pre-determinate possibilities that defines cosmic existence as we know it.

Reflection is a distinguishing mark seen in science, art, philosophy, religion and morality which we cannot do without. It does not reveal universal consciousness being far from human capability but engages in understanding the complexity of being. Consciousness is needed for evaluations and criticisms. Man is more than his physico-chemical processes, a compounded of relationships with the world and alterity, experiencing a nexus of lived meanings not causalities. Living forms in cosmological interdependence are mutually dependent, the organic and inorganic are opposite and complementary.

Presence experiences relationships as dynamic referentiality connecting the universal and experiential with the real and physical. In a unity of time and space a being is distinctive in its performance as Shakespeare wrote; life is but a play. The protagonist in *The Painter of Battles* takes refuges in art as solace and salvation from life's fatalistic endeavors; brutality, sadness, absurdity and ambivalence that permeate a tragic reality which became the normal. Feelings of loss and nothingness permeate the protagonist's life after experiencing war therefore he, Faulques, revolts against them and named them his tragic feeling of life [*el sentimiento trágico de la vida*] (de Unamuno 1986). Energy in vacuum and empty of matter is nothingness then energy precises over matter. Faulques felt emptiness, a feeling of nothingness that produced a sense of the futile against the events that were taking place, creating a horrific feeling he struggled with even after leaving the battlefield; as time went by it became worse. In such a chaotic environment he felt a powerless exacerbating an ambivalence regarding the experienced. Afterwards when he had a chance to revise the events, these feelings became worse for him. He then analyzed and discussed this feeling with others as portrayed in textual dialogues and monologues. The thoughts and ideas caused by the war became a game of chess in its contradictions and complementary elements which produced in him a "*cogito ego sum*"; a thinking process of the experiences lived. Humans have evolved from different genotypes and continue to do so with chance as condition of universal occurrence: "La vida y su regla… de ajedrez". ["Life and its rules…a chess game"] (Pérez-Reverte, 269) this game of chess in its linguistic and cultural contents mediates between the physical, mental and psychological realms:

> …the word is not the bearer of its own meaning, has no inner power, and is merely a physic, physiological or even physical phenomenon set alongside others, and thrown up by the working of an objective causality. (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 138)

Words serve to elucidate perception, sensation, corporeal awareness, intentionality, action and articulate sound; as we all do, he depended on them to express himself. Consciousness establishes links to thoughts in cultural content. Both central characters relate to us readers in their struggles, perceptions, consciousness, actions and thoughts

trying to survive the war and its aftermath, each from different perspectives; one as active, an ex-combatant, the other passive, as a photojournalist. Each understand it and experienced it its own way:

> "…Habla de otra guerra distinta de aquella que pensamos usted y yo al oir la palabra". ["…(He) speaks of a war, a different from the one you and I think when we hear the word".] (Pérez-Reverte, 219)

Without further explanations the word war sweeps an intense range of emotions based on these incredible experiences of survival that resurrected in him a feeling of loneliness: "…terrible national loneliness" (Husserl 1981, 352) something that Husserl also felt during World War I and wrote about it to his friend Hugo Müsterberg in 1915. As a survivor in war one feels fragile even though an intense camaraderie exists between soldiers, maybe more than what is common in most circumstances; probably due to the unsafe environment, dependency on others and chance for survival. Vulnerability and violence are integral in survival. These factors caused him to acknowledge the insignificant spatial dimension he was subjected to at a depth of 15 billion light years.

> _ ¿Cuánto puede pesar la luz? … _Lo que la oscuridad, más o menos. Casi tres kilos por centímetro cuadrado. …Habla del aire._Claro. [How much could the light weight?…_As darkness, more or less. Almost three kilograms per square root of a centimeter…You speak of the air. Sure.] (Pérez-Reverte, 198)

In unison he faces both individuality and universality. One is ordinary matter with energy while this type of ordinary matter is the least abundant in the cosmos, only 17 % while in the evolution of galaxies and structure formation dark matter has had the central role (Kroupa et al. 2010). Dark matter constitutes 83 % (23/(23 + 46)) of the expanding universe and mass energy constitutes 23 % (Friedman equations and the FLRW metric). Dark matter forms 23 % of the mass-energy content while ordinary mass is 4.6 % and the remainder is dark energy (http://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-is-dark-energy/) being a spatial property of a dynamic fluid or field that fills space and creates an opposite effect in expansion. Technology and scientific discoveries have expanded our perceptions meanwhile our biology affects us more than we are capable to recognize: "Parece mentira la cantidad de sangre que tenemos en el cuerpo…cinco litros y pico…" ["It seems unreal the quantity of blood that one has inside the body…five liters and more…"] (Pérez-Reverte, 49). We are bound to our bodies trying to know who we are and where we stand. Cosmic reality has now expanded considerably our view of life; life is more and more an incomprehensible miracle; more complex not less. Cosmic forms are perceived as dimensionless when spatially bounded Husserl predicted that new discoveries in cosmic laws will reorient universal perceptions (Husserl 1962). These new discoveries in astrophysics have made the universe more geometrical and obscure than we thought, surreal and unimaginable mysterious to most ordinary humans:

> … regla implacable que gobernaba el azar perverso- la ambiguedad que gobernaba no era en absoluto casual- la del mundo y de la vida. Aquel punto de vista confirmaba el carácter geométrico de esa perversidad, la norma del caos… […implacable rule that gov-

> erns the perverse randomness- the ambiguity that governs that which is not absolutely casual - of the world and of life. That point of view confirms the geometric character of this perversity, the norm of chaos.] (Pérez-Reverte, 47)

The chaotic randomness perceived by Faulques is part of the Butterfly Effect; this is the evil that asserted control over his life. Being a photographer he knew that photos are void of judgment; a frame is an approximation not the truth. In reality he was no more than a detached spectator whose critical self-awareness made him aware of ill-fated inclusions that come from physics and mathematics. His loneliness and alienation were the byproducts of these imperceptible mathematical rules appearing in fractal equations in the Koch curve (Helge von Koch) which have 1.26 alterations changing the patterns incalculably (Gleick 1999, 99) which also are occurrences of the Butterfly Effect or Lorenz attractor. "…el número de partidas posibles: uno seguido de ciento veinte ceros". ["… the number of possible departures: one followed by one hundred and twenty zeros".] (Pérez-Reverte, 210). … me refiero a los de comportamientos irregulares, arbitrarios o caóticos, pero no pudo entenderlos por la dificultad matemática de su tratamiento. […I refer to the irregular behaviors, arbitrary and chaotic, but was not able to understand them due to the mathematical difficulty in their treatment.] (Ibid., 122). The enormity of the range in the mathematical equations that are needed to perceive such minuscule, almost imperceptible irregularity is more than he can fully understand or apply to his life. He knows the equation but the changes are so tiny as to seem irrelevant yet capable of enormous consequences. Then existence began to seem inconsequential by not understanding what in the long run might be what causes the changes. Additionally he has difficulty understanding spatial geometrical properties, being arbitrary and confusing to him. The Benoit Mandelbrot set of $Z=Z^2+C$ is used in the Butterfly Effect in patterns where the circular humps that remain low match bifurcation graphs as in blood vessels patterns, in heart beat rhythms, tree branches, stock market data and other systems containing chaos self-similarity. In the symmetry of the sequential scales these numbers have distributional aberrations that change independently in constant variables at the curve in a .000127 (Gleick 1999, 86) alteration. Merleau-Ponty similarly wrote that universal dimensionality is not sheer contingency and chaos but a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 271). The structural patterns when observed are numerically complex, being measurable but in a modal infinity of possibilities they are not; which is beyond Faulque's comprehension. These numbers did play for him an important role in his safety: "De las infinitas trajectorias de un bala, solo una ocurre en realidad". ["Of the infinite trajectories of a bullet, only one occurs in reality".] (Ibid., 209). Only one is possible and meaningful. Every step was dangerous, an inch could make the difference between life and death then the mathematics became crucial in his daily endeavors: "*Arimos kinesis* Aritmética del movimiento según el antes y después". ["*Arismos kinesis*, arithmetic of movement according to before and after".] (Ibid., 241). He was aware of this since a point without magnitude has direction and distance in space, escaping the differences in approximations in the scope of logarithms because the accuracy of these measurements increases imprecisely causing what might seem chaotic but later the patterns become evident. He most feared lack of control; it was like

being at the mercy of an omnipotent cruel god because in cosmic appearance randomness was enigmatic, mysterious, capricious and sinister.

> …era más sombrío y más siniestro: la impotencia ante el capricho geométrico del Universo,…guiado por causas invisibles, en el corazón mismo del hombre y de su vida. […was more somber and sinister; the impotence facing the capricious geometry of the Universe… guided precisely by invisible causes to the center of man's heart and his life.] (Pérez-Reverte, 80)

The inclusion made his life seem more absurd than usual as when guided by what might seem a capricious force created by an odious Greek god that tampers with one's destiny which gave him no choice but to resign to this reality no matter how abstract and incomprehensible it might seem: … Yo hablo de resignación. Aunque no descifre el código, uno comprende las reglas. Entonces se resigna. […I speak of resignation. Even though one does not decipher the code, one understand that there are rules. Then one resigns.] (Ibid., 62). In all the chaos that surrounds him he uses the camera as a guiding logic, a Leica 3MD, the best for his kind of work, to capture war events in a sad and somber history that constantly unfolded in front of his eyes, demonstrating once more man's capacity for destruction and inhumanity, something that has been going on for centuries and somehow continues to this day. Individual existence in war is never explained in its basic dimensions or analyzed while common ones remain in the background. Ordinary experiences according to Merleau-Ponty (1962, 34) can be distinguished between the self experiential, cultural and historical since they have direct contact with alterity while intentions relate to one's consciousness and self-awareness: "…only some, not all mental stages and events have intentionality" (Searle 1983, 1). While shooting photos Faulques mostly lacked self-awareness avoiding at all cost the danger at hand. He felt that what he captured was dubious and partial never the complete reality: "No era posible fotografiar el peligro o la culpa". ["It was not possible to photograph danger or guilt".] (Pérez-Reverte, 281). We were not easily moved, in a media-saturated world, by fatalistic portraits of events; these images bare of emotions turned into shadows and in their repetitiveness produced in us more indifference and apathy than solidarity; a consequence of the gap perceived between the feelings and images which at best, are a fraction of what actually occurred. Faulques took a photo of Ivo, causing the death of his wife and child and received acclamation and prizes for the perfection of this shot therefore when he was told he did not comprehend the disparity between what he intended and the unintentional consequences that took place since the lenses were always an extension of his retina and he was neutral. He never intended to hurt, cause damage or alter events; he was a photographer and as such never interfered, his job required neutrality:

> "…su cámara y su retina". ["…his camera and his retina".] Ibíd., 22). He later adds: "Ahora nuestra simpatía de oficio hacia toda clase de víctimas nos libera de responsabilidades. De remordimientos". ["Now our professional sympathy towards all types of victims free us of responsibilities, and remorse."] (Ibid., 20)

He was neutral all the time and maintained a distance, feeling compassion for the victims, massacres and the horrors he witnessed. This neutrality comes with an

acknowledgment, a reflective re-visioning that freed him from commitment which Husserl expanded on in *Ideas* (Husserl 1962). Faulques paid a price, overcome by a guilt that filled his life after knowing what happened. Meanwhile he was not able to acknowledge these feelings to others because neutrality is required from a photojournalist and knowing well that he could not have been able to alter the events. He was an observant and a powerless figure. In the novel many moral and political discussions took place relating to individual obligations in these situations since the factual that took place absolved him from responsibility. Both central characters, the ex-combatant and the photojournalist, are not able to find a common ground on how to analyze events; one was active and the other passive. One's empirical claims avoid reliance discussing experiences rather than occurrences, in these situations reality is fragmentary and cannot be theorized in terms of the conscious; it presents visible internal expressions not external as in Husserl's Kantian argument that the sense of what is given derives from itself. Selective participatory observations and reflections constituted the reality in war as Faulques saw it when he says:

> _"La guerra, dijo tras pensarlo un rato, sólo puede fotografiarse bien cuando, mientras levantas la cámara, lo que ves no te afecta…" [_"The war, he said after thinking about it for a while, only can be photographed well when you lift the camera if what you see does not affect you"]. (Pérez-Reverte, 61)

Documenting history he was unveiling horrors that later came to haunt him when it became difficult to separate these lived experiences now from his daily life then painting battles became his therapeutic medium.

Sartre argues that man's free will creates responsibilities for oneself and mankind: "…freedom is a will both to itself and to the freedom of others" (Sartre 1973, 52) but Faulques experienced neutrality: "Siempre procuré ser el hombre que miraba. Un tercer hombre indiferente". ["I always tried to be the man that was seeing, an indifferent third man."] (Pérez-Reverte, 132). The camera is what gave him another choice which is what he thought at the time, because freedom does not mean that every action has obligations or meanings, each action is not an example. Human relationships are dynamically unbounded in predeterminations and conditions imposed by the intellect. He perceives biological connections to the Lorenz' attractor as the subtle almost imperceptible nuances that he named: "…la despiadada naturaleza del universo" ["…the merciless nature of the universe"] (Pérez-Reverte, 121). At the mercy of the unknown in a vast and complex cosmos, one is alone in taking or not the burden of exemplary self-responsibility and he chooses not to.

In the mathematical calculations that seem to govern life in the universe, velocity has an important role, more so in a photographer's job, adding complexity to events: "No hay tiempo para reflexionar nada". ["There is no time to reflect on anything".] (Ibid., 22). Velocity has a crucial role in photography; a difference of a second makes a perfect shot, creates a mediocre one, or prohibits the possibility of the capture of it. The Pauli Exclusion Principle (Wolgang Pauli) sites in space the velocity of two particles relates at infinite values to the space-time curvature distancing from those at lower energies when electrons at this high energy congregates then matter occupies

space but do not condense (http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/hph.html). This is included in the Butterfly Effect observation which relates to solid properties as well as the stability of common matter, and also pertains to the speed used in the instantaneous process: "…la precisión fugaz de una fotografía percibida en un instante" ["…the fleeting precision of a photograph perceive in an instant"] (Pérez-Reverte, 87); velocity increments chaos. The relationship between velocity and space was a constant concern; how fast or slow to shoot a photo, to move or not in dangerous terrains full of mines and ridden by bullets; this relationship between mass and velocity had a critical effect on him.

Ivo, his rival, tried to make him adhere to what he called responsibilities which he Faulques avoided since Sartre's exemplarism does not provide judgments or clues for morality. Faulques avoided the responsibilities since no rules exist in moral theorizing; deliberations and decisions can or can not be autonomous. Sensations produced by war bounded him to unknowns endowed with the mysterious butterfly flutter, increasing feelings of alienation and uncertainty as Hamlet posed in his famous question: "To be or not to be that is the question…There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life. (Shakespeare, "Hamlet" Act 3, Scene 1, 2002, 63.), similarly to what de Unamuno wrote in his book *El sentimiento trágico de la* vida, these are common feeling in Spain, the constant and almost subtle feeling that for man life always becomes tragic:

> Hay algo que, a falta de otro nombre, llamaremos el sentimiento trágico de la vida, que lleva tras sí toda una concepción de la vida misma y del Universo, toda una filosofía más o menos formulada, más o menos consciente. [There is something that, for lack of another name, we can call the tragic feeling of life, that carries with it the whole conceptions of life itself and the universe, a complete philosophy more or less formulated or more or less conscious] (de Unamuno 1986)

Philosophical constructs transpose individual and universal conceptions as non-controllable; irrationalities, soullessness, indifference and apathy abound in life. Searches for these solutions are futile and detrimental: "One lives in a world, and more specifically, in world situations…" (Cairus, "Conversations with Husserl", LIV, 11/5/32", 1976, 75) as one tries to find solutions in situations beyond one's control and understanding. Change affects perceptions, predicaments and consciousness, engages in unprejudiced reflections which express the historical nexus to the individual. The infamous or famous photo that Faulques took, represents his butterfly's flutter, insignificant and yet magnanimous in a harmful predicament of what man inhumanity to man can do: el hombre era más testigo que protagonista… ambas cosas a la vez: victima tanto como culpable. [… man is more witness than protagonist …both at the same time: victim as much as guilty.] (Pérez-Reverte, 133). This predicament also reflects lack of control since in most actions one is changed by imperceptible forces like the flutter of the butterfly's wings that occurs in the Lorenz attractor. The chaotic effect made him victim and perpetrator when he really felt like an innocent bystander. During the war he was able to not discern, explore, discriminate or manipulate the noetic or conceptual, his retina and camera

gave him minimum self-awareness in circumstances of peril that were constantly changing and beyond his control.

Social practices are reason-giving activities conducing ethical, epistemic responsibilities and criticisms re-orienting human culture towards rational self-aware goals and hopes. Calculations in war and lack of compassion surpass commonality: "Ahora comprendo. Es question de amoralidad geológica". ["I now understand. It is a question of geological amorality".] (Pérez-Reverte, 188). He assumes the unavoidable modern despicable reality of a non participant spectator in historic events: "…asumir la ausencia de sentimientos del universo: su despiadada naturaleza". ["…to assume a universal lack of feelings: its merciless nature".] (Ibid., 121). A feeling of impotence resulted as witnessing innumerable horrors and created a deeper greater feeling that finally lured him to avoid and escape the war. He avoided what surrounded him; the brutality, unintentional consequences and horror: "…que horror horrible, inapelable, que se extendía por los siglos y la historia. ["…an unappealing and horrific horror that extends itself through the centuries and history"] (Ibid, 27). Man is an insignificant being; he is formed of matter located in time-space and has an infinitesimal part in the grand cosmic design. At this point Faulques cannot cope with despair, reflects on self-knowledge as a member of an uncaring world community and as was predicted the moment comes when one sees only the geometry of the forms: … te llevarás la cámara a la cara y al mirar por el visor solo verás líneas, volúmenes y leyes cósmicas. […you will raise the camera to your face and when looking through the lens you will only see lines, volumes and cosmic laws.] (Ibid., 125), but he chooses to leave before it came to that point. He abandoned photojournalism and becomes a painter of battles. Photos are the shapes and shadows one recognizes, separate from experiences, feelings, thoughts and ideas. He knew this but after witnessing so much atrocity, alienation and the terrible unintentional consequence it became irrelevant to him to continue capturing images that mostly do not contribute to the betterment of any events, no matter how much horror one sees; war goes on. Man has been brutal through centuries while maintaining the capacity for goodness, creativity and love. At the end survival might be a product of a mathematical equation, a barbaric reflection of cosmic reality: … la guerra como estructura, como esqueleto descarnado, evidente, de la gigantesca paradoja cósmica. […war as structure, as a boneless skeleton, evident of the gigantic cosmic paradox.] (Ibid., 65). Peace contains horrors like in war but at a smaller scale, in its anonymous functionality this cosmic paradox supplies a mysterious commonality that mirrors both individual and cosmic reality which come from those uncertainties, destruction and those tragic feelings he felt. The cosmos is subtle, wondrous and grandiose, more than he ever imagined while ideas are intrinsic grounding acts like those that come and go to question reality; grasping the essence of what it is to be human in the immensity we call cosmos. Abandoning his daily pursuits he goes to the lighthouse, paints battles and swims into the ocean while inconsequentially or not the flutter of the butterfly alters the skies.

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Part V

Drama Between Earth and Skies: Nietzsche, Saint-John Perse, Yves Bonnefoy

Victor Kocay

Abstract This paper begins with Nietzsche's claim that all understanding is anthropomorphic in origin, and attempts to show how the poets Saint-John Perse and Yves Bonnefoy have essentially inverted human belief systems. Systems of thought once founded on an understanding of the skies as the seat of powers greater than human powers and beyond our human capacity for understanding have been replaced in the works of these poets by human experience that relates our physical presence in the world. As Nietzsche also claims, however, our language is only a metaphor for the objects it names, implying that language does not reveal objects of the real world but only incorporates them, as it were, into our conceptual apparatus. Now Perse and Bonnefoy both make a conscious effort to renew our relation to the world we live in and to transpose, one could say, our desire for knowledge of the unknown onto the objects of the physical world constituted in our experience of place.

Keywords Perspective • Metaphor • Knowledge • Physical presence • Language

For Nietzsche, all understanding is anthropomorphic[1]; knowledge is never absolute but always only relative to human beings who seek knowledge in an effort to understand the world we live in. In primitive societies the stars were seen as having a direct influence on the lives of individuals; in ancient Greek civilization, and in the context of ancient mythology, nature was considered to be the form or shape that gods would take in their efforts to communicate with human beings.[2] In the Christian world, the skies, or heavens, have a different meaning as a reflection of the power of God. And, modern, true conceptions of the cosmos, says Nietzsche, have at least as a moral consequence that human beings have become more modest in their

[1] "Alle Naturwissenschaft ist nur ein Versuch, den Menschen, das Anthropologische zu verstehen […]"; "All scientific knowledge is only an attempt to understand human beings, the anthropological […]" (Nietzsche, *Nachlaß 1869–1874*, Kritische Studienausgabe, herausgegebn von Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, (München: Deutschen Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), vol. 7, § 19[91].

[2] Nietzsche, ibid., § 19[115].

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_16

projections.[3] That is to say that human understanding and the drama of life are often reflected in the different ways in which we see the sky above us. Speaking of the "skies" in the plural then, and even though the sky essentially never changes physically but only in the perspective of the viewer, would seem to imply first that human values are reflected in our understanding of the sky, such that each value or belief system would give a different configuration to the sky, and second, it would seem to imply that the sky itself is in some way a symbol of the unknown. Whatever is beyond our knowledge or beyond the grasp of our intelligence is projected, as it were, onto the sky. The term "skies" in the plural would therefore refer to the belief systems produced by different peoples in the course of human history, and in this sense, each configuration of the sky, as Nietzsche claims, would reflect the form of human beliefs and knowledge. The term "drama" in the singular, on the other hand, as referring to the unfolding of human life – and even though there are countless individual human dramas – would indicate that human life is always essentially the same, that is an ongoing process that, from the perspective of human knowledge at least, is an unceasing attempt to understand our world, to go beyond the limits of the known world and to discover the world that lies just beyond our limited intellectual and sense capacities. In this paper I attempt to show that the French poets Saint-John Perse and Yves Bonnefoy, both apparently influenced by Nietzsche's work and thought, strive to go beyond the limits of our understanding, not by means of a metaphysical or a religious construct, however, but by seeking to better understand the world of natural objects that we live in, by exploring the limits of our physical knowledge and of the language we use to represent objects of the real world, a language that allows us to grasp objects of the real world but that at the same time imposes a distance or a space between thought and its object, and thereby removes us, as it were, from the object's direct apprehension.

Now, according to Nietzsche, the particular configuration that human beings give to the sky in our efforts to understand our world is closely related to our understanding of the production of art. One could say that for Nietzsche knowledge itself is a form of drama and that the values we see as the foundation of our artistic production are not what shape our artistic production, as is commonly believed, but rather our values are a reflection of our beliefs. It is in this context that Nietzsche describes what he refers to as the birth of tragedy in ancient Greece. Essentially, drama had its origin in music as a response to the fear of invasion, and came to express a dream-like ideal as a possible world distinct from the constant fear of hunger and the threat of annihilation. In this sense drama became the expression of the moral values that constituted the foundation of the society in which they originated, but it also gave shape to society in the form of an ideal to be realized. And according to Nietzsche's understanding of history, moral values were subsequently transformed, or inverted,[4] as different types of society with different beliefs came to prominence, when, for example, an aristocratic and somewhat barbaric society gave way to the slave

[3] Nietzsche, Nachlaß 1875–1879, Kritische Studienausgabe, op. cit., vol. 8, § 9[1], p. 171.

[4] Nietzsche's word for this is "Umwerthung".

mentality of resentment.[5] In a similar fashion, according to Nietzsche, Christian values such as love and compassion, founded on weakness and contempt for the natural world, would eventually come to be replaced by values of strength and great individual deeds, that is, by a return to nature, or rather by the discovery of nature.[6]

For Nietzsche, a change in belief systems represents the continuation of human drama, a drama that he likens to an art form founded on language use, a form of knowledge as it were, for it expresses our relation to the world we live in in the form of beliefs, human objectives and behavior. Now for Nietzsche, all language is metaphorical, in its creation as well as in its development. The words we use to describe or to name objects of the real world do not capture the objects themselves but only name the effect that these objects have on our sense system. This is a first level of metaphor. The noun, "tree", for example, originally derived from a configuration of the natural world becomes an abstract concept for our understanding, but the concept does not reveal the object named to us nor exhaust its physical characteristics. The object named remains always beyond our understanding such that our understanding of the object is always a reflection of our own sense perception. It is in this way, for Nietzsche, that our knowledge is anthropomorphic or related to our particular human perspective with regards to the world we live in. Further, language and therefore thought are developed by analogy, according to Nietzsche, and this constitutes a second level of metaphor. Our understanding notes similarities and likenesses between objects and transfers terms from one sense perception to another when similar sensations are provoked.[7] Human knowledge expressed in language is thus always metaphorical in origin, although when metaphors become well-known they are no longer considered as metaphors but as correct linguistic usage. Only rare or unusual terms are still considered to be metaphors. This is an important point for both Saint-John Perse and Yves Bonnefoy, poets who attempt as it were to renew our relation to language and to the world it represents.

In his major work, *Amers*,[8] a poem about the sea, Saint-John Perse attempts to capture the development of human thought and artistic expression from the earliest known texts, primarily Homer's epic account of the battle of Troy, to our modern understanding of the world we live in. For Perse, ancient religious beliefs, as an expression of the divine are likened to a form of poetry. In Perse's work the divine is not the world beyond, but rather a trait of human thought and creativity founded on our presence in the world. Essentially, Perse has inverted the relation between human beings and the divine, such that the divine is now a part of human nature. Part of his poem mimics the form of an ode, but for the most part *Amers* adopts the structure of a primitive Greek play with an "invocation", a "strophe" and a "chorus".

[5] Nietzsche develops this argument in his work, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.

[6] Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Kritische Studienausgabe, op. cit., vol. 5, § 204.

[7] Nietzsche, *Die fröliche Wissenschaft*, Kritische Studienausgabe, op. cit., vol. 3, § 355. Cf. Angèle Kremer-Marietti, *Nietzsche et la rhétorique* (Paris: PUF; L'Harmattan, 1992, 2007), notably the section entitled "la 'metaphora' originaire", pp. 218–229.

[8] Saint-John Perse, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1972, 1982). All references to Perse are to this edition.

And following the Greek tradition, the invocation is a celebration of the sea in its beauty and importance for human beings in the development of civilizations. The strophe recounts the history of moral change, and in particular the unmasking of sexual desire as a basic human instinct; and the song of the chorus, by means of analogy, mimics the union of a man and a woman in what the poet calls the overcoming of the intolerable space between a word and its meaning. On the surface the poem is about the sea, but philosophically or morally it is about human beliefs, human knowledge and human desire as they change through the course of time, from the earliest times of which we have record, that is from the ancient Greeks, to our modern scientific understanding of human existence.

Now, Perse has often been described as a realist poet, in part because he uses the names of plant and animal species, of rock types, of geological and geographical formations, and in part because his poetry is a celebration of the world we live in. His method, as it were, is to honor the physical world, a world which includes the human world and human history, in a manner that evokes Nietzsche's notion of "amor fati", or in other words his "yes" to the world, what he refers to as "Ja sagend",[9] his acceptance of the world in all its attributes. In a similar manner, Perse's poetry shows an attachment to the world of real objects that we live in, as opposed to a created world, that is, an ideal, a moral or a religious world. Perhaps for this same reason, Perse's poetry is closely related to physical space. His poem, *Anabase*, for example, is set in the China he knew as a diplomat posted there; *Vents* reflects his travels in the United States; *Neiges* is set in New York City; and *Chronique* is closely related to the geography of southern France. *Amers*, on the other hand, represents an attempt to incorporate into one work the history and development of Western European civilization. Following Nietzsche, or perhaps inspired by Nietzsche, Perse underscores that in spite of the aesthetic and moral ideals that human beings frequently seek and have sought to realize in the course of history, we as a civilization are the product of thousands of years of discipline and training of the human animal, such that it remains our physical presence that determines us as individual human beings. *Amers* culminates in a love scene, or rather in a kind of dialogue in which a man and a woman alternately express their sexual desire and their sexual pleasure, but also their fears, their hopes and their feeling of solitude as individuals, that is, as opposed to the feeling of oneness and completeness that they encounter in their sexual relations. And their encounter is considered to be essentially the same encounter known to human beings since the beginning. Perse's phrase for this is "one and the same wave across the world, one and the same wave from Troy rolls its hip towards us",[10] a phrase he often repeats, a phrase that means that physical human existence is like the ocean: for thousands of years it repeats

[9] Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut un Böse*. Op. Cit., § 21. In an earlier poem, "Pour fêter une enfance", Perse recounts scenes of his childhood in Guadeloupe. He uses the word "songe" to refer to his memories and he says: "J'ai fait ce songe, dans l'estime: un sûr séjour entre les toiles enthousiastes" (*Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., p. 23); "I had this recollection, with great esteem: a secure sojourn between enthusiastic images" (my translation).

[10] "Une même vague par le monde, une même vague depuis Troie roule sa hanche jusqu'à nous" (Perse, *Œuvres complètes*, op. cit., p. 326).

the same motions, the same waves, the same interactions even though it is constantly changing, like human society has progressed and changed with time yet is always an expression of human needs and human deeds. Ultimately, it is our physical presence in the world that makes us what we are, and it is our physical presence in the world, that is, our particularly human perspective on the world, or as Nietzsche would say, our all too human perspective on the world that determines our beliefs about the world and our knowledge of the world we live in.

This does not imply, however, that human beings can be reduced to physical characteristics or to biological formulas alone, for human beings, as productive and creative beings, are more than physical existence. As Nietzsche would say, we are driven to seek knowledge about the world and to produce what he refers to as art forms or schemata. He calls this unceasing quest for knowledge a basic human instinct, meaning that our desire for knowledge is simply a fact of human life, as incomprehensible and as arbitrary as that may be. To use Nietzsche's terms, the desire for knowledge is a will to power (Wille zur Macht), a desire to live and to flourish, to become who and or what we are because that is who and or what we are; and for Nietzsche this desire is the defining trait of all life. The desire to live and to flourish is also a central theme in Perse's works, and not only in *Amers*, as indicated, but in other works as well, such as in *Chronique* where the poet's own physical presence and an account of his life are set in the context of the changing form of the earth. The poet is one man, yet through his own ancestors and all of human history he is a member of a species that continues to live, to produce, to create and to flourish on earth. And even at an older age, to his surprise one might say, he finds himself subject to a desire that does not wane but only becomes more intense. In a sense he can't escape desire, but this is what characterizes him as a human being, that is, the same wave from Troy until our day, the same desire that characterizes human beings in general.

Now, the poetry of Yves Bonnefoy, although much less euphoric than the poetry of Saint-John Perse, is in some regards similar. It would first seem that both poets were inspired by the work of Nietzsche. As well, both poets can be considered as "realists" in the sense that they refer repeatedly to real objects and attempt to evoke an immediate relation with the physical world. In addition, they are to some extent preoccupied by the use and function of language, that is, as Perse would say, by the "space" between the word and what it refers to, or as Bonnefoy would say, by the opposition between the object named by language and the concept that the word signifies. And both poets evoke a sense of place. For Perse, as noted, physical space is part of poetic inspiration, and although this is true for Bonnefoy as well, for the latter, in addition, the notion of place is also grounding of poetry. One might say that for Bonnefoy the notion of place has a somewhat Heideggerian tone as a dwelling place, as experience or as a coming into existence. According to Bonnefoy, our experience of place is immediate and physical, that is, primary to the expression we give it. In his writings and essays on language, on poets, on painting and on sculpture, the notion of place is central to his thought, especially in his later works, that is, beyond the surrealist aspects of his early poems. Succinctly put, the notion of place as a dwelling place or more generally as our physical presence in the world, or as our corporeal existence in the world, is inescapable for it is only by

means of our physical presence that we exist in the world. But for Bonnefoy, place is not only a condition of existence, and therefore of human productivity, it is also the foundation of language, for it is our immediate sense experience or our experience of the physical world that constitutes the primary matter of language and therefore of poetry.

For Bonnefoy, in a manner similar to Nietzsche, words refer to objects, and in this sense they express our relation to the world we live in. But as Nietzsche claims, words do not give us the reality of things in the world; instead, they become concepts, abstract meanings established by metaphor and analogy. When we encounter an object unfamiliar to us, by comparison or by similarities with other things we use known terms to express the unknown quantities. In this sense, according to Nietzsche, knowledge is always reducing the unknown to known entities. In the words of Bonnefoy, the concept is abstract and removes us from the immediate experience of place; and expressing the unknown by the use of known terms is in a sense denying the existence of things that are unknown to us or that are known to our experiential presence in the world. To enhance our experience of the world, to better understand our world, to further explore the world we dwell in, it is necessary, according to Bonnefoy, that we overcome this distance or this space that the word as concept imposes between our experience and our understanding. For Bonnefoy it is imperative to use words in a manner that allows the reality of our experience to unfold, as it were, or to come into existence. Bonnefoy: "Here is the world we know through the senses. Our language, our sixth and most noble sense, must rise to the occasion and decipher its signs."[11]

In his poem, "Horizon",[12] Bonnefoy recounts the experience of a walk in the woods. He is surrounded by trees, forest, water etc., as can well be imagined, but the patches of blue sky above him are a constant reminder that there is a beyond. Where the sky appears to meet the earth, a phenomenon we refer to as the horizon, his immediate sense perception is limited such that the horizon marks the limit of his experience, the limit of the known world, and as a limit it marks the beginning of the unknown. In this sense the horizon is also a symbol of dreams and aspirations for it is by means of imagination that we grasp the notion of a world beyond and of which we have no direct experience. But the horizon also invites us beyond because, in Nietzsche's terms, our thirst for knowledge of our world is a basic human instinct. We are driven to go beyond the known limits of our world in order to better understand our physical reality.

In the context of the poetry of Bonnefoy, it would appear that our understanding of the world as immediate sense perception, as opposed to an abstract conceptual schemata implies a somewhat subjective appreciation of the world, for an immediate relation with the world can only be as a unique, individual experience. It would further imply that works of poetry, as relating such sense experiences, would be

[11] Yves Bonnefoy, "Les Tombeaux de Ravenne", in *L'Improbabale* (Mercure de France; Gallimard, 1980, 1982, pp. 13–30), p. 23.

[12] Yves Bonnefoy, "L'Horizon – The Horizon", translated by Michael Bishop (Halifax: Éditions VVV Editions, 2003).

limited to personal experience and, given the impossibility of communicating completely any sense experience, that poetry at best would only communicate a small part of that experience. The drama between earth and skies would become then a multitude of individual dramas and each individual would have countless sense experiences to relate through the course of a lifetime. In his preface to a republication of some of his early poems, Bonnefoy states that "in the use of words there are moments when the speaker is closed in on his or herself, moments of giddiness before the abyss that separates the word from the object it refers to. At this point the perception of realities, even the most inviting, breaks into pieces, is hardened and obscured." And he goes on to say that "the aim of poetry is to resist such giddiness."[13] Poetry must save being he says,[14] so that being in turn can save us. That is, it is only by means of a conscious attempt to avoid the pitfalls of conceptual, abstract constructions that language can reveal to us the matter of the world we live in.

Now words refer inevitably to concepts, and it is by means of concepts that language is understandable for others, that is, it is because of concepts that language does not fall apart as it were into isolated fragments of private idioms. This means that poetry is as it were a struggle between the reality of immediate sense experience and the conceptual structures of language. But for my own existence to be of importance, that is, in order to avoid the negation of my own physical presence in the world by virtue of the conceptual apparatus of thought, it is imperative that my physical presence or my physical difference be acknowledged and founded even in my use of language.[15] It is in this context that the notion of place becomes primary, for it is physical space or place that constitutes my physical difference. In this sense, because it is rooted in place, poetry gives us hope according to Bonnefoy. External realities are transformed by life and by time into experiences that are open to interpretation and subject to expression. Experience opens up the objects of the real world to our explorations and to our expectancies, and therefore to our hope for the future. We are not necessarily condemned to disappear as it were in the conceptual constructs of language.

It would seem that poets like Saint-John Perse and Yves Bonnefoy continue to develop the type of human drama that emerged perhaps with Romanticism, that is, our very human efforts, to speak like Nietzsche, to understand and incorporate into thought and works of art the natural world we live in. For the Romantics, in their break with the tradition of rationalism, this aspect of human drama was expressed in the form of sentiment, that is, as the sentiment occasioned by our encounter with the real world such as the works of nature. Although the Romantics were perhaps more concerned with sentiment itself and with its expression than with its source, it is clear from their works that sentiment, in its initial stages at least, derives from an experiential relation with objects of the real world. In this sense, sentiment is actually a part of understanding, perhaps a first step towards the object, a first attempt to reveal the object of the real world for thought, because sentiment, derived

[13]Yves Bonnefoy, *Traité du pianiste et autres écrits anciens*, Mercure de France, 2008, p. 14.

[14]Yves Bonnefoy, "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie", in *L'Improbable* (op. cit., pp. 107–133), p. 110.

[15]Yves Bonnefoy, Traité du pianiste […], op. cit., p. 184.

from sense experience, is our primary relation to the world. The movement that begins with Romanticism and develops into realism and finally, into a personal account of a world experience, would seem to indicate that it is no longer the sky that represents the unknown, and on to which we as human beings project our dreams or our imaginations, but that the real drama of human life is an account of life itself, that is, an account of the world that we as human beings inhabit. The sky has become a part of our physical world, and the unknown has become the object that is close to us, the world we live in, the world we experience through our senses, and as Yves Bonnefoy would say, not only through our five senses, but also through our sixth sense, that is, language.

I have tried to show that the drama of human life "between earth and skies" has been inverted by this very drama itself. In early civilizations what was beyond our understanding was considered god-like, as a superior force that reigned over human life, and these forces were projected on to the sky above us, such that the sky was a kind of forum for the gods. This is what Nietzsche calls the anthropomorphic origin of thought. By means of drama, sacrifices and other expressions, human beings sought to appease the gods, to harness their powers, to understand their ways and to invoke their favors to their own ends. In short, we sought to understand what was beyond our intellectual grasp in order to enhance our own physical existence. With the demise of religious beliefs and the discovery of nature, human efforts to understand the world became focused on real objects known through sense experience: and this modern drama continues. Nietzsche, in his particular perspective or from his particular standpoint in the nineteenth century, attempts to discover the natural origins of human behavior in basic animal instincts. In a similar manner, Saint-John Perse sings the glory of the natural world, his esteem for the natural world, but at the same time views nature and natural instincts, and particularly sexual desire, as essentially constitutive of human behavior. For Perse, it is by virtue of our human instincts and by our very human nature, which he refers to as divine, that we as individuals can identify with an ever-flourishing species and accept finally our ultimate disappearance as individuals. Yves Bonnefoy, in a similar sense, attempts to make of poetry, that is of poetry limited by place and expressive of place, an individual drama, an individual struggle, or battle, as Nietzsche would say, with the presence of the physical world. For Bonnefoy, true language is reality itself,[16] and it is the poet's or the artist's own personal drama to express this reality. But poetry is not just an artistic or personal expression: "It operates the transmutation of the accomplished into a possible, of memory into expectancy, of deserted space into directionality, into hope."[17] In this sense the personal reality of the poet derived through sense experience is transformed or opened up by language into an essential human experience that is communicable to others: and the drama between skies and earth has become the drama of Earth.

[16]Yves Bonnefoy, "Une Vigne qui bouge dans ses ombres", in *L'Improbable* (op. cit., pp. 293–295), p. 295.

[17]Yves Bonnefoy, "L'Acte et le lieu de la poésie" (op. cit.), p. 132.

Phenomenology Is a Humanism: Husserl's Hermeneutical-Historical Struggle to Determine the Genuine Meaning of Human Existence in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*

George Heffernan

Abstract In *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), Husserl expands his philosophical horizon to include the question about the genuine meaning of human existence. Understanding the crisis of the European sciences as a symptom of the crisis of European philosophy and as an expression of the life-crisis of European humanity, and interpreting European science, philosophy, and humanity as representative of their global-historical counterparts, Husserl argues that the life-crisis of European humanity is reflective of the critical condition of global-historical humanity. The crisis of "European" life emerges as a crisis of *human* existence, and Husserl's phenomenology unfolds as a search for an answer to the question not only about the sense of the life-world but also about the meaning of human life. Thus phenomenology, as care for humanity, shares with existentialism, as a humanism in the broadest sense, the conviction that human beings live in a world not in which life makes sense, but in which they must make sense of life. Accordingly, the genuine essence of human existence is not passively "given" but actively "taken", since it involves an entelechy that constitutes itself in an evolutionary achievement, and it is the evidentiary result of an existential struggle for meaning against annihilating forms of meaninglessness, namely, irrationalism, positivism, and skepticism. This paper examines Husserl's hermeneutical-historical approach to the question about the meaning of human existence and suggests an understanding of phenomenology as a form of humanism, and perhaps even as a unique kind of "existentialism", that is, an ethical philosophy that takes absolute moral responsibility for the presuppositionless application of reason to life.

Keywords Phenomenological hermeneutics • Existentialism • Humanism • Husserl • Heidegger

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_17

Introduction: The Vexed Relationship Between Phenomenology and "Philosophy of Existence" or Existentialism

In a series of texts from the "Prague Treatise" and the "Prague Letter" (1934),[1] through the "Vienna Lecture"[2] and the "Prague Lectures" (1935),[3] to *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936),[4] Husserl performs a seismic shift in the horizon of his philosophical studies. Whereas in most earlier works he concentrated on topics from the fields of mathematics, logic, and knowledge, in these later texts he focuses on the problem of the genuine meaning of human existence. According to his descriptions, the crisis of the European sciences is a symptom of the deeper crisis of European philosophy and culture, as well as an expression of a radical crisis in the life of European humanity (*die radikale Lebenskrisis des europäischen Menschentums*). Interpreting European science, philosophy, and humanity as representative of global-historical science, philosophy, and humanity, Husserl understands the life-crisis of European humanity as reflective of the critical condition of global-historical humanity. Thus the crisis of "European" life emerges as a crisis of *human* existence.[5]

The question about the genuine meaning of human existence is usually associated not with the phenomenology of Husserl but with the German *Existenzphilosophie* of the 1920s and 1930s that he contemned, not to say condemned, as a dangerous

[1] Edmund Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937), Mit Ergänzenden Texten*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989) (Husserliana XXVII), pp. 184–221, 240–244.

[2] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie: Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976[2]) (Husserliana VI), pp. 314–348.

[3] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie, Ergänzungsband: Texte aus dem Nachlass 1934–1937*, ed. Reinhold Smid (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993) (Husserliana XXIX), pp. 103–139.

[4] Hua. VI, pp. 1–276.

[5] Thus too I focus on a different aspect of Husserl's crisis than the usual ones. Cf. Christian Möckel, "Krisis der wissenschaftlichen Kultur? Edmund Husserls Forderung nach 'Besinnung'", *Cultura: International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology* 4 (2005), pp. 26–39; Möckel, "Krisisdiagnosen: Husserl und Spengler", in: Möckel, *Phänomenologie: Probleme, Bezugnahmen und Interpretationen* (Berlin: Logos, 2003), pp. 107–128; James Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection: An Essay on Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004); Ernst Wolfgang Orth, *Edmund Husserls "Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie"*, in: Orth, ed., *Vernunft und Kultur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999); Helmuth Vetter, ed., *Krise der Wissenschaften—Wissenschaft der Krise? Wiener Tagungen zur Phänomenologie im Gedenken an Husserls Krisis-Abhandlung (1935/36–1996)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998); R. Philip Buckley, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Crisis of Philosophical Responsibility* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992); Pierre Trotignon, *Le coeur de la raison: Husserl et la crise du monde moderne* (Paris: Fayard, 1986); Antonio Banfi, "Husserl e la crisi della civiltà europea", *Aut-Aut* 43–44 (1958), pp. 1–17; Hermann Lübbe, "Husserl und die europäische Krisis", *Kant-Studien* 49 (1957/58), pp. 225–237.

form of "irrationalism".[6] The term "Existentialismus" had already been employed but was not yet widely used in Husserl's time, and its precise origin is still surrounded by some obscurity.[7] While it is not wise to take an essentialist approach either to "the philosophers of existence" or to "the existentialists", it is safe to say that they—Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre, to round up a few of the usual suspects—form a family with overlapping and underlapping resemblances, but one that shares certain core concerns, namely, authentic and inauthentic existence, individual and collective responsibility, human and divine axiology, freedom and determinism, rationality and absurdity, and objectification, alienation, and dehumanization.[8] Yet these are the very topics on which Husserl focuses in the phenomenological sense-investigations (*Besinnungen*) of *The Crisis*. Therefore it is fitting indeed to understand his later transcendental philosophy as a search for an answer to the question not only about the sense of the life-world (*die Bedeutung der Lebenswelt*) but also about the meaning of human existence (*der Sinn des menschlichen Daseins*).

Here one must look beyond the binary oppositions generated by such designations as *Phänomenologie* or *Existenzphilosophie* or *existentialisme*.[9] What Husserl's phenomenology, as a real care for the true good of humanity, has in common with existentialism, as a humanism in the broadest sense, is the conviction that human beings do not live in a world in which life makes sense, but rather in a world in which they must make sense of life. According to Husserl, for example, the genuine essence of human existence is not passively "given" but actively "taken", since it involves an entelechy that is intended and fulfilled in an evolutionary achievement, and it is the evidentiary result of an existential struggle to constitute meaning against annihilating forms of meaninglessness, namely, irrationalism, positivism, and skepticism.[10] The

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[6] "Existenzphilosophie", in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel (Basel: Schwabe, 1971–2005), vol. 2, cols. 862–865.

[7] "Existentialismus", in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 2, cols. 850–852. Cf. Urs Thurnherr, "'Existenzphilosophie' und 'Existenzialismus' oder Kurze Geschichte 'eines' Etiketts", in *Lexikon Existenzialismus und Existenzphilosophie*, ed. Urs Thurnherr and Anton Hügli (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), pp. 9–17.

[8] This is not to gloss over the differences, which can be significant. For example, Kierkegaard presupposes, in *Fear and Trembling*, that, if one does not live eternally, then one cannot live meaningfully, whereas Heidegger posits, in *Being and Time*, that, if one does not grasp the finitude of existence, then one cannot exist authentically. Cf. Thomas Flynn, *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1–23. As Flynn's short list of existentialist themes (p. 8) indicates, it can be difficult to formulate a definition of "existentialism" on which even *existentialists* agree. Cf. also Steven Crowell, "Existentialism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (on-line 2004/2010).

[9] Otto Friedrich Bollnow, "Deutsche Existenzphilosophie und französischer Existentialismus", *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 2 (1948), pp. 231–243.

[10] Hua. VI, p. 11: "Damit fällt auch der Glaube an eine '*absolute*' Vernunft, aus der die Welt ihren Sinn hat, der Glaube an den Sinn der Geschichte, den Sinn des Menschentums, an seine Freiheit, nämlich als Vermöglichkeit des Menschen, seinem individuellen und allgemeinen menschlichen Dasein vernünftigen Sinn zu verschaffen. … Verliert der Mensch diesen Glauben, so heißt das nichts anderes als: er verliert den Glauben 'an sich selbst', an das ihm eigene wahre Sein, das er

aim of this paper is to inquire into Husserl's hermeneutical-historical approach to the meaning of human existence and to move toward a genuine understanding of phenomenology as a form of humanism, and perhaps even as a unique kind of "existentialism", that is, an ethical philosophy that takes absolute moral responsibility for the presuppositionless application of reason to life.

The paper also seeks to be an exercise in phenomenological hermeneutics. Husserl suggests that it is possible to understand the thinkers of the past better than they understood themselves, and even better than they ever could have understood themselves.[11] This hermeneutical principle is not original with or unique to Husserl's historical sense-investigations in *The Crisis*. In fact, the principle is one of the oldest and most revered in hermeneutics, and the history of the discipline is in large part a commentary on it.[12] What is important here is that one proceed judiciously and apply the same hermeneutical standards in understanding Husserl as he does in understanding others. Yet Husserl is not suggesting that anyone can without further ado understand the great thinkers of the past better than they did themselves. Thus, if understanding Husserl "better" than he did himself means anything, then it means understanding him *differently* from how he understood himself. Here charity of interpretation means doing justice to the historicity of a great thinker, realizing that historicity does not entail historicism.[13]

Question: Is Phenomenology a Kind of "Philosophy of Existence"?

In large part due to the work of Heidegger and Jaspers, what was called "Existenzphilosophie" was not only fashionable but also dominant in Germany in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[14] By intent or in effect, Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*

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nicht immer schon hat, nicht schon mit der Evidenz des 'Ich bin', sondern nur hat und haben kann in Form des Ringens um seine Wahrheit, darum, sich selbst wahr zu machen."

[11] Hua. VI, p. 74: "Nur in der Endstiftung offenbart sich das, nur von ihr aus kann sich die einheitliche Ausgerichtetheit aller Philosophien und Philosophen eröffnen, und von ihr aus kann eine Erhellung gewonnen werden, in welcher man die vergangenen Denker versteht, wie sie selbst sich nie hätten verstehen können."

[12] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960), pp. 180–181, 280–281.

[13] Edmund Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft" (1911), in *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1911–1921), Mit Ergänzenden Texten*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) (Husserliana XXV), pp. 3–62, and Hua. VI, pp. 381–386 (the second part of Beilage III or of "Der Ursprung der Geometrie" [composed 1936 and published 1939]). For a fine treatment of phenomenology, history, and historicism see David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

[14] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Existentialismus und Existenzphilosophie" (1981), in *Gesammelte Werke 3*, *Neuere Philosophie I: Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), p. 175: "In Deutschland benannte man in dieser Zeit die Dinge mit dem Ausdruck

(1927) made it possible to focus on an existential analytic of *Dasein* (There-Being [or Being-There] or human being) rather than on a fundamental ontology of *Sein* (Being), and Jaspers' essays in the "elucidation of existence", from his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919) to his three-volume *Philosophie* (1931/32), with its core concept *Existenzerhellung*, suggested that people's choices of worldviews could be legitimately founded on volitional positions deriving from existential decisions grounded in personal experiences in "marginal situations" (*Grenzsituationen*). The rapid rise of a philosophy that seemed to concentrate on concrete questions of human existence, as his own "rigorous science" of essences did not, represented for Husserl a big professional disappointment and a major philosophical challenge. After all, Kierkegaard, the original existentialist, had charged that the great philosopher of the absolute, Hegel, had neglected the individual, and now Heidegger was committing philosophical patricide by arguing that Husserl, the grand essentialist, had overlooked existence.

The locus classicus for Husserl's critical reaction to the rise of *Existenzphilosophie* is his "Afterword to the *Ideas*" (1930).[15] There, without mentioning Jaspers or Heidegger, or anyone else in this regard, he defends transcendental phenomenology and attacks "existence philosophy" as an unphilosophical relapse into anthropologism and psychologism. Refusing to get involved in a detailed altercation with the countercurrents of contemporary German philosophy, but devoting special attention to "Lebensphilosophie, mit ihrer neuen Anthropologie, ihrer Philosophie der 'Existenz'" (one notes the mocking scare quotes), which he claims is "wrestling for dominance",[16] Husserl states categorically: "Ich möchte nur ausdrücklich sagen, daß ich allen von diesen Seiten her erhobenen Einwänden—des Intellektualismus, des Steckenbleibens meines methodischen Vorgehens in abstrakten Einseitigkeiten, des überhaupt und prinzipiellen Nichtherankommens an die ursprünglich-konkrete, die praktisch-tätige Subjektivität und an die Probleme der sogenannten 'Existenz', desgleichen an die metaphysischen Probleme—keinerlei Berechtigung zuerkennen kann."[17] "All these objections" to his philosophy rest, according to Husserl, on "misunderstandings" of it, which is the rhetorical leitmotif of the "Afterword".[18] Properly understood, he argues, his transcendental phenomenology possesses the "universal problem horizon of philosophy": "… daß sie also wirklich alle vom konkreten Menschen aus zu stellenden Fragen, darunter auch alle sogenannten metaphysischen, in ihrem Felde hat, soweit

'Existenzphilosophie'. Das Wort 'existenziell' war in den späten Zwanzigern geradezu ein Modewort. Was nicht existenziell war, zählte nicht."

[15] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Drittes Buch: Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, ed. Marly Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952) (Husserliana V), pp. 138–162. The "Afterword" was first published, under the title "Nachwort zu meinen *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*", in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* II (Halle-an-der Saale, 1930), pp. 549–570.

[16] Husserl, "Nachwort", p. 138.

[17] Husserl, "Nachwort", p. 140.

[18] Husserl, "Nachwort", pp. 138, 140, 143–144, 147, 151–152, 162.

sie überhaupt einen möglichen Sinn haben …."[19] The "Afterword" goes on to express the bathos and pathos of someone who has experienced both "the desperation of having fallen in love with philosophy" and the exasperation of having been rejected by other philosophers for allegedly ignoring its primary and ultimate questions.[20] Like many thinkers in such situations, Husserl felt that, if other philosophers only understood his philosophy, then they would underwrite it.[21]

Thus it is evident that, while he rejects the charge that phenomenology fails to deal with the problems of "so-called 'existence'", Husserl recognizes that such problems do exist and that a universal philosophy does address them. Hence it would be hasty to assume that Husserl did not pose the concrete questions of human existence to which the *Existenzphilosophen* pointed. What Husserl especially objected to was Heidegger's claim to the primacy of existential analytics over transcendental phenomenology. During their awkward, and eventually abortive, attempt to collaborate on an entry on "Phenomenology" for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1927/28),[22] Husserl already doubted whether Heidegger was a genuine follower of his own phenomenological principles.[23] Yet only after having supported Heidegger as his successor in Freiburg (1928) did Husserl actually study *Sein und Zeit* (1929), which he had gladly published in his *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* (1927). His reaction was negative: "Ich kam zum betrüblichen Ergebnis, dass ich philosophisch mit diesem Heideggerschen Tiefsinn nichts zu schaffen habe, mit dieser genialen Unwissenschaftlichkeit, dass er in der Ausbildung einer Systemphilosophie begriffen sei, von jener Art, die für immer unmöglich zu machen ich zu meiner Lebensaufgabe stets gerechnet habe."[24] Husserl's point is not only that transcendental phenomenology does not neglect the concrete questions of human existence, but also that it can better provide answers to them than *Existenzphilosophie*.[25] In fact, he regarded Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* not as

[19] Husserl, "Nachwort", p. 141.

[20] Husserl, "Nachwort", p. 162.

[21] Another key text for understanding Husserl's critical reaction to the rise of *Existenzphilosophie* is his "Phänomenologie und Anthropologie", a lecture that he held in Frankfurt on June 1, in Berlin on June 10, and in Halle on June 16, 1931. In it Husserl rejects the suggestion that he traces to Dilthey but that also seems to apply to Heidegger: "Die phänomenologische Philosophie soll völlig neu vom menschlichen Dasein her aufgebaut werden." Cf. Hua. XXVII, pp. 164–181, esp. p. 164 (quoted), 174, 179–180.

[22] Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie: Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925*, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962) (Husserliana IX), pp. 237–301.

[23] Steven Crowell, "Husserl, Heidegger, and Transcendental Philosophy: Another Look at the *Encyclopedia Britannica* Article", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50 (1990), pp. 501–518.

[24] Husserl, Letter to Alexander Pfänder, January 6, 1931, in *Edmund Husserl: Briefwechsel*, ed. Karl Schuhmann with Elisabeth Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), vol. II, p. 184. Responding to Pfänder's letter of January 2, 1931, Husserl explains why he supported Heidegger over Pfänder as his successor and how he realized his mistake a short time later.

[25] Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft", Hua. XXV, pp. 59–60: "Erst wenn die entschiedene Trennung der einen und anderen Philosophie sich im Zeitbewußtsein durchgesetzt hat, ist auch daran zu denken, daß die Philosophie Form und Sprache echter Wissenschaft annehme und als Unvollkommenheit erkenne, was an ihr vielfach gerühmt und gar imitiert wird—den Tiefsinn. Tiefsinn ist ein Anzeichen des Chaos, das echte Wissenschaft in einen Kosmos verwandeln will, in

transcendental phenomenology but as "philosophische Anthropologie": "Heidegger transponiert oder transversiert die konstitutiv-phänomenologische Klärung aller Regionen des Seienden … ins Anthropologische …. Dabei wird alles tiefsinnig unklar und philosophisch verliert es seinen Wert."[26] Yet, according to Husserl, only transcendental phenomenology is philosophy as rigorous science.[27] Also, whereas Husserl attempted to apply phenomenology to axiology,[28] Heidegger tried to elevate phenomenology beyond ethics.[29] Thus it is not surprising to find Husserl himself, in the years between the publication of *Sein und Zeit* (1927) and his death (1938), habitually employing existentialist terms and appealing to existentialist themes—as well as connecting existentialist topics to ethical concerns.[30] This is most evident in the crisis-thematic texts.[31] Therefore it is not as if Husserl shared no awareness of, or appreciation for, the existential questions raised by the philosophers of existence—to the contrary. So what are for him "the metaphysical questions" of human existence and what are his answers to them? Above all, how does he approach them?

Argument: Phenomenology Is a Humanism

In Part One of *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl argues that the crisis of the European sciences is an expression of the radical life-crisis of European humanity. Yet this text has a context. In a

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eine einfache, völlig klare, aufgelöste Ordnung. Echte Wissenschaft kennt, soweit ihre wirkliche Lehre reicht, keinen Tiefsinn. Jedes Stück fertiger Wissenschaft ist ein Ganzes von den Denkschritten, deren jeder unmittelbar einsichtig, also gar nicht tiefsinnig ist. Tiefsinn ist Sache der Weisheit, begriffliche Deutlichkeit und Klarheit Sache der strengen Theorie. Die Ahnungen des Tiefsinns in eindeutige rationale Gestaltungen umzuprägen, das ist der wesentliche Prozeß der Neukonstitution strenger Wissenschaften. Auch die exakten Wissenschaften hatten ihre langen Perioden des Tiefsinns, und so wie sie in den Kämpfen der Renaissance, so wird sich—das wage ich zu hoffen—die Philosophie in den Kämpfen der Gegenwart von der Stufe des Tiefsinns zu derjenigen wissenschaftlicher Klarheit durchdringen. Dazu aber bedarf es nur der rechten Zielsicherheit und des großen, vollbewußt auf das Ziel gerichteten und alle verfügbaren wissenschaftlichen Energien anspannenden Willens."

[26] Roland Breeur, ed., "Randbemerkungen Husserls zu Heideggers *Sein und Zeit* und *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*", *Husserl Studies* 11 (1994), pp. 13, 27. Breeur also helpfully collects the loci from Husserl's *Briefwechsel* that document the break with Heidegger. Cf. pp. 3–6.

[27] Husserl, "Nachwort", pp. 139–140, 159–162. Cf. Husserl, Letter to Roman Ingarden, December 2, 1929, in *Husserl: Briefwechsel*, vol. III, p. 254: "Ich kam zu dem Resultat, daß ich das Werk [Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*] nicht im Rahmen meiner Phänomenologie einordnen kann."

[28] Hua. VI, pp. 4, 7, 11.

[29] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1977[14]), p. 99: "Werte sind *vorhandene* Bestimmtheiten eines Dinges."

[30] For a particularly striking example, directed against Heidegger, see Hua. XXIX, p. 332: "Die blendenden, tiefsinnigen Weisen, in denen *Heidegger* mit dem Tode umspringt, wird sich der Tod schwerlich gefallen lassen." Husserl proceeds to describe death within a transcendental-phenomenological horizon.

[31] Gadamer, "Die phänomenologische Bewegung" (1963), in *Gesammelte Werke 3*, p. 128: "Der Erfolg von *Sein und Zeit* zwang Husserl zu einer neuen Besinnung, und so erschien … die *Krisis*-Abhandlung."

series of works, namely, from the "Prague Treatise" and the "Prague Letter" (1934), through the "Vienna Lecture" (May 1935) and the "Prague Lectures" (November 1935), to *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), Husserl explores the situation of philosophy in his time and describes it in terms of a "crisis". In the "Prague Treatise", for example, he writes that "there is a … Europe alive in these crises", though it is not clear which "crises" he means.[32] In the "Prague Letter", the exception that proves the rule, he does not explicitly mention a "crisis". In the "Vienna Lecture", which was held under the title "Philosophy in the Crisis of European Humanity" but printed under the title "The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy", he not only mentions "a crisis" but also repeatedly speaks of "the European crisis", the "crisis of European humanity", and "the crisis of European existence".[33] In the "Prague Lectures", which were held under the title "Psychology in the Crisis of European Science", he speaks of "the crisis of science", "a crisis of the sciences", "a universal European crisis", "the history of psychology" as "a history of crises", "a crisis of psychology", "the crisis of the sciences", "the crisis of modern culture", "a crisis of philosophy", and "a crisis of self-comprehension on the part of the human being".[34] In *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, he refers to the most crises of all, for example, "the crisis of the sciences", "the radical life-crisis of European humanity", "a crisis of the sciences", "the crisis of the European sciences", "a crisis of our sciences as such", "the crisis of a science", "a crisis of the sciences in general", "the crisis of science", "the crisis of our culture", "a crisis peculiar to psychology", "the crisis of philosophy", "the crisis of all modern sciences", and "a crisis of European humanity itself with respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its total *existence*".[35] Thus one and the same expression "Krisis" has many different but related meanings in *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*.

Evidently, one thing to be said about the crisis in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* is that the crisis of which Husserl so urgently writes is much more than a "mere" crisis of the European sciences.[36] Another thing to be said about the crisis in *The Crisis* is that it would be a major error to think that Husserl invented the idea of a "crisis" in order to score rhetorical

[32] Hua. XXVII, p. 208.

[33] Hua. VI, pp. 314–315, 318, 342, 347.

[34] Hua. XXIX, pp. 103, 108, 118, 122, 137–138.

[35] Hua. VI, pp. 1, 3, 10, 14.

[36] Reinhart Koselleck, "Krise", in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexicon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Konze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972–1997), vol. 3, pp. 617–650. Cf. Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1959), which traces the modern idea of crisis back to Rousseau. For a good account of "crisis consciousness" at the turn of the century (19th–20th) see Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

points for his philosophy, one which was not attracting the enthusiastic devotees that Heidegger and others perceived to be *Existenzphilosophen* in the late 1920s and early 1930s were.[37] To the contrary, when Husserl picked up on the motif of a crisis, he was then not only evoking a leitmotif of his own philosophizing, but also invoking the spirit of his times—perceptively tapping into the reigning *Zeitgeist*.[38] In fact, by the time he began to make systematic use of the notion, there had already appeared an extensive literature in the *Geisteswissenschaften* and in the *Naturwissenschaften* on various crises, real and perceived.[39] In addition, the theme of a "tragedy of modern scientific culture" ("die Tragik der modernen wissenschaftlichen Kultur"), with deleterious consequences for the question about the meaning of human life, was not new to Husserl's philosophy in the late 1920s or early 1930s.[40] Rather, it had been a leitmotif of his thought since at least the first

[37] Heidegger, in *Martin Heidegger: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, vol. 29/30 (*Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit [Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1929/1930]*) (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), p. 243: "Überall gibt es Erschütterungen, Krisen, Katastrophen, Nöte: das heutige soziale Elend, die politische Wirrnis, die Ohnmacht der Wissenschaft, die Aushöhlung der Kunst, die Bodenlosigkeit der Philosophie, die Unkraft der Religion. Gewiß, Nöte gibt es überall."

[38] Gadamer, "Existenzphilosophie und Existentialismus", pp. 177–178: "Daß die tiefe Kulturkrise, die damals über die europäische Kulturwelt kam, auch ihren philosophischen Ausdruck finden mußte und daß dies insbesondere in Deutschland geschah, dessen Umbruch und Niederbruch der sichtbarste, katastrophenhafteste Ausdruck des allgemeinen Widersinnes war, versteht sich von selber."

[39] Consciousness of crisis was widespread indeed. Cf. Georg Simmel (1858–1918), "Die Krisis der Kultur" (1916); Rudolf Pannwitz (1881–1969), *Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur* (1917); Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (1918/1922–1923); Paul Valéry (1871–1945), *La crise de l'esprit* (1919); Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1972), *Krise der Weltanschauung* (1923); Arthur Liebert (1878–1946), *Die geistige Krisis der Gegenwart* (1923); René Guénon (1886–1951), *La crise du monde moderne* (1927); Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930); Ernst Jünger (1895–1998), *Die totale Mobilmachung* (1930); José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955), *La rebelión de las masas* (1930); Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (1931); Fritz Jellinek (1895–1971), *Die Krise des Bürgers* (1935); Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985), *Das Schicksal deutschen Geistes am Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche* (1935). Cf. also, in individual disciplines, Karl Joël (1864–1934), *Die philosophische Krisis der Gegenwart* (1914); Hermann Weyl (1885–1955), "Über die neue Grundlagenkrise der Mathematik" (1921); Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923), "Die Krisis des Historismus" (1922); Hans Tietze (1880–1954), *Lebendige Kunst-Wissenschaft: Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte* (1925); Karl Bühler (1879–1963), *Die Krise der Psychologie* (1927); Hermann Platz (1880–1945), *Das Religiöse in der Krise der Zeit* (1928). Cf. finally, in literature, Karl Kraus (1874–1936), *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1919/1922); Hermann Hesse (1877–1962), *Blick ins Chaos: Drei Aufsätze* (1920); Thomas Mann (1875–1955), *Der Zauberberg* (1924); Joseph Roth (1894–1939), *Radetzkymarsch* (1932); Elias Canetti (1905–1994), *Die Blendung* (1931/1935); Robert Musil (1880–1942), *Das hilflose Europa*, in *Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten* (1936); Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), *La nausée* (1938 [dramatic time: 1932])—not to forget Franz Kafka (1883–1924), *Die Verwandlung* (1915), *Der Prozeß* (1925), and *Das Schloß* (1926).

[40] Edmund Husserl, *Formale und transzendentale Logik: Versuch einer Kritik der logischen Vernunft*, ed. Paul Janssen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974) (Husserliana XVII), pp. 7, 9.

decade of the century.[41] Yet Husserl was never a pessimistic theorist of decline and fall (à la Spengler),[42] for, despite scattered moments of apparent despair,[43] he seems to have remained convinced to the end that the idea of a "philosophy as rigorous science" could still be realized.[44] This was in spite of whatever medical-philosophical "arteriosclerosis" he may or may not have suffered.[45] Finally, there is evidence that Husserl also suffered from chronic depression due to overwork, and that he usually fought the related crises with even more work.[46]

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[41] Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft", Hua. XXV, p. 60: "Man nennt unsere Zeit eine Zeit der *décadence*. Ick kann diesen Vorwurf nicht für gerechtfertigt halten. Man wird in der Geschichte kaum eine Zeit finden, in welcher eine solche Summe von arbeitenden Kräften in Bewegung gesetzt und mit solchem Erfolge am Werke waren. Wir mögen die Ziele nicht immer billigen; wir mögen es auch beklagen, daß in stilleren, behaglicher dahinlebenden Epochen Blüten des Geisteslebens erwuchsen, wie wir ähnliche in der unsrigen nicht finden und erhoffen können. Und doch, mag zumal das Gewollte und immer wieder Gewollte in unserer Zeit den ästhetischen Sinn abstoßen, dem die naïve Schönheit des frei Erwachsenen so viel näher geht, wie ungeheure Werte liegen doch in der Willenssphäre, wofern die großen Willen nur die rechten Ziele finden. Es hieße unserer Zeit aber sehr Unrecht tun, wenn man ihr den Willen zum Niedrigen andichten wollte. Wer den Glauben zu wecken, wer für die Größe eines Ziels Verständnis und Begeisterung zu erregen vermag, wird die Kräfte leicht finden, die sich diesem zuwenden. Ich meine, unsere Zeit ist ihrem Berufe nach eine große Zeit—nur leidet sie am Skeptizismus, der die alten, ungeklärten Ideale zersetzt hat. Und sie leidet eben darum an der zu geringen Entwicklung und Macht der Philosophie, die noch nicht weit, noch nicht wissenschaftlich genug ist, um den skeptischen Negativismus (der sich Positivismus nennt) durch den wahren Positivismus überwinden zu können. Unsere Zeit will nur an 'Realitäten' glauben. Nun, ihre stärkste Realität ist die Wissenschaft, und so ist die philosophische Wissenschaft das, was unserer Zeit am meisten not tut."

[42] This emerges most evidently in Husserl's five essays on "renewal" (*Erneuerung*) (1922–1924), the first three of which are the Kaizo Articles (1923–1924), Hua. XXVII, pp. 3–94, e.g., p. 4: "Sollen wir den 'Untergang des Abendlandes' als ein Fatum über uns ergehen lassen? Dieses Fatum *ist* nur, wenn wir passiv zusehen—passiv zusehen könnten. Aber das können auch die nicht, die uns das Fatum verkünden."

[43] Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft", p. 56: "Die geistige Not unserer Zeit ist in der Tat unerträglich geworden." Cf. Hua. VI, p. 437, n. 1 (spring of 1937).

[44] Hua. VI, p. 508 (summer of 1935?): "*Philosophie als Wissenschaft*, als ernstliche, strenge, ja apodiktisch strenge Wissenschaft—*der Traum ist ausgeträumt*." Cf. Gadamer, "Die phänomenologische Bewegung", p. 129: "Man mißversteht diese Husserlschen Worte, wenn man sie als seine eigene Meinung auffaßt. In Wahrheit schildern sie eine von ihm nicht geteilte, ja von ihm als ein geradezu tödliches Verderben bekämpfte Meinung." Cf. also Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971 [Second Edition]), p. 77, fn. 2: "In the few places where in 1935 Husserl seems to be saying that philosophy as a rigorous science is a dream now ended (for instance, in *Husserliana* VI, 508) the context makes it plain that he was speaking in bitter irony about the times, not about himself." Cf. finally Hua. XXVII, p. 238 (also 1935): "… 'Du glaubst noch an eine Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft? Hast Du den Aufbruch der neuen Zeit verschlafen?' — O nein. Ich 'glaube', ich 'predige' nicht: ich arbeite, ich baue, ich verantworte. Ich erweise mir die neue Wissenschaftlichkeit …."

[45] Hua. VI, pp. 439–440.

[46] Husserl, Letter to Dorion Cairns, March 21, 1930, Letter to Alexander Pfänder, January 6, 1931, Letter to Gustav Albrecht, June 3, 1932, etc.

What may be most striking about Husserl's rhetorical approach in Part One of *The Crisis* is its *existential* character, which may in turn be most evident in his hortatory language.[47] For Husserl employs a "critical" language of "life" linked to the leitmotiv "crisis", for example: "Gefahr" ("danger"), "Kampf" ("struggle"), "Klage" ("lament"), "Krankheit" ("sickness"), "Krieg" ("war"), "Lebensnot" ("life-threatening need"), "Not" ("plight"), "Rätsel" ("enigma"), "Ringen" ("wrestling"), "Schicksal" ("fate"), "Schmerz" ("pain"), "Sinnlosigkeit" ("meaninglessness"), "Skepsis" ("skepticism"), "Streit" ("conflict"), "Verlust" ("loss"), "Versagen" ("failure"), "Widersinn" ("counter-sense"), "Widerspruch" ("contradiction"), and so forth. The fact that Husserl speaks of "Krisis" rather than of "Krise" is also no accident, for the former possesses a plethora of medical-existential connotations that the latter usually lacks. The existentially urgent language is all the more remarkable, given Husserl's well-known contempt for philosophies that dealt, enthusiastically or passionately or otherwise, with "existence". In fact, however, Husserl himself repeatedly speaks of the crisis in "existential" terms and arranges Part One of *The Crisis* in such a way that it culminates in the provocative formulation of "a painful *existential contradiction*" ("ein peinlicher *existenzieller Widerspruch*").[48] Furthermore, he repeatedly diagnoses the crisis of the sciences as a condition not of their scientific character, which, he concedes, is intact, but of their meaningfulness for human *Dasein*, which, he argues, has gone lost, and proposes the recollection of a historical form of human *Dasein* as a crucial part of the remedy for the critical condition of European humanity.[49] Finally, he repeatedly invokes "life" (*Leben*) and "vital needs" (*Lebensnot*) for answers to metaphysical questions.[50]

All this leads to a basic and central question. For, if Husserl really did contemn *Existenzphilosophie*, then what is the true relationship between his phenomenology and "existence philosophy", and indeed between his phenomenology and existentialism? For instance, is it possible to understand Husserl in this respect better than, or at least differently from how, he understood himself? That is, is it possible to understand Husserl as an *Existenzphilosoph*, or even as an existentialist, *malgré lui*? Since the remedy that he proposes for the crisis is evidently humanistic in character, it certainly is possible to understand Husserl as a humanist, albeit *sui generis*. Hence there may be common ground here, in so far as it has been famously and plausibly argued, after Husserl, that "existentialism is a humanism". Thus the suggestion is that phenomenology and existentialism, as forms of humanism, there intersect where they focus on the human being and certain specifically human concerns.

[47] In this paper, I bracket out all issues surrounding the "Eurocentric" character of Husserl's investigations in *The Crisis* and in the related texts. See my paper "From Violence to Evidence? Husserl and Sen on Human Identity and Diversity: Toward a Postcolonial Phenomenology of Humanity", in *Phenomenology 2010: Nature, Culture, and Existence*, ed. Lester Embree, Thomas Nenon, and Michael Barber (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010), pp. 95–121.

[48] Hua. VI, pp. 10, 15–16. Cf. Hua. VI, pp. 337, 345–46 ("Vienna Lecture").

[49] Hua. VI, pp. 3–6, 8, 11, 15, 17. Cf. Hua. VI, pp. 319, 322–323, 326–327, 329, 333, 336, 338, 340, 347 ("Vienna Lecture").

[50] Hua. VI, pp. 1, 3–5, 10–11, 13, 15. Cf. Hua. VI, pp. 314–322, 324–336, 338–344, 347–348 ("Vienna Lecture").

In this analysis, Part One of *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* serves as *pars pro toto* for the crisis-thematic texts of the later Husserl, though it remains a desideratum to explore their differences in this respect as well as in many others.

In § 1, Husserl beings with a rhetorical question: "Is there, in view of their constant successes, really a crisis of the sciences?"[51] His ironic answer is that, judged by the normal standards of what is scientific, namely, repeated successes in delivering reliable results by means of rigorous methods, there is no crisis of the natural sciences, no crisis of the human sciences, and no crisis of psychology. On the other hand, compared to these sciences, philosophy itself is unscientific, and it is threatened by "skepticism, irrationalism, and mysticism".[52] Thus the only crisis seems to be that of philosophy, and the question is wherein it consists.[53]

In § 2, Husserl takes a different approach to the question of a "crisis" by criticizing "the positivistic reduction of the idea of science to mere factual science" and by describing "the 'crisis' of science" as "the loss of its meaning for life".[54] The positive sciences have, of course, provided humanity with "prosperity". They have not, however, given any adequate answers to the decisive questions of genuine *humanity*. Indeed, they have turned away from the questions that human beings find burning in troubled times, namely, "the questions about the meaning or meaninglessness of this entire human existence".[55] The point is that "merely factual sciences make

[51] Hua. VI, p. 1: "Gibt es angesichts der ständigen Erfolge wirklich eine Krisis der Wissenschaften?" Cf. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, tr. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 3. Occasionally I modify this excellent translation.

[52] Hua. VI, p. 1: "Eine Krisis unserer Wissenschaften schlechthin, kann davon ernstlich gesprochen werden? Ist diese heutzutage vielgehörte Rede nicht eine Übertreibung? Die Krisis einer Wissenschaft besagt doch nichts minderes, als daß ihre echte Wissenschaftlichkeit, daß die ganze Weise, wie sie sich ihre Aufgabe gestellt und dafür ihre Methodik ausgebildet hat, fraglich geworden ist. Das mag für die Philosophie zutreffen, die ja in unserer Gegenwart der Skepsis, dem Irrationalismus, dem Mystizismus zu erliegen droht."

[53] Hua. VI, p. 2: "Jedenfalls ist der Kontrast der 'Wissenschaftlichkeit' dieser Wissenschaftsgruppen gegenüber der 'Unwissenschaftlichkeit' der Philosophie unverkennbar."

[54] Hua. VI, p. 3: "Die positivistische Reduktion der Idee der Wissenschaft auf bloße Tatsachenwissenschaft. Die 'Krisis' der Wissenschaft als Verlust ihrer Lebensbedeutsamkeit."

[55] Hua. VI, pp. 3–4: "Sie [the crisis of the sciences] betrifft nicht ihre Wissenschaftlichkeit, sondern das, was sie, was Wissenschaft überhaupt dem menschlichen Dasein bedeutet hatte und bedeuten kann. Die Ausschließlichkeit, in welcher sich in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts die ganze Weltanschauung des modernen Menschen von den positiven Wissenschaften bestimmen und von der ihr verdankten 'prosperity' blenden ließ, bedeutete ein gleichgültiges Sichabkehren von den Fragen, die für ein echtes Menschentum die entscheidenden sind. Bloße Tatsachenwissenschaften machen bloße Tatsachenmenschen. Die Umwendung der öffentlichen Bewertung war insbesondere nach dem Kriege unvermeidlich, und sie ist, wie wir wissen, in der jungen Generation nachgerade zu einer feindlichen Stimmung geworden. In unserer Lebensnot—so hören wir—hat diese Wissenschaft uns nichts zu sagen. Gerade die Fragen schließt sie prinzipiell aus, die für den in unseren unseligen Zeiten den schicksalsvollsten Umwälzungen preisgegebenen Menschen die brennenden sind: die Fragen nach Sinn oder Sinnlosigkeit dieses ganzen menschlichen Daseins."

merely factual human beings",[56] whereas existential questions demand answers "based on rational insight".[57]

In § 3, Husserl describes what he regards as "the founding of the autonomy of European humanity with the new conception of the idea of philosophy in the Renaissance".[58] On Husserl's description, the human questions were not always excluded from scientific investigation. To the contrary, the human being was once the central theme. But "positivism, so to say, decapitates philosophy",[59] and the positivistic sciences let fall all the "highest and final" questions, that is, the metaphysical questions or the inquiries into the concerns of the human being per se, for example, reason, history, God, world, immortality, temporality and eternity—all the value questions. Yet the core of the Classical-Renaissance conception of humanity was that the human being would form itself, in "the 'philosophical' manner of existence" ("die 'philosophische' Daseinsform"), in freedom and with reason.[60] Thus it would include all philosophical questions in a universal discipline. Although he does not use the word "humanism", Husserl does appeal to a historical sense of *humanism*, that is, Classical-Renaissance humanism, but not in a naïve way ("man is the measure of all things").

In § 4, Husserl thematizes "the failure of the new science after its initial success" and "the unclarified motive for this failure".[61] He argues that "the new humanity, animated by and blessed with such an exalted spirit", was not sustainable because humanity "lost the inspiring belief in its ideal of a universal philosophy and in the scope of the new method", so that the method was able to yield indubitable successes only in the positive sciences.[62] Yet it was not only the comparison with the positive sciences that showed that such successes were not to be obtained for "the

[56] Hua. VI, p. 4: "Bloße Tatsachenwissenschaften machen bloße Tatsachenmenschen."

[57] Ibid.: "Fordern sie [die Fragen] nicht in ihrer Allgemeinheit und Notwendigkeit für alle Menschen auch allgemeine Besinnungen und ihre Beantwortung aus vernünftiger Einsicht?"

[58] Hua. VI, p. 5: "Die Begründung der Autonomie des europäischen Menschentums mit der neuen Konzeption der Idee der Philosophie in der Renaissance."

[59] Hua. VI, p. 7: "Der Positivismus enthauptet sozusagen die Philosophie."

[60] Hua. VI, p. 5: "Das europäische Menschentum vollzieht in der Renaissance bekanntlich in sich eine revolutionäre Umwendung. Es wendet sich gegen seine bisherige, die mittelalterliche Daseinsweise, es entwertet sie, es will sich in Freiheit neu gestalten. Sein bewundertes Vorbild hat es am antiken Menschentum. Diese Daseinsart will es an sich nachbilden. … Was erfaßt es als das Wesentliche des antiken Menschen? Nach einigen Schwanken nichts anderes als die 'philosophische' Daseinsform: das frei sich selbst, seinem ganzen Leben, seine Regel aus reiner Vernunft, aus der Philosophie Geben."

[61] Hua. VI, p. 8: "Das Versagen der anfänglich gelingenden neuen Wissenschaft und sein ungeklärtes Motiv."

[62] Ibid.: "Wenn nun das neue, von jenem hohen Geiste beseelte und beglückte Menschentum nicht standhielt, so konnte es nur dadurch geschehen, daß es den schwunggebenden Glauben an eine universale Philosophie seines Ideals und an die Tragweite der neuen Methode verlor. Und so geschah es wirklich. Es erwies sich, daß diese Methode sich nur in den positiven Wissenschaften in zweifellosen Erfolgen auswirken konnte. Anders in der Metaphysik, bzw. in den im besonderen Sinne philosophischen Problemen, obschon es auch hier nicht an hoffnungsreichen, scheinbar wohlgelingenden Anfängen fehlte."

philosophical problems in the special sense" in metaphysics. There was also the fact that the unified universal philosophy was supplanted by mutually exclusive system-philosophies, and this in turn led to a wavering and collapsing of the idea of philosophy. Philosophy underwent a long period of passionate struggle for a clear understanding of the true reasons for this failure.[63]

In § 5, Husserl elucidates "the ideal of universal philosophy and the process of its inner dissolution".[64] A clearer sense of the chronic crisis emerges: "Thus the crisis of philosophy implies the crisis of all modern sciences as members of the philosophical universe: at first a latent, then a more and more prominent crisis of European humanity itself with respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its entire 'existence'."[65] Thinking like a Classical Greek, Husserl locates the cause of the loss of the meaning of science for human existence in the skeptical loss of faith in the distinction between knowledge (*episteme*) and opinion (*doxa*).[66] He argues that the genuine essence of human existence is not passively "given" but actively "taken", since it involves an entelechy that is intended and fulfilled in an evolutionary achievement, and it is the evidentiary result of an existential struggle to constitute meaning against annihilating forms of meaninglessness, namely, irrationalism, positivism, and skepticism: "If the human being loses this faith [in the distinction between knowledge and opinion], then it means nothing other than this: the human being loses faith 'in the human being', in the true being of the human being, which is not something that the human being always already has, with the evidence of the 'I am', but something that the human being only has and can have in the form of the struggle for the truth of the human being, the struggle to make the human being true."[67] The scientific crisis becomes an existential crisis, and the history of philosophy becomes a struggle for the existence of genuine philosophy and for the genuine meaning of human existence.[68]

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[63] Hua. VI, pp. 8–9.

[64] Hua. VI, p. 9: "Das Ideal der universalen Philosophie und der Prozeß seiner inneren Auflösung."

[65] Hua. VI, p. 10: "Demnach bedeutet die Krisis der Philosophie die Krisis aller neuzeitlichen Wissenschaften als Glieder der philosophischen Universalität, eine zunächst latente, dann aber immer mehr zutage tretende Krisis des europäischen Menschentums selbst in der gesamten Sinnhaftigkeit seines kulturellen Lebens, in seiner gesamten 'Existenz'."

[66] Hua. VI, p. 11: "Damit fällt auch der Glaube an eine '*absolute*' Vernunft, aus der die Welt ihren Sinn hat, der Glaube an den Sinn der Geschichte, den Sinn des Menschentums, an seine Freiheit, nämlich als Vermöglichkeit des Menschen, seinem individuellen und allgemeinen menschlichen Dasein vernünftigen Sinn zu verschaffen."

[67] Ibid.: "Verliert der Mensch diesen Glauben, so heißt das nichts anderes als: er verliert den Glauben 'an sich selbst', an das ihm eigene wahre Sein, das er nicht immer schon hat, nicht schon mit der Evidenz des 'Ich bin', sondern nur hat und haben kann in Form des Ringens um seine Wahrheit, darum, sich selbst wahr zu machen."

[68] Ibid.: "Immer mehr nimmt die Geschichte der Philosophie, von innen gesehen, den Charakter eines Kampfes ums Dasein an, nämlich als Kampfes der geradehin in ihrer Aufgabe sich auslebenden Philosophie—der Philosophie im naiven Glauben an die Vernunft—mit der sie negierenden oder empiristisch entwertenden Skepsis."

In § 6, Husserl characterizes "the history of modern philosophy as a struggle for the meaning of the human being".[69] He describes "the true struggles of our times" as "struggles between humanity which has collapsed and humanity which is still on its feet", and "the genuine spiritual struggles of European humanity" as "struggles between skeptical unphilosophies and vital philosophies", whose vitality consists in the fact that they "struggle for their own true and genuine meaning and thus for the meaning of a genuine humanity".[70] Husserl argues that the struggle can only be won by philosophy as metaphysics,[71] and its outcome will decide whether "the *telos* that was inborn in European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy"—a humanity that is what it is on the basis of philosophical reason—is a mere factual, historical delusion, or whether Greek humanity was the breakthrough to "what is essential to humanity as such", its "entelechy".[72] So Husserl defines what it means to be human: "To be human at all is essentially to be a human being in a socially and generatively united civilization; and, if the human being is a rational being (*animal rationale*), then the human being is a rational being only in so far as the whole civilization of the human being is a rational civilization, that is, one with a latent orientation toward reason or one openly oriented toward the entelechy which has come to itself, become manifest to itself, and which now of necessity consciously directs human becoming."[73] Thus Husserl's phenomenological-teleological humanism is

[69] Hua. VI, p. 12: "Die Geschichte der neuzeitlichen Philosophie als Kampf um den Sinn des Menschen."

[70] Hua. VI, p. 13: "Die wahren, einzig bedeutungsvollen Kämpfe unserer Zeit sind die Kämpfe zwischen dem schon zusammengebrochenen Menschentum und dem noch bodenständigen, aber um diese Bodenständigkeit bzw. um eine neue ringenden. Die eigentlichen Geisteskämpfe des europäischen Menschentums als solchen spielen sich als *Kämpfe der Philosophien* ab, nämlich zwischen den skeptischen Philosophien—oder vielmehr Unphilosophien, die nur das Wort, nicht aber die Aufgabe behalten haben—und den wirklichen, noch lebendigen Philosophien. Deren Lebendigkeit aber besteht darin, daß sie um ihren echten und wahren Sinn ringen und damit um den Sinn eines echten Menschentums."

[71] Ibid.: "Die latente Vernunft zum Selbstverständnis ihrer Möglichkeiten zu bringen und damit einsichtig zu machen die Möglichkeit einer Metaphysik als einer wahren Möglichkeit—das ist der einzige Weg, um eine Metaphysik bzw. universale Philosophie in den arbeitsvollen Gang der Verwirklichung zu bringen."

[72] Ibid.: "Damit allein entscheidet sich, ob das dem europäischen Menschentum mit der Geburt der griechischen Philosophie eingeborene Telos, ein Menschentum aus philosophischer Vernunft sein zu wollen und nur als solches sein zu können—in der unendlichen Bewegung von latenter zu offenbarer Vernunft und im unendlichen Bestreben der Selbstnormierung durch diese seine menschheitliche Wahrheit und Echtheit, ein bloßer historisch-faktischer Wahn ist, ein zufälliger Erwerb einer zufälligen Menschheit, inmitten ganz anderer Menschheiten und Geschichtlichkeiten; oder ob nicht vielmehr im griechischen Menschentum erstmalig zum Durchbruch gekommen ist, was als *Entelechie* im Menschentum als solchen wesensmäßig beschlossen ist."

[73] Ibid.: "Menschentum überhaupt ist wesensmäßig Menschsein in generativ und sozial verbundenen Menschheiten, und ist der Mensch Vernunftwesen (*animal rationale*), so ist er es nur, sofern seine ganze Menschheit Vernunftmenschheit ist—latent auf Vernunft ausgerichtet oder offen ausgerichtet auf die zu sich selbst gekommene, für sich selbst offenbar gewordene und nunmehr in Wesensnotwendigkeit das menschheitliche Werden *bewußt leitende* Entelechie." Cf. Hua. VI, pp. 13–14: "Philosophie, Wissenschaft wäre demnach *die historische Bewegung der Offenbarung der universalen, dem Menschentum als solchen 'eingeborenen' Vernunft*."

admittedly metaphysical and arguably ahistorical, since he apparently thinks of the human being in terms of an atemporally, if not eternally, valid human essence, defined by rationality.

In § 7, Husserl lays out the project of the historical-hermeneutical investigations of the work.[74] In what is, from an existentialist perspective, the most important statement in Part One of *Die Krisis*, Husserl says: "Aber als Philosophen dieser Gegenwart sind wir in einen peinlichen *existenziellen Widerspruch* hineingeraten. Den Glauben an die Möglichkeit der Philosophie als Aufgabe, also an die Möglichkeit einer universalen Erkenntnis, *können* wir nicht fahren lassen. In dieser Aufgabe *wissen* wir uns als ernstliche Philosophen *berufen*. Und doch, wie den Glauben festhalten, der nur Sinn hat mit Beziehung auf das eine, einzige uns allen gemeinsame Ziel, auf *die* Philosophie?"[75] Yet what exactly is "the painful *existential contradiction*" into which "we as philosophers of the present" have fallen? Is it between the theory of the idea and the practice of the thing? Or is it more intractable than that? Is it even clear what it was for Husserl himself?

In the rest of this paper, I suggest that "the painful *existential contradiction*" emphasized in Part One of *The Crisis* involves an acute self-conflict on Husserl's part. It consists in the fact that Husserl insists, on the one hand, that philosophy, in order to be "meaningful for life", must provide adequate answers to the pressing questions of human existence, and, on the other hand, that, in order to be "rigorous science", it cannot do this very thing. For the answers to the questions of human existence are particular, that is, they are inextricably linked to individuals, whereas the rigorously scientific philosophy that Husserl espouses is universal, that is, it focuses on essences and is interested in particulars only as steps to universals as goals. Therefore Husserl's approach is conflicted in itself, demanding that philosophy achieve a certain end but denying it the only possible means thereto. The result is that transcendental philosophy is restricted to giving essentialist answers to existential questions. Yet the existential inadequacy of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is mitigated by his humanism. Hence, if there is any critique of Husserl here, then it is charitable in intent. For, at the time of *The Crisis* and of the related texts, he seems to have been genuinely torn between doing phenomenology and talking *Existenzphilosophie*.

Question: Is Phenomenology a Kind of Existentialism?

Since Husserl does not use the expression "Humanismus" in Part One of *Die Krisis*, it seems far-fetched to suggest that he advocates a form of "humanism" there. Yet §§ 1–7 are saturated with references to the human being (*Mensch*) and humanity (*Menschentum*, *Menschheit*), and in these paragraphs Husserl aims to help European humanity out of its existential crisis by clarifying how it can develop its genuine

[74] Hua. VI, p. 15: "Die Vorhabe der Untersuchungen dieser Schrift."

[75] Ibid.

"entelechy". Now it is remarkable that Husserl appeals to the new conception of what it means to be human in the Renaissance, which was itself the renewal of a Classical idea of the human being, as the first step toward a cure for the malady that infects European science, culture, and humanity. Evidently, Husserl draws on the heritage of humanism. In so far as he develops a historical concept of humanism in *The Crisis*, Husserl works with the Classical and Renaissance concepts. Thus there are significant overlappings and underlappings between humanism and existentialism here. For contemporary readers, two post-Husserlian texts are particularly rich sources for illuminating Husserl's concept of humanism, namely, Sartre's *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (1945/1946) and Heidegger's *Über den Humanismus* (1946/1947).

In a part of *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* that reads like an attempt at a commentary on Heidegger's statements in *Sein und Zeit* that "*[d]as 'Wesen' des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz*",[76] and that "*die Substanz des Menschen ist die Existenz*",[77] Sartre denies that "l'essence précède l'existence" and affirms that "l'existence précède l'essence".[78] Thus the human being is an "existence qui choisit son essence".[79] Establishing a connection with existentialism, Sartre distinguishes two kinds of humanism.[80] The first ascribes value to individual human beings according to the greatest deeds of the best human beings. Arguing that human beings are not in a position to render a general judgment that the human being is magnificent, rejecting the view that the human being is an end, and suggesting that the human being is yet to be determined, Sartre calls this "cult" of humanism "absurd".[81] In its place, he proposes an alternative form of humanism, one that is rooted in a radical conception of the human being as a totally free and absolutely sovereign legislator both for the individual and for the collective: "Mais il y a un autre sens de l'humanisme, qui signifie au fond ceci: l'homme est constamment hors de lui-même, c'est en se projetant et en se perdant hors de lui qu'il fait exister l'homme et, d'autre part, c'est en poursuivant des buts transcendants qu'il peut exister; l'homme étant ce dépassement et ne saisissant les objets que par rapport à ce dépassement, est au cœur, au centre de ce dépassement. Il n'y a pas d'autre univers qu'un univers humain, l'univers de la subjectivité humaine. Cette liaison de la transcendance, comme constitutive de l'homme—non pas au sens où Dieu est transcendant, mais au sens de dépassement—, et de la subjectivité, au sens où l'homme n'est pas enfermé en lui-même mais présent toujours dans un univers humain, c'est ce que nous appelons l'humanisme existentialiste. Humanisme, parce que nous rappelons à l'homme qu'il n'y a d'autre législateur que lui-même, et que c'est dans le délaissement qu'il décidera de lui-même; et parce que nous montrons que ça n'est

[76] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 42. Cf. pp. 12, 231, 318, 323.

[77] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 212. Cf. pp. 117, 314.

[78] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* (composed 1945 and published 1946), ed. Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996), pp. 26, 29, 31, 39.

[79] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 59–73.

[80] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 23–25, 37–40.

[81] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 73–76.

pas en se retournant vers lui, mais toujours en cherchant hors de lui un but qui est telle libération, telle réalisation particulière, que l'homme se réalisera précisément comme humain."[82] "Humanism" in this *existentialist* sense Sartre endorses, and in this sense he also describes *existentialism* as a "humanism"[83]: "L'existentialisme est un humanisme."[84] His humanistic existentialism, as atheistic existentialism, says that "l'homme est condamné à être libre … condamné à chaque instant à inventer l'homme".[85] In support of his position, Sartre appeals not to Husserl (for he does not argue that phenomenology is a humanism) but to Heidegger, whom he characterizes as a fellow atheistic existentialist.[86] Yet Heidegger suggests, in his *Über den Humanismus*, that Sartre has not thought enough about action, as well as that he write more carefully.[87]

Rejecting Sartre's characterization,[88] and responding to Beaufret's query,[89] Heidegger shifts the focus from existentialism to humanism.[90] Questioning whether traditional humanistic thinking has understood the essence of the human being,[91] he argues that Roman, Christian, Renaissance, Marxist, and Sartrian humanism all rest on a presupposed explication of being as a whole.[92] He concludes that, since all

[82] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 76–77.

[83] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 23, 38, 74–76.

[84] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, p. 23.

[85] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 39–40.

[86] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 26, 29, 37. Sartre regards Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, on the other hand, as 'Christian existentialists'. Cf. p. 26.

[87] Martin Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1949/2010[11]), p. 5: "Wir bedenken das Wesen des Handelns noch lange nicht entschieden genug." And p. 56: "Nötig ist in der jetzigen Weltnot: … weniger Literatur, aber mehr Pflege des Buchstabens." *Über den Humanismus* is also available in *Martin Heidegger: Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, vol. 9 (*Wegmarken*) (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), pp. 313–364.

[88] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 21: "Aber der Hauptsatz des 'Existentialismus' hat mit jenem Satz in 'Sein und Zeit' nicht das geringste gemeinsam …."

[89] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 7–8: "Sie [Jean Beaufret] fragen: Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'? Diese Frage kommt aus der Absicht, das Wort 'Humanismus' festzuhalten. Ich frage mich, ob das nötig sei. Oder ist das Unheil, das alle Titel dieser Art anrichten, noch nicht offenkundig genug? Man mißtraut zwar schon lange den '-ismen'. Aber der Markt des öffentlichen Meinens verlangt stets neue. Man ist immer wieder bereit, diesen Bedarf zu decken."

[90] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 13, 20–21, 26, 32, 42–44. In the *Gesamtausgabe*, the title word "Humanismus" is in quotes. On *Existentialismus* or *Existenzialismus* cf. pp. 13, 20–21, 26, 32.

[91] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 11: "So bleibt doch die Humanitas das Anliegen eines solchen Denkens; denn das ist Humanismus: Sinnen und Sorgen, daß der Mensch menschlich sei und nicht un-menschlich, 'inhuman', das heißt außerhalb seines Wesens. Doch worin besteht die Menschlichkeit des Menschen? Sie ruht in seinem Wesen."

[92] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 13 (cf. pp. 11–13): "So verschieden diese Arten des Humanismus nach Ziel und Grund, nach der Art und den Mitteln der jeweiligen Verwirklichung, nach der Form seiner Lehre sein mögen, sie kommen doch darin überein, daß die humanitas des homo humanus aus dem Hinblick auf eine schon feststehende Auslegung der Natur, der Geschichte, der Welt, des Weltgrundes, das heißt des Seienden im Ganzen bestimmt wird."

humanism is metaphysical and all metaphysics is humanistic, humanism, like metaphysics, fails to ask about the relation between the human being and Being.[93] Against humanism, which he thinks not wrong but wrong-headed, Heidegger suggests that the essence of the human being be thought of as "Ek-sistenz", that is, as "the manner in which the human being is, in its own essence, to Being" and to "the truth of Being".[94] He says that, since humanism thinks metaphysically, this kind of thinking is not humanism.[95] Yet Heidegger's critique of humanism is explicitly directed against Husserl too, since Heidegger says that Husserl, as well as Sartre, does "not recognize the essentiality of the historical in Being".[96] He claims that his own "humanism in the extreme sense" thinks of the human being in its *Ek-sistenz*, which includes its proximity to Being and to the historicity of truth.[97] For Heidegger the *Ek-sistenz* of the human being is not reducible to the existence of the thinking

[93] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 13: "Jeder Humanismus gründet entweder in einer Metaphysik oder er macht sich selbst zum Grund einer solchen. Jede Bestimmung des Wesens des Menschen, die schon die Auslegung des Seienden ohne die Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seins voraussetzt, sei es mit Wissen, sei es ohne Wissen, ist metaphysisch. Darum zeigt sich, und zwar im Hinblick auf die Art, wie das Wesen des Menschen bestimmt wird, das Eigentümliche aller Metaphysik darin, daß sie 'humanistisch' ist. Demgemäß bleibt jeder Humanismus metaphysisch. Der Humanismus fragt bei der Bestimmung der Menschlichkeit des Menschen nicht nur nicht nach dem Bezug des Seins zum Menschenwesen. Der Humanismus verhindert sogar diese Frage, da er sie auf Grund seiner Herkunft aus der Metaphysik weder kennt noch versteht."

[94] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 21–22: "… die Ek-sistenz des Menschen ist seine Substanz. Deshalb kehrt in *Sein und Zeit* öfters der Satz wieder: 'Die "Substanz" des Menschen ist die Existenz' …. … der Satz 'die "Substanz" des Menschen ist die Ek-sistenz' [sagt] nichts anderes als: die Weise, wie der Mensch in seinem eigenen Wesen zum Sein anwest, ist das ekstatische Innestehen in der Wahrheit des Seins. Durch diese Wesensbestimmung des Menschen werden die humanistischen Auslegungen des Menschen als animal rationale, als 'Person', als geistig-seelisch-leibliches Wesen nicht für falsch erklärt und nicht verworfen. Vielmehr ist der einzige Gedanke der, daß die höchsten humanistischen Bestimmungen des Wesens des Menschen die eigentliche Würde des Menschen noch nicht erfahren. Insofern ist das Denken in *Sein und Zeit* gegen den Humanismus. Aber dieser Gegensatz bedeutet nicht, daß sich solches Denken auf die Gegenseite des Humanen schlüge und das Inhumane befürworte, die Unmenschlichkeit verteidige und die Würde des Menschen herabsetze. Gegen den Humanismus wird gedacht, weil er die Humanitas des Menschen nicht hoch genug ansetzt."

[95] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 26: "Ob dieses Denken, gesetzt daß an einem Titel überhaupt etwas liegt, sich noch als Humanismus bezeichnen läßt? Gewiß nicht, insofern der Humanismus metaphysisch denkt."

[96] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 32. "Weil aber … Husserl … die Wesentlichkeit des Geschichtlichen im Sein [nicht erkennt] …." This is the only mention of Husserl in the work. It is hard to overlook Heidegger's remarkable philosophical opportunism, which lies in the fact that he attacks essences vis-à-vis Husserl but defends them vis-à-vis Sartre.

[97] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 34–35: "Denkt es [such thinking] diese Humanitas nicht in einer so entscheidenden Bedeutung, wie sie keine Metaphysik gedacht hat und je denken kann? Ist das nicht 'Humanismus' im äußersten Sinn? Gewiß. Es ist der Humanismus, der die Menschheit des Menschen aus der Nähe zum Sein denkt. Aber es ist zugleich der Humanismus, bei dem nicht der Mensch, sondern das geschichtliche Wesen des Menschen in seiner Herkunft aus der Wahrheit des Seins auf dem Spiel steht. Aber steht und fällt in diesem Spiel dann nicht zugleich die Ek-sistenz des Menschen? So ist es."

ego, but consists rather of "care for Being".[98] According to his critique, "humanism" has lost its sense,[99] and this is due to a metaphysics that has forgotten Being and ignored historicity.[100] On Heidegger's new, "strange" sense of "humanism", "the essence of the human being rests in its Ek-sistenz", but how this essence is committed ("geschicklich wird"), is determined by Being, so that it does not depend on the human being.[101] The question is whether it is better to call this "humanism" or to speak "against humanism".[102] The danger, Heidegger realizes, is that one be thought to speak for "barbaric brutality" and "inhumanity",[103] but the danger, he thinks, is

[98] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 35: "Aber die Existenz ist hier nicht die Wirklichkeit des ego cogito. Sie ist auch nicht nur die Wirklichkeit der mit- und für-einander wirkenden und so zu sich selbst kommenden Subjekte. 'Ek-sistenz' ist im fundamentalen Unterschied zu aller existentia und 'existence' das ek-statische Wohnen in der Nähe des Seins. Sie ist die Wächterschaft, das heißt die Sorge für das Sein."

[99] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 36–37: "Sie fragen: Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'? 'Auf welche Weise läßt sich dem Wort Humanismus ein Sinn zurückgeben?' Ihre Frage setzt nicht nur voraus, daß Sie das Wort 'Humanismus' festhalten wollen, sondern sie enthält auch das Zugeständnis, daß dieses Wort seinen Sinn verloren hat."

[100] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 37: "Es hat ihn verloren durch die Einsicht, daß das Wesen des Humanismus metaphysisch ist und das heißt jetzt, daß die Metaphysik die Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seins nicht nur nicht stellt, sondern verbaut, insofern die Metaphysik in der Seinsvergessenheit verharrt. Allein eben das Denken, das zu dieser Einsicht in das fragwürdige Wesen des Humanismus führt, hat uns zugleich dahin gebracht, das Wesen des Menschen anfänglicher zu denken. Im Hinblick auf diese wesentlichere Humanitas des homo humanus ergibt sich die Möglichkeit, dem Wort Humanismus einen geschichtlichen Sinn zurückzugeben, der älter ist als sein historisch gerechnet ältester."

[101] Ibid.: "Das 'humanum' deutet im Wort auf die humanitas, das Wesen des Menschen. Der '-ismus' deutet darauf, daß das Wesen des Menschen als wesentlich genommen sein möchte. Diesen Sinn hat das Wort 'Humanismus' als Wort. Ihm einen Sinn zurückgeben, kann nur heißen: den Sinn des Wortes wiederbestimmen. Das verlangt einmal, das Wesen des Menschen anfänglicher zu erfahren; zum anderen aber zu zeigen, inwiefern dieses Wesen in seiner Weise geschicklich wird. Das Wesen des Menschen beruht in der Ek-sistenz. Auf diese kommt es wesentlich, das heißt vom Sein selbst her, an, insofern das Sein den Menschen als den ek-sistierenden zur Wächterschaft für die Wahrheit des Seins in diese selbst ereignet. 'Humanismus' bedeutet jetzt, falls wir uns entschließen, das Wort festzuhalten: das Wesen des Menschen ist für die Wahrheit des Seins wesentlich, so zwar, daß es demzufolge gerade nicht auf den Menschen, lediglich als solchen, ankommt. Wir denken so einen 'Humanismus' seltsamer Art."

[102] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 37–38: "Soll man diesen 'Humanismus', der gegen allen bisherigen Humanismus spricht, aber gleichwohl sich ganz und gar nicht zum Fürsprecher des Inhumanen macht, noch 'Humanismus' nennen? Und das nur, um vielleicht durch die Teilnahme am Gebrauch des Titels in den herrschenden Strömungen, die im metaphysischen Subjektivismus ersticken und in der Seinsvergessenheit versunken sind, mitzuschwimmen? Oder soll das Denken versuchen, durch einen offenen Widerstand gegen den 'Humanismus' einen Anstoß zu wagen, der veranlassen könnte, erst einmal über die Humanitas des homo humanus und ihre Begründung stutzig zu werden?"

[103] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 38: "Weil gegen den 'Humanismus' gesprochen wird, befürchtet man eine Verteidigung des In-humanen und eine Verherrlichung der barbarischen Brutalität. Denn was ist 'logischer' als dies, daß dem, der den Humanismus verneint, nur die Bejahung der Unmenschlichkeit bleibt?"

not dispositive.[104] So Heidegger replaces "humanism in the metaphysical sense" with "humanity in the service of the truth of Being".[105] Thus his "humanism" is a relativism,[106] and he accepts this.[107] Yet the unsolved mystery is: If the human being is not "the lord of Being" but "the shepherd of Being",[108] then who will judge what "the truth of Being" is? How? If "language is the house of Being",[109] then can philosophy not provide a viable alternative to the false dilemma of science versus poetry?[110] Why not? Yet Heidegger calls for an end to philosophy then when it is needed most.[111] As Husserl might have observed: All this is profound, but is it tenable? Skepticism notwithstanding, Heidegger's casual association of "human*ism*" with Fasc*ism*, Commun*ism*, and National Social*ism*—even at the verbal and conceptual level—is a bold expression of cynicism that should give thoughtful readers long pause.[112]

Toward the end of *Über den Humanismus*, Heidegger remarks: "Bald nachdem 'S. u. Z.' erschienen war, frug mich ein junger Freund: 'Wann schreiben Sie eine Ethik?'"[113] Indeed, the paradox of *Sein und Zeit* is that it is all about existence and not at all about ethics. Yet, as his existential analytic was an analytic without an ethics, so Heidegger's philosophy of the human being is a "humanism" without a morality, and so too his philosophy of Being emerges as an "ontology" (*sit venia*

[104] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 40: "Daß der Gegensatz zum 'Humanismus' keineswegs die Verteidigung des Inhumanen einschließt, sondern andere Ausblicke öffnet, dürfte in einigem deutlicher geworden sein."

[105] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 44: "Die Wahrheit des Seins denken, heißt zugleich: die humanitas des homo humanus denken. Es gilt die Humanitas zu diensten der Wahrheit des Seins, aber ohne den Humanismus im metaphysischen Sinne."

[106] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 41: "Alles Werten ist, auch wo es positiv wertet, eine Subjektivierung."

[107] Ibid.: "Gegen die Werte denken, heißt daher nicht, für die Wertlosigkeit und Nichtigkeit des Seienden die Trommel rühren, sondern bedeutet: gegen die Subjektivierung des Seienden zum bloßen Objekt die Lichtung der Wahrheit des Seins vor das Denken bringen."

[108] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 34 (cf. pp. 22–23): "Der Mensch ist nicht der Herr des Seienden. Der Mensch ist der Hirt des Seins."

[109] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 5 (cf. pp. 10, 25, 50–51, 53): "Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins."

[110] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 5–7, 31 ff.

[111] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 56: "Es ist an der Zeit, daß man sich dessen entwöhnt, die Philosophie zu überschätzen und sie deshalb zu überfordern. Nötig ist in der jetzigen Weltnot: weniger Philosophie, aber mehr Achtsamkeit des Denkens; weniger Literatur, aber mehr Pflege des Buchstabens."

[112] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 7–8: "Sie [Jean Beaufret] fragen: Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'? Diese Frage kommt aus der Absicht, das Wort 'Humanismus' festzuhalten. Ich frage mich, ob das nötig sei. Oder ist das Unheil, das alle Titel dieser Art anrichten, noch nicht offenkundig genug? Man mißtraut zwar schon lange den '-ismen'. Aber der Markt des öffentlichen Meinens verlangt stets neue. Man ist immer wieder bereit, diesen Bedarf zu decken." One must read this passage again for the first time. Of what other "-isms" (than "existentialism") would a reasonable person have been thinking in 1946/1947? Cf. *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 32–33, 37–41.

[113] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 45.

verbo) without an axiology.[114] Hence, despite, or, more accurately, due to, the "turn" (*Kehre*) from the human being (*Dasein*) to Being (*Sein*),[115] *Über den Humanismus* reinforces the same value-free approach to the most basic human issues as *Sein und Zeit*, and it does not, nor does it seek to, represent a satisfactory response to Sartre's existentialist humanism or humanistic existentialism,[116] which, for its part, suggested a universalist ethics that, it conceded, it could not justify.[117] Thus, if, according to Sartre, "existence precedes essence", then, according to Heidegger, *Being precedes being human*. For it is not only the lack of ethics in *Über den Humanismus* that is striking, but also the absence of reason, freedom, and virtue, or any other human-all-too-human moral instances. Evidently, Heidegger also does not accept the "human-being-as-rational-animal-humanism" that Husserl advocates.[118] In any case, he resisted an "existentialist" interpretation of *Sein und Zeit*, which was not intended as a *moral* appeal for authenticity—an edifying exhortation to authentic existence.[119] What motivated him in *Sein und Zeit*, as well as (a fortiori) in *Über den Humanismus*, was rather the *amoral* question about the relationship between *Dasein* and *Sein*.[120] The whole point of Heidegger's hermeneutics of finitude is that the fact

[114] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, p. 41: "Das Denken in Werten ist hier und sonst die größte Blasphemie, die sich dem Sein gegenüber denken läßt." Cf. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft* (1886), § 108: "Es gibt gar keine moralischen Phänomene, sondern nur eine moralische Ausdeutung von Phänomenen …"

[115] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 19–20.

[116] Gadamer, "Existenzphilosophie und Existentialismus", p. 184: "Der 'Brief über den Humanismus' war eine förmliche Absage an den Irrationalismus des Existenzpathos, das ehedem die dramatische Wirkung seines Denkens begleitet hatte, aber nie sein eigentliches Anliegen war. Was er in dem französischen Existentialismus am Werke sah, war ihm fern. Der 'Brief über den Humanismus' redet da eine deutliche Sprache. Es ist das Thema der Ethik, das Heideggers französische Leser in ihm vermißten und das wohl auch Jaspers in ihm vermißte. Heidegger wehrte sich gegen diese Zumutung und Forderung. Nicht, weil er die Frage der Ethik oder die gesellschaftliche Verfaßtheit des Daseins unterschätzte, sondern weil der Auftrag des Denkens ihn zu radikaleren Fragen nötigte. 'Wir bedenken das Wesen des Handelns noch lange nicht entschieden genug', lautet der erste Satz des Briefes, und es wird deutlich, was dieser Satz im Zeitalter des Sozialutilitarismus und vollends 'jenseits von gut und böse' meint: die Aufgabe des Denkers kann nicht darin bestehen, hinter sich auflösenden Bindungen und sich schwächenden Solidaritäten mit dem mahnend erhobenen Finger des Dogmatikers hinterher zu laufen. Seine Aufgabe war vielmehr, auf das hinzudenken, was diesen von der industriellen Revolution gezeitigten Auflösungen zugrunde liegt und das Denken, das auf das Kalkulieren und Machen heruntergekommen ist, zu sich zurückzurufen."

[117] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, pp. 31–32, esp. p. 32: "Choisir d'être ceci ou cela, c'est affirmer en même temps la valeur de ce que nous choisissons, car nous ne pouvons jamais choisir le mal; ce que nous choisissons, c'est toujours le bien, et rien ne peut être bon pour nous sans l'être pour tous."

[118] Cf. Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 14, 18, 22, 25, 34, and Husserl, *Krisis*, Hua. VI, p. 13.

[119] Gadamer, "Existenzphilosophie und Existentialismus", p. 182: "Die Intention dieses Lehrers der Philosophie war keineswegs die des moralischen Appells an die Eigentlichkeit der Existenz."

[120] Ibid.: "Die Frage, die ihn bewegte und in die er das ganze bedrängte Selbstgefühl jener Jahre einbrachte, war die älteste und erste der Metaphysik, die Frage nach dem Sein, die Frage, wie sich dieses endliche, hinfällige, seines Todes gewisse menschliche Dasein trotz seiner eigenen

that "Being-There" (*Dasein*) gets "to be" (*Sein*) for a limited time only does not diminish but rather enhances the meaningfulness of "being in the world" (*In-der-Welt-sein*), "being with others" (*Mitsein*, *Mitdasein*), and "being for itself" (*Selbstsein*), but only if the response of finite being to its being finite is "its own" (*eigentlich*).[121] Yet it is perfectly consistent with the materially indeterminate approach of *Sein und Zeit* that Adolf Hitler (born in 1889), who led Germany to wage war for *Lebensraum* and to exterminate Jews, Slavs, "Asiatics", and many others, could have been one of the "authentic" existences, while Martin Heidegger (also born in 1889), who joined the National Socialist German Workers Party on May, 1, 1933, as member #3125894, might have been one of "them" (*das Man*).[122]

Zeitlichkeit in seinem Sein verstehen könne und zwar als ein Sein, das nicht eine Privation, ein Mangel ist, eine bloße flüchtige Pilgerschaft des Erdenbürgers durch dieses Leben zu einer Teilhabe an der Ewigkeit des Göttlichen hin, sondern das als die Auszeichnung seines Menschseins erfahren wird."

[121] Although one may accept the common translation, to speak precisely, one must say that the English "(one's) ownness" expresses the German *Eigentlichkeit* more accurately than does the English "authenticity", since the former does not have the moral, ethical, or existential—that is, edifying—connotations suggested by the latter. The problem of "ownness" versus "otherness" arises due to the fact that the world of *Dasein* is always one that is already shared *mit Anderen*. Cf. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 118: "Auf dem Grunde dieses *mithaften* In-der-Welt-seins ist die Welt je schon immer die, die ich mit den Anderen teile. Die Welt des Daseins ist *Mitwelt*. Das In-Sein ist *Mitsein* mit Anderen. Das innerweltliche Ansichsein dieser ist *Mitdasein*." Now with respect to the *Dasein*-with of Others and everyday Being-with, Heidegger says (*Sein und Zeit*, p. 126): "Dieses Miteinandersein löst das eigene Dasein völlig in die Seinsart 'der Anderen' auf, so zwar, daß die Anderen in ihrer Unterschiedlichkeit und Ausdrücklichkeit noch mehr verschwinden. In dieser Unauffälligkeit und Nichtfeststellbarkeit entfaltet das Man seine eigentliche Diktatur." Yet, in the transition from the first to the second section (*Abschnitt*) of *Sein und Zeit* (the two parts were composed approximately one year apart), there is a subtle but significant shift in Heidegger's thinking about the relationship between the ownness of *Dasein* and the otherness of *Mitdasein*. For, in the first section, Heidegger emphasizes the potential for conflict between *Dasein's* striving for authenticity and the inauthenticity emanating from *Mitdasein*, whereas, in the second section, he suggests the possibility of a factically necessary connection between the achievement of one's own authenticity and the participation of others in their own. Through "solicitous being with others" (*das fürsorgende Mitsein mit den Anderen*), *Dasein* fully emerges as *Mitdasein*, *Mitdasein*, as "community" (*Gemeinschaft*), and community, as "people" (*Volk*), whereby all are supposed to share in the same "happening" (*Geschehen*) of "generation" (*Generation*), "heritage" (*Erbe*), and "destiny" (*Geschick*)—individual "fates" (*Schicksale*) notwithstanding. Cf. *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 297–298, 383–385, etc.

[122] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §§ 25–27. It remains a mystery how a thinker capable of this level of reflection on "the herd" (Nietzsche) could have joined the ultimate herd, that is, the Nazi Party. On "Heidegger and National Socialism" a very good place to start is with Dieter Thomä, "Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus: In der Dunkelkammer der Seinsgeschichte", in *Heidegger Handbuch*, ed. Thomä (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2003), pp. 141–162. As for Emmanuel Faye's *Heidegger: L'Introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel S.A., 2005): On the one hand, few suspected that Heidegger's commitment to National Socialism was as uncompromising as Faye has shown, but, on the other hand, one of the most effective ways to weaken a strong case is to overstate it. On balance, one must agree with Habermas' assessment: "Die Aufklärung über das politische Verhalten Martin Heideggers kann und darf nicht den Zwecken einer pauschalen Herabsetzung dienen." Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Heidegger—Werk und Weltanschauung", in: Victor Farías, *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus*, tr. Klaus Laermann

Subsequently, alarmed at what had appeared to be a close relationship between the enthusiasm for *Existenzphilosophie* and the resentment of National Socialism in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Jaspers, Heidegger's *Kampfgefährter* turned *Kritiker*, judiciously reversed priorities with his *Vernunft und Existenz* (1935), an unambiguous appeal to reason against "the pathos of existence".[123] In his prudence and temperance, he was not followed by Heidegger,[124] who had radicalized his decisionist approach with his "Rektoratsrede" (1933), for example, and provided Husserl with a case study in "irrationalism".[125] Although Husserl would then suffer a personal, professional, and existential crisis when, during the printing of the "Prague Lectures", his *Lehrbefugnis* was revoked (1936), this did not prevent him from continuing his work on *Die Krisis*.[126] In the event, it was Husserl,[127] but not Heidegger,[128]

(Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1989), pp. 11–12. Cf. also ibid., p. 14. The most judicious treatment of the relationship between philosophy and National Socialism may well be that of Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993). To use Heidegger's Nazism to dismiss his philosophy is to miss the point, which is to understand what it is about his philosophy that made him open to National Socialism. Cf. *Hannah Arendt–Karl Jaspers: Briefwechsel 1926–1969*, ed. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner (Munich: Piper, 1985), or *Hannah Arendt–Karl Jaspers: Correspondence 1926–1969*, tr. Robert and Rita Kimber (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), Letter 393 (Jaspers–Arendt, March 9, 1966): "Can the basis for Heidegger's political judgments and actions be found in his philosophy?"

[123] Gadamer, "Existenzphilosophie und Existentialismus", pp. 175–176.

[124] In Husserlian terms: It is a fact that Heidegger had a political *Weltanschauung*—the question is whether he also had a political *philosophy*. Cf. first Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1951), *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), and, above all, *The Life of the Mind, Volume Two: Willing* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978), pp. 172–194 ("Heidegger's Will-not-to-will"). Cf. furthermore Karl Löwith, *Heidegger: Denker in dürftiger Zeit* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1953), and "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism", in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 167–185 (on p. 167 the editor of the volume, who is also the translator of the piece, notes that the French original first appeared in 1946–1947). Cf. finally Otto Pöggeler, "Heideggers politisches Selbstverständnis", in *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*, ed. Annamarie Gethmann-Siefert and Otto Pöggeler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 17–63.

[125] Hua. VI, pp. 1, 14.

[126] Hua. XXIX, p. xxvii. The revocation was effective "mit Ende des Kalenderjahrs 1935". For a useful account of Husserl's critical personal and professional situation from 1930 to 1935 see Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), pp. 39–42, esp. p. 40.

[127] Hua. VI, p. 15: "Wir sind dessen auch schon dem allgemeinsten nach inne geworden, daß menschliches Philosophieren und seine Ergebnisse im gesamtmenschlichen Dasein nichts weniger als die bloße Bedeutung privater oder sonstwie beschränkter Kulturzwecke hat. Wir sind also—wie könnten wir davon absehen—in *unserem* Philosophieren *Funktionäre der Menschheit*. Die ganz persönliche Verantwortung für unser eigenes wahrhaftes Sein als Philosophen in unserer innerpersönlichen Berufenheit trägt zugleich in sich die Verantwortung für das wahre Sein der Menschheit, das nur als Sein auf ein *Telos* hin ist und, *wenn überhaupt*, zur Verwirklichung nur kommen kann durch Philosophie—durch *uns*, *wenn* wir im Ernste Philosophen sind."

[128] It is worth asking: Does the word "Verantwortung" (*responsibility*) occur in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*? Tellingly, it does not. Equally tellingly, the word "Verantwortlichkeit" (*answerability*)

who had the courage to issue a timely normative call to philosophical responsibility.[129]

The author of *The Phenomenological Movement* accurately observes that "there is no reason to deny the possibility of an existential philosophy within the framework of Husserl's phenomenology",[130] and he appropriately proposes that "there are even indications that Husserl himself conceived of his transcendental phenomenology as a distinctive existential possibility, and that in particular the transcendental reduction included for him a liberating conversion of human existence".[131] Yet it is far-fetched to suggest that Husserl and Kierkegaard share a common conception of truth: "… if for the existentialist, as Kierkegaard puts it, 'subjectivity is the truth', a phenomenology aimed at finding the source of all consciousness in subjectivity is … a congenial approach."[132] For Kierkegaard was reacting against Hegel's absolutist-objectivist moralizing in a setting in which there was no acute danger that particular individuals would commit grave mass crimes against their fellow human beings.[133] The philosophy of Nietzsche created a different situation, one in which, although God is dead, not everything is permitted, and all moral responsibility falls on human beings.[134] Now Husserl poses existential questions not as an unconventional existentialist suggesting different strokes for different folks but as a traditional essentialist offering universally valid answers to perennially perplexing questions.[135] Thus his humanism posits an unbreakable connection between the systematic search for the humanity of human beings and the eidetic quest for the universal in the

occurs only once (p. 127): "Weil das Man jedoch alles Urteilen und Entscheiden vorgibt, nimmt es dem jeweiligen Dasein die Verantwortlichkeit ab." In the "beyond good and evil" spirit of the work, Heidegger here describes how it is—he does not prescribe how it should be.

[129] Cf. Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1979). Cf. also Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001 [New Edition]), p. 247: "But as to Heidegger's being, it is an occurrence of unveiling, a fate-laden happening upon thought: so was the Führer and the call of German destiny under him: an unveiling of something indeed, a call of being all right, fate-laden in every sense: neither then nor now did Heidegger's thought provide a norm by which to decide how to answer such calls—linguistically or otherwise: no norm except depth, resolution, and the sheer force of being that issues the call."

[130] Herbert Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism", *The Journal of Philosophy* 57 (1960), p. 67.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism", p. 70. The reference is to the section on "Truth is subjectivity" in Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* to the *Philosophical Fragments* (1846).

[133] While he took a special interest in the story of Abraham and Isaac, Kierkegaard seems not to have fully realized that there are numerous narratives of divinely commanded mass killings in the Bible.

[134] Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (1883–1885).

[135] This is nowhere more evident than in his ethical writings. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen über Ethik und Wertlehre 1908–1914*, ed. Ullrich Melle (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988) (Husserliana XXVIII), and *Einleitung in die Ethik: Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1920 und 1924*, ed. Henning Peucker (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004) (Husserliana XXXVII).

human being.[136] Existentialism champions individuals in marginal situations and challenges rules from universal laws, while phenomenology is interested in particulars only as steps to universals as goals. Yet Sartre's existentialist humanism is much more compatible with Husserl's phenomenological existentialism and humanism than is Heidegger's non-existentialist anti-humanism (which Foucault continues). For Sartre's account of moral deliberation posits that individual actions entail universal decisions (disallowing any teleological or theological suspension of the ethical in Kierkegaard's sense),[137] and it states that persons are absolutely responsible for their passions.[138] Heidegger's approach, on the other hand, seems to involve understanding how Being commits—deterministically?—Being-There to the destiny of serving as Being's There among beings.[139] Yet the philosophical attempts to bestow an original meaning on the traditional expression "humanism" did not end with Sartre or with Heidegger, for landmark essays by Jaspers,[140] Gadamer,[141] Marcel,[142] Marcuse,[143] Levinas,[144] Sloterdijk,[145] and others followed.[146] Thus

[136] This is evident in the Kaizo Articles, Hua. XXVII, pp. 3–94.

[137] No doubt in part due to its strongly Kantian character, Sartre later regretted having published *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*. Cf. Thomas Flynn, "Jean-Paul Sartre", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (on-line 2004), and *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 47. The most sustained attempt at an existentialist ethics may be: Simone de Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947).

[138] Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, p. 40: "L'existentialiste ne croit pas à la puissance de la passion. Il ne pensera jamais qu'une belle passion est un torrent dévastateur qui conduit fatalement l'homme à certains actes, et qui, par conséquent, est une excuse. Il pense que l'homme est responsable de sa passion."

[139] Heidegger, *Über den Humanismus*, pp. 22–23: "Der Mensch ist vielmehr vom Sein selbst in die Wahrheit des Seins 'geworfen', daß er, dergestalt ek-sistierend, die Wahrheit des Seins hüte, damit im Lichte des Seins das Seiende als das Seiende, das es ist, erscheine. Ob es und wie es erscheint, ob und wie der Gott und die Götter, die Geschichte und die Natur in die Lichtung des Seins hereinkommen, an- und abwesen, entscheidet nicht der Mensch. Die Ankunft des Seienden beruht im Geschick des Seins. Für den Menschen aber bleibt die Frage, ob er in das Schickliche seines Wesens findet, das diesem Geschick entspricht; denn diesem gemäß hat er als der Ek-sistierende die Wahrheit des Seins zu hüten. Der Mensch ist der Hirt des Seins. Darauf allein denkt *Sein und Zeit* hinaus, wenn die ekstatische Existenz als 'die Sorge' erfahren ist (vgl. § 44a, S. 226 ff.)." Cf. ibid., p. 55: "Indem das Denken, geschichtlich andenkend, auf das Geschick des Seins achtet, hat es sich schon an das Schickliche gebunden, das dem Geschick gemäß ist."

[140] "Über Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten eines neuen Humanismus", *Die Wandlung* 4 (1949), pp. 710–734 (reprinted in Reclam's Universal-Bibliothek No. 8674 [Stuttgart 1951/1978]).

[141] *Wahrheit und Methode*, I, I, 1, b (Guiding Humanistic Concepts).

[142] *The Existential Background of Human Dignity: The William James Lectures at Harvard University 1961–1962* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[143] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

[144] Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Montpellier: LGF, 1972).

[145] Peter Sloterdijk, *Regeln für den Menschenpark: Ein Antwortschreiben zu Heideggers "Brief über den Humanismus"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999).

[146] On the French attempts see Roger Shattuck, "Humanisms", in *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York: Columbia University

Heidegger's critique of Husserl's humanism as ahistorical also could not and cannot escape its own historicity.[147] In the end, Sartre embraced existentialism and humanism, Heidegger embraced neither and eschewed both, and Husserl embraced humanism but eschewed "existence philosophy" as he understood it.

Conclusion: The Crisis of Transcendental Phenomenology

The word "Lebenswelt", seems, of course, to capture what was long missing and long sought in the thought of Husserl.[148] The concept *Lebenswelt* is, however, hardly the answer to the question about the meaningfulness of the European sciences to the radical life-crisis of European humanity. The life-world also does not appear to represent an adequate attempt on Husserl's part to respond to Heidegger's original account of the *Weltlichkeit der Existenz*. First, the life-world is an ambiguous concept, and an intensive scholarly preoccupation with it has not been able to determine definitively whether its more important aspect is that of the world as it is prior to any and all saturation with scientific syntax, or that of the world as it is available for practical, pragmatic action—it is "pre-given" in any case.[149] Furthermore, it is evident from Part Two and Part Three (A) of *The Crisis* that the clarification of the life-world by transcendental phenomenology should serve theoretical science, positive or philosophical, more than practical life. In fact, it is not clear whether and to what extent the life-world or its transcendental-phenomenological clarification can provide answers to the "questions about the meaning or meaninglessness of this entire human existence". Finally, it is not even clear whether and to what extent a transcendental-phenomenological clarification of the life-world can serve as the solution to the problem of "the meaningfulness of science for life". Hence one is well advised to cultivate a healthy skepticism with respect to Husserl's proposed solution to these problems.[150]

Press, 2006), pp. 260–262, and Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism That Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought, 1926–1954* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[147] Given that their Davos encounter (March, 1929), with their *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (March 26), centered around the question "Was ist der Mensch?", Heidegger's *Über den Humanismus* also cannot be understood without due diligence to Ernst Cassirer's *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944). The transcript of the Davos Disputation, by Otto Bollnow and Joachim Ritter, is reprinted in Heidegger's *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973 [Fourth, Expanded Edition]), pp. 246–268. Cf. Peter Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[148] Gadamer, "Die phänomenologische Bewegung", p. 123: "So faßt sich auch in dem Wort 'Lebenswelt' zusammen, was in Wahrheit schon seit langem und insbesondere im Denken Husserls gesucht und gefragt worden war."

[149] Edmund Husserl, *Die Lebenswelt: Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution, Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916–1937)*, ed. Rochus Sowa (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008) (Husserliana XXXIX).

[150] Gadamer, "Die Wissenschaft von der Lebenswelt" (1972), in *Gesammelte Werke 3*, p. 157: "Wirklich? Ist das [die transzendentale Phänomenologie] die Lösung für die Probleme des modernen Lebens und der modernen Zivilisation?"

At this point, one may recall that in the crisis-thematic texts Husserl mentions not one crisis but many crises, all of which seem to be inextricably linked. In the "Prague Treatise", for example, he writes that "there is a … Europe alive in these crises", though it is unclear which "crises" he means.[151] In the "Vienna Lecture", he speaks of "the European crisis", the "crisis of European humanity", and "the crisis of European existence".[152] In the "Prague Lectures", he speaks of "the crisis of European science", "the crisis of science", "a crisis of the sciences", "a universal European crisis", "a history of crises" ("the history of psychology"), "a crisis of psychology", "the crisis of the sciences", "the crisis of modern culture", "a crisis of philosophy", and "a crisis of self-comprehension on the part of the human being".[153] In *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, he refers to the most crises of all, for example, "the crisis of the sciences", "the radical life-crisis of European humanity", "a crisis of the sciences", "the crisis of the European sciences", "a crisis of our sciences as such", "the crisis of a science", "a crisis of the sciences in general", "the crisis of science", "the crisis of our culture", "a crisis peculiar to psychology", "the crisis of philosophy", "the crisis of all modern sciences", and "a crisis of European humanity itself with respect to the total meaningfulness of its cultural life, its total *existence*".[154] So, although he may not have committed a technical violation of the Ockhamist principle that crises are not to be multiplied beyond necessity, it seems that it would not be easy to find another crisis, one that Husserl has not treated.

Yet it is not very hard to find that other crisis. In fact, the real crisis in *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* is the one that Husserl does not mention. Perhaps it is also one of which he could not even have conceived. For the genuine crisis is the crisis of transcendental phenomenology itself. This crisis lies in the fact that, as a philosopher of his present, Husserl misconstrues "the painful *existential contradiction*"[155] of philosophy. For the contradiction is not between the facility of the conception of that philosophy and the difficulty of its realization. That is, it is not a conflict between the theory of the idea and the practice of the thing. It is, rather, a conflict between the requirement that philosophy be a rigorous science of the essences of phenomena and the demand that philosophy provide answers to the questions of human existence. Since human existence is already and always the existence of particular individual human beings (Heidegger is right about some things, for example, *Jemeinigkeit*),[156] such answers would have to be concrete and practical (Jaspers was the

[151] Hua. XXVII, p. 208.

[152] Hua. VI, pp. 314–315, 318, 342, 347.

[153] Hua. XXIX, pp. 103, 108, 118, 122, 137–138.

[154] Hua. VI, pp. 1, 3, 10, 14.

[155] Hua. VI, p. 15.

[156] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 41–43, 187–188, 190–191, 221, 240, 263, 278, 280, 297–298. Cf. Heidegger's existential account of truth as "disclosedness" (*Erschlossenheit*) in *Sein und Zeit*, § 44, which is in part a critical reaction to Husserl's scientific concept of truth as "validity" (*Geltung* or *Gültigkeit*).

first to propose an existential-existentialist application of phenomenology).[157] Yet for Husserl there can be no science of the particular individual because all science is of the universal essence.[158] One finds it hard to imagine, of course, how there can be specific answers to life's questions. One could have expected, however, practical approaches from phenomenological theory to existential concerns. In principle, nothing precludes such an application of the phenomenological method to existential topics.[159] Thus "the painful *existential contradiction*" in Husserl's philosophizing is between his demand

[157] Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie: Ein Leitfaden für Studierende, Ärzte und Psychologen* (Berlin 1913 [now available through the University of Michigan Library]). Cf. Jaspers, Letter to Arendt, September 18, 1946: "Die Philosophie muß konkret und praktisch werden, ohne ihren Ursprung einen Augenblick zu vergessen."

[158] It is clear from the First Section of *Ideen I* (§§ 1–26: "Wesen und Wesenserkenntnis") that, as Husserl practices it, phenomenology involves a strong preference for essences over facts. The same holds for *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*. See my paper "From the Essence of Evidence to the Evidence of Essence: A Critical Analysis of the Methodical Reduction of Evidence to Adequate Self-givenness in Husserl's *Die Idee der Phänomenologie*", in *Proceedings of the 42nd Annual Meeting of the International Husserl Circle* (unpublished), ed. Patrick Burke and Lawrence Long (Florence: Gonzaga University Press, 2011), pp. 71–92. I realize that Husserl claims that "every lived experience … has an essence of its own which can be seized upon intuitively, a 'content' which allows of being considered by itself in its ownness", and that he refers to "individual essences" (*individuelle Wesen*). Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie*, ed. Karl Schuhmann (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976) (Husserliana III/1–2), pp. 70, 487. Yet the question about the precision of Husserlian essentialism, with its distinction between empirical essences and pure essences, and with its supposition that eidetic analysis yields not exact essences but morphological essences, is the topic of another paper. That paper would take into account Edmund Husserl, *Zur Lehre vom Wesen und zur Methode der eidetischen Variation: Texte aus dem Nachlass (1891–1935)*, ed. Dirk Fonfara (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011) (Husserliana XLI), and Rochus Sowa, "Eidetik", "Eidetische Variation", "Eidos", "Ideation", "Kategoriale Anschauung", "Sachverhalt", "Typus", and "Wesensgesetz", in *Husserl-Lexikon*, ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010), pp. 63–65, 65–69, 69–75, 144–147, 164–168, 260–262, 287–291, and 313–317, respectively.

[159] This interpretation is consistent with that of Spiegelberg, "Husserl's Phenomenology and Existentialism", p. 68: "It is also argued that phenomenology 'brackets' all questions of existence, hence that it is essentially a philosophy of detachment in contrast to existentialism's philosophy of commitment (*engagement*). But it is a misunderstanding of the phenomenological reduction to think that bracketing our beliefs in the existence of the phenomena eliminates the phenomenon of human existence. This misunderstanding is based on an unfortunate equivocation in the meaning of the word 'existence'. For the existence-character in the phenomena which we bracket is something quite different from *Existenz* or *Dasein* as the structure of being-in-the-world, which is found only in human beings. As far as the latter is concerned, bracketing may well affect the belief in the reality of the world and even of the human being who is in such a world. But even this does not mean that being-in-the-world and its believed reality is totally ignored. It may be described qua phenomenon like any other reduced phenomenon. One may consider Husserl's treatment of this phenomenon inadequate. It may also be true that the phenomenologist's detachment implies a temporary retreat from the involvement and active participation in concrete existence. But this does not mean total neglect of the phenomena of existence. Nor must it be overlooked that the immanent residuum of consciousness which survives the ordeal of the phenomenological reduction has the character of absolute existence—an existence that can certainly rival in poignancy the existence which the existentialists attribute to the human being incarnated in the world."

that philosophy focus on the specifically human questions and the requirement that it bracket them out in so far as they demand individual answers for concrete persons. Ironically, transcendental phenomenology was supposed not only to clarify how the positive sciences had lost their meaningfulness for human life but also to explain how it itself could become meaningful to human beings.

The problem with Husserl's later, crisis-thematic texts is not that they do not pose the questions about the meaning of human existence, but that they provide essentialist answers to these existential questions. The philosophical difference between Husserl and Heidegger is that the former was an *essentialist* and the latter an "existentialist". This observation goes beyond such programmatic statements as "existence precedes essence" or "the essence of Dasein lies in its existence". It goes to the heart of Husserl's *Berührungsängste* vis-à-vis what he referred to as *Existenzphilosophie* and what emerged as *Existentialismus*. With all respect to the perfectly legitimate differences between Jasper's *Existenzphilosophie*, Heidegger's *Daseinsanalytik*, and Sartre's *existentialisme*, Husserl seems not only passively uninterested in but also actively disinterested in existentialist answers to existential questions. In his transcendental phenomenology, the ultimate meaning-maker is not the unreflectively engaged human being but a methodically disengaged consciousness: one that performs the transcendental reduction that brackets the world and all that is in it in order to carry out apriori investigations of constituting acts of consciousness and of their correlative constituted contents of consciousness at the universal level of essences. The point is that Husserl's rigorously scientific focus on consciousness and on its theoretical and epistemological concerns is not the solution to but a problem for the meaning of human life.[160] For, as Heidegger recognized, the cognitive manner of being is founded on and grounded in a *Seinsweise* that is more basic than itself.[161] For Husserl, on the other hand, "the philosophy of 'existence'" represented not a philosophy but a worldview. In this regard, Husserl's greatest concern was his intellectual integrity: "Wie werde ich ehrlicher Philosoph?"[162] To be perfectly honest, Husserl admitted that, while it may not be a "novel" (*Roman*), every interpretation of the history of philosophy is a piece of "poetry" (*Dichtung*).[163] But Husserl's own philosophical worldview was strongly

[160] Gadamer, "Martin Heidegger 75 Jahre" (1964), in *Gesammelte Werke 3*, p. 192: "Was ist das Sein des menschlichen Daseins? Gewiß nicht bloßes Bewußtsein."

[161] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 59–62 (§ 13).

[162] Gadamer, "Die Wissenschaft von der Lebenswelt", p. 152 (cf. *Gesammelte Werke 3*, pp. 158, 163): "Der tiefe Ernst seiner [Husserl's] im Grunde schlichten und arglosen Persönlichkeit ließ ihn damals und fortan [after the First World War] von einer einzigen Frage beherrscht bleiben: wie werde ich ein ehrlicher Philosoph? Ein Philosoph, das hieß für ihn: ein Selbstdenker, ein Mann, der sich für alle seine Gedanken und Überzeugungen … letzte Rechenschaft zu geben suchte und dem jede unkontrollierte und unbeweisbare Überzeugung wie ein Verlust seiner inneren Glaubwürdigkeit vor sich selber erschien."

[163] Hua. XXIX, p. 47: "Jeder Versuch, aufgrund der Verkettung literarisch dokumentierter Tatsachen eine Geistesgeschichte, eine Geschichte der Philosophie zu konstruieren, ist nicht ein 'Roman', sondern eine 'Interpretation', eine durch die Tatsächlichkeiten der Dokumentierung gebundene 'Dichtung' (sehen wir davon ab, daß auch diese Tatsächlichkeiten ihr Problematisches haben)." On

Greek, and, according to a popular conception of Greek philosophy, there is no *episteme* of *to hekaston*. Now this notion presupposes a certain Classical view of things. Yet what about the post-Classical schools of the Hellenistic period and their common conviction that, if philosophy is to be meaningful for life, then it must also be a way of life?[164] In any case, Husserl emphasized the difference between *Philosophie* and *Weltanschauung* so rigorously that he had no viable alternative other than to reject any philosophy that attempted to explain worldviews, especially those which he regarded as "irrational", in an even remotely legitimating mode.[165] In the end, it should go without saying, but it goes better with saying, that it is an essentialist misunderstanding to suggest that the existentialists are irrationalists who teach that life is absurd.[166]

One must, of course, heed Husserl's often cited observation: "In der Tat, der größte und wie ich sogar glaube, wichtigste Teil meiner Lebensarbeit steckt noch in meinen, durch ihren Umfang kaum noch zu bewältigenden Manuskripten."[167] One can, however, find virtually no specific analyses of concrete moral problems or of ethical dilemmas, for example, in Husserl's published or unpublished writings. Instead, one finds general remarks about "the specifically human questions", that is, the traditional "metaphysical questions", for example, about "God", "immortality", and "freedom".[168] In this regard, the best expression of Husserl's humanism may have been his unwillingness or inability to think the worst about his fellow human beings, for he did his best to help them to avoid irrationalism, positivism, and skepticism. As a wise young lady suffering her own chronic crises would put it a few years later: "It is a wonder that I have not abandoned all my ideals; they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of

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the next page (p. 48), Husserl applies this idea to "his" reading of Plato. One wonders how he would have applied it to his interpretation of Galileo in *Die Krisis*. Cf. Hua. VI, pp. 510–513, on what it means to say: "Jeder Philosoph entnimmt aus der Geschichte."

[164] Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1995). A fine example of applied philosophy at the present time is William Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[165] See the section on "Historizismus und Weltanschauungsphilosophie" in "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft", Hua. XXV, pp. 3–62. Cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen* (Berlin 1911 [now available through GRIN Verlag]); Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin 1919 [now available through Kessinger Publishing]); Heidegger, "Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*" (1919–1921), in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9, pp. 1–44.

[166] À la William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1958).

[167] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität, Texte aus dem Nachlass, Dritter Teil: 1929–1935*, ed. Iso Kern (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973) (Husserliana XV), p. lxvi (Letter to Adolf Grimme, March 5, 1931).

[168] Thus Husserl's theistic approach to existentialist questions is more closely related to that of Marcel than to that of Heidegger or to that of Sartre. Cf., e.g., Gabriel Marcel, *Être et avoir* (Paris: Aubier/Éditions Montaigne, 1935).

everything, that human beings are truly good at heart."[169] On the other hand, the challenge of Husserlian humanism, with its teleological demand for human beings to pursue, if not to achieve, "infinite tasks"[170] in the direction of the development of an "entelechy" of rationality for which there could be no apriori demonstration, may have proven too much for too many.[171] That is a shame, but it is no reflection on Husserl or on his phenomenology. He believes that essence precedes existence, but he thinks that entelechy leads existence to essence.

In closing, one should recall that Husserl ends the "Vienna Lecture" with the prophetic remark that "Europe's greatest danger is weariness".[172] Yet a grave danger to his philosophy was also his own naïve, or, perhaps more accurately, innocent, preference for a traditional "rationality" that went hand in hand with an imagination inadequate to his ominous times in crucial respects.[173] After all, with his historical horizon, which seems to have been that of a Hapsburg-Hohenzollern, not to say Wilhelmine, academic, Husserl had no idea of, and no anticipation for, the Europe that was, already in his final years, not only well on its way to, but also deeply mired in, the "bloodlands" of Hitler and Stalin.[174] Like most other highly civilized and cultivated Europeans of his time, Husserl could hardly imagine the real existential crisis that was looming, nor can he be fairly blamed for this inability. Tragically, his sincere plea for "genuineness"[175] could not sustain itself against the false hopes

[169] Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Otto Frank and Mirjam Pressler and tr. Susan Massotty (New York: Doubleday, 1991/1995), p. 332 (July 15, 1944). Yet such often quoted passages are balanced by others, such as this one (pp. 280–281/May 3, 1944): "Oh, why are human beings so crazy? … There is a destructive urge in human beings, the urge to rage, to murder, and to kill. And until all of humanity, without exception, undergoes a metamorphosis, wars will continue to be waged, and everything that has been carefully built up, cultivated, and grown will be cut down and destroyed, only to start all over again."

[170] On "Philosophie als unendliche Aufgabe" see Hua. VI, pp. 73, 319, 323–324, 326, 336, 338–339, 341.

[171] If there were still any doubts as to whether the actual human beings of the Renaissance could be adequately understood in terms of an essence of pure reason alone, then the spectacular exhibition "Gesichter der Renaissance" (Bode Museum, Berlin, 2011/Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2012) should dispel them once and for all. See also Keith Christiansen and Stefan Weppelmann, eds., *Gesichter der Renaissance: Meisterwerke italienischer Portrait-Kunst* (Munich: Hirmer, 2011).

[172] Hua. VI, p. 348: "Europas größte Gefahr ist die Müdigkeit."

[173] Reasonable people can reasonably disagree about what it means to be "reasonable". Cf. Montaigne, *Apologie de Raimond Sebond* (*Essais* II, 12), in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), p. 235: "J'appelle toujours raison cette apparence de discours que chacun forge en soi; cette raison, de la condition de laquelle il y en peut avoir cent contraires autour d'un même sujet, c'est un instrument de plomb et de cire, allongeable, ployable et accommodable à tout biais et à toutes mesures; il ne reste que la suffisance de le savoir contourner."

[174] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[175] Hua. VI, pp. 1–3, 7, 10–16. There are 17 references to "Echtheit" and "das Echte" in Part One of *Die Krisis* alone.

raised by a rhetorically seductive and sophistically clever approach[176] that in reality reduced "authenticity" to "disclosedness", but "disclosedness" to "resoluteness", and therefore "authenticity" to "resoluteness".[177] Nor was an anethical decisionist intensity, remarkably un-Greek and strikingly un-Aristotelian, adequate to the exigencies of the times,[178] for character is destiny, whereas the *Dasein* that Heidegger describes clearly lacks virtue of character,[179] so that it can hardly possess virtue of intellect.[180] After the fact, Husserl may have protested, like Camus, another *existentialiste malgré lui*, that he was not an existentialist. In fact, perhaps the only philosopher who ever admitted to being an existentialist was Sartre. Yet Husserl embraced and performed his infinite existential tasks with the heroic attitude of a Sisyphus facing the absurd. And, as Camus suggested at the end of his beautiful myth,

[176] One does not have to agree with everything that Adorno says to see that he is on to something here. Cf. Theodor Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit: Zur deutschen Ideologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1964).

[177] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 42–43, 53, 122, 130, 144, 163, 179, 187–188, 191, 193, 221, 234, 250–251, 260, 262–264, 268–269, 271, 277, 279–280, 286–287, 295–298, 302, 304, 306, 322–323, 325–326, 328, 336, 338–339, 343–344, 348, 383–386, 391 (*Eigentlichkeit*); pp. 75, 86–87, 123–124, 132–137, 139, 143, 145–148, 161–162, 167, 170, 182, 188, 190–191, 203, 220–223, 226–227, 230–231, 269–270, 295–297, 325, 350–351, 365–366 (*Erschlossenheit*); pp. 296–299, 301–302, 304–307, 322, 325–326, 328–330, 338–339, 383–386 (*Entschlossenheit*).

[178] Löwith, *Mein Leben in Deutschland vor und nach 1933: Ein Bericht* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986/2007 [originally written in 1940]), p. 31: "Wodurch er [Heidegger] zunächst auf uns wirkte, war … gerade das inhaltlich Unbestimmte und bloss Appellierende seines philosophischen Wollens, seine geistige Intensität und Konzentration auf 'das Eine was not tut'. Erst später wurde uns klar, dass dieses Eine eigentlich nichts war, eine pure Entschlossenheit, von der nicht feststand Wozu? '*Ich bin entschlossen, nur weiss ich nicht wozu*', hiess der treffliche Witz, den ein Student eines Tages erfand."

[179] Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, ed. Hans Saner (Munich: Piper, 1978), pp. 33–34: "Heideggers Philosophie bis jetzt gottlos und weltlos, faktisch solipsistisch. Gradlinig und blind in der Akzentuation der 'Entschlossenheit'. — Ohne Liebe. Daher auch im Stil unliebenswürdig. Nur 'Entschlossenheit', nicht Glaube, Liebe, Phantasie. Ein neuer Positivismus. Spannung der welt- und gottlosen Existenz in sich selbst zu ungeheurer Intensität. Disziplin, verzweifelte Entschlossenheit. Unbedingte, aber leere Energie."

[180] In Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that one cannot have virtue of character without virtue of intellect or virtue of intellect without virtue of character. Yet Aristotle's practical philosophy in general and his ethical philosophy in particular are hardly in evidence in *Sein und Zeit*. The exceptions—the footnotes on pp. 32 and 225—prove the rule. In fact, the German word for *virtue*, namely, "Tugend", does not occur once in *Sein und Zeit*. In addition, in *Über den Humanismus*, Heidegger compares the ethical content of "Aristotle's lectures on 'ethics'" (*die Vorlesungen des Aristoteles über "Ethik"*) unfavorably with that of the tragedies of Sophocles and the sayings of Heraclitus (pp. 6, 24, 40, 46–47, 55, esp. p. 46 ff.). It is then hard to agree with Richard Polt, an excellent guide to Heidegger's paths, when in regard to *Being and Time* and *On Humanism* he writes (in *Heidegger: An Introduction* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999], p. 170): "In some ways, one can even argue that Heidegger himself is close to Aristotle, the great philosopher of virtue." Cf. also Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, p. 93: "'Denn nichts ist schwerer und nichts erfordert mehr Charakter als sich in offenem Gegensatz zu seiner Zeit zu befinden und laut zu sagen: Nein …' [Tucholsky]. … Davon ist nichts in Heidegger." Cf. finally *Hannah Arendt–Karl Jaspers: Briefwechsel 1926–1969*, Letters 92 and 93, September 1 and 29, 1949.

"one must imagine Sisyphus happy": "Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux."[181] Bestowing his own phenomenological and humanistic meaning on the expression *Dasein*, Husserl best described "the fate of a philosophical existence in all its seriousness": "Ich versuche zu führen, nicht zu belehren, nur aufzuweisen, zu beschreiben, was ich sehe. Ich erhebe keinen anderen Anspruch als den, in erster Linie mir selbst gegenüber und demgemäß auch vor Anderen nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen sprechen zu dürfen als jemand, der das Schicksal eines philosophischen Daseins in seinem ganzen Ernste durchlebte."[182] Thus, if there is something tragic about Husserl's hermeneutical-historical struggle to determine the genuine meaning of human existence by means of essentialist investigations, then there is also something heroic about it as well.[183]

[181] Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l'absurde* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1942), p. 168. Camus, of course, criticizes Husserl as an essentialist who does not fully understand the absurd. Cf. pp. 45, 59, 65, 67–70, 72–73. He concedes, however, that even his argument for the absurd must be based, at least in part, on evidence. Cf. pp. 18, 21, 24, 56, 58, 69, 73, 76–77, 87, 143, 184.

[182] Hua. VI, p. 17.

[183] This is the revised version of a paper that was presented at the 36th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology and Literature, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study/ Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 21–22, 2012. It is also the revised version of a paper that was originally presented at the 4th Triennial World Conference of the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations, Instituto de Empresa Universidad, Campus de Santa Cruz la Real, Segovia, Spain, September 19–23, 2011. I dedicate the finished paper to the memory of Prof. Dr. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (1923–2014) for her long life of service to the Phenomenological Movement.

Milton's Sky-Earth Alchemy and Heidegger's Earth-Sky Continuum: A Comparative Analysis

Bernard Micallef

Abstract In *Paradise Lost*, allusions to alchemy are mostly evident in the third book, where Satan, on his way to ruining God's wondrous creation of earth and man, passes through the region of the sun. Part of the orb's "all-cheering" effect is to "shoot invisible virtue even to the deep," reaching the inner nature of bodies in the surrounding universe. Remote as the "arch-chemic sun" is from earth, it functions as a first alchemist whose rays are naturally mixed with terrestrial moisture to produce "here in the dark so many precious things/of colour glorious and effect so rare." This divinely ordained and natural alchemy stands in stark contrast to two other rival pursuits for rare metal in *Paradise Lost*. Firstly, there is the brigade of fallen angels in the first book, who are led by Mammon towards earthly riches, digging into a volcanic hill whose "glossy scurf" is a clear sign "that in his womb was hid metallic ore,/The work of sulphur." Secondly, there is the future fallen race of man who, a few verses later in the same book, is likewise led by Mammon to rifle "the bowels of their mother earth/For treasures better hid." In contrast to this sky-earth alchemy descending from a divine source, Martin Heidegger's philosophy of art sees a phenomenological continuum extending in the opposite direction, from earth to Greek temple, godhead, sky, and sun. These last celestial entities are brought into being through the ramifying potential of the human work of art, the Greek temple that puts in relief the presence of the god within its sacred precinct as well as the natural elements surrounding it. In this process, earth endures as the unfathomable aspect of a constantly arising and unconcealed world. Can Heidegger's work of art, which ultimately engenders even God's firmament, be reconciled with Milton's alchemical allegory, which depicts God's heavenly rays engendering the earth's lesser riches? Heidegger's philosophy of art implies the sky and the godhead as products of mankind's ceaseless creativity working upon an ultimately impenetrable earth, whereas Milton's alchemical allegory condemns mankind's futile attempt to emulate God's supreme art of engendering life in earth. And yet, striking resemblances emerge between the two paradigms as they are brought together in a comprehensive *gestalt* of creation.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_18

Keywords *Paradise Lost* • "The origin of the work of art" • Alchemy • Transmutation • Phenomenology

Milton's Sky-Earth Alchemy

In the third book of *Paradise Lost*, Satan, on his way to ruining God's wondrous creation of man, passes through the region of the sun, a realm represented in clearly alchemical terms. Part of the orb's "all-cheering" effect is to shoot "invisible virtue even to the deep," reaching the inner nature of the surrounding bodies (III:581–86).[1] And distant though the "arch-chemic sun" is from earth, its rays reach and are naturally mixed with terrestrial moisture to produce "Here in the dark so many precious things/Of colour glorious and effect so rare" (III:609–12). Divinely ordained, this natural alchemy stands in stark contrast to two other rival pursuits for rare metal in *Paradise Lost*. Firstly, there is the brigade of fallen angels in the first book, led by Mammon to dig into a volcanic hill whose "glossy scurf" is an incontrovertible "sign/That in his womb was hid metallic ore,/The work of sulphur" (I:672–74). Secondly, there is the future fallen race of man who, a few verses later in the same book, is likewise led by Mammon to rifle "the bowels of their mother earth/For treasures better hid" (I:685–88).

Milton depicts alchemy as an increasingly profaned art. It is ultimately taken up by mankind, in poor laborious imitation of the fallen angels' relatively dexterous and swift ore extractions from earth. The fallen angels' mining for gold itself pales beside the golden virtues effortlessly and naturally emanating from the alchemical sun, the repository of divine radiance. In the third book of Milton's epic, the sun's region breathes forth "elixir pure" and naturally flows with rivers of "Potable gold," while its innate virtues include the philosopher's stone which "here below/ Philosophers in vain so long have sought" – a futile human quest encouraged by the earthly alchemist's hollow claim to have captured "Volatile Hermes" (mercury), and to have drained Proteus "to his native form," that is, brought alchemical transmutations down to an essential nature or to the quintessence of life (III:600–08). In fact, as A. B. Chambers points out, "mercury has never been fixed by modern science," so that here Milton is only mockingly reiterating a spurious boast uttered by contemporary alchemists (280), thereby heightening their failed quest for the philosopher's stone with a parodic echo of their unfounded claim to have stabilized or captured the volatile substance. As Stanten J. Linden points out, "here Milton's ironic reference to the 'powerful Art' used in this attempt [fixing mercury as a component of the philosopher's stone] recalls the alchemist's futile efforts to fix Mercury in Jonson's *Mercury Vindicated*," suggesting a seventeenth-century literary milieu that satirized alchemical claims of the sort (*Darke Hierogliphicks* 252).

[1] Citations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from John Carey and Alastair Fowler's annotated collection, *The Poems of John Milton*. See **References** for full bibliographical details.

Much the same can be said for the asserted ability to refine transmuting substances into their quintessential (native) form, more of an alchemical pretense than a proven fact.

Milton's alchemical allusions betray a sustained distrust of any form of alchemy practised beyond its role as a divine principle pervading all of natural creation, sustaining an organic, metallic, and mineral evolution as a heavenly ordained physical process. In his prose polemics, too, Milton employs images of human alchemy in scathing attacks upon religious and political views opposed to his, thereby associating the art of transmutation with all that stood censurable in his eyes. Linden demonstrates with persuading evidence how the epic poet employs "the terminology of the alchemical process, e.g., 'extract,' 'distill,' 'sublimat,' 'refine,' [to effect] serious assaults on personal, religious, and political opponents," so that unlike other satirical English authors alluding to alchemy up to his time, "Milton's alchemical satire is not composed primarily for the purpose of humor" (*Darke Hierogliphicks* 247). Rather, the Miltonic image of the human alchemist becomes an object of ridicule doubling as a cutting weapon of attack. The more unlikely the vulgar image of the earthly alchemist is, the sharper as a tool of satire it becomes. In short, there is in *Paradise Lost* a divinely activated alchemy functioning as an inherent quality of the natural evolution of God's creation, and a human alchemy that, ever frustrated in its greedy and vile attempt to reproduce the precious minerals and metals naturally begotten in earth, only succeeds in corrupting the godly process of transmutation embedded in a self-sufficient natural evolution.

One outstanding example of Milton's satiric use of human alchemy features in his debut polemic, *Of Reformation*, where he assails the Episcopal Church on the grounds that its prelates are involved in "the same Alchymy that the *Pope* uses, to extract heaps of *gold*, and *silver* out of the drossie *Bullion* of the Peoples sinnes" (quoted in Linden, *Darke Hierogliphicks* 247). Ironically depicted as the Pope's practice of refining and transmuting the dross of human weakness into equally impure pursuits – namely, the monetary value of gold and silver – alchemy is here reduced to its most vulgar (or exoteric) image: that of chemical processes employed merely to increase the practitioner's material riches. In traditional alchemical lore, the authentic practitioner is contrastively depicted as engaged in a more mystical (or esoteric) brand of alchemy, whose outward transmutations of metals and minerals were only an epiphenomenon, a by-product or secondary issue, of the primary phenomenon: namely, self-transformation through spiritual refinement. By transforming their congregation's fear of divine judgement into material profit, Milton's Pope and prelates reverse this spiritual refinement of man into a purer being, reducing an esoteric into an exoteric art of transmutation. The selling of indulgences, Milton's evident target in his metaphor of ecclesiastical alchemy, thus reverses the process whereby the earth's womb is impregnated with divine virtues by the "arch-chemic sun," a process that begets material riches only through the eminently spiritual process of divine insemination.

In *Paradise Lost*, a crucial part of Satan's rebellion against God takes the form of the extraction of ores from soil within the infernal regions, where Satan's defeated host are compelled to forge metals in a hellish bid to emulate God's heavenly abode,

as well as to produce war machines for a second assault on heaven. These constitute the first two infernal uses of alchemy that inaugurate its profaned use by lesser beings than God. In his study "The Natural History of Metals and Minerals in the Universe of Milton's *Paradise Lost*," Edgar Hill Duncan gives ample illustration of the fallen angels' first corruption of metal through mining, specifically in his comment on Book VI where Lucifer rallies "his angels after the doubtful issue of the first day's fighting" to encourage them towards "the invention of 'devilish Engines'" that, made from purposely mined and mingled metals, would give them an advantage over God's loyal host in the forthcoming struggle (387). Satan draws the rebel angels' attention to the "materials dark and crude" that, lying deep under the superficial riches and the intrinsically fertile heavenly soil, propel the natural growth of "plant, fruit, flour ambrosial, gems and gold" when "toucht/With Heav'ns ray" (VI:472–81). "Heav'ns ray" is often interpreted as the sun's ray, but the term equally calls to mind the concept of divine emanation. The rebel host should avail itself, Satan suggests, of the dark materials and processes concealed in earth that, upon being touched by heavenly virtues, engender riches and life as part of the organic composition of soil. Duncan points out how these dark materials are presented, in the ensuing verses, as already "pregnant with infernal flame" (VI:483), adding in parenthesis that this is a "subterranean and not [a] hellish" flame, for "Lucifer's Hell had not yet been formed" (388). One might also suggest the use, here, of the rhetorical figure of *hysteron proteron*, which reverses the chronological order of the entities referred to in "infernal flame": the divine flame naturally impregnating the earth with riches and life will gradually become more and more infernal (and defiled) as Lucifer's continued defiance, partly in the form of his corrupting extraction of "materials dark and crude," earn him an increasingly hellish domain. But the important point is that, prior to Satan's and man's defilement of it, alchemy already inheres in earth as a divine art of transmutation, a life-engendering flame whose impregnation of the earth's womb associates it with the quintessence of life, the hidden essence of creation itself, or God's sacred means of bringing about and perpetuating being itself.

Milton's likely sources for such imagery, Duncan suggests, are both Aristotle's theory of exhalations "imprisoned in the earth" by the sun's heat and later medieval and Renaissance treatises on alchemy. According to Aristotle's theory, the dry and vaporous exhalations caught underground were "material causes" of metals and minerals respectively, "the efficient cause being, it would seem, the heat of the sun" (Duncan 389). In Book I of Milton's epic, the brigade of fallen angels digs into a sulphurous hill whose surface symptoms betray the deeper metallic riches of this natural alchemy, but their infernal purpose of building the hellish palace Pandemonium does more than simply appropriate the alchemical virtues of "Heav'ns ray" and the "arch-chemic sun." More significantly, the devils's appropriation of God's alchemy relocates and redefines its use in such a way as to make it an efficient tool of defiance and rivalry against its own creator, its very point of sacred origin. It is this re-established and redefined art of transmutation that, as implied by the Miltonic image of Mammon-led man rifling the bowels of mother earth, will be historically replicated in mankind's later quarrying, mining, extracting, dissolving,

and recombining of earth's dark riches. I will later suggest a functional similarity between these essentials of mankind's historical progress in a material world and Heidegger's ontological concept of art as the projection of a world whose differentiated entities arise out of an undifferentiated earth. Suffice it to point out, for now, Milton's implicit condemnation of transmuting activities whereby human progress in a material world is tangibly accomplished.

In *Paradise Lost*, the ore extracted by the fallen angels also figures as the product of sulphur, in accordance with the long alchemical tradition that supplemented Aristotle's theory of exhalations with further notions of a sulphur-mercury procreative bond. In particular, Medieval Islamic alchemy elaborated Aristotle's notion of dry and vaporous subterranean exhalations by presenting, not minerals and metals as the primary products of these vapours, but sulphur and mercury, which would then combine with varying degrees of perfection to produce different metals. Duncan quotes from E. J. Holmyard's study on the works of the famous Islamic alchemist of the Middle Ages, Jabir Ibn Hayyan (better known by his Christianized name Geber), to show how "the reason of the existence of different varieties of metals is that the sulphur and mercury are not always pure and that they do not always combine in the same proportion. If they are perfectly pure and if, also, they combine in the most complete natural equilibrium, then the product is the most perfect of metals, namely gold. Defects in purity or proportion or both result in the formation of silver, lead, tin, iron or copper" (392). Some version or other of this sulphur-mercury theory became commonplace in European alchemy of the Middle Ages. "In the fancier language of many another alchemical treatise sulphur, the active principle, becomes the father of metals and mercury, the passive principle, their mother" (Duncan 393). This alchemical notion became fundamental to most later treatises on alchemy up to and including Milton's time, as Duncan amply illustrates.

In the foregoing analyses of alchemical allusions in *Paradise Lost*, all the chemical methods and agents appropriated by Satan precede the fall as processes and substances beneficially inhering in God's creation, even if they are to be redefined and ultimately corrupted by the human alchemist subjecting them to his worldly gains. Sulphur, although constantly associated with Satan's hellish domain in the first two Books of Milton's epic, is as vital an agent of God's natural alchemy as the "arch-chemic" sun that, as noted above, stimulates all organic transmutations and material refinements in earth. Like the "Potable Gold" of Milton's sun (the *aurum potabile* that Paracelsus equates with the life-elixir, and that alchemical tradition invests with a spiritual as much as a physical nature), sulphur is an alchemical agent that, prior to the fall, already operates as a fundamental principle or stimulus in the organic genesis of both life and material riches.

John Read observes how, in medieval and Renaissance alchemical theory, sulphur and mercury were not merely material substances but also creative principles that, when "conjoined in natural processes under planetary influences […] gave rise to base metals, such as tin and lead; when they were of high purity they gave silver or gold; but when each of the two principles was of superfine purity they yielded the Philosopher's Stone" (18). More importantly, sulphur and mercury were

"supposed to exist in the interior of the earth" as "natural exhalations," coming "into conjunction in the bowels of the earth" to help in the process of engendering pure and impure metals, a slow natural process that the alchemist working "on the outer crust of the earth" tries to "imitate and accelerate" (18–19). Read is, in fact, describing an alchemical engraving of 1617, whose arcane symbolism presupposes a creation already invested with a natural and slowly evolving alchemy implanted by God, a reproductive process discovered and imitated by the human alchemist intent on mastering the creative tools of life, the processes and substances that might show him the way to prolong, if not engender, being.

In his introduction to *The Alchemy Reader – From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, Linden provides a useful summary of the alchemical mentality persisting "well into the seventeenth century" that extended Aristotle's theory of the natural origin of metals, an alchemical mindset based on "the idea of a single underlying prime matter [with its four constituent elements]; and vapours and exhalations – the moist and the dry – as the 'parent principles' of all things that were quarried and mined" (13). The natural marriage of sulphur (the hot and dry exhalation) with mercury (the cold and moist exhalation) stood for an extended schema of corresponding opposites – fire and water, male and female, soul and spirit, sol and luna, and so forth – whose reproductive union ultimately achieved the philosopher's stone, which was accordingly believed to possess fire and water. Linden illustrates how this natural alchemy became increasingly informed by an organic metaphor representing metals as living and spiritual beings conceived and maturing in the earth's womb:

> Extending the anthropomorphic image of sexually differentiated metallic parents is the organic metaphor of the growth and maturing of metals within the womb of Mother Earth. Elias Ashmole, the seventeenth-century antiquary and champion of alchemy, notes that "If *Mineralls* as well as *Plants*, take food and nourishment, wax and grow in bignesse, all is clear, I hope, and void of doubt." And in his *New Light of Alchymie*, Michael Sendivogius discusses at length the idea that metals grow from "seeds." In the view of both [seventeenth-century] authors, metals and minerals are living beings, possessing not only bodies but souls and spirits, as well. Duration of maturation and the purity of the proximate materials are crucial factors in this "ripening" process and result in a hierarchically-arranged "scale of metals" with gold and silver occupying the two highest positions. This is evidence that they have been ripening for the longest period of time: Nature, as Aristotle influentially put it, always strives for perfection or "follows the best course possible." (*The Alchemy Reader* 13–14)

The rebel angels' alchemical meddling with the ripening life of metals in the earth's womb, it would seem from this alchemical mindset, is a foreshadowing of Eve and Adam's eventual eating of the forbidden fruit borne by the Tree of Knowledge. Let us recall how, in the Eden account in Genesis, Adam and Eve are banished from the garden not only for their eating from this tree, that leads to sexual awareness, moral knowledge of good and evil, and by extension, all of human culture, but also for fear lest they subsequently eat of the Tree of Life, with the more decisive prospect of gaining the means to creation and immortality. In this view, the human alchemist's later tampering with God's naturally maturing organic metals becomes a worldly version of the original sin, echoing the original eating of the

forbidden fruit in terms of an alchemical intrusion into the naturally ripening life of God's organic metals and minerals. Linden discusses the close relation between the concept of a self-engendering alchemy of nature and "the idea that to be successful the methods of alchemical art must *imitate* those of Nature, what Roger Bacon calls, 'Art using Nature for an instrument,'" with the added advantage of accelerating the long drawn-out process of nature's metallic transmutations, thereby turning the work of ages into that of days (14). In ironic contrast to Milton's denunciative schema of alchemy as a human theft of a godly knowledge encompassing the art of creating life, this seventeenth-century alchemical view resonates with the neoplatonic theme of returning to and reuniting with a perfect divine essence by improving upon an imperfect and incomplete creation emanating, in diminishing forms of completeness, from its original maker. In evident disagreement with this alchemical belief of his time, Milton's depiction of human alchemy is an extension of the fall, a perpetual relapse into the original sin of the forbidden fruit by virtue of attempting to partake of the divine knowledge and tools leading to the quintessence of life.

Satan's and Man's Alchemy: A Divine Art Corrupted

Alchemy, God's procreative art implanted in the earth's womb, is never intrinsically pernicious in Milton's epic. Rather than cast in a bad light, its beneficial functions are eclipsed by Satan's devious manipulation of the art in his heroic rebellion against God as master alchemist. The distinction between a sacred and a profane alchemy was, after all, a common debate in a period when, as John Ferguson has long observed, the printed matter on this subject exploded: "[…] about 1650," he says, "began the publication in earnest of alchemical writings of all kinds, to say nothing of mystical and occult books besides. Between the years 1650 and 1675 or 1680 more alchemical books appeared in English than in all the time before and after these dates" (n. pag.). *Paradise Lost* first appeared midway through this period of heightened alchemical awareness, which however also displayed an increased chemical knowledge that criticized "the Aristotelian and alchemical elements," "the failure of alchemy to effect transmutation according to its doctrine and practice, and the evil repute into which it fell through unscrupulous impostors" (n. pag.). In this *milieu* of alchemical debate and scrutiny, it should come as little surprise that Milton's epic distinguishes between an original alchemy, authentic in so far as its divine agency remains concealed from lesser beings, and its increasingly impoverished state at different stages of adoption: first Satanic and then human. In effect, Milton's alchemical outlook leaves the neoplatonic idea of emanation from one supreme alchemist intact, while rejecting the concomitant neoplatonic concept of climbing back up the descending alchemical ladder, from Satan to man, to Sun, to God.

The Miltonic notion of an alchemical ladder finds support in a correlative hierarchy of light which Chambers describes in the following terms: "Above Satan and unapproachable by him is the dark and supernatural light of the Creator; surrounding

Satan is a dazzling display of natural light and power raised to the highest degree [in the sun's realm]; below is the earthly alchemist engaged in fruitless imitation of the sun; and lowest of all is the unnatural gleam of Pandaemonium" (285). It will be observed how, in its heavenly or supernatural state, light is no different from darkness in a delicate alchemy of opposites engendering creation and life, an alchemical marriage obtaining also on the lower level of the sun's rays as they mingle with dark matter to generate earth's riches and life. Duncan sees this marriage between the sun's radiant virtues and the earth's dark material as emanating "from the source of divine light itself," for the sun only acts as the "created repository of that [divine] light in the mundane universe" (420). The same author also speculates that the many references to sulphur in Books I and II, with their evident evocations of the flames of hell, are likewise to be construed as "a spark of that divine light which at Hell's creation penetrated even those inmost depths," so that this spark hardly needed "the surrounding fires and burning mount," especially when one takes into consideration the chemical terms for sulphur in Milton's time: namely, a "celestial spirit," a "first agent in all generation," and a "scintilla" implanted in dark matter (420–21). The subterranean mingling of light and darkness is thus a perfect alchemical mixture of opposites initiated by God to germinate life in the earth's womb, and when Satan's host exploits the sulphurous earth's inhering alchemy they have, in effect, disrupted a procreative combination of divine radiance and dark, subterranean matter.

In traditional alchemical lore, nigredo is the blackness associated with death (spiritual as much as physical) whose putrefying substance the alchemist would subject to fire in order to obtain primal matter, itself a vital germinal stage in proceeding to albedo, the whiteness of revived and purified being. As Stanton Marlan points out, albedo is both a stage in this alchemical procedure "*and* the illuminating quality intrinsic in the blackness of the nigredo process. The whiteness that the alchemists speak of is not a whiteness separate from blackness. On the contrary, to understand the 'renewal' that 'follows' the nigredo, one must go beyond simple dichotomies and see the complexity of the blackness itself" (99). Burning away the dross or inessential qualities of the putrefying nigredo, the alchemist aims at begetting "this light hidden in nature," associated by Carl Jung with "*lumen naturae*," or "the light of darkness itself" (Marlan 98). "In alchemy," Marlan elaborates, "light and dark and male and female are joined together in the idea of the chemical marriage," from which union the "*filius philosophorum*," the philosopher's stone as much as the child of wisdom in alchemy, is begotten as a new light that "is a central mystery" of the art (99). At work in Milton's depiction of heavenly rays and dark earth coming into procreative union through God's supreme alchemy is this marriage of whiteness and blackness derived from alchemical lore. At once borrowing from a human alchemical tradition and castigating its worldly practice, Milton re-establishes the art of purification, transmutation, and regenerated life in what he evidently considers its indisputably and exclusively divine province. Much the same treatment of alchemical lore can be observed in the case of the "Potable Gold" and the elixir of life, terms evidently drawn from man's alchemical literature only to be attributed to the "arch-chemic sun," whose pure virtues have been perverted,

in Milton's eyes, by the same human history and culture that revealed their processes to him.

Let us recapitulate: descending from God's superlative radiance, a comparatively dimmed light and heat are preserved in the sun's golden realm, where they nonetheless retain enough intensity to persist as the elixir of life, the regenerative force that would then penetrate and impregnate the earth's dark womb as a terrestrial scintilla or the masculine principle of sulphur. Duncan cites metallurgical and alchemical sources of Milton's time to illustrate how sulphur, believed to be the "father of metals" or the "masculine seed" generating metal on earth, suited the poet both as the progenitor of "metals in the hellish regions of the universe of Paradise Lost" and as the agent of terrestrial heat, the scintilla implanted in the earth's dark womb by virtue of the divine radiance persisting in the sun's rays (410, 417–18). Sufficient evidence is provided by this metallurgical study for us to suspect an alchemical *milieu* in Milton's days which, apart from positing metal as the progeny of heaven's light and earth's darkness, also entertained the more ambitious task of unearthing, appropriating, and accelerating God's secret *modus operandi* for begetting life itself. Not only is the enigmatic marriage between heaven and earth, light and darkness, masculine and feminine God's closely guarded secret of life; it also inheres in God's very nature as an androgynous and undivided being. Thus alchemy's archetypal opposites (one easily calls to mind a longer list, also correlating sulphur and mercury with such contraries as *rex* and *regina*, or Adam and Eve) implicate man's history as none other than an ongoing quest for that divine knowledge of combined contraries, at once sacred and esoteric, that would bring man on a par with his maker.

We can now have a closer look at the specific passages in *Paradise Lost* that portray this incipiently benign alchemy in its natural or appropriated, its pure or defiled forms. As indicated above, there are two reasons why the fallen angels mine for metals: first, to build their council-house, Pandemonium, in Book I, and secondly, to build weapons with which to equal and overthrow their creator in Book VI. Duncan cites works of mineralogists, metallurgists, and literary figures from Milton's time to demonstrate the prevalence of the belief that exhalations of subterranean metals and minerals produce above ground the discolouration and the gloss of surface deposits, which conversely reveal even the type of metal to be found below (400–01). Duncan's metallurgical citations are followed by his observation that these surface deposits are what leads Mammon and one multitude of the rebel angels directly to the "ribs of gold" beneath the glossy surfaced hill (I:690), whose volcanic activity is, in accordance with seventeenth-century metallurgy, a naturally occurring heat refining baser metals into gold, the pure metal that will eventually constitute the "golden architrave" resting on the "Doric pillars" of Pandemonium, whose roof will likewise be of "fretted gold" (I:714–17).

The hellish temple rises wondrously in the form of exhalations and music that materialize out of the sulphurous soil onto which the fallen angels climb from the fiery lake they had first been thrust into by the divine host. While a first rebellious multitude goes forth to mine gold from the glossy hill, a second multitude melts the mined ore and a third channels its molten flow into "a various mould." It is the activity

of the second and third rebellious multitudes that concerns us mostly, for their activity marks the momentous theft not only of the metallic products of a divine alchemy, but more crucially of its very *modus operandi*:

> Nigh on the plain in many cells prepared,
> That underneath had veins of liquid fire
> Sluiced from the lake, a second multitude
> With wondrous art founded the massy ore,
> Severing each kind, and scummed the bullion dross:
> A third as soon had formed within the ground
> A various mould, and from the boiling cells
> By strange conveyance filled each hollow nook,
> As in an organ from one blast of wind
> To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes. (I:700–09)

The "wondrous art" by which the second multitude dissolves the undifferentiated mass of ore, thereby removing impurities from gold, in fact severs each metallic kind from its organic oneness with its fecund mother earth, wherein natural alchemy persists with its more integrative development. The third multitude takes this separating process a step further, effecting a "strange conveyance" that diverges the purified gold into the variously shaped cavities of a mould, just as "one blast of wind" (a synecdoche for the wholeness of natural forces) is dispersed into many organ pipes by the instrument's "sound-board." Starting with the first multitude's extraction of "ribs of gold" from earth, this "wondrous" and "strange" art crucially ends in a virtually industrial separation of gold, ironically encouraged by the mysterious subterranean refinement that, while producing gold as a distinct metal, takes away none of its natural union with mother earth. The rebellious angels's appropriation of divine alchemy will eventually bequeath to man, Promethean-like, the fascinatingly strange art of raising magnificent structures out of dark undifferentiated matter, but the emphasis is on the series of artificially and forcibly conducted separations that bear little resemblance to the gradual subterranean formation of distinct metals offset by their retained union with earth's slowly germinating riches. In sharp contrast to this innate alchemy of evolving nature, the fallen angels' "liquid fire" is swiftly cut off from its fiery lake, their golden ore brutally severed from the earth's maternal womb, and the single flow of their purified gold cast into the separately shaped nooks of their mould, this last act portending the variously cast golden idols that would eventually constitute man's pagan history, an impure extension of this adulterated alchemy as will be shown in the following paragraphs.

The fiendish multitudes conducting this profaned art are as yet nameless, on account of having their previous names stricken from the heavenly record and having to await the mythical point in human history when they will be assigned pagan names, and will be evoked as heathen deities. Through a proleptic leap into this future history of mankind, Milton identifies these angels turned fiendish alchemists with heathen figures whose "shrines" will eventually invade and contaminate God's holy sanctuaries on earth, subsequent to their having fixed "Their seats long after [the fall] next the seat of God,/Their altars by his altar" (I:383–88). These first alchemists will thus, in time, adulterate God's temple with "abominations," profane his

rites with "cursed things," while "with their darkness [they] durst affront his light" (I:389–91). Their rebellious alchemy is now a "darkness" that affronts, rather than marries, heaven's impregnating light, causing an alchemical disharmony of opposites akin to the abominable blend of heathen with sacred figures that is to blight God's temples, altars, and rites along human history. Even Israel, the chosen people, will stand infected by this hideously conducted alchemy of separation and abominable reintegration, as attested by Milton's reference to biblical episodes in which Israel's true God is confused with a golden calf or ox:

> Nor did Israel scape
> The infection when their borrowed gold composed
> The calf in Oreb; and the rebel king
> Doubled that sin in Bethel and in Dan,
> Likening his maker to the grazed ox,
> […]. (I:482–86)

The fallen angels' erstwhile life in heaven had enjoyed a closer acquaintance with God's secret alchemy of life, as Satan reveals in Book VI when recalling, with restrained admiration, how heaven's soil yielded plants, fruit, and gold when touched by divine rays. Nonetheless, while raising Pandemonium through sulphurous flames borrowed from the fiery lake (as opposed to heavenly rays received from the "arch-chemic sun"), the rebellious crowd bequeaths to mankind an infectious art of unnaturally segregated and hideously reintegrated wholes. Ultimately, this "infection" will have impoverished a divine alchemy into the human alchemist's spurious posturing as a multiplier of gold, which is in fact borrowed readymade, before being melted and reshaped into abominable idols. Not only will Israel be infected with an art that must henceforth borrow, rather than produce through genuine alchemical refinement, its gold; it will also double its gold only in terms of idols and sin, in ironic contrast to authentic alchemical multiplication, the process whereby the potency of the philosopher's stone is augmented. Even the prototype Pandemonium betrays a more authentic alchemy than that of mankind's history, for its wondrous emergence from the soil resonates still with the semi-divine virtues of exhalations, of symphonies accompanied by sweet voices, and of subterranean gold:

> Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
> Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
> Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet,
> Built like a temple, where pilasters round
> Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
> with golden architrave; nor did there want
> Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven,
> The roof was fretted gold. (I:710–17)

With its rows of "starry lamps and blazing cressets" hanging by a "subtle magic" from the ceiling, providing light "As from a sky," this temple's golden magnificence betrays the fallen angels' endeavour to maintain the princely decor and spectacle of their erstwhile heavenly abode, where once they "held their residence,/And sat as princes" (I:726–35). On the other hand, the lamps and cressets that produce light in Pandemonium are "fed/With naphtha and asphaltus" respectively, foreshadowing the

first inferior by-products obtained from man's materialistic and industrial exploitation of God's natural alchemy. The volatile nature of naphtha and the black flammable substance of asphalt also imply the diminution of heavenly radiance to dark earthly substitutes. Emerging wondrously and magically from the soil, Pandemonium has for its architect a fallen angel whose "hand was known/In heaven by many a towered structure high"; but here, too, Milton is making room for an eventual diminution into an earthly substitute in human culture, realized when the nameless angel is renamed Mulciber in Greek myth, the god of fire, metalworking, or earthly alchemy better known by his Italian name, Vulcan. For the Renaissance alchemist Paracelsus, Vulcan is both the founder and the personification of the alchemist's art of manipulating fire in order to heat, distil, and refine the *prima materia* (93, 141–45). The very name Vulcan signifies, for Paracelsus, the transforming power in man, the alchemical knowledge that helps mankind carry God's incomplete creation to its ultimate or completed form: "Things are created [by God] and given into our hands, but not in the ultimate form that is proper to them" (145), for alchemy, as embodied in Vulcan, is the ability "to carry to its end something that has not yet been completed" (141). By contrast, Milton scorns such mythical figures as purport to embody God's secret alchemy on the terrestrial plane of human myth, bringing it that much closer to historical manipulation by man. The following verses show Milton's masterful depiction of heaven's nameless architect undergoing a seamless fall from divine grace into mankind's pagan narrative, wherein his erstwhile angelic identity and skill give way to his "fabled" identity as the god of alchemy "thrown by angry Jove" onto a clearly terrestrial geography:

> and how he fell
> From heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
> Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
> To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
> A summer's day; and with the setting sun
> Dropped from the zenith like a falling star,
> On Lemnos the Aegaean isle: thus they relate,
> Erring; for he with this rebellious rout
> Fell long before […] . (I:740–48)

Rather than a haphazard choice on Milton's part, Mulciber is the mythical embodiment of the art of alchemy extending beyond Satan's and man's initial fall, and descending into a human culture that would henceforth mythologize man's historical bid to take over God's tools of creation. The rebellious angels' profaned alchemy thus spills over into an equally impure human history that would assign mythical names and powers (not least Mulciber's) to the fallen angels, a history producing pagan idols made, fittingly enough, of that borrowed gold that would likewise in time prove a historical substitution of the alchemical engendering of gold in the earth's womb. This metonymic web of descending degrees of authenticity – alchemical and historical at one and the same time – illustrates the continuity between a profaned alchemy and an adulterated human history in the Miltonic worldview. The slowly emerging picture is of an alchemy that is itself transmuted into an ill-blended history and, inversely, of a human history that is but a corrupted

alchemy, a series of false blendings and transmutations. It is no coincidence that the instrument heralding the fallen angels' consensus on ruining the Edenic state of man, thereby inaugurating this adulterated history, is itself the product of the first hellish dabbling in God's art of transmutation. For, ominously enough, it is a "sounding alchemy" that proclaims agreement in Pandemonium on the necessary fall of man. This allusion to the alloy out of which trumpets were made in Milton's time functions as a metallurgical portent of man's equally alloyed history of the sacred and the profane:

> Toward the four winds four speedy cherubim
> Put to their mouths the sounding alchemy
> By herald's voice explained: the hollow abyss
> Heard far and wide, and all the host of hell
> With defeaning shout returned them loud acclaim. (II:516–20)

Duncan refers to the accepted interpretation of "the sounding alchemy" as a metonymy of the efficient for the effect, that is, of the alchemical cause of mixing metals standing for its result, namely, the produced trumpets heralding the rebel council's resolution; however, the same scholar also provides ample evidence of the popular use of the term alchemy to signify an alloy by that name, a counterfeit and "unwholesome" metal which befits the fallen angels as their "metallurgical product" (403). Contemporaries of Milton such as Francis Bacon employed the term "alchemy" to designate such an alloy used for bell-making, a known verbal use that accounts for Milton's epithet "sounding" (404). Apart from exotically raising Pandemonium out of sulphurous soil, therefore, the exploited art of transmutation also produces the alloy alchemy as the forged medium best suited for heralding the similarly fabricated history succeeding the fall. Depicting God's pristine alchemy at increasingly adulterated stages starting from Mammon's first rush towards a hill's "metallic ore,/The work of sulphur," Milton finally incorporates human history itself, comprising its culture and mythmaking, as but another forged product along the same unbroken chain of alchemical deterioration, history as but another badly compounded amalgam (of the sacred and the profane) along a degenerating succession of alchemical experiments.

Chambers provides a hierarchy of alchemical allusions in *Paradise Lost* usefully placed within a broader literary context that had, up to Milton's time, already extensively satirized man's ambitious quest for God's tools of creation. His intertextual synopsis is insightful:

> According to Milton's physics, matter is derived from God Himself, is shaped in His creating hands, metamorphosed naturally by the sun and unnaturally in hell. But on earth the limits of matter are fixed; he who undertakes the reduction of it to unformed plasticity necessarily works "in vain." At best a fraud and at worst a piece of devil's work, the grimy toil in search of matter's secret leads only to Chaucer's Canon – who will make no pilgrimage – or to the Vice characters of Jonson's *Alchemist*, or to the complaint of Aureng-zebe: "I'm tir'd of waiting for this Chymic Gold,/Which fools us young, and beggars us when old." The reference of an anonymous author in the *Hermetic Museum* to "Satan, that grim pseudo-alchemist" was perhaps an attempt to reverse the normal literary view that the alchemist is a grim pseudo-Satan. The *ignis fatuus* of the stone thus flickers out at Mulciber's forge, not at the furnace of the sun, for Protean matter – like that old dragon – is finally bound only by its Creator. (286)

Pointing out the reversibility between Satan as a "pseudo-alchemist" and the human alchemist as a "pseudo-Satan," Chambers goes on to distinguish between the ephemeral light flickering out at Mulciber's forge and the true perpetual light by which the Creator bounds changing matter "at the furnace of the sun." But this is, after all, the alchemical view that was already well-established by Milton's time, and that the nineteenth-century occultist Franz Hartman explicates in religious and natural terms:

> Alchemy does not mix or compound anything, it causes that which already exists in a latent state to become active and grow. Alchemy is, therefore, more comparable to botany or agriculture than to Chemistry; and, in fact, the growth of a plant, a tree, or an animal is an alchemical process going on in the alchemical laboratory of nature, and performed by the great Alchemist, the power of God acting in nature. (n. pag.)

It is this overarching paradigm of organic alchemy that Milton subtly equates with life itself, understood as a divine principle in constant becoming, whose inbuilt alchemy humankind would laughably attempt to reproduce. This is evident in other subtler instances of an ironized human alchemy in *Paradise Lost*. In Book V, for instance, Raphael's angelic digestion of the same food consumed by Adam and Eve is presented as an organic alchemy whose "concoctive heat" transubstantiates food; but the narrative voice of Milton's epic is quick to point out that this is no cause for wonder, taking into (mocking) consideration the "empiric alchemist" (or charlatan) that with his own "fire of sooty coal […] Can turn, or holds it possible to turn/Metals of drossiest ore to perfect gold/as from the mine" (V:439–43). As elsewhere in *Paradise Lost*, the human alchemist's claim to transmutation is here presented in equivocal terms ("Can turn, or hold it possible to turn"), the only verified acquisition of gold having come from laboriously mining the inherently alchemical earth. Glenn Sucich notes, with primary reference to Milton's *Areopagitica*, but also to such examples as Raphael's digestion, the poet's indebtedness to the "correlation between alchemical transmutation and digestion" that had become commonplace in the natural philosophy of seventeenth-century thought, a *milieu* that gave "alchemists as well as artists a powerful trope with which to express processes of purification, both material and spiritual" (51). As will be argued in the following section, the notion of an innate organic and spiritual becoming of creation suggested by this alchemical paradigm bears a surprising resemblance, with some crucial reversals, to the postmodern phenomenological paradigm of the self-regulating artwork setting up a human world, as exemplified by Martin Heidegger's Greek temple. It will be shown how certain fundamental notions – such as the continuum between God and man, heaven and earth in the creative impulse – are shared by both paradigms, albeit with critical shifts in emphasis and hierarchical order.

Heidegger's Earth-Sky Phenomenology of Art

As the product of manipulating earth's inbuilt alchemy, Milton's Pandemonium surprisingly foreshadows some crucial aspects of Martin Heidegger's celebrated image of a Greek temple arising, as an artwork, from a concealed earth.

The contextual distance between the two images need not deter us from examining the fundamental issue shared by both epical and phenomenological presentations of a temple: namely, the continuum obtained between heaven and earth in the artistic impulse to set up one's own sanctuary, or sacred abode. Heidegger's Greek temple illustrates the human artwork raising an undifferentiated earth into a relational human context, in whose interwoven fabric even the godhead in the temple's precinct will subsist as but one among many artistic threads. In *Paradise Lost*, Pandemonium's defiant emergence out of the earth's manipulated alchemy betrays Milton's preceding concern with a creative impulse extending its world independently of its divine maker, thereby inaugurating a human history that would make free with earth's embedded genesis of material riches and life, a human culture that would ultimately extract gold or borrow it to erect its own heathen sanctuaries and gods.

Lacking any equipmental or practical purpose, Heidegger's temple functions as a primarily artistic progression bringing into formulated being its constituent matter, which thereby starts to happen as an articulated truth. The temple is, first and foremost, a *work* or an ongoing creative labour that brings the undifferentiated mass of a concealed earth into the differentiated and interconnected shapes of an increasingly nuanced human context, namely, our historical being lived as the immediate and undeniable veracity in which we are inescapably engaged. As Iain D. Thomson points out, Heidegger's "great art *works* inconspicuously to establish, maintain, and transform humanity's historically variable sense of what is and what matters" (43). In this artistic coming-to-be of a lived world, the earth substance is never used up, in contrast to the material of everyday tools that fades into their practical application. Even while Heidegger's earth remains self-secluding in the work of art, its concealment is contrastively thrust into the configured series of correlations that constitute a specific human realm. The god enclosed within the temple's precinct, for instance, extends the sanctuary's material into a religious and sacred *milieu* whose further extension eventually formulates human destiny. "Birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace" are, for Heidegger, addenda of the sacred realm opened up by the building's artistic coming-to-be (OWA 167). Likewise, the temple's gleaming surface puts in relief the sun's rays caught upon its brilliant stone, which in turn brings about the human configuration of the sky's breadth, and its corollary division into night and day. A concealed earth is thus lived as the self-regulating *modus operandi* of an artistically projected world.

Heidegger argues in his later essay, "Building Dwelling Thinking," that "to build is in itself already to dwell," to feel at home not so much in one's private residence, but in the very sphere of creative labour that, in effect, is our self-disclosing world (348). More importantly, in this essay it is not just distinctly aesthetic objects like the Greek temple, but everyday examples of constructing and cultivating the earth – say, a bridge and vegetables respectively – that enable us to dwell in the operative field constituting our lived world. In Heidegger's words, "the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is […] dwelling" (BDT 349). Accordingly, the origin of the work – now ranging from purely artistic to more pedestrian human constructs – also constitutes the unassailable truth coterminous with our manner of residing in and engaging a world.

Dwelling means inhabiting things construed as a manner of building earth, whose self-secluding substance is probed as an artfully configured habitat of differentiated and interrelated elements.

The notion of inhabiting earth as artfully constructed matter recalls Milton's image of Mammon-led man probing the bowels of mother earth in order to mine, extract, dissolve, and recombine its riches into a habitable domain through the art of transmutation, itself drawn from earth. This is an earth pervaded with an organic alchemy, naturally subsisting as the ability to demarcate and recombine its constituent metals and minerals into life and entire worlds. As illustrated in the preceding sections, the alchemical *milieu* of Milton's days entertained the ambitious task of unearthing, appropriating, and accelerating this very *modus operandi* that inheres in earth as the secret and strange art of raising magnificent habitable domains out of an undifferentiated substance. Human alchemy merely unearths this intrinsically transforming power of earth itself, in order to carry God's incomplete creation to its ultimate or completed form.

In Heidegger's phenomenology, there is a comparable implication of dwelling in (rather than on) earth as a constant potential for creation. While the differentiated and interconnected components of Heidegger's broadening world unfold as a meaningful human context, the concealed earth nevertheless retains its self-secluding nature, becoming discernible only in the self-disclosing sphere of the artwork where it carries out its strife with the unconcealed world. Earth is, as it were, ontologized in the work of art, its perennially hidden nature becoming momentarily conspicuous in its interdependence with an artfully formulated world. In Heideggerean terms, the work of art sets forth an earth by setting up a world (OWA 172). And yet, the earth loses nothing of its original obscurity, that is, its natural resistance to being differentiated and reconfigured into the discernible structure of a lived world. As Joseph J. Kockelmans puts it, in this artistic strife

> rock comes to bear, metals come to shine and glimmer, colors come to glow, tones begin to sound, and words to speak. And all this comes to the fore as the work sets itself back into the heaviness of stone, into the firm but pliant quality of wood, into the hardness and luster of metal, into the light and darkness of color, into the sound of tone, and into the naming power of the word. […] Thus earth is that which comes to the fore and shelters at the same time. (149–50)

Heidegger sums this up as "*the work* [that] *lets the earth be an earth*" (author's emphasis), that is, a self-concealing matter that, despite shattering "every attempt to penetrate it," still shines forth by being brought "into the open region as the self-secluding" (OWA 172–73). Robert Stulberg similarly argues that in Heidegger's work of art, which is, in effect, no different from "existing reality," the inhering earth is "ever-concealed, ever-enclosed, and always withdrawn in itself," an earth that "resists all attempts to uncover its innermost characteristics" and that "we can never entirely reveal," but only make "'apparent' and 'open'" by setting it forth "in a context of being – an 'open, relational context' which will enable the earth to be" (261). Amidst the "higher relationships" obtaining in the ongoing work of art, earth attains to a greater degree of being than would otherwise be discernible. In other words, we dwell *in* earth only through an unrelenting effort to probe its obscure

mass by means of artfully conducted divisions and reconfigurations, a sustained creative labour with significant parallels to Milton's alchemically probed earth, whose extracted and recombined riches inaugurate a human world of myth, sanctuaries, and idols.

There is at least a functional similarity between Heidegger's concealed earth, artfully broken up and reworked into the relational context of human history, and Milton's image of mother earth, alchemically separated, refined, and reconstructed into the architectural magnificence of hellish and human realms. In both cases, earth hides the *prima materia* to be processed by an art of separation and reintegration, a sphere of skilful composition containing the capacity for ever higher levels of interrelatedness in its artistically extended domain. In both cases, the art involved accounts for the *very coming into being* – as opposed to the mere imitation – of reality, in that both Milton's divine alchemy and Heidegger's artwork constitute the *happening* of a world, bringing about an historical context whose boundaries can only be redrawn through further artistic creation. In both cases, too, the creative potential is preserved in the earth element, either as Milton's natural alchemy vitalizing the earth's womb or as Heidegger's artistic drive sheltered in the self-secluding earth to which any worldly thrust must inevitably return. And in both cases, the process of creation draws upon its own interrelated components for further extension, be it God who first infuses the earth, via the sun's rays, with its organic art of transmutation subsequently appropriated by man, or man who, via the artwork, first projects earth into an historical context comprising divinities alongside mortals.

From Milton's conception of a divine alchemy profaned by human history to Heidegger's inverse conception of a human world engendering the divine, the agent and the product of creation exchange places. This reversal, however, preserves and even highlights the persisting relationship between heaven and earth, divinities and mortals in the creative impulse, whether human or divine. This raises the following question: why does the divine inhere so invariably in earth and alongside the mortal in such temporally distant models of the creative impulse?

As Julian Young observes, for Heidegger man realizes what is ethical, moral, and sacred – knowing who he is and what to do – by dwelling in the artistically opened world experienced as a "horizon of disclosure" (29). Man inhabits this horizon as, simultaneously, an ontological and ethical structure, a lived ethos. This cannot be otherwise since Heidegger's world is "the usually unnoticed understanding which determines for the members of an historical culture what, for them, fundamentally there *is*. It constitutes, as it were, the entry conditions […] which something must satisfy in order to show up as a being in the world in question" (Young 23). While some of those entry conditions are secular, others are patently sacred, religious, and divine. To what extent is Milton's dread of a human culture mingling the sacred with the profane realized in Heidegger's notion of dwelling in a self-engendering world that likewise blends the sacred with the secular, an historical world whose every construction and cultivation connects earth with sky, mortals with divinities, in a lived complex of interrelated elements Heidegger calls the fourfold (BDT 353)? From Milton's divine alchemy corrupted by human history to Heidegger's sacred and secular fourfold sustained through man's creative constructs along history, the

creative process invariably remains a heaven-earth (or divine-mortal) complex of relationships. The more crucial question, already hinted at in this section yet further discussed in the following, is whether this creative process is governed by its own relativity or by a predominant component within its progressive configuration, be that God or man.

Origin and Delimitation of the Creative Impulse

It is not only Heidegger's sheltering obscurity of earth that restrains the artwork's opposing tendency towards an endlessly unfolding world. Beyond the mutual stability obtaining in the struggle between a concealed earth and an unconcealed world, there is the work's endurance as a coordinated labour whose boundaries are made manifest by the singularity of its method of composition. The artwork's creative impetus is offset by Heidegger's notion of preserving the work by knowing what to do and what to want in the midst of the truth materializing in its dynamics. To stand within the work aspect of the artwork is to preserve a uniquely conceivable and yet likely manner of being: "Preserving the work, as knowing, is a sober standing-within the awesomeness of the truth that is happening in the work" (OWA 192). As Frank Schalow puts it, "the true signature of [Heidegger's] art lies in giving birth to the singularity of the event itself, to the wellspring which unfolds according to the limits set by the work" (82). Accordingly, "the artistic process enters into an alliance with what is not present, constellating new limits in which an original appearing can occur, i.e., of *style*" (Schalow 83). If style delimits the self-disclosure of Heidegger's world through its original manifestation, is to inhabit a world the same as inhabiting a self-regulating work of art?

Heidegger's example of the world set up by the Greek temple sheds light on what this standing within the work as a unique materialization of truth might mean:

> Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the obscurity of that rock's bulky yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, first brings to radiance the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of the air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *physis*. It illuminates also that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises as such. In the things that arise, earth occurs essentially as the sheltering agent. (OWA 167–68)

Held in healthy check by the earth's constant striving to reincorporate and conceal it, this open-ended creativity discloses the relational and interactive coming-to-be of

distinct entities: we encounter the very existence of daylight, for instance, not by trying to isolate and capture it in scientific measurement, which would only cause its truly experienced nature to disappear into the numerical correctness of a wavelength. Rather, daylight comes into discernible and arranged being as it is reflected on the temple's gleaming stonework, which contrastively brings out the obscurity of the rock it stands on and the relative darkness of the raging storm against which it holds its ground. In its coordinated manifestation relative to other darker or reflecting elements, daylight becomes what it actually is in a relational human context: a thread inextricable from the whole tapestry of human culture and history that provides it with its relative significance, that is, with its only distinctive and knowable truth. By removing "the distance between the aesthetic and the nonaesthetic" (Megill 163), Heidegger's work of art effectively lets things be what they are in a highly contextualized inventiveness, its generative and regulatory factors happening as one and the same principle of standing within the distinctive truth opened up by the work of art. "The mere *factum est*" of Heidegger's work "initiates new worlds," but it also establishes their truth as "a unique and distinctive event," implying a relational composition that could never be otherwise (Stulberg 263–64).

The nuances of Heidegger's phenomenology reveal a work of art that lies beyond any capricious human manipulation just as much as Milton's divine alchemy, inhering in earth as a creative faculty, ultimately stands beyond the full understanding and fraudulent claims (or practice) of the "empirical alchemist." In *Paradise Lost*, usurping the secret art of transmutation never amounts to mastering its divinely inaugurated process of organic genesis, but only to mining its products and attempting to understand and manipulate their natural evolution. Heidegger's notion of preserving the work of art by standing within the truth opened up by the work, that is, by knowing what to do and what to want in the midst of the strife between world and earth (or extension and retention), suggests a creative impulse that, far from being contingent upon the whims of mankind's creative faculty, is primarily constrained by its own unique style or manner of unfolding. Its whole mechanics of correlating earth and sky, or mortals and divinities, in one relational context, its strife between "measure and unmeasure" (OWA 195), its articulation of human destiny in an unbroken sequence of correlated causes and effects: all these restraints on creativity suggest an artfully coordinated gathering of things, each of which falls into place primarily because that place is reserved specifically for it by way of contrast with, cause of, or consequence upon other touching components within a whole surrounding field of relativity. An emerging implication is that no human will, however collective and organized, can fully encompass this relativity so as to master its centuries-old unfolding as a particular world.

If Milton situates mankind in a world whose very earth contains God's preordained art of genesis and transmutation – a natural alchemy of life, riches, and magnificent structures – Heidegger's mankind, standing awestruck within the world initiated by its own artwork, must then inhabit the ontological supplements, corollaries, contrasts, and further relational consequences effected by the unfolding conditions of that world. This is why Heidegger's temple "first gives things their look and to men their outlook on themselves [, a view that] remains open as long as

the work is a work" (OWA 168). In other words, the composing act itself confines man to that work-specific mode of appearance of existing things in which man will invariably find and engage his manner of being. This is "the being that surges upward, growing of its own accord, *physis*" (OWA 184). By revealing its interrelated components in their correlative growth, the artwork will in effect have situated man in an unfolding outlook upon himself. Evidently, the work of art here takes the ontological and epistemological initiative, subjecting to its compositional self-disclosure even the human artist that first set the compositional enterprise in motion. Consequently, the work (as the active labour of composition) takes priority, and ascendancy, over its human creator even in the matter of its own preservation, which is prescribed primarily by the work itself: "The proper way to preserve the work is co-created and prescribed only and exclusively by the work" (OWA 193). This is why Heidegger must ultimately focus on the creative thrust as an end in itself, a thrust that becomes all the more conspicuous and extraordinary "the more cleanly it seems to cut all ties to human beings," thereby transporting us out of our "accustomed ties to world and earth" and into its own peculiar openness (OWA 191). It is the thrust of an "art hidden in nature [but that] becomes manifest only through the work" (OWA 195).

Concluding Comments

What further correlations, contrasts, and relational nuances may be said to emerge from a *gestalt* of creation that assimilates Milton's alchemical and Heidegger's phenomenological formulations of genesis? Some crucial overlaps between the two interpretative systems are inescapable within this *gestalt*, such as the common view that earth preserves divine or sacred prospects, lying dormant in its concealed matter until this extends into a lived world, be that divine, diabolic, human, or purely and independently artful. Another commonality in juxtaposing Milton's and Heidegger's paradigms of an artfully engendered world is their shared exclusion of pragmatic ends from the self-regulating and self-sufficient genesis of this lived world: Heidegger's self-unfolding truth fades when the artwork is reduced to equipmental use, and Milton's life-engendering alchemy diminishes into the pragmatic alchemist's derisory attempts to fix volatile substances once it is used merely to increase earthly riches.[2] A common field of perception sustained through these extended analogies would allow us to dwell in the very interplay, the progressively nuanced differentiality and relativity, arising between the respective traditions of creation. We read *Paradise Lost* and are persuaded that we dwell in God's divine alchemy of creation; we read Heidegger's phenomenology of art and are persuaded

[2] Even if, in his later work "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger includes all worldly things (even equipment) as products of the creative impulse, it is nevertheless its world-extending force and its expansion into a sacred realm that prevail, overshadowing all other practical uses to which the work of art might be put and in which its being would promptly disappear.

that we dwell in the unfolding world and truth generated by the artwork; but in bringing both traditions into mutual proximity we may also conceive ourselves as dwelling in the very growth of the meaning of genesis obtaining between its inherited discourses.

Even while Milton's sky-earth alchemy and Heidegger's earth-sky continuum start from contrasting points of departure, their meeting ground provides us with this intermediate space inhabited as the interpretative growth of the notion of genesis. As repeatedly implied in Paul Ricoeur's *Conflict of Interpretations*, we inhabit conflicts between interpretative systems that extend the documents of life in which our very being has been articulated. Moreover, to inhabit these conflicts between interpretations is to attain to new levels of meaningful being, or a surplus of meaning. Christian Norberg-Schulz sees Heidegger's Greek temple as an architectural poiesis allowing man to dwell poetically between the obscure earth, on which the temple rests, and the open sky, against which it towers (66–67). Milton's profaned alchemy has a comparable function when portrayed as an art lying intermediate between its earthly potential and its heavenly virtues, an art that can, in fact, go both ways: towards its worldly abuse as much as towards a reverential affirmation of its divine origins. But there is also a more fundamental sphere of creativity we might inhabit, and that is the language-world sustained by these inherited discourses of genesis, a linguistic order that allows its discursive traditions to be brought together in a renewed understanding.

By dwelling in this progressive *gestalt* of creativity, we situate ourselves in the very dynamics of newly arising perspectives on genesis. One such perspective is the insight that to inhabit our world is tantamount to inhabiting a work of art with diabolic as much as divine prospects. And this insight might well lead to further inquiry: for instance, could an artfully sustained world free itself from its initial – divine or human – authorship, allowing its supplements to grow out of its own relational dynamics? Only in our comprehensive *gestalt* can we see the anxiety already inscribed in Milton's subterranean alchemy – namely, an ongoing potential for genesis accessible to diabolic and human manipulation – become the very basis for Heidegger's self-engendering openness of the work of art. For it is Milton's dread of a world losing its divine author that Heidegger's phenomenology would eventually promote as an artwork gathering forth "its own possibilities" in the constant unconcealment of a world, an artwork whose authorship becomes "inconspicuous" as it comes to resemble, more and more, the "self-engendering process of nature (*physis*)" (Schalow 82). Our literary and philosophical traditions have long afforded us with such paradigm shifts on the intriguing subject of genesis, and to bring these shifts together in a nexus of divine, diabolic, human, or simply self-engendering creation goes beyond merely articulating our anxieties and fascination with the art of creating a world. To retrieve and juxtapose the inherited documents and articulations of genesis is also to belong to its effective history, by situating ourselves in the progressive interplay between its constituent discourses.

It is only by dwelling in this effective history of genesis that we begin to glimpse an intriguing development of the notion of dwelling itself: for is it not now evident that we have moved from dwelling in the natural alchemy of divine creation,

to dwelling in a world thrust out of earth by virtue of the human artwork, to dwelling in the language-world that maintains and reconfigures these poetic, philosophical, and other discursive systems of genesis? This last notion of dwelling remains greatly indebted to Heidegger's notion of inhabiting a world opened up by an artwork, but it also conceives of that world as consisting primarily of linguistic or symbolic orders reinterpreted by virtue of a productive distance from their discursive origins. This is why Ricoeur can argue that "the very structure of the sacred universe" depends on an ongoing symbolic correspondence between an event lost in time, such as creation, and our present linguistic and symbolic orders maintaining it, orders that intervene between time immemorial and the creative preservation of this time in our present awareness (*Interpretation Theory* 62). This creative tradition ensures that

> a temple always conforms to some celestial model. […] the hierogamy of earth and sky corresponds to the union between male and female as a correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Similarly there is a correspondence between the tillable soil and the feminine organ, between the fecundity of the earth and the maternal womb, between the sun and our eyes, semen and seeds, burial and the sowing of grain, birth and the return of spring.
>
> There is a triple correspondence between the body, houses, and the cosmos, which makes the pillars of a temple and our spinal columns symbolic of one another, just as there are correspondences between a roof and the skull, breath and wind, etc. This triple correspondence is also the reason why thresholds, doors, bridges, and narrow pathways outlined by the very act of inhabiting space and dwelling in it correspond to the homologous kinds of passage which rites of initiation help us to cross over in the critical moments of our pilgrimage through life: moments such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. (*Interpretation Theory* 62)

This passage on inhabiting our world as a progressive symbolic order incorporates both alchemical analogies (the correlation of the earth's fecundity to a maternal womb, or the correspondence of earth and sky to male and female) and a phenomenological continuity (the continuum between dwelling in a space of "thresholds, doors, bridges, and narrow pathways" and undergoing rites of passage such as "birth, puberty, marriage, and death"). The quotation from Ricoeur, in fact, corroborates my concluding comment: that we still dwell in Milton's sky-earth alchemy and Heidegger's earth-sky continuum, only now both paradigms of genesis are inhabited as a renewed language-world, a world opened up by an interpretative mediation between its different – poetic, philosophical, religious, mythical, and other – traditions of creation. It is this linguistically disclosed world that allows us to dwell in genesis as an ongoing amplification of its inherited discourses.

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Forces of the Cosmos in Alam Minangkabau: A Phenomenological Perspective

A.L. Samian

Abstract The literature of the Minangkabau tribe of the Malay World is rich with proverbs based on their view of 'nature and nurture'. By and large, they construe the world (*alam*) as an open book and a 'guru' into the mysteries of life. In this paper, the author will examine some of those proverbs based on the book *Kato Pusako Papatah Patitih Ajaran dan Filsafat Minangkabau*. Towards the end, an outline of their belief regarding the destiny of man, levels of reality and the gradation of what is occult and manifest is analysed within the unfolding drama between skies and earth.

Keywords Minangkabau tribe • *Kato Pusako* • *Peribahasa* (proverbs) • Cosmos • Oral tradition

Introduction

The Minangkabaus are the natives of Gunung Merapi (Merapi Mountain), in the valley of Pariangan and the land of Padang Panjang, West Sumatera. Some later migrated to West Malaysia, in particular to Negeri Sembilan. The most conspicuous aspect of their architecture is the buffalo-horn-shaped roof of their houses. For the purpose of this paper, what is interesting is that there are quite a number of Malay thinkers who are of Minangkabaus' origin even though most of them earn their livelihood working as farmers.[1] It is their close affinity with nature, 'as an open book', that permeates their thoughts.

The origins of the Minangkabau are depicted in their oral history known as *Tambo* (Batuah & Madjoindo 1957). It begins with 'once upon a time' or 'since time

[1] Notable ones include Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA) and Zainudddin Labay. The former, for example, was an autodidact and very prolific author, who has written more than 100 books on a wide array of subjects. His writings include *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck* (1966) and *Antara Fakta dan Khayal Tuanku Rao* (1974). See also A.L. Samian, 2011. Hamka's Perspective on Human Security, in *International Conference on the Making of New Asia* (Taiwan: Fuo Guang University, 2011).

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_19

immemorial…', whereby time is indefinite. It is related that in the beginning, Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain (Alexander the Great) had three princes. The eldest, Maharaja Alif became the King of Rome. The second son, Maharaja Depang, became the Emperor of China and the youngest, Maharaja Diraja, with his wife, and Cati Bilang Pandai, a philosopher, sailed to the south to Gunung Merapi (Merapi Mountain) in West Sumatera. One of his princesses, Princess Indah Juliah, tied the knot with another King, bequeathing a son, later known as Datuk Ketumanggunggan. Upon the death of Maharaja Diraja, Indah Juliah married Cati Bilang Pandai, conceiving Dato Pepatih Nan Sebatang. It is chiefly from these two princes, Datuk Ketumanggunggan and Dato Pepatih Nan Sebatang, that the Minangkabaus have the proverbs, the *Pepatah petitih*.[2]

The word 'Minangkabau' comes from a legend in their history. They were about to be conquered by a powerful foreign king and in order to deter the conquest, they agreed to a have a buffalo (thus the word *kabau*) duel with the invaders. The enemy had a huge buffalo yet the Minangkabau, after convening a historical meeting, decided strategically to match it with a calf by tying a sharp iron (*minang*) to its horn. After ensuring that the calf was deprived of milk, they released the starving calf to counter the huge stallion. Perceiving that the huge buffalo is its mother, the calf went underneath the bull and in the midst of trying to suckle it, fatally injured the bull. Needless to say, they won the duel without any bloodshed from both sides. From thereafter, they were known as the Minangkabau (iron-horned buffalo) tribe (Manggis 1971; Mansoer et al. 1970).

Apart from the oral history (*Tambo*), their literature is very rich in *peribahasa* (proverbs). By and large, the Minangkabau avoid direct confrontation. This communal behavior is reflected in their language which is ubiquitous with *peribahasa* (metaphors, allegories, adage)[3] which have interestingly close affinity with the cosmos, to the extent of an organic relationship. Most of these *peribahasa* are known as *Kato Pusako Pepatah Petitih* and it is its particular relationship with nature and their philosophies of life that we will in turn examine.

Cosmology

The Minangkabau views nature not merely as an open book, rather as a teacher (Nasroen 1971). The attitude of perceiving nature as an open book could be traced back as early as the advent of human civilization. Man knows by way of perception and experience, whether it is experiencing the sensibles or the insensibles. Of course

[2] There are several versions with regard to the details of the number of cousins and siblings but all agreed about the principle role of Dato' Ketumanggunggan and Dato' Pepatih Nan Sebatang. See M.Rashid Manggis, *Minangkabau, Sejarah Ringkas dan Adatnya*, (Padang: Sri Dharma, 1971).

[3] Minangkabau literature includes Pantun, Seloka, Gurindam, Kaba, Pepatah, Petitih, Mamang, Pituah, Pemeo dan Kias. Pantun, Seloka, Gurindam are very well known as part and parcel of Malay culture. The Kaba. Pepatah, Petitih *etc* are very much Minangkabaus'. See, for example, Navis, 1970. Sastera Tradisional Minangkabau, in *Himpunan Prasaran dan Kertas kerja Semianr Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Minangkabau*, Padang, Sumatera.

there are other modes of knowing, for example, by intuition, imagination, trial and error, yet experience remains as an important mode of knowing, be it the practical or the theoretical, scientific or purely mathematical experience. Paracelsus for example espoused the view that nature is the work of God, whereas the Scripture is the word of God.[4] These are taken as sources of knowledge. The Minangkabaus take it a step further by subscribing to the pedagogical position that not only is nature an open book but it also guides them in the pursuit of truth. Before we delve deeper, let us examine the concept of nature according to the Minangkabaus.

Nature

Alam Terkembang jadi Guru- Nature is *Alam*, i.e., the cosmos. It is not static but ever expanding (*terkembang*). It is created continuously. There is always something new in nature (Navis 1984). New in the sense of from non-existence to existence, that occupies space and time, points and instances, geometry and arithmetic, that is present and endures. By virtue of its newness, it is not sacred. Since it requires a creator, it is preconditioned by the existence and will of the Logos. That it is profane does not mean that it is unimportant or insignificant. Rather its newness implies our ignorance of its presence, thus it is important to be learned about it. And the best way to acquire knowledge concerning it is none other than to make it a teacher, namely a 'guru'. The attitude is to 'listen' and 'observe' it, not unlike listening and observing the teacher. Nature, thus created, is to be studied, certainly neither to be exploited nor manipulated, but to be respected and obeyed as well as managed. As a teacher, nature 'nurtures'. The Malay word '*Alam*, originates from the Arabic verbal noun '*ilm. Alam* means impressions, *alama* is synonymous with 'signposts'. Therefore *Alam* also signifies 'that by which one knows'. Since it is by way of '*alam* that one can know,[5] therefore '*alam*' is and should be elevated as a '*guru*' or a teacher. It's not a perfect teacher since it is new, not absolute, and because it is not absolute, it is not to be worshipped. In other words, *Alam* is a creation. The cosmos is a *makhluq*, yet a unique creation because of its stature as a teacher that nurtures. The cosmos is from the Divine, yet no part of It just as our shadows are from us but not part of us.

[4] The parallel between the "Words" of God (Scripture) and the "Works" of God (Nature) were espoused by many in the East and the West. Apart from Paracelsus, Copernicus appealed to theological argument in justifying the heliocentric theory and William Harvey likewise referred to the hermeneutic position in justifying the centrality of the heart . We should gravitate to God as implied in the Scripture (Words) because God is the center of the universe; ditto the Sun and the heart as the 'works' of God. See for instance A.G. Debus. *Man and Nature in the Renaissance*, Cambridge History of Science Series. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)

[5] Malay is a language spoken by 320 million people (270 million from Indonesia, and the rest mainly from Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Southern Thailand), considered as the fifth language of the world. For a more detailed esoteric exposition of the word *Alam*, see William C. Chittick "Reason, Intellect and Consciousness" in A-T Tymieniecka (ed.) *Reason, Spirit and the Sacral in the New Enlightenment* (New York: Springer, 2011)

A shadow is not the same with what is shadowed, yet it is not also different. There are the exoteric and esoteric aspects underlining the primordial relationship.

The cosmos is ever expanding, ever new and nurturing. The word 'guru' also points to its ability to inspire. It is by learning from nature that man could be inspired. There is an internal dimension to making nature a teacher, not so much as an object of study which is detached from the observer. As a teacher, nature is to be respected and obeyed. Respecting nature implies the importance of appreciating its existence. It is interesting to note that 'the expanding universe' is not something new to the Minangkabau. *Alam terkembang* and not *Alam mengembang* because '*terkembang*' showed that it is made to expand; it does not have the innate ability to expand by itself. So '*Alam'* is the 'works of God', not unlike the view of Paracelsus. It is by way of these 'works' of God that we can acquire knowledge. From *Alam* as a 'guru', the Minangkabau learn that there are fundamental laws of nature, the '*adat nan sabana adat*', i.e., the laws of the cosmos that govern the 'expanding universe'. Thus from '*Alam Terkembang jadi guru*' they have:

> *Adat nan sabana adat (The real laws of nature)*
> *Tak lapuk dek hujan (Unscathed by rain)*
> *Tak lekang dek panas (Unscorched by heat)*
> *Jika diinyak indak layu (If beaten will not weaken)*
> *Jika dibubuk indak mati (If done will not die)* (Indo 1999, *Kato Pusako*, 10).

Interestingly, in spite of the perceived unchangeable law of nature (*adat nan sabana adat*),[6] nature to them is not to be worshipped; it is not sacred and indeed profane. Even though nature is the best teacher, it is still a creation of the Divine, nothing more and nothing less.

Man

The Minangkabaus believe that man is a 'student of nature'. It is by being a student of nature that he can fulfill his destiny to create the matrix of creativity (*imaginatio creatrix*). With this knowledge about nature, man creates.[7] Practically, man needs tools, thus '*penakik pisau diraut'*. *Pisau* or knife, for that matter, iron or steel, enhances man's creativity. It is unthinkable for a man to survive in the tropical rain forest without a knife. It is man's earliest tool, the masons for instance, using knives to shape the earth. It is interesting to note that there is no emphasis on the pen in the culture of the Minangkabau, or the particular affinity between the pen and man. That nature is a teacher yet as a student the pen is not mentioned. In the tradition of universal scholasticism, or even more so in the history of civilization, no serious creative act could be done in the absence of the pen. There are many prolific thinkers who are of Minangkabau origins. The explanation is that the close affinity between *alam* as

[6] 'Adat nan sabana adat' also refers to the fundamental laws of the society. See Rihis K. Toha, (ed.) *Sejarah Kesusasteraan Melayu Klasik,* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor, 2011).

[7] That it is man's destiny to create is also a belief shared by the Brethren of Purity in the Middle Ages. See Detlev Quintern "On the Harmony of Spirituality" in A-T. Tymieniecka, ed. *op. cit*.

adat nan sabana adat. Adat according to the Minangkabau is also observation of the Scripture and the latter is written none other than with 'The Pen'. Therefore 'The Scripture' is the written Word of The Divine whereas Nature is His Works.

Man acts of creativity-air *setitik jadikan lautan* (From a drop of water we create the sea) and *tanah segengam jadikan gunung* (From a handful of earth, we create a mountain) shows the need to create from the two basic elements of the cosmos – earth and water and it has to be done stepwise. It is the earth that needs to be recreated. Createdness implies 'being expanded', a kind of Cartesian *res extensa*. The expansion of water – that is from a drop to an ocean, requires not a meagre theoretical and practical creativity; it is the destiny of man to create in his entire life. The worth of a man lies in his ability to create.[8] The Minangkabaus believe that the fact that man cannot create everything that he wishes to create is a case of Divine Immanent; the fact that man could not know everything that he wishes to know is a case of Divine Transcendent. Again, from '*alam terkembang jadi guru*', they have the traditional code of value:

> *Penakik pisau diraut* (Sharpen the knife we will)
> *Seludang jadikan nyiru* (Make a container from the palm leaves)
> *Cacang kayu jadi ukiran* (Make wood carving from leftover branches)
> *Air setitik jadi lautan* (Make an ocean from a drop of water)
> *Tanah sekepal jadi gunung* (Make a mountain from a handful of earth) (Indo 1999, *Kato Pusako*, 2)

Not everything is absolute. Pragmatism, according to the tribe, has its space and time, spatial and temporal value. The pragmatic Minangkabau man believes that:

> *Di mana batang bergulung di sana cendawan tumbuh* (Whereby the tree lies, thereby the mushroom grow)
> *Di mana ranting di patah di sana air disauk* (Whereby the branches are broken, thereby the water is taken)
> *Di mana bumi dipijak di sana langit dijunjung* (Whereby the ground is trodden, thereby the sky is beholden)
> *Di mana negeri diduduk di sana adat dipakai* (Whereby the country we reside, thereby are our social rites) (Indo 1999, *Kato Pusako*, 14).

In other words, in the hierarchy of Minangkabau values, not everything is absolute and to be pragmatic is also 'to live according to the teaching of nature'.

The Logos

Alam and man are created, *(creatio ex nihilo)*. Alam is 'terkembang', i.e., recreated, and man, by virtue of being created, has the innate ability and propensity to create. What is the nature of the relationship between The Creator and these two creations (man and nature) according to the Minangkabaus?

[8] I have argued at another occasion that it is his product of creativity, based upon arithmetic and geometry, that differentiates one man from another. For that matter, I have defined mathematics as 'a language of creativity based upon arithmetic and geometry'. See A.L. Samian, Realiti Ruang, Masa dan Pematematikan, *Sari-International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation* (28) (1) (2010) pp. 277–287.

That man creates is because The Creator, The Logos, creates. The Cosmos is a phenomenon; Man likewise is a phenomenon. However, unlike nature, man is accountable primarily because of his given ability to create. If he is not accountable, then Justice and The Good do not exist. But it is impossible for the The Just and The Good not to exist because, paraphrasing Rousseau, 'All men love good and what they find good, it is in judging what is good that they go wrong' (*Social Contract*, 4.7). Besides, 'values', whether intrinsic or extrinsic, esoteric or exoteric, are real. The values we live by shape the world we live in. We create in tandem with our values. It is impossible to imagine a valueless world since everything that is created has value.

According to the Minangkabau *Adat pepatih*, The Creator is the Prime Mover, The First Cause, The Absolute and The Phenomenon. Although we learn about Him by way of the Cosmos, The *Alam*, yet He could not be known because He is greater than whatever great we could think of Him. He is always *more* than what we could comprehend. Since we cannot know Him, we can only 'recognize' Him, not His Essence but His Divine Unity. Therefore the *pepatih* saying, '*Menulis dari Alif, membilang dari Esa'* (In writing, we begin from Aleph, in counting, we begin from Unity) and the saying of the traditionalists, 'He who recognizes himself recognizes his Lord'.

Since the Creator, by way of His Works and His Words, are absolute, man therefore could only create in the sense that 'man creates but God decrees', or rather, 'man proposes God disposes' (*Manusia punya asa, Tuhan punya Kuasa*). Since from nothing nothing can come and into nothing nothing can return, then The Divine is 'Everything there is', the Logos is The Creator and The Destroyer; for everything created there is a seed of destruction in it.

It is because The Divine is Omnipotent and Omniscient, there is imperfection in man and nature, namely, 'the phenomena'. Since the Creator designs the sublime and the mundane in such a way that there is a uniformity in apparent chaos or vice versa, there is the '*adat nan sabana adat'*, natural laws that '*dilasak indak layu, di bubuik tidak mati*' (beaten yet did not break, done yet did not die).

However, the finiteness of the *Alam*, the cosmos, is to be understood in the sense of relative infiniteness. The Phenomenon is the Absolute Infinite, Existence Itself (*Yang Maha Ada*) where Essence and Existence have no distinction, the effacement of polarity. The Phenomena is, but the glimmers of The Phenomenon, it is not The Phenomenon, not Existence Itself, because it is from It, not a part of It.[9] The impossibility of verbalizing this internal experience, the esoteric aspect of creativity, in totality culminates in the categorically unreserved acceptance of the symbolic act of creation of The Divine as '*Jadilah!*' (Be!), which negates all further reduction. In the first act of creation, the verbal act is the primordial celestial music of the spheres. For if man, *qua* man, could have acquired absolute knowledge then the knowledge so acquired will be absolutely relative since it is self-evident that every man is ignorant of something. It is by way of the cosmos that he knows something – *Alam terkembang jadi guru (The expanding cosmos becomes our teacher).*

[9] The scholar of the Malay World, Nuruddin Ar-Raniri has argued that the world is, metaphorically, a shadow of the existence of the divine, i.e., from and not a part of Existence Itself. See Riris K. Toha- Sarumpaet (ed.) *op. cit*.

Thus:

Ampek macam ulemu pengetahuan (Four kinds of knowledge)
Partamo ulemu pengetahuan tentang diri (First is knowledge about the Self)
Kaduo ulemu pengetahuan tentang orang lain (Second is knowledge about Others)
Katigo ulemu pengetahuan pada Alam (Third is knowledge about the Cosmos)
Keampek ulemu pengetahuan tahu pada nan Maha Kuaso[10] (Fourth is knowledge about The Divine)

(Indo 1999, *Kato Pusako*, 80–81).

The Logos can only be known as He wishes to be known. He creates because He wishes to create and no other. The Logos, is the First Cause, The Unmoved Mover, The Ultimate Cause and the Ultimate Effect for the Effect would not exist in the absence of the Cause. This esoteric experience is not fully communicable by way of words since words do have their limit. In a similar vein, music is the expression of the inexpressible. We can only relate so much. Words are expressions of thought, not thought itself. Thoughts are 'growth' of ideas, and ideas are offshoots of intention, and intention, ultimately, are individuation of the spirit which are not communal, i.e., shared. As St. Augustine and Al-Ghazzali would acquiesce, each spirit is unique. The essence, or worth of a man, hence, lies in his spirit even though man does not constitute spirit alone. In the hierarchy of reality, the spirit is the most real, the shadow of The Real, the occult and the manifest, the internal phenomena which is none other than from the *Noumena* itself, but not part of the Noumena. As the Creator is absolute, the Divine could only be known by His Divine Names which is none other than 'Aspects of Himself' which He Choseth to reveal. It is glimmers of these Aspects that could be found in the phenomena of The-Cosmos-and-Man in the belief of the Minangkabaus.

Conclusion

The book *Kato Pusako Papatah Patitih Ajaran dan Filsafat Minangkabau* is a documentation of 'oral tradition' on the wisdom and beatitude of the Minangkabaus. It is interesting to note that traditionally speaking, the Minangkabaus are former adherents of the world's major religions. It is not surprising that these proverbs are traditional human wisdom that are not alien to their worldviews. They are not inductivists, reductionists, positivists, relativists, transcendentalists or immanentalists proper. At the very least, their cosmology underlies the pervasive existence of the Ultimate Real, the Logos and Existence Itself which points to The Unity-of-Everything-There-Is-Alive in the unfolding drama between skies and earth.

[10]The belief in ultimately '4' classifications (or its multiples i.e., 8, 12, 16 etc.) in branches of cosmologies could be found in major traditional belief, for example, the 4 elements of nature, the Aristotelian 4 causes (material, formal, efficient, final cause), the spiritual world as the fourth dimension, the Scriptural importance of 40 days, the 12 disciples of Christ, implying that '4' is sufficient and sustainable.

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Language, Meaning, and Culture: Research in the Humanities

Lawrence Kimmel

Abstract Human beings are story-telling animals. We play out our lives in complex and interactive narratives that constitute our individual and collective lives; taken altogether, such narratives constitute the self-understanding of a people and time. It should be acknowledged that this remains relative and a relational matter; that there exists no master-narrative in the sense that there is a final way that the world is. There is no one way that things or people must be; this is so of the physical world of objects no less than the life-world of human beings. Even so, as Physics aspires to a full account of the relations of things in a systematic and formal theory, Humanistic studies can aspire to a full account of the relations of human beings in an informal and unsystematic narrative. Even if not aspiring to a closed theoretical system, a narrative of cultural life can be assimilated into a coherent conceptual frame and historical account.

Keywords Research methods • Story-telling • Knowledge • Culture • Language

It may be helpful, in a prefatory manner, to give some background notes on what I believe to be the general area of research to which my comments in this essay will be directed—qualitative research. *Qualitative research* as a technical expression refers to an activity that to my knowledge I have never done. As a philosopher I do research but it has no further description than 'scholarship.' Qualitative research on my understanding seems to be a social science expression that intends to distinguish it from *quantitative* research. Since perhaps the seventeenth century and the emergence of modern science, quantitative analysis has become the model of respectable research procedure, and qualitative research has had to accommodate itself to a theoretical aside. The power of quantitative analysis is arguably and precisely that of the discounting of differences (that involves the exact refining and measurable control of unit variables.) The language of mathematics is the paradigm here: we discount the difference between apples and oranges, cabbages and cannibals in order to count them—in the simplicity of that reduction lies the quantificational elegance and power of mathematics.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_20

There are two general historical points of departure and ensuing legacies that define science research, one formal, one empirical. The former began with Descartes' dictum of methodological doubt: (*Discourse on Method*) to reach certainty, one must begin by doubting everything and whatever survives this thoroughgoing doubt is then indubitably true. Descartes had been scandalized by his education from religious scholars who, on his account, would cite various and kinds of authority from Aristotle to Scripture and Church Tradition as the occasion appealed. His solution was to find a method that provided a single and consistent reference: assume what you want to prove is false, and then show that it is not. The idea was to establish an absolute rule of form and point of departure that would ensure genuine knowledge and certainty. Recall Descartes' primary example was the *Cogito* (*Meditations on First Philosophy*)—to show that even in doubting everything, one cannot finally doubt that one is doubting, which then becomes indubitable on the formal rule of non-contradiction. Logical clarity becomes the ideal of science on this first leg of historical legacy.

A second source of scientific method different in kind is found in Francis Bacon's dictums concerning empirical research. There is a tradition that attributes to Bacon the story of a medieval conference that was held where one of the panels concerned the question of the number of teeth in a horse's mouth. The monks argued heatedly on the issue in the manner of the times, citing different authorities from Aristotle and Pliny to Boethius and John of Salisbury but could come to no resolution. Finally one novitiate monk, new to such procedures, raised his hand and suggested that perhaps they should go get a horse and count its teeth. He was summarily shouted down and dismissed. It is true, of course, that counting the teeth in one horse's mouth does not answer the conference question, but that only shows there may be something wrong with the question. The story, which I have never been able to trace in Bacon's written work (originally written in Latin), was in any case of course apocryphal and related for its humor, but it fits the empirical point of his philosophical thesis . He had in mind the rule that one must *investigate* the world, not simply think about it. The rule might be: *don't think—look*! Bacon also had the important early empirical insight that the value of knowledge is not that it yields truth, but rather that it generates power.

In later times we tend to separate science and technology in this way: that science is somehow simply about knowledge, and technology the employment of that knowledge. But the point is that both center in the accumulation and exercise of power: whether in quantification, computation and the control of variables and binding inference, or in the ordered empowerment of industry and developmental systems. In conceptual terms these two aspects of science—rational and empirical—were brought together in the Enlightenment by Kant: simply stated, the point is that concepts without percepts are empty, percepts without concepts are blind—in effect we not only look through our language at the world, the world that we know is a construction of our language. Post-modern writers, such as Derrida and Foucault (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*) through a commitment to open forms of discourse, have made much of and have extended this constructivist perspective and at least as I understand it, qualitative research is also a beneficiary in drawing on the logic of this transcendental perspective.

Hannah Arendt (*The Human Condition*) once referred to sociology and anthropology as 'the debunking sciences.' She had in mind research into objective facts as against the otherwise confident ease of social presumptions and cultural pretension. In more recent years, however, under post-modern perspectives (whatever pretensions that might cover), there is no longer the same confidence about objective facts. The sociology of knowledge, as well as philosophical analysis of language use and meaning, has brought into question the idea of the objective neutrality of any account. Even within the natural and physical sciences we have come to factor-in the idea that all observation is 'theory laden'; more simply, that all seeing is 'seeing as…' In the sciences, no less than in politics, we have become suspicious. Objectivity is now widely regarded as relational and contextual—it must be argued for, as against pre-judicial subjectivity.

The upshot of contemporary epistemology in its most radical form contends that there is no given or 'absolute' connection between language and world. Positivism had claimed, in Wittgenstein's expression (*Tractatus*), a complete description of reality, of the world as 'everything that is the case', the totality not of things, but of facts. If we know all of the facts, then we have a complete description of the world. Further, the idea was that if language could be 'corrected', if we could *re-form* language to consist simply of facts—to rid language of the figurative and emotive, from the obfuscating confusions of values, emotional distortions—then science would be the beneficiary, and thus become authoritative for human life. In political terms this would make the language of science total-authoritarian—and thus the rule of science totalitarian. The problem with this program among other things is, of course, that human life and the life-world of human beings is not reducible to a language of facts. If we are plainly and inclusively to describe the world in philosophical terms, we should rather say it is not the totality of things *or* facts, but the *totality of meaning*. As we will note in more detail later, it would be to the point, but not quite correct, to say that there are no facts, only interpretations. But that too, is overweening: not everything can be an interpretation. One must start somewhere, even if that grounding is ultimately a postulate.

This background discussion brings us again to the issue of qualitative research and to the question of culture and relation to a philosophy of culture. We are, all of us, born into a language; we grow up learning both facts and values in a jumble of cross-referenced networks and language games. We view the world, as Aristotle suggests (*Rhetoric*), through our shared natural language. But as we develop, we learn to be self-conscious and critical of that language and to extend it in complex ways and forms of life. But early on and in quite ordinary ways we begin to do qualitative research. The logic of knowledge in its simplest form consists in two moments, that of making distinctions, and that of making connections. The world in the sense of knowledge only appears in iterating and distinguishing things from the root reality. In the absence of language, we open our eyes to a manifold of appearance—there is only 'there'. It is only with language that we distinguish 'things' at all. If I were to first open my eyes in the absence of language there would only be a chaotic cluster of color: as I look out now I can imagine the emergence of distinctions*: boy/sidewalk/tree/..building*…and then of course there would be the added

moment of connecting things in various ways—the boy *is on* the sidewalk, *by* the tree, *in front of* the building…

We could begin our story of story-telling, of research and writing, long before the seventeenth century. In the Classical period of Greek culture, the logic and methods of Plato and Aristotle can be distinguished by noting that the former was a mathematician by training and intuition who aspired to a complete system, a monistic synoptic vision of the whole; the latter was a biologist who was attracted to the multiversity of life forms and so provided accounts in terms of a pluralistic field of variable relationships. The one was searching for a vision of the whole, the other for a frame of referencing difference. Whether or not, as has been suggested, one can understand Western intellectual history as a series of footnotes to these two seminal thinkers, it is clear that mathematical order and system, as well as experiential richness, are hallmarks of human understanding. Research in the modern sense strives to sharpen the clarity of systematic order and add detail to the wealth of our perception, but it is well to acknowledge that the whole of our work turns in the cultural socket of these original thinkers.

Qualitative research in the diversity of its forms contributes its measure to the quality of things as inquiry into the density and richness, the diversity and relationships that exist in and of ideas and things. We have taken these initial moments to ask a very simple question: in "doing research", what is it, really, that we are doing? The philosophical counsel in beginning any inquiry is always to make sure we try to *think what it is we are doing* …and the cultural correlative to this is that… in so doing, *what is it we are becoming*? Reflect for a moment on the *meaning* of the expression 'to *do* re-search: to search for…' to look again, more deeply, in greater scope, with greater clarity… It may be useful to note the presumption in searching that we have some idea of what it is we are looking for. To ask a question is in some sense to know at least what will count as an answer. Even though, as we have seen, we are not looking to verify a hypothesis—or as later corrections insist, to formulate a hypothesis that is in principle falsifiable (Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*)—we should still have some sense of the limits of qualitative inquiry.

At some point in contemporary intellectual history the concepts of 'Identity' and 'Essence' faded. The traditional confidence in searching out eternal verities—for example setting out the essence of the True, the Good, the Beautiful, or the Sacred—in any sense of uppercase identity simply dissolved. In place of defining identity in terms of essence we began to think of the task as description in terms of difference. We could mark the beginning of this particular form of debunking in Nietzsche's insistence that there are no facts only interpretations, that any claims to truth are framed within a language best understood as 'an army of metaphors.' More recently and familiarly, this idea is reiterated in Derrida's (*L'Ecriture et la différence*)—language of sense as '*differance'*. He deliberately misspells '*difference'* to underscore the two different meanings of the word in French, in which it can mean both *to differ*, and *to defer*, the point being to underscore the idea that every expression is in an important sense indeterminate, so that no final account of meaning is self-contained—there is always an erasure, or better, a ghost line to another expression, which leads to yet another, etc.

The philosophy of culture, as I teach and write about it, searches out paradigms in terms of which we can account for particular cultures but at the same time construct a narrative of the development of common human expressions of identity and community. This is necessarily a broad gauge inquiry—someone, I think Ambrose Bierce (*The Devil's Lexicographer*), once humorously described history as 'broad gauge gossip.' Research into the myriad forms of expression and life recorded and portrayed in the art, literature and history available to us leaves at least a residual sense that there have been root values endemic to any and every historical culture. The distinctly human passion to discover and give voice to what is true, good, beautiful, or sacred seems a part of our cultural DNA. These are not always distinct categories of appraisal in a given culture, but every known culture and period seems to have had a common investment in such values; it is only in the emphasis on a particular value, and in the details of the answers to these questions that one finds distinctive differences toward the identity of a culture or era. Most often the answers to these fundamental questions (and values) run-together or overlap in a way that informs the character—the ethos—of a people and time.

Liberal studies, sometimes contrasted with scientific studies, are directed to the life-world—the *Lebenswelt*—of human beings, to the total range of those activities and expressions in terms of which human beings come to understand themselves as human beings. The special importance of research in the Humanities, again as sometimes contrasted with scientific research, is not that it achieves objective facts under some neutral script, but that it employs, as Aristotle first recommended, rhetorical strategies and the use of metaphorical discourse to open up possibilities of insight into deeper human aspects of a tradition or culture. The search is certainly for knowledge, but of a kind leading to an inclusive understanding not contingent upon verification. Nor is a theoretical structure required for such research. Scholarship in the Humanities—whether in history, literature, religion, or philosophy—is most often conducted to uncover or discover common values that continue to inform and determine our collective lives and future prospects.

The philosophical inclination is to frame all activities either from some conception of human nature, or alternatively to understand the variations that have developed in cultures from a response to the human condition, that is, to the conditions under which human life is given. This is not a straight-forward task in any event. It has been a matter of historical dispute and cultural differences in expression how to regard the level of life that can legitimately be called *human*. A creature born of woman that spends the effort of its entire existence simply laboring to live, living to labor, an *animal laborans* (Hannah Arendt*: The Human Condition*), is arguably not living a human life, even if one grants it to be a human being. Or perhaps that will not do either, an organism reduced to the contingencies of survival again might argue against calling that being human…. There are many kinds, models, and methods of research directed to argued results. It may be useful, however, to address a more elemental consideration in the idea of research itself.

The philosopher's task, as we have seen, and as it was historically conceived (and perhaps more recently abandoned) is to propose elemental questions—questions about questions, in a regressive not progressive manner, to reach the root meaning of some

idea or activity, some definitive expression or concept. Socrates seemed to address the point of humanistic activity as coming to understand what it is we already know. It is in the light of this idea we have addressed this odd and seemingly simple-minded question about research as an activity of *re*-searching, of searching…*again*. It is as if we have missed something and feel the need to look more closely, or more carefully, in broader scope, in greater depth… But the implication is also that we must know something of what we are looking for, else we should not know when we find it.

An interest in the social world may be contrasted once again with the physical world. As a way of speaking, of course: there are, for purposes of comparison, the many worlds as described by physics, biology, psychology, economics…each distinctive disciplines with languages that in a sense address, describe, define, explain… different worlds, of objects and organisms, events, processes and thoughts. Early in the last century the Positivist program developed out of progressively successful inquiries in the physical sciences. The thought was that if we could develop a critical language of description that simply and exclusively dealt with facts, stated in propositions that could be tested and verified, then we could have complete confidence that all things knowable could be known. The operational *mantra* for the Positivists was that the meaning of any term or concept was the means of its verification. There was a vigorous theoretical and social effort to reform at least the language of inquiry so that legitimate research would deal exclusively with and result in a totality of facts. The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* of Wittgenstein became the secular bible of the Positivist movement, formulating the root idea that 'the world is everything that is the case'—the totality not of things, but of facts. The meaningful world, the world of knowledge, is the totality of facts. It is not difficult to see the model context here is the field of the physical sciences. According to the Positivists, the world is seen, in its knowable totality, through the uncompromising and objective perspective of science. The attempt, in this language reform, was to set the parameters of inquiry to exclude any discourse not reducible to the rule of meaning that required objective verification.

I should like to say a few more things about the *Tractatus*. In his preface to a book that contains only seven propositions, but a book that revolutionized thinking about logic and language Wittgenstein makes the following remark that sets the stage for the whole: '*What can be said at all can be said clearly, and what cannot be talked about must be passed over in silence.*' There is one proposition in subalternate support of the sixth proposition (6.52) in this early manifesto that I should also like to cite here—for in a sense my comments in this essay are a response to this further claim: '6.52 *We feel that even when all possible scientific answers have been given, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course then there are no questions left, and this itself is the answer.*' There are two recommendations here that were seriously leveled with respect to the comprehensive sense of science determining sensible discourse, and the relegation of all else to silence (i.e. discourse outside the legitimate—i.e. scientific—boundaries of inquiry and truth). I think, as the later Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* also thought, that there are indeed and in fact questions left, and that a significant aspect of qualitative inquiry and cultural studies is an investigation of just that significant silence of which science itself is silent.

This may be too dramatic and overstepping bounds and those binds which non-scientific studies share with all research. But the point is, echoing Pascal (*Pensées*), that intuition and insight may find reasons that Reason does not know. If as Hamlet claimed at the end that 'the rest is silence,' he also pointed out to Horatio earlier (William Shakespeare: *Hamlet*) that there are more things in heaven and earth (ghosts speaking, brothers murdering—i.e. things in the real world outside the pale of reason and moral understanding) than are accounted for in any system of thought. Cultural research in the humanities is, and must remain, open to this real world not reducible to the legitimacy of science and propositional form.

This is perhaps the point at which I should make clear that while my remarks are referenced to the field of 'qualitative research' this essay is not itself an exercise in such research. My intention is rather to show in an essay form what alternative ways humanistic studies can be set apart from a "scientific" orientation most particularly in the philosophy of culture. I am suggesting that in this, and perhaps other cases, a different approach from that of business as usual in 'research' is invited or required.

In any event, if we are to do meaningful research within this alternative and broad frame of a philosophy of culture, we must look again and more deeply at those elemental values that shape a people or time and decide what boundaries are set in such a frame. I think, unlike the simplicity of the positivist program, there is no given set or settled frame of inquiry for such research. One must follow up on one's intuitions wherever they lead. Although the field of cultural activities from physics and politics to poetry and picnics is essentially inexhaustible, judging from social science and anthropological research one might infer that there *is* no 'Culture', singular and upper case. The contemporary perspective from these sciences seems to presume that there is no Culture 'as such', that there are only particular and different cultures (plural and lower case), different times, different contexts and conditions of development, etc. Further, there is an implicit warning that any attempt to speak of *culture-writ-large* as if it were a category which one might use to bring into perspective a comprehensive range and development of human activity would necessarily involve interpreting the whole of history reduced to the perspective of one's own time and culture—one would only be spinning out a narrative of one's own biases.

I doubt I will need to argue that this is a common assumption of contemporary social anthropology. As a case in point, I once had a proposal before a faculty committee to fund research in which I intended to trace common features in the oral traditions of culture. Part of this was to see if I could interpret the Native American tribal cultures in terms of the pre-classical oral tradition of the archaic Greeks. An anthropologist on the committee, I later was told, argued that a given culture can only be understood on its own terms and not deliberately interpreted, that is distorted, through the lens of a different or alien culture. He objected that one must not superimpose one culture upon another—raising the *spectre* of cultural colonialism as it were—and insisted moreover, there *is* no Native American culture, or indeed Native Americans, that there are only different tribal cultures among what we mistakenly call Native Americans….well, you see the gist and perhaps the logic of his argument. In any event the committee did, and their response was that I should re-write and re-submit the proposal directing research to only one distinct and clearly delineated culture. I went ahead with my research without their funding. Research

in philosophy is of a different kind and order than that of social anthropology *of course*, nor did I want to have to argue that with the committee. Social science is perhaps understandably concerned to sanitize a method to minimalize the contribution of one's own perspective—personal, professional, social, historical, etc.—and then provide the most neutral value-free analysis possible. While this is an admirable endeavor, it is not one that must be universally adopted in cultural research.

I am in agreement with that aspect of social research that has benefitted from insights of the sociology of knowledge (as well as from post-modern, deconstructive, and the newer reaches of pragmatism (Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*)) that while one should indeed reduce the possible contamination of bias, one must also concede that all inquiry is value-laden. It may be, rather, that the idea is less to rid oneself of pre-judgments than to make certain that one is aware of the degree of intrusion of those judgments. Moreover, if one is persuaded that cultures develop in terms of value-commitments then one need be sensitive to the importance of those values in terms she can understand. If one begins with the postulate that every culture will have a concept—that is the values—of what is real, what is true, etc., then even if those *things which count as* 'real' and 'true' *differ*, there is still a basis for talking about common values—it is simply, in the language of paradox, that the valuation of those same values is different.

What I find myself arguing for here is the privilege of metaphor, of inquiry into culture and into the values which inform the language and activities through which we identify a given culture and ourselves in relation to that culture. As we have seen, this is first of all to acknowledge and insist upon a different paradigm from that of post-positivistic frames of reference. Prior to the exclusive currency of the language and discourse of facts were earlier suggestions as we have noted with Nietzsche, who argued with some persuasion if provocative excess that there are no facts, only interpretations. Wittgenstein later reminded us that not everything can be an interpretation, and he also later recanted on his *Tractatus* insistence (one however that the positivists continued to embrace as their own) that the world could be completely and fully understood as the totality of facts. In his later more informal *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein's revised view might be expressed: the world is *neither* the totality of things, *nor* of facts; it is the totality of (possible and ever shifting) *meaning*—i.e. a view that the intelligibility of the life-world extends to *whatever* is meaningful in the shared language of human beings—from taxes and trees, to neurons and neomorts, from Cindy Lou Who and King Lear to profit margins and surplus labor and so on to cabbages, kings, Ghosts, Goblins, and Things That go Bump in the Night. Think in this context of Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Pied Beauty*: "Glory be to God for dappled things/For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow/For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim…" Meaningful expression is *of course* not limited to propositional form, and our interest in understanding the world and human beings in it must be open to the disclosure of whatever we find articulated in utterly variable and indeterminate forms of discourse: poetry no less than politics, politics no less than physics or physiology.

So what if anything is singular or instructive about're-search' in the philosophy of culture? There are no field location digs, seldom if ever even field work, nor is a

laboratory relevant: scholarship is primarily critical review and commentary in a dialectical manner of what has been written by others. In this field, research is directed basically to and through the discourse of its own discipline. Philosophy tends to be commentary on philosophy, much as contemporary painting tends to be (interpreted as) critical commentary on the history of painting. Rather than pursue new subjects to paint, many painters focus on developing critical variations on earlier paintings and on the styles of earlier painters in the field of visual arts. Philosophy, from the view of an 'insider' even, seems sometimes to have exhausted the options of original insight. We should note here, as elsewhere, the obvious and important exception in some fields of phenomenological inquiry. Socratic discourse, in an oral tradition, was also an investigation of and through discourse, but initially and primarily it was a critical examination of the (public) discourse of his time. The Socratic 'laboratory' was the *Agora* of Athens, the original market-place of ideas. Even Plato, withdrawing into the *Academy*, picked up on the dialogical adventures of Socrates in critically examining the flaws in the rhetoric of the public discourse of the Sophists. The combination of those two formidable teachers has in some way formed the comportment and perspective of all later philosophy that investigates the flaws as well as the sometimes unnoticed linkages between those public languages that inform and frame the continuing tradition of cultural activity—whether languages of the sciences or arts, of sacred antiquities of an earlier era, or the political and social antics of a secular present.

Apart from the architectural edifice of Plato's Idealist system that aspired to a 'synoptic vision' of the intelligible world, Plato provided a cultural critique of the rhetorical conceits and the emotive excesses of the literary and social traditions of the time, including the uncritical acceptance of the Homeric *Epics* as sacred, and of the alleged moral lessons embodied in the heroic traditions of tragic drama. However, he overstated the case against, and undervalued the contributions of literature and the public discourse of the Sophists. Socrates and the idealist leanings of Plato endured critical review in their turn through the comic commentaries of Aristophanes. The playful critique of Socratic discourse in *The Clouds* is more humorously illuminating than critically devastating, but it tends to put things back into balance. Parenthetically, Aristophanes' play is often cited in later philosophy as a case of mistaking Socrates as a Sophist, an allegation that Plato took pains to defend against in *The Apology* in the more serious case of Socrates on trial for his life.

We might further note that it is in again in a different genre, but not a major difference in thinking when we look at the work of Thucydides, the first critical historian in Western intellectual thought. The domain of his interests is of course the murderous and lengthy war of the Peloponnesus between the major powers of Athens and the Lacedemonians and their allies. In order to give a critical account of the events of the war, to explain and enable understanding, Thucydides provided not only descriptions of actions, but an interpretation of motives through dialog and speeches, and through attributed or transparent motives that would serve to explain the meaning of not only the events but of the war, and it should be noted, providing insight into war itself. It may be appropriate here to consider one example of the resources available to us. In Thucydides' *History*, in the well-known chapter on the

"Melian Dialogue" and in which Thucydides typically supplies extended interpretive expression, he documents not only the predictable self-indulgence of a superior force which great Athens has brought against the small Island of Melos, but the discourse serves as a political testament for the future history of political negotiation and human engagement. The Athenian envoys declaim to the Melian leaders that 'You know as well as we do that as the world goes the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.' Similar expressions of this point can be found among the writings of the Greek Tragic Dramatists no less than in yesterday's newspaper. The point is that our understanding of these ancient texts and their resonance with our own times depends on the fact that human beings have grown no new emotions since coming out of Eden and down from the trees, and our cultural research draws on this fact. Koheleth's proclamation that there is nothing new under the sun is surely an exaggeration, but wherever we find ambition and greed we may be confident that there are traces that reach into culture and through history to its origins. Our cultural research depends on such paradigms of human expectation.

The point I want to make in this brief historical review of reference is that the life-world of human beings is made meaningful and manifest in the language use of a culture. Language frames and constitutes our lives as meaningful, and the further point is that human beings are logo-centric creatures, we have a fundamental need for meaning without which we are, as individuals and peoples, lost to ourselves, as Viktor Frankl (*Man's Search for Meaning*) memorably recorded of his experience in *Auschwitz*. Not only do we look at the world through the language into which we are born, as Aristotle put the case, but we construct our world through language, as Kant later demonstrated. We learn our values and the meaning of our shared lives and world as and in the learning of language. Indeed it is in the sharing of a language that a community is formed, and through which a people discover and express their identity.

Although research in the humanities is thus fundamentally limited to an inquiry into language use, into the range of expressions that inform and define a culture, it is important to recall the crucial and indelible relation between language and life. Human beings are story-telling animals. We play out our lives in complex and interactive narratives that constitute our individual and collective lives; taken altogether, such narratives constitute the self-understanding of a people and time. It should be acknowledged that this remains relative and a relational matter; that there exists no master-narrative in the sense that there is a final way that the world is. There is no one way that things or people must be; this is so of the physical world of objects no less than the life-world of human beings. Even so, as Physics aspires to a full account of the relations of things in a systematic and formal theory, Humanistic studies can aspire to a full account of the relations of human beings in an informal and unsystematic narrative. Even if not aspiring to a closed theoretical system, a narrative of cultural life can be assimilated into a conceptual frame and historical account.

That said, any contemporary account must take notice of the so-called 'prophets of suspicion'—Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud—whose work collectively has seriously undermined confidence in any pretensions of comprehensive narrative inclusion, whether political, religious, historical or scientific. Whether a discipline or language

is theoretically or rhetorically formed, it remains folded into a narrative and set of value assumptions about the activities in that discipline. Marx put it that Man does not have a nature, he has a history (*Theses on Feuerbach*) We are reminded more recently that Science too, has a history, and so is informed by a narrative which consists in a record of fundamental paradigm shifts. It is a conceit to think that any field of language (the language of physics no less than that of politics and poetry) is free of historical development, free of a genealogical accountability. Nietzsche (*Genealogy of Morals*) insisted on the need for a re-valuation of all values; for example we should ask whether morality is really moral, whether the values to which we are committed are in fact valuable. Marx, in turn, argued that the proclaimed ideals that frame the morality of politics are rather ideologies that merely rationalize political interests. And finally, Freud developed a whole system of symptomatic suspicions about any rational justification of individual motives and social behavior. My point, is that these skeptical thinkers, however suspicious of rational discourse in culture, are nevertheless in the same modality of inquiry as Socrates, Plato, Aristophanes, Sophocles, Thucydides and Aristotle. All of these writers provide textual resources as well as insights into the verities, variations, and variabilites of culture.

I have tried to review and analyze in this essay part of the range of resources on which one can draw in research in the humanities and in 'liberal' studies as contrasted with 'scientific' studies. The importance of such research must be found independently of any intent to demonstrate some theoretical hypothesis, nor does its value reside finally even in the securing of fact—certainly not in a system of facts. It is rather concerned to disclose a variegated fabric of meaning in the shared and collective lives of human beings. Its collective aim is to open up possibilities for insight, intuitions no less than inferences into the deeper aspects of a tradition and the inheritance of culture that will better help us to understand our own times and projects.

It is well, finally, to recall Santayana's warning (*The Life of Reason*) about the failure to understand our own history as it might apply to cultural inquiry: while science may make the world possible and though poetry makes nothing happen, both activities together contribute to the fuller meaning of cultural life. The greater ambition of philosophical inquiry into the many languages of culture is, among other things, to find those ghost threads that lead through the whole diversity of the recorded past as it bleeds into our future.

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Part VI

Ringing

Kimiyo Murata-Soraci

The fittingness of the saying of being, as the proper sending of truth is the first law of thinking.

–Heidegger

Abstract In the current climate of globalism/globalization, it seems to have become increasingly difficult for us to take time in understanding the discourse of the other and take delight in a nonvoluntary encounter with the other. This paper will present the scene of "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer" and explore the ways in which we can genuinely belong to one another solely by attuned hearing and speaking of language.

Keywords Dialogue • Heidegger • Hearing • Speaking • Graciousness • Shunzei

Crossing across skies and a rotation of day and night, a Japanese scholar comes to visit Heidegger. This rare visitation (訪れ) of the other sets a scene of dialogue (Gespräch) in "A Dialogue On language between a Japanese and an Inquirer." (1953–54)

Since the visitor is a compatriot of mine, let me speak a few words about the Japanese language "to visit." To visit a person or a site, we say in Japanese "otozureru" (訪れる). This usage originates in the Japanese folk Shinto tradition wherein the word meant the unpredictable coming-and-going of Kami who descends from a vault of heaven to a site of human dwelling to interact with humans or things.[1] Although the dialogue at hand has nothing to do with transcendence and presence of sacred other, the Japanese word holds a certain relevance because of an unheard way by which Kami's presencing (otozure 訪れ) is made known to a human host in the pure tolling of sounds (oto音) brought about (tureru 連れる) by coming to presence of Kami. To sense an imperceptible sign-al and receive the other, a human host must be all ears. S/he is called to keep it open in a balanced position of vigilant

[1] Richard B. Pilgrim, "Intervals (Ma) in Space and Time" in *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives,* ed. Charles Wei-Hsun Fu and Steven Heine (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 68.

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_21

receptivity. Bearing in mind an ancient call for alert hearing comportment for a genuine encounter with the other, let us now attend the scene of the "Dialogue."

The dialogue unfolds "from out of language's reality, and be led to its reality." (*OWL*, 51)[2] This impersonal and nonvoluntary origination and destination of their dialogue creates a general atmosphere of opaqueness and an edgy mood to which we the reader/audience are invited to accompany the two players' journeying (erfahren) to the *Wesen* of language.[3] And yet, as the dialogue unfolds, their stern composure of "[l]et [ting] language be experienced as language"[4] appears to us counter-intuitive despite a certain degree of familiarity in terms of form and content of the dialogue.

In a course of their conversation, we come to gather, in snapshots, their worldly identities, circles of friendships and their indirect personal connection from the period of *Being and Time* (1927), and their different intellectual and cultural heritages as well. The topics of language, philosophy, and aesthetics and remarking of the Western and East Asian differences and similarities on these subjects overflood in our academic parlance. The form of presentation, too, has its long standing usage in the lineage of Platonic dialogues. Nevertheless, witnessing the two scholars making out of play the arsenal of their disciplined methods, logic and grammar for assertoric statements,[5] and above all their will to ground and essence, we sense their anxiety as much as ours, although ours is stirred by their uncertain way of mapping a way to the source of language solely by hearing (hören) the silent claim of language.

We sense somehow that the binary framework of host/guest, speaker/listener, seer/seen, and word/thing of dialogue is led to undergo a "rare visitation" (mare na otozure) of anxiety in jointly exploring the impersonal dimension of language. A distant ring of tautology regarding anxiety ("[a]nxiety is anxious about…," *BT*, 310) re-sounds here in us all. We sense that both opposite parties are being held in tension in an attempt to stay with hearing and understanding the discourse of the other: the discourse of the other stands for the two players the self-showing-saying of language, and for us, the two interlocutors' saying correspondence (entsprechen). Thus, a whole scene revolves around the unfolding of language.

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[2] Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 51. Hereafter *OWL.*

[3] Ibid. "Experience means eundo assequi, to obtain something along the way, to attain something by going on a way."

[4] Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings,* trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1993). Hereafter *BW*. "Instead of explaining language as this or that, and thus fleeing from it, the way to language wants to let language be experienced as language." P. 406.

[5] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). Hereafter *BT.* "But because the λόγος came into their philosophical ken primarily as assertion, …is oriented towards discourse as assertion. But if on the contrary we take this phenomenon [Rede] to have in principle the primordiality and breadth of an existential, then there emerges the necessity of re-establishing the science of language on foundations which are ontologically more primordial. The task of liberating grammar from logic requires beforehand a positive understanding of the basic a priori structure of discourse in general as an existentiale." P. 209.

As Kenneth Maly points out that the prefix er- of erfahren has an etymological root connection with the prefix ur-,[6] temporary co-sharing of opposite parties in taking an exploratory journey to the root occurrence of language appears to be hosted by language's way-ing. On the threshold of the play, our spectator position, instrumental view of language as a medium of individual and public communications, and assumption of either transcendent or immanent presence of fixed meaning get thrown into indeterminacy. Thus, listening to the unfolding conversations between the two, we are already a bit offset from a contentious posture and an anticipation of resolution since the two scholars are resolutely disavowing from production of meaning; in our sharing of the experience (die Erfahrung), issues of finding not only what's in a world language really 'is' but also a just way whereby we can enter anew our friendship with language seem to take a stand in both sides of spectrum. Unawaringly, we all have been magnetically drawn to the "ways" of language in the scene of the "Dialogue."

When Heidegger and the Japanese determine "the nature of language as Saying" and as "Koto ba" (*OWL*, 48), their words sound neither identical nor different; rather, they bring to mind a distant ring of the call that calls ("Es ruft…," *BT,* 320) nonmediatedly as if the two interlocutors were taking a detour to the discourse of reticence (*BT*, 208)[7] and looking for a way to let the call re-sound beyond a range of mortal dasein's hearing responsibility to the call of conscience, therewith attached hues of selfhood and the ontological difference.

Coming to think about a tautological way of speaking, Heidegger gave in *Being and Time* the first one in his conception of phenomenology as "to let that shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself." (*BT,* 58) The *Sache* of Being remained nonapparent despite its inconspicuously apparent closeness to beings (*BT,* 59). By following rigorously his "method" of ἀποφαινεσθαι τά φαινόμενα, Heidegger sought to ground his own and unground the conventional meditation on the truth of Being. The incompletion of his inquiry was much ado not only with the assertoric nature of language and a vicious circle of codependency between it and the conception of Being as transcendent presence; but it was also to with the two-fold design of revealing and concealing intrinsic to the nature of language.[8] This mutually enclosed circle impaired his way of clearing things in and of (αὐτός of tautology) their unconcealment (alētheia). Concomitantly, the primordial-the inaudible prearticulation intrinsic to language's self-showing disclosure-discourse that enables hearing and understanding of any being's way to be and to be with the

[6] Kenneth Maly, "Reading and Thinking: Heidegger and the Hinting Greeks" in *Reading Heidegger,* ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1993), p. 224. I am indebted to his etymological explanations of the Greek word αὐτός of tautological thinking. For this, see p. 227.

[7] *BT*. "Only he who already understands can listen [zuhören]. Keeping silent is another essential possibility of discourse, and it has the same existential foundation. …As a mode of discoursing, reticence articulates the intelligibility of Dasein in so primordial a manner that it gives rise to a potentiality-for-hearing which is genuine, and to a Being-with one-another which is transparent." P. 208.

[8] *BT*. "Aristotle never defines the thesis that the primordial 'locus' of truth is in the judgment. He says rather the λόγος is that way of Being in which Dasein can either uncover or cover up. The double possibility is what is distinctive in the Being-true of the λόγος: the λόγος is that way of comporting oneself which can also cover things up." p. 268.

other was left unclarified in its relation to the cultured bodies of meaning of life, values, and ethos.[9] Neither ways of meditation on the truth of Being nor the way of language found their sense of wholesomeness (αύτος of tautology) 'as in αὐτόῤῥιζος, roots and all."[10]

So then, in remembering the no-ground of language thereby a missing link of the "between" of all senses of life and the world, our protagonists "run ahead" (vorlaufen, *BT,* 372–373)[11] to an utterly untraversed domain of language. By their repetition (Wiederholung) of the "futural" movement, they wrench even the aporetic figure of "death" as "pure possibility" (*BT,* 307) for dasein's mortal temporality and life-together with others and bear it out all the way to the faceless alterity of language. Not only the two players but also language come to stand out, once again, of the circles of determinations; they become lightened (lichten, *BW,* 441–442)[12] to meet the other really on a genuine surface in a region beyond a terrain of beings.

In the face of no-ground for certainty, our players are facing a possibility of both drawing forth a new relation and perverting the thing itself of language. A wakeful listening to the unpredictable clearing of language is exceedingly fragile and yet the last path laid open for them. The two wander around the same (αὐτός) region of the showing-and-speaking of language with the same composure of hearkening. Their single-minded recircling reminds us of the bees in "glens and gardens of the Muses" (*the Ion,* 534b)[13] and their carefree delight in gathering the thing itself of flowers and plants.

When the two interlocutors translate their previous determinations of the nature of language into "grace" and "graciousness," such an uplifting moment of nearly non-human delight comes to pass. The Japanese clarifies that the "koto" of "koto ba" (言葉) indicates "the lighting message of grace." (*OWL,* 45) Heidegger recalls the past quote from Sophocles and heeds an etymological linkage between the three words-charis, tiktousa, and dichten-and clarifies that "graciousness is itself poetical, is itself what really makes poetry, the welling-up of the message of the two-fold's unconcealment." (*OWL,* 46) Being struck by his remark, the Japanese pays further heed to the nodal character of "graciousness" by seeking some hints from his own tradition. We will shortly supplement his recollection by retrieving a few poems of

[9] *BT*. "Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another. Dasein-with is already essentially manifest in a co-state-of-mind and a co-understanding. In discourse Being-with becomes 'explicitly' shared; that is to say, it is already, but it is unshared as something that has not been taken hold of and appropriated." P. 205.

[10] *Reading Heidegger*. P. 227.

[11] *BT*. "By the term 'futural', we do not here have in view a "now" which has not yet become 'actual' and which sometime will be for the first time. We have in view the coming [Kunft] in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, comes towards itself." p. 373.

[12] *BW*. See the editor's notes on Heidegger's nuanced emphasis on the word Lichtung and lichten. P. 442.

[13] Plato, *The Collected Dialogues,* eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New Jersey: Princeton University press, 1989), p. 220. See also Nancy's remarkable reading of the dialogue in Jean-Luc Nancy, *le partage des voix* (Paris: Galiée, 1982).

Shunzei (1114–1204 A. D.) and his aesthetic principle of yugen (幽玄) which influenced greatly Zeami's (1363–1443 A. D.) Noh Theater. But, let us first explore in what way or ways the most intrinsic character, movement, and power of Saying gets said by Heidegger as "graciousness." How does the thing itself (sache selbst) come to appear in hearing and speaking of language?

Prioritizing of language in the two players might make us misperceive as if language abides permanently in an abyss and reigns over the listeners who can bear a message afterwards as a mouthpiece of language. This view of language takes its character of no-ground as essentially static and a possible object for transcendent subjectivity. Heidegger underscores that in reality "speaking and hearing occur simultaneously"[14] in an abyss way beyond or underneath a veneer of man's conscious immediacy, however. In an attuned speaking correspondence, human listeners encounter "the sounding of the word." (*OWL,* 129)[15] Isn't, then, the soundless voice the very *Wesen* of language as Saying? How do the listeners bring forth the message?

A noncoincidental co-happening of hearing and speaking seems to hold a key for gateway to the hidden design of Saying and its two-fold relation between hearing and speaking of language.

The simultaneous happenings between hearing and speaking interlace the two irreducibly and open a space in-between (das Zwischen) wherein the two oscillate from one to the other, and from the other to one, freely and reciprocally. Here, the contraries belong to each other in an imageless kinship whereby they appear neither identical nor different but akin to each other in their nonmediational and nonvoluntery encounter. It enables words of things and things of words to break through a blockage of human subject's conscious immediacy and sound out directly in and of their own sounds; things are led to speak in and for themselves in their natural (αὐτός) l(r-)ight.

The basic elements–language, man, words, and things–by which a composition of the world is made (poiein) get, once again, freed from compressed sounds of meanings and affects thus displaced from their designated place of meanings and values arranged in a scale of hierarchy and sequence with view to human concerns and flourish. Things become rooted in the source of their finite unconcealment; bearing both historical and nonhistorical traces of self-difference, things are opened up anew for relation to bind with one another in their figurative co-journey awhile. Such a wondrous releasement of things in and of their own sounds comes to pass in

[14] *BW*. P. 410–411. "Such listening to language precedes all other instances of hearing, albeit in an altogether inconspicuous way. We not only speak language, we speak from out of it. We are capable of doing so only because in each case we have already listened to language. What do we hear there? We hear language speaking." P. 411.

[15] *OWL*. "Man's, the listener's, being made appropriate for saying, has this distinguishing character, that it releases human nature into its own, but only in order that man as he who speaks, that is, he who says, may encounter and answer Saying, in virtue of what is his property. It is: the sounding of the word. The encountering saying of mortals is answering. Every spoken word is already an answer: counter-saying, coming to the encounter, listening Saying." P. 129.

a dis-course of attuned correspondence. Heidegger names it as "Appropriation." (*OWL,* 53)[16]

In resounding of self-enactment, things look the same (αὐτός) and wholesome (αὐτός) as another. Each mirrors another just as it is (αὖτως) and takes the impenetrable dimension in the other as integral to life, thus inviolable and irreducible to any one point of view. Thus, in hearing and speaking of language, myriad things appear Hermes-like, bearing a message of self enownment (ereigness ereignet, *PLT,* xix).[17] In this light, human listeners and language are not sole and main players in the scene of the dia-logue. A readymade shade and range of attunements attached to things–language, man, words, and things–gets shaken (Abbauen, *WP,* 22)[18] and undergoes silently a way of transformation-and-remembering of one's having-been. This possibility of refiguring each other's belonging happens at every time of saying correspondence, thus inexhaustibly. Without a presence of identifiable ground, things are allowed to flourish and to "gleam and radiate" (enargeia, *BW,* 443) in an air, delightfully, in a likeness of bare self-unconcealment.

Concurrent with the two-fold ringing of hearing and speaking, the Saying of language comes to sound out in and of itself through it. Language shows silently its incredible power and dynamism: it holds myriad things' disclosive happenstances as their common hinge, re-members lives of things and events in their enowned belonging to one another, extends ongoingly a limit of sounding of the word and the thing, and keeps open an unencompassable space of the between of one another's association. Heidegger's remark of "graciousness" points to language's intrinsic capacity of "letting be" and of its spacing movement. "Graciousness" points to the essential "favoring [Mögen]"[19] character of Saying as it brings about (tureru 連れる) a gift of the most fitting way to be to myriad things. However, the thing itself which thus binds myriad rings of ecstatic arising-and-falling from elsewhere and which extends aimlessly its hinge to whosoever or whatsoever comes to meet on a way appears nowhere.

In *Letter to Humanism,* Heidegger says that "the favoring-enabling power" is "what is properly 'possible' [das Mögliche]."[20] It sounds "like" a dynamic pure nothing and "like" a soundless voice which simply is impossible to be imagined by a category of being and in a range of the call of conscience.[21] The thing itself of

[16] *OWL*. "This is how I think of the being-toward-each-other of vastness and stillness in the same Appropriation of the message of unconcealment of the two-fold." Also, "Because showing of Saying is appropriating, therefore the ability to listen to Saying-our belonging to it-also lies in Appropriation." P. 129.

[17] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. xix.

[18] Martin Heidegger, WAS IST DAS-DIE PHILOSOPHIE? (NESKE, 1955), p. 22.

[19] *BW*. P. 220.

[20] Ibid. 19.

[21] *OWL*. It's crucial to hear Heidegger's own footnote on Ereignis: "…The matter, while simple in itself, still remains difficult to think, because thinking must first overcome the habit of yielding to the view that we are thinking here of "Being" as appropriation. But appropriation is different in nature, because it is richer than any conceivable definition of Being. Being, however, in respect of its essential origin, can be thought of in terms of appropriation. (M. H.)" p. 129.

language appears exceedingly aporetic and maddening; nevertheless, the irresolvable excess shows and speaks of itself in indeterminate reverberations at once with and through the listeners' saying correspondence to which it blends in. The opposite self-showing between language and the listener rings out in and of themselves simultaneously; although Saying of language that enacts its showing out of itself is utterly unimaginable alterity to that of the listener's hearing and speaking, they look alike in an originary way of nonmediational and ephemeral self-showing event. The opposite resounds in each other in a likeness of the middle voiced occurrence.[22]

It seems that Heidegger has found in the Saying of language and the way of "encountering the sounding of the word" (*OWL,* 129) the missing link of language and being which was left buried in *Being and Time*.[23] He trans-lates the "graciousness" which marks out the node of another discourse into the "coming upon us" (das Zu Kommende)[24] to which all beings' having-been stakes out equally for one another's appropriation without an end. In a saying correspondence, human listeners are not mere mouthpiece of language; they assist language's way-ing and let it resound in its showing-and-saying without mediation, and are reciprocally being enabled to stand out from the superficial circle of "ζῷον λόγον ἔχον" and to meditate on "Being as what arrives (l'avenant*) [otozure]."[25] Accordingly, Heidegger and the Japanese keep wakefully their base of dialogue before an immense vault of pure sounds. Let us now turn to the Japanese conversant's remark of "grace" and explore how the thing itself of Emptiness sounds out in the node of word by retrieving Shunzei's poems and his conception of yugen.

We regard Shunzei (俊成1114–1204) as the paragon of medieval Japanese poetry called "Uta no Michi" (歌道) because he mapped out a new "poetics of space," to use a Bachelardian term, by incorporating the Tendai shikan (止観) meditation into his poetizing activities. We recall the Japanese interlocutor tries to clarify his saying of "grace" as the *Wesen* of "Koto ba" (言葉) by turning his gaze to a correspondence between "aistheton and noeton: Iro and Ku." (*OWL,* 46) His remark brings into view the worn-out phrase of "Form is emptiness; Emptiness is form" (色即是空、空即是色) in the *Heart Sutra*. It is this noncoincidental identity (soku, 即) of the phenomena with the real–the basic position of the Tendai Buddhist philosophy–that Shunzei trans-lated into his poetic vision with a clarion call of yugen (幽玄) addressed in *the Koraifuteisho* (1197).

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[22] Charles E. Scott, *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of Ethics and Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) I am indebted to his clarifications of Heidegger's later views of language addressed in the chapter 2. "There is no mediation between concealing and revealing, for example, or between bestowal and loss. Our belonging (gehören) to language is without mediation in our hearing (hören) the Sage of language, and the Sage is without mediation in language's occurrence." P. 30.

[23] *OWL*. "What Appropriation yields through Saying is never the effect of a cause, nor the consequence of an antecedent. The yielding owning, the Appropriation, confers more than any effectuation, making, or founding. What is yielding is Appropriation itself-and nothing else.* … the appropriating event is not the outcome result) of something else, but the giving yield whose giving reach alone is what gives us such things as a "there is," a "there is" of which even Being itself stands in need to come into its own as presence.**" p. 127.

[24] *Reading Heidegger*. P. 229.

[25] *BW*. P. 264.

The Tendai philosophy is well known by its three-fold "No-truth" of the Middle (中観) and the shikan meditation. Both were systematized by Chih-I (538–597 A. D.) in China. Chih-I appropriated Nagarjuna's (150–250 A. D.) two-fold truth of emptiness which sets the conventional truth implicitly against the absolute truth, thus, entraps the inquirer in a dilemma between the logical assertion of reality and the language which the reality ultimately surpasses. The seeker of truth ends up reifying emptiness. In his treatises *Ha hua Hsuan I* and the *Mo ho Chih Kuan,* Chih-I put forth the One-No truth which is "absolute subtlety" (絶待妙) because everything (dharma) becomes manifest simultaneously in a pure absence of substantial reality in such a way that the reality and the phenomena are at once equally both full and empty as well as radically interrelated in each moment of passing occurrence.[26] This riddle-like subtlety and dynamism of Emptiness is a matter of embodiment with a right seeing rather than speculation and argument. To realize the truth of Emptiness, Chih-I invented the makashikan meditation; thus, the Middle position can't be realized without a reciprocal incorporation of theory and practice.

Shikan meditation involves two steps: the first step, "shi" (samatha, 止) lets one's dispositional setting calm down from the drives of self-care. The second step, "kan" (vipasyana, 観) lets one perceive vigilantly things nearby without obstructions of self-care so that one becomes perceived really by the things around. By dropping of the frame of seer/seen, the opposite interplays with each other in becoming at once both host-and-guest of the real other. Shikan 止観meditation lets people and things become in touch with the sameness of reality-intrinsically void (sunya, 空) of independent, underlying self-existence (muga, 無我) and unsurpassable interdependence with the other-.

Shunzei practiced this form of contemplation for his poetry so that his poiēsis was both a deeply personal and impersonal experience of how to be there with the other, and was not propelled by an art for art's sake or by hankering for fame. Rather, poetry meant for him a way of freeing naturally (jinen, 自然に) thus effortlessly (mui, 無為) a common space whereby all sorts of things with missing tails of causal origin and purpose encounter in passing. Let me now recite a couple of his poems[27]:

> Both in distance and right here/Both on grasses and trees/Is evenly dyeing everything/ Everywhere in its new green
>
> Night and fall close in:/Wind from the wide hearth/Howl into me/Along with the muffles moans/Of grass-hidden quail

His poems gather things in nature-trees, grasses, rains, wind, nightfall, quail–as an intimate world-forming event. Although the disclosed things near and far appear unadorned and create desolate and shady moods, a whole setting of the poem is shimmered with natural tranquility and beauty and the things show a certain aura of dignity, a faint fragrance of aliveness, and a ring of own voices. Things in the poems

[26] Paul L. Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-T'ai Philosophy* (Asian Humanities Press, 1989), p. 152. "The one truth is [actually] no [truth]; all truth is at rest. Each and every [truth] is [ultimately] inexpressible." P. 255.

[27] The following poems of Shunzei are cited from William R. LaFleur, *The Karma of Words* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 94, p. 98. I am indebted to his work on Shunzei's relation to the Japanese Tendai Buddhism and practice espoused in the chapter 4.

let us hear overtones of emptiness and bring to surface an inoperable depth in and of their fragile, real life of appearing-to-be-passing-away. Here, the truth of Emptiness wells up from nowhere and sounds out on the surface lines of things laid bare; surface here is deep, albeit imperceptibly.

In a nonvoluntary encounter with things enabled by Shikan meditation, lives of things are brought forth in their own right whose immeasurable traces come to spread on the surface of Shunzei's verses as an inoperable blank space (yohaku, 余白) at the margins, come to hover in resonances (yoin, 余韻), and to simmer with emotive touches from far side (yojō, 余情). Those are nothing other than the excess of meaning. And yet, Shunzei calls such "depth" (fukami, 深み) in poem "yugen."[28] We note in passing that his attunement to the hidden wake of every and each thing's (dharma) coming to presence separates his aesthetic concept of yugen (幽玄) from the Heian poetry of impermanence (mujo,無常) and the concept of miyabi (lit. "grace", 雅).

Seen in the light of Shunzei's poiēsis, we can say that the thing itself of Japanese language, Koto ba, corresponds to the enabling power of self-enownment to myriad things of that which Heidegger speaks. With alertness to a danger of calling the favoring-enabling power of no-thing as "Emptiness" or "Appropriation," we shall leave the scene of the "Dialogue" bearing forth the matter of how to hear and encounter one another on a real surface.

[28] Swanson, *Foundations*, pp. 90–91. I shall quote Lafleur's excellent translation of key passages from Shunzei's *Koraifuteisho*: "The Mo-ho chih'kuan of the Tendai school opens with these words by Kuan-ting [Chih-I's amanuensis]: "Calm-and-contemplation [shikan] has in itself a clarity and tranquility beyond anything known to earlier generations." Now, if we pay attention to this at the outset, a dimension of infinite depth as well as profound meaning will be discovered. It will be like listening to something sublime and exalted while trying to understand the poetic sensibility-its fine points, weak points, and its depth. This is to say that things that otherwise are incapable of being expressed in words will be understood precisely when they are likened to calm-and-contemplation [shikan]. …what I have brought up for consideration is nothing more than those verbal games known as "floating phrases and fictive utterances" ["kyogen-kigo"]. However, quite on the contrary, it is exactly here that the profundity of things is demonstrated. This is because there exists a reciprocal flow of meaning between such things [as poetry] and the way of Buddhism, a way that maintains the interdependence of all things. …I can now for the record state that the Japanese lyric called the uta has a dimension of depth, one that has affinity with the three stages of truth in Tendai, namely, the void [ku], the provisional [ke], and the middle [chu].", pp. 90–91. Note that Lafleur's English translation is based on the original Japanese text from *Kodai chusei geijutsu-ron*, ed. by Hayashiya Tatsusaburō (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1973), pp. 262–263.

On the Mystery of Sky and Earth in Camus' *The Exile and the Kingdom*

Victor G. Rivas Lopez

Il y a une détermination du haut et du bas et en général du lieu qui précède la "perception"

(Merleau-Ponty)

Abstract After centuries of a hardly justifiable trust in the meaningfulness of cosmos and in the transcendent framework of life whose common ground was an all-embracing reasonability, nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought discovered a disturbing strangeness in reality that changed radically the way of understanding and experiencing it in every plane of existence. (Which would not be comprehensible without taking into account the influence of Kant's criticism of metaphysics, of Nietzsche's criticism of morals and, finally, of Heidegger's criticism of the would-be sense of existence. Regarding this issue, vide Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, Trans. John R. Snyder, (Baltimore: John Hopkins and Polity Press, 1988), p. 113 and ff). Speaking concretely of sky, which had traditionally been seen as the dwelling of divinity and the sole aim of human nature beyond the so-called deceptive charms of worldly life, it was confirmed the romantic discovery of a worrisome potency that was not akin to God's metaphysical omnipotence and that was all the more perceptible through night, when daylight had vanished and the would-be identity of everything together with the axiological order of existence became fathomless (Vide Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, (Princeton: Princeton University, 2001), p. 118 and ff). For although there is a peculiar clarity during night, it is in essence for suggesting vital possibilities and fantasies that contradict the diurnal vision of reality and the conscious intentions of everyone, which is on the other hand also perceptible when one grasps how in principle the endless extension of earth triumphs over the efforts of man to subdue it and to establish an elemental justice more in agreement with human wants and reasonability. As a matter of fact, there are some situations wherein one discovers that every value and goal is dispensable because all of them hinge upon an unsurpassable relativeness that threatens even sky itself, which, however, instead of sparking off a nihilist desperation–as it could be expected–

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_22

provides existence with a critical lucidity that would be almost identical with happiness if it were possible to link them in an irretrievable beyond.

Now, all this has usually been expressed either within a dramatic literary setting that forces the respective characters to face situations that end up crushing them or, on the contrary, within a sentimental vision of life whose happy endings belie the real greatness that the characters are supposed to be after. But there is an other possibility to set out the issue, namely, to show how a situation demands to accept the mysterious originality of every human being and the strangeness of cosmos itself whereto we have just alluded, which is what Camus does in the tales included in the book that I want to analyse, which, independently of the respective anecdotic content, unfold as a whole a vision of existence that rejects whatever idealization insofar as it tries to set out the vital experience of average people, which implies to recognize the limitations of men on having to choose freedom or happiness. (Kant is the thinker that opposes these two values on considering that each one of them stands for aims that are not reconcilable. Vide *Critique of Practical Reason*, A46 and ff). So to speak, mediocrity can be the reverse of lucidity when one is in the middle of an existence that would perhaps be deemed mean but that can at any rate be vindicated because it has found its own balance within the possibilities of everyday life that are not so easily noticed, above all when one has been blinded by the light of an unreachable sky.

The foregoing remarks will be the thread of this paper, which is divided into three sections: in the first one, we shall delve into how the twentieth-century experienced the link of earth and sky in contraposition with tradition; in the second section, we shall analyse how that led to a phenomenological revaluation of existence that was utterly alien to the ideal of religious transcendence; in the third and final one, we shall bind that with the odd thesis of the absurdness of existence that is the indispensable counterpart of the immanence thereof, as Camus has showed in his works perhaps with more concreteness than any other writer.

Keywords Absurdness • Existentialism • Modernity • Subjectivity • Criticism

The Experience of Earth and Sky

As far as we see the issue, *sky has symbolically been experienced in three very different ways through the becoming of Western tradition*, and we think that a right appraisal thereof will be for showing the originality of Camus's conception.

First of all, there was a classical experience of the sky: man raised the eyes in broad daylight towards the cloudless vault of heaven and all of a sudden he became immersed in the clarity that pervaded the several shades of blue; the impression of limitlessness was for an instant so overwhelming that the contemplator gaped while everything seemed to be motionless, although the wind that blew softly made him recover straightaway and follow the shades that ascended up to the sun whose brightness invited him to wander imaginatively through the sky after having overcome his momentary bewilderment. While the horizon disappeared beneath the

all-embracing blueness, the contemplator started to feel quiet, oddly indifferent to the material things that he was more wont to care for (such as richness or bodily pleasure), as if his whole being were just the reflection of that immensity that he perceived, to the point that in a certain moment he experimented that *sui generis* weightlessness that goes hand-in-hand with any kind of the so-called spiritualization: in those conditions, the elemental difference between the contemplator and the reality whereat he gazed dissolved in a state of absoluteness, so that he rose together with the gradations of light and beyond the sun that shined above towards its own limitlessness that spread everywhere and whose only centre was not the sun but the sight of the contemplator that had been carried away to such an extent that he left behind without further ado the distance that separated him from the sky, as we have just said, in a sublimation that made him feel that his own image was the measurement of the whole cosmos. The unfathomable transfiguration or spiritualization was triple, for *the elevation always went hand-in-hand with the inward illumination and with the anthropomorphic projection*, which made up the singular absoluteness wherein the contemplator overcame his limitations and saw his figure as the cipher of the universal continuity of being, which stands for the essence both of the mythic vision of universe and of that mystic enrapture that was the origin of metaphysics.[1] In such a state, whatever doubt, whatever uncertainty was unthinkable, and the all-embracing sense triumphed even over the successive course of reflection, which fell short before the irreducible certitude of the contemplator, who could dispense with the rest of reality for he had already got the innermost and timeless kernel thereof. Of course, the contrary attitude was also perfectly possible, that is to say, the enraptured contemplator could devote himself to the understanding of the infinite variety and relativeness of reality that in the light of his ineffable vision revealed itself none the less as a deceptive appearance or as becoming whose essential order was transcendent. Thus, for the classical experience of sky, the latter was the diaphanous medium through which man could perceive either mythically or metaphysically both the sovereign potency that nurtured everything and the teleological sense of the universal knowledge of reality, as Plato expressed very surely better than anyone else in those passages from the *Phaedrus* wherein he describes with unequalled mastery how the sky that man perceives opens, via the plane wherein the gods live, to a superior reality that is the dwelling of the ideal being of everything[2] or the similarly famous passages from the *Timaeus* where he describes how the demiurge formed the so-called world of becoming after the ideas.[3] In other words, *for the classical experience the nature of sky was metaphysical and akin to divinity*, and it

[1] It would seem strange that I find the common rise of metaphysics and myth in an obnubilation, but it is a fact that most of the so-called rational proofs of a divine creation or of a rational unity of existence were at bottom imaginative projections and nothing more. Regarding this "aesthetic" framework of reason vide the famous dissertation of Nietzsche "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense" in Clive Cazeaux (Ed.), *The Continental Aesthetic Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), Trad. Daniel Breazeale, pp. 53–62.

[2] *Phaedrus*, 247c-d.

[3] *Timaeus*, 34b and ff.

spread as the privileged medium of a vision or revelation that allowed man to identify himself with the majesty and immensity that were not within his reach in the normal conditions of earthly existence that was, on the contrary, subjected to numberless hindrances and nuisances, the worst whereof was the very fleetness of joy.

In the second place, there was a romantic experience of sky: man raised the eyes in the middle of a starless night towards a vault of heaven ceaselessly traversed by lurid flashes of lightning that for an instant let see the sullen mass of the clouds while the rain and the hail came pouring down in devastating gusts. The horrid contraposition of the darkness and the lightning seemed to shatter the whole sky and through the rents thereof it seemed to appear a more sinister and overwhelming potency, an unyielding negativity that despite its formlessness or perhaps thanks precisely to it crushed the observer and instilled into him that prehistoric, mythic horror against which man has fought with all of his energy and that comes back on and off whenever one discovers something that cannot be objectified and that none the less is somehow perceptible, just like the violence of nature that reminds man in the middle of a furious storm of his being at the mercy of a potency that has nothing to do with his idealizations and rationalizations and that can blow up when least expected, which is why the overpowering, limitless darkness that threatened behind the sky during the storm was enough for romanticism to unsettle the would-be harmony of man and cosmos that had until then been the ground of whatever providence. Under such a drive, the observer closed the eyes and gave free rein to imagination, which in an instant began to recreate in the most variegated ways the feebleness of man and the hopelessness of existence, for although the storm was not as devastating that it destroyed the observer at once, it showed unmistakeably that it was just a question of time and that he would finally be caught in the wheel of bale that rode roughshod over the majesty of the sky, which would completely bewilder the observer if it were not by the reminder of his own meanness before the totality of nature: why should he be trampled if he was just a reed that did not deserve to be noted? Even more, why should he fear that natural negativity when all his being had experienced it all the time through the passional drives that tend to express themselves without restrictions and against the supposedly natural order? A stormy night sky was not then the gateway to a spotless, spiritual realm, but to a sheer obnoxiousness that beat in the innermost of nature and also in the heart of hearts of everyone, for beneath the outer weakness it appeared an inner wickedness, a drive as potent as the one that shattered the sky and whose essential negativity was simply the reverse thereof. After all, *the cosmic harmony could still be vindicated although with a negative value*, for man agreed with nature insofar as he suffered, the same as the sky, the violence of the elemental formlessness, which is why Schopenhauer, who was doubtlessly the most lucid and most corrosive expositor of the romantic experience, said that the metaphysical ground of reality was not a transcendent rationality but an immanent drive alien to reason that he called "will" and that, contrary to what tradition had from Plato to Hegel said, did not stand for the everlasting overcoming of the original brutality but for a self-affirmation of the desiderative condition of existence that expresses itself beyond the rational causality and rather obeys an uninterrupted, inexorable chain of natural conditions and wants that

demand to be satisfied independently of the conscious will of the individual or rather against it.[4] Thus, contrary to the Kantian analysis of the feeling of sublimity that underlined the transcendental affinity of nature and moral order precisely in the presence of the overwhelming potency of natural forces that were supposed to arouse the conscience of his own moral dignity in the subject (provided, of course, that the latter were able to contemplate at a distance the outbreak of the storm),[5] Schopenhauer dwelt into the impossibility of agreeing with that potency, which according to him explained why man would never be at his ease in nature if it were not by the imaginative compensation of art that allows to recreate it beneath the symbol of a negative harmony between the will and the human finitude, which is however useless outside the realm of artistic imagery, which leads to the terrible conclusion that the sole way of enduring the brutishness of existence is the absolute asceticism.[6]

There is finally a critical experience of the sky: man gazes upwards and he embraces the whole blueness with that strangeness that nature sparks off in someone that has lost the wont of a placid contemplation and that withal changes every object of experience either into an instance of theoretical determination or, on the contrary, into a meaningless image. In the middle of the sky, the sun shines with all its potency but the observer feels almost annoyed because he cannot simply enjoy a moment of relaxation, a break in the middle of a hectic working day, and must still look for a shelter when he would precisely like to be carried away by the interplay of the light and the clouds that suggests so many possibilities of wasting time and forget the load of worries and goals that contemporary existence imposes over everyone. The solar reverberation, then, does not suggest in this case majesty or immensity, let alone divinity, but psychological processes that stand for the wish of being at one's ease most of the time, a state of mind that is straightaway interrupted because at that moment an aircraft appears on one extreme of the sky and climbs, reminding the observer of the advantages that some people enjoy and the unfairness of existence. While the aircraft goes on rising, the observer delves into a more or less loose train of thought on the unsurpassable socio-economical differences, which makes him look away from the height with a certain disdain, for it does not make sense being there literally woolgathering when the opportunities of enjoying life are somewhere else, in the realm of economical success that the contemplation of nature conceals. The observer discovers that the sky, instead of revealing a transcendent or spiritual reality, shows an unfathomable emptiness that prevents grasping what really matters from a profane standpoint, that is to say, the practicalities and profit. But such an attitude is not the sole one, for when the observer lowers the head, he perceives around him the bustle of the street and the weariness and boredom of people that like him have to toil all day long. The acknowledgement of the common hardness of existence triumphs over the daydreams of comfort and leisure, and without implying anything else makes the observer realize how distant the sky is from the earthly

[4] Vide *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vv., translation by E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1958), v. I, paragraph 21.

[5] Vide *The Critique of Judgement*, B94, translation by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: OUP, 1952).

[6] *Op. Cit*., v. I, paragraph 58 and ff.

condition of human existence. In a final glance to the height, he momentarily remembers the ancient belief in the existence of glory and transcendence but he dismisses it at once because he feels that *the real mysterious is not above but on the soil that teems with men full of the oddest cravings and aspirations*, which is wherein Camus tried to delve throughout his work, whose originality goes beyond the classifications of literature and philosophy as two neatly different genres and offers a comprehensive vision of existence that belies whatever idealization, above all the metaphysical identification of the divine and the human that makes everyone look for an all-embracing sense in existence that he is supposed to fulfil, when the fact is that every vital phenomenon shows the contrary, i.e., that existence is utterly absurd because it is unjustifiable and that what someone does hinges upon he himself and not upon a would-be transcendence. Thus, that existence is no longer meaningful by itself does not imply at all that man has to despair for it can still be vindicated the simple experience of a world that has lost its ties with the sky just to get a concreteness in proportion to human contradictoriness.

The Phenomenological Revaluation of Existence

As we have just seen, the critical experience of sky breaks with the two main features that the classical and the romantic visions share despite their obvious differences, that is to say, timelessness and strangeness. As a matter of fact, the first two approaches set out existence within a transcendent affinity with a would-be divine realm or beneath the crushing sway of an unfathomable potency, which inverts the classical experience but leaves at any rate untouched the transcendence that it upholds; still more, this is why both the classical and the romantic approaches are at bottom *visions* more than *experiences*, for although there is an undeniable metamorphosis of man in both of them, the case is that the force working there is metaphysical and springs from a source beyond human comprehension and, above all, beyond the ontological framework of existence, which always implicates the presence of man within a space-time dimension where everyone interacts with other human beings and with the rest of reality in a complex flow. This phenomenological or rather critical ground of existence is instead concealed by the spiritual or poetical idealization that characterizes the classical and the romantic visions, which on the other hand explains their final meaninglessness before the passional drive of existence, which acts within the very delimitated plane of finitude and communality, the two values that respectively oppose the timelessness and the strangeness that prevent man from acknowledging his earthly condition, whose full delimitation is meant by the term *kingdom*, which must not be misunderstood as meaning "the territory of a king or of a superior authority" but simply "the territory where something is important" and/or "one of the ancient divisions of the natural world",[7] two senses of the term that are equally sound for grasping the ontological determination

[7] Vide the corresponding entry in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* on-line.

of existence. For the thing that outstands in existence is not oddly enough the sovereignty of man (as metaphysical tradition somehow or other upheld in the light of the primacy of God),[8] let alone the spotless brightness of reason or of economical progress (as the Enlightenment defended),[9] but, on the contrary, the senselessness or absurdity of existence, which expresses in multiple ways from the bottomless helplessness to the gaudiest megalomania, passing through the limitless variety of human characters and situations. Thus, *in the kingdom of man there is paradoxically neither king nor subjects, just the unsurpassable want of readjusting time and again the perturbing void that everyone perceives in the very kernel of existence and the goals wherewith everyone tries unsuccessfully to make sense thereof*. This impossibility of getting a vital balance that finally justifies one's own being is why the more lucid someone is, the more he is compelled to remain, so to speak, outside the kingdom where others live unconsciously, in a permanent *exile* wherefrom there is no return precisely because the price of lucidity is to realize how senseless the vital goals of most people are, which could on the other hand bring about the most awful desperation in the exiled one if he were not completely responsible of his choices and deeds, which he cannot justify invoking any natural or supernatural order or any other kind of metaphysical necessity, a condition that leads to what seems *prima facie* to be the disconcerting consequence of the absurdness that rules existence, *i.e*., that everyone has to be responsible for what he has done and, consequently, for everyone else (taking into account that we shall whether knowing it or not affect him). In sooth, although the asseveration of an inexorable absurdness fosters apparently the most rampant solipsism (for it could be made out as the ground of an aleatory vision of existence), everyone has to accept the relativeness of his own stance regarding whatever existential clarification of sense wherewith others furnish him, which, of course, does not mean either that he cannot be perfectly right in a particular situation, provided that he remains loyal to the all-embracing earthly condition of existence and does not intend to appeal to the celestial or divine destination thereof. In other words, there is no God in the sky that spreads on the kingdom of man and on the wandering of the exiled ones.

The general framework of Camus' ontological conception that we have just summarised will more concretely show its philosophical richness when we set out its articulations in the light of the main book of tales of the thinker, that is to say, *The Exile and the Kingdom*,[10] whose general assumption is that *the sole dimension of existence is earth*, which, none the less, does not implicate either that existence is easier to grasp, on the contrary, for man has to deal with a lot of earthly forces that resist whatever effort to understand them. As a matter of fact, earth has a compactness

[8] The most famous criticism of the affinity of theology and anthropological supremacy is set out in Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism*, where the philosopher debases the image of man as the ground of knowledge and of the comprehension of a so-called final sense of existence.

[9] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Enlightenment*, Trans. P. Pettegrove, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 3 and ff.

[10] I shall handle the French edition of the work: *L'Exil et le Royaume*, Folio 78 (Paris: Gallimard, 1957).

and amplitude that exceeds by far whatever capacity of man, which is perceived in all its hardness in those latitudes wherein human being experiences his total subjection to the inclemency of weather and to the scantiness of means for living, as it occurs, for instance, in the *desert*, which brutally imposes and defeats the silly images that associate it to the tropics: "[…] the desert was not [the hot place whereof people dream] but only the stone, the stone everywhere, in the sky where it reigned too, crunching and cold, the sole stone dust, as on the floor where only the withered gramineae grew up".[11] As the existential dimension where existence is utterly subjected to earth despite the progress of learning and the doubtless increase in the technical control of nature, the desert marks the limit of man and of every other being, both on the level of the organic wants and on the level of culture and ways of living, for it compels man to live like a frightened animal in an isolation and terror that unsettles the bravest ones and sends them back to the prehistoric times. Contrary to what Schopenhauer thought, the dark potency wherewith earth imposes over man has nothing to do with a metaphysical intuition but with that wild cruelty that appears in some tribal rites that have resisted civilization and that crush even the most refined or spiritualized people when they get into contact with the barbarians that have had to accept unconditionally the tyranny of existence:

> I went blind in those days where the still fire crackled for hours […] in this hole in the middle of the desert, where the heat of daytime prevents any contact among the beings, puts harrows of invisible flames and boiling crystals among them, where the cold of night fix them straightaway one by one in their shell of gem, nocturnal inhabitants of a dried ice floe, black Eskimos shivering in their cubic igloos.[12]

Thus, whether it expresses itself through the dryness of the stone, through the infernal heat of the equator or through the abyssal cold of the poles, *the desert remains the same as the inexorable subjection to earth that is the deepest sense of the kingdom*, which reveals itself above all as an experience of absurdness beyond good and evil or, rather, beyond the traditional antithesis of those values.[13] Face to the inexorability of existence that the desert stands for, the easiest position would simply neglect everything or justify the own stints with the pretext that that is the way things are, but earth itself prevents man from being carried away with that nonchalance, all the more because existence is not a representation that each reinterprets at his own, on the contrary, it always is experienced as an unavoidable want of making a choice and fulfilling it for all one is worth, and that requires that one acts together with others, who will somehow or other be affected by our actions and vice versa, since theirs will affect us too. In other words, every act and every choice has a transcendental value that does not depend only on the individual that performs them but on the universal earthly determination of existence, which, on the other hand, would be unbearable if it were not cyclical and gradual and allowed man to

[11] "The Adulterous Woman", *Ibid*., p. 16.

[12] "The Renegate", *Ibid*., p. 43.

[13] Which reinforces, by the by, the bound of the moral the epistemological relativism, as Nietzsche so brightly sets out in his homonymous book *Beyond Good and Evil*, which he considered the most important of his works.

daydream with happiness when the fact is that the human kingdom is based on an impenetrable senselessness that for its part takes shape in the desert, where it reproduces with awful predictability in the innermost thoughts and in the behaviour of man, which is why the latter can even ride roughshod over his own dignity and opt for thraldom when he is offered liberty, an aberration that can nevertheless be clarified when it is set out within a more encompassing comprehension of existence, as it happens in "The Host",[14] a tale that deals precisely with that absurd renunciation of freedom that characterizes man when he has the limitless possibility of doing what he wants: Daru, a mature primary teacher that lives in a desolate tableland in a country that has withal been scourged by drought and famine, has by an express order of the authorities to lead to a military post an Arab that is accused of having killed his cousin. Since they must wait for the next day to do the journey, Daru has time enough to observe the odd behaviour of the man, who acts as fatalistically or as indifferently as if he had already been sentenced and he could not offer any resistance to his fate; although Daru does not tie him, the man hardly moves, and perhaps because of that his presence is all the more perceptible for Daru, who feels that somehow or other he must share, even without intending it, the fate of the man:

> In the room where he had slept alone for more than a year, this presence annoyed him. But it annoyed him too because it imposed over him a kind of fraternity that he rejected in the present circumstances and that he knew well: the men that share the same rooms, whether they are soldiers or prisoners, establish a strange link as if they were, without the armours that they have taken off together with their clothes, joined beyond their differences, in the old community of dreams and tiredness.[15]

The desert is not then solely the place of isolation and dreariness, it is also and with all the more reason the place wherein men, face to their mutual helplessness, can discover the odd identity of absurdness and humanity through the irreducible presence of others and beyond the abstract idealizations that rule average coexistence, which means that the desert, or, in general, the earth (considered simultaneously as the border and the counterbalance of the human kingdom) possess a *sui generis* depth, a thickness that has none the less nothing to do with the pitiless subjection of man to a tyrannical predestination or to an unfathomable transcendence. It is true that it is very hard to discover this aspect of the desert and that most people are completely blind to it even when they have spent all their life there, but it is impossible not to perceive it in those extreme situations that compel to face barely the community of existence such as the encounter with a stranger that one cannot avoid and that demands to put at stake one's values and ideas, which had until then been safeguarded by prejudices and wonts or, also, by the overwhelming immensity of the desert that, as we have just mentioned, very few people are able to experience as such, although some strong spirits that have tried themselves out find there their natural dwelling: "In this desert, no one, neither him nor his guest, were anything. However, outside this desert, neither of them, Daru knew it, could really live".[16] And

[14] Albert Camus, *Op. Cit*., pp. 81–99.

[15] *Ibid*., p. 94.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 91.

this certainty is not the outcome of a fatalistic submission but the acceptation of an ontological affinity that defies whatever tenet concerning the limitless freedom of man and the uprooting that characterizes the modern conceptions of existence. Without intending to assert the tribal fixation of existence by environment, it is undeniable that there is a strong feeling that ties someone to a certain landscape or territory, and in this case in principle the aberrant identification with the desert becomes comprehensible when it is taken into account how it allows one to feel the potency of earth beyond the preferences of man or the want of comfort, wherewith one can dispense after having faced solitude and silence for a long time, which prepares man for the discovery of the unsurpassable bodily identity with others, which is the counterpart of a shallow carelessness. Still more, this identity solely comes to the fore thanks to the desert, and the hardness that the latter imposes reveals all of a sudden the concreteness of existence without the barriers of individuality.

This explains too why the desert, the ontological dimension of earth, never joins men through that ideal brotherhood that has after Rousseau become a tenet of modern culture (and that has brought about so much confusion regarding the link of individual freedom and democracy) but through that coexistence that demands that everyone is totally responsible of himself because there is neither a spontaneous solidarity nor a final identification whereon one can rely.[17] Thus, if it is true that in the desert everyone has to answer that "[…] kind of wretched interrogation"[18] that shines in the eyes of the people that depends upon him, that does not mean that he is ready to carry their problems on his shoulders, on the contrary, he just wants to get rid of them because they stand for a burden that no one could stand, which is by the by what happens when Daru receives the assignment of taking the murderer to the police: he does not want to get involved in the matter because it is the outcome of that foolishness that overwhelms man, but he also has a duty to fulfil and, to top it all, he cannot be alien to the oppressing helplessness of that man that has not acted out of wickedness and that even so has to pay his crime with his life, which would be the cruellest form of absurdness if the abstract need of coexistence were not more important than whatever other reason on judging and regulating human actions. In other words, the murderer has to be punished not because there is a sound reason for that but because that is the only way of keeping the least social order that the human kingdom requires to counterbalance the potency of the earth that so easily unsettles everyone.[19] But Daru decides not to participate in that social mechanism and leave instead that the man chooses with total freedom what his fate will be. Thereat, when they come to a crossroads on their way to the military post the next morning, he stops all of a sudden, gives the man some money and supplies and tells him that if he takes the path to the east he will arrive at the post in two hours and that if he takes the path to the south, he

[17] For an exposition of the difficulties that this implicates, vide Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 42 and ff.

[18] Albert Camus, *Op. Cit*., p. 92.

[19] It would be very interesting to compare this with the second chapter of *The Stranger,* whose anonymous protagonist is finally sentenced to death not because of the crime that he has committed but because of the social want of preserving an image of harmony and respect for the law.

will arrive at the grazing lands of the desert nomads the next day, who will shelter him by their laws of hospitality. Daru leaves the man straightaway after that and walks back quickly to the school. When he is a little far from the crossroads, he climbs a hill to see what the man has made and glimpses he is on his way to the east. When he arrives to school, he sees on the blackboard of the only classroom an ominous threat: he will be punished by having delivered the man to the military. Right then, he feels that "in that vast country that he has so much loved, he was alone".[20]

What is the moral of this apparently sombre end? That man is inexorably subjected to earth and that his kingdom is a mere chimera for he is incapable of overcoming the natural selfishness of the individual and has to endure an everlasting loneliness? Without denying that every existential happening and every personal choice is at bottom absurd since there is no way to secure once and for all a temporal development where they could play a clear part, the fact is that man can, at least in some exceptional moments, experience the full complexity of the humanity that everyone embodies. The acknowledgement that most people will act in a fatalistic way, that they will repeat time and a gain what has always led them to their ruin, and that in all that there is not the least possibility of learning from one's own experience, does not mean either that man is carried away by earthly forces wherewith he cannot establish an understanding relationship, which goes hand-in-hand with the appeal to a critical conception of existence that does without the would-be sublimity thereof. Of course, this implies perforce that the symbol by antonomasia of that sublimity, i.e., the sky, has to sink after having revealed its senselessness, which, however, far from reducing the scope of human experience, enlarges it, as we shall see in the next section.

The Absurdness as the Immanence

After having lost its metaphysical import, the sky or, rather, the heaven, which stands for the would-be transcendence of existence, ends up uncovering the emptiness of whatever idealization, above all the one concerning a post-mortem retribution or punishment of the human actions in the light of a moral order. For instead of providing existence with an unshakeable framework as their upholders think, the theological ideal that expresses itself through the presumption of a final rationality of existence distorts the space-time articulation of existence and imbues human mind with prejudices that bring about so often the worst unsettlement and the cruellest violence, as it happens when someone tries to indoctrinate others with a certain religiosity without realizing that he simply tries to tame the multitudinous potency of desire that is somehow or other the best proof of the senselessness of existence since desire always rides roughshod over the perfect synchrony of will and duty that is the very essence of whatever moral idealization and also the counterpart of theological ones.[21] In other

[20] *The Exile and the Kingdom*, p. 99.

[21] Emmanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, A241 and ff.

words, desire, on marring the affinity of moral fulfilment and theological transcendence that is symbolized in the image of a cosmos where the sky stands for the realm of divinity and simultaneously (although with some certain shades) of a *post-mortem* everlasting compensation, reduces the two aspects of the issue to a faded anachronism, to a fake mystery that has nothing to do with the real mysteriousness of existence, which, as we have just seen, lies in the unfathomable contradictoriness of liberty that everyone has to face. When someone chooses punishment when he could be free, he brings up even unwillingly the problem of the senselessness of existence, and that is why the sole way for solving it is the exile, the experience of earth beyond the kingdom wherein men deceive themselves through others and vice versa. It is needless to say that this experience forbids to appeal to God, as it happens in "The renegade",[22] whose protagonist, a former Catholic priest that has been awfully tortured by the African heathens that he was supposed to convert, discovers that whatever religion is incapable of appeasing the most awful torment, which is the lack of a consolation in misfortune and the savage outburst of desire before which the idea of providence or spiritualization is absurd. Still more, the fact that most people see existence as an egotistical projection instead of grasping the common condition thereof and that even this does not solve the original senselessness shows that existence is hard enough so as to require to deal with the transcendence of sky, which, none the less, does not prevent the latter from playing in spite of everything a fundamental aesthetic function in existence, which relates, on the one hand, to the ontological unity of existence that triumphs over the inter-personal differences and, on the other hand, to the final imaginative unity of the individual identity that would border on mysticism if it had not been counterbalanced by the consciousness of the insurmountable finitude.

With regard to the first aspect, it must be taken into account how sky and earth coincide in the total horizon that defines the everyday existence of everyone despite the differences that we have so far emphasised between them, which is somehow or other a symbol of the coincidence of interests that men discover beyond the natural differences among them and that are reproduced in the socio-economical classes, which is what we see in "The Dumb Ones", a tale that narrates how a group of workers must come back to the barrel shop where they work because the strike that they had organized has failed. At the beginning of the story, Yvars, the 40-year old barrel-maker that is protagonist thereof, is on his way to the job and feels the shame of having to acknowledge that the barrels market is in crisis and that his co-workers and he cannot get a wage rise. While he pedals his bicycle on the boulevards deep in thought, he does not perceive how "[…] the sea and the sky mingled in a sole brightness"[23] in a radiant winter morning, but he has all his life loved their continuity because it has provided him with a horizon of freshness and simple bodily pleasures such as swimming in the company of friends and beauty girls. But since Yvars is very upset and feels that he has aged several years in a few days, he does not appreciate the radiance of nature; on the contrary, he moves forward "[…] gritting

[22] Albert Camus, *Op. Cit*., pp. 37–58.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 61.

the teeth, with a sad and dry anger that darkened even the sky itself".[24] That is to say, independently of the senseless metaphysical attributions wherewith tradition has endowed it, the sky is just an image of the emotive fullness of existence that everyone experiences and that varies ceaselessly in accordance with the state of mind, and this aesthetical condition allows everyone to integrate his becoming through time and space together with others. The so-called sense of life is then the evanescent image of an existential plenitude that is projected on the sky as an immense screen where one can see one's own vital becoming, not precisely as in a dream because the others have a lot to do there and without them and without the very light of the sky the image would vanish at once. Thereat, when Yvars is in his post together with his fellow workers, their common anger is modulated and somehow dissipated by the subtle shades of the light that floods the barrel shop and that shelters them; men have to accept the revolting unfairness of existence but even so they can share the instant unfolding of reality, whose literal insignificance is the medium to overcome what would otherwise implicate a crushing opposition. The insignificance that we underline is by no means a negative condition, on the contrary, it offers the possibility for everyone of embodying the continuity existing between earth and sky at the daybreak, and that is why men can share the immediacy of existence and through it overcome their mutual disagreements, even their bitterest hatred: when the patron that has refused the wage rise tries to smooth things over with them, the workers refuse outright to speak to him, but when some time later his little daughter that is very ill has a dangerous outburst, everyone feels worried although silence remains the same, so that Yvars experiences a strong want of going home as soon as possible. When he arrives there, he takes a rest while he contemplates the natural continuity of reality that he had not noticed in the morning:

> The mended clothes hanged above him, the sky became transparent; beyond the wall, the mild evening sea was visible. Fernande brought the anisette, two glasses, and the siphon with fresh water. She put herself next to her husband. He told her everything while he held her hand, as in the first years of their marriage. When he finished, he stayed motionless, turned towards the sea where the fast twilight ran from one end to the other of the horizon. 'Ah, it is his fault!', he said. He would like to have been young and that Fernande were young still and go away together with her, at the other side of the sea.[25]

This image of perfect domestic peacefulness shows that although the sky is no longer the symbol of a metaphysical transcendence, let alone of a theological providence or of a post-mortem compensation, it can at any rate play the part of an ontological fullness that is for providing man with an emotional kernel wherewith he can deal with the unavoidable conflicts with others that spring time and again and that man can solely set aside when he has a way to reintegrate the space-time framework of existence, which does not mean either that he will overcome the inexorable absurdness of reality that has been mistaken with an unfathomable mystery when it is nothing more than the trembling experience of the own feebleness before the potency of earth that is expressed above all through the eternal recurrence of desire

[24] *Ibid*., p. 66.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 78.

that so admirably reflects the everlasting cycle of the sky, as one discovers in those extraordinary moments when the burden of years and of barren ideals dissolves into the overpowering astonishment of being alive.

The intuition whereto we have just alluded is the thread of the last of the stories whereon we shall remark, "The Adulterous Woman",[26] a masterpiece that shows how Janine, the protagonist, a middle-aged woman that has a soporiferous but pleasant marriage with a materials seller, discovers when least expected the terrible strength of the earth during a business travel through the desert, which once again reveals itself as the deepest dimension of existence because man gets therein the resoluteness and simultaneously the quietness required to be up to everything. First of all, Janine surprises because the harshness of the desert is not as she had thought it to be, that is to say, the hellish heat of an iron noon, but the iciness of a wind that scourges brutally with gusts full of sand grains that get everywhere and compels one to be covered with those burnouses that the Arabs use and that change everyone into a phantasmal presence that all the time gets lost in the wind: "In the middle of a great hiccup, the bus started again. A hand rose from the tattered mass of the shepherds, always motionless, and then it vanished in the mist, behind them".[27] In that limitlessness, men appear or disappear all of a sudden in the ceaseless wind, and one would feel adrift if their own compactness of the environment was not so powerful a bearing. Janine, then, notices that she always had taken for granted the humanity of the Arabs when the fact is that she did not know them at all, and that she had mistaken the desert with a tropical landscape when it has nothing to do with it. Still more, this double discovery brings to light for the character the rest of her emotional groundwork, so that she realizes that her peacefulness has rather been boredom and her satisfaction has rather been stagnation. Thus, when she hears that there is a fortress in ruins on the outskirts of the little village where they are, she asks her husband to take her there. When they are on the top of the ruins, she gapes before the immensity of the sight, which is all the more touching because of the random traces of man on the arid tableland: "From time immemorial, on the dry earth, harrowed to the bones, of this measureless country, some people walked without truce, who did not posses anything and did not obey anyone, miserable and free masters of a strange kingdom".[28] Men are utterly subjected to earth but that does not mean either that they are in thrall thereof, for it provides them with the resources to keep their dignity untouched despite the exterior harshness, the mutual enmity and the innermost unbalance that threatens even at best. The kingdom, as we have already underlined, is not then the realm where men hold limitlessly their sway over the rest of reality but, on the contrary, the realm where they acknowledge one another despite their fierceness, which is why their misery does not belie their dignity and why Janine intuits that that kingdom also is hers and that she must betray her life to get it.

That very night, when her husband is deeply asleep, Janine dashes by the little village that is wholly immersed in the quiet iciness and arrives breathless and frozen

[26] *Ibid*., pp. 11–34.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 17.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 27.

at the hillock of the ruins that is deserted at that hour. When she is on the top and opens her eyes, she contemplates a beauty that she had never before perceived:

> After a moment, however, it seemed to her that a kind of gyration carried away the sky above her. In the thickness of the dry and cold night, thousands of stars formed ceaselessly and their gleaming cubes, immediately separated, started to slide imperceptibly towards the horizon. Janine could not stop the contemplation of those drifting fires. She gyrated together with them and the same motionless progress united her little by little with her innermost being, where iciness and desire fought […] After so many years when, fleeing before fear, she had run madly and aimlessly, she finally stopped […] Then, with an unbearable sweetness, the night water began to fill her, immersed iciness, rose little by little from the dark bottom of her being and overflowed in uninterrupted waves until her mouth full of moans. A moment later, all the sky spread over her, who was convulsed on the cold earth.[29]

This wonderful image could perfectly symbolise the fusion of the classical and the romantic visions of the sky if it were not by the total absence of whatever kind of transcendence bar the psychological one that notwithstanding its intensity does not bring to mind either a metaphysical transfiguration. Far from that, it strengthens the earthly or critical condition of the whole experience, since the character collapses in the middle of an uncontrollable pleasure that contradicts idealization (in the deprecatory sense of the word) and must rather be understood as the culmination of the discovery of the absurdness of existence that is perceived in the border of the human kingdom and the desert that surrounds it, discovery that is just another name for the exile that the wise man must one way or another face, which shows withal that the exile must not be mistaken with a punishment since it is the ground of the only authentic experience of the earthly nature of man that deploys beneath a sky where the absence of gods and of man himself is required to perceive without shadows the intensity of light. *Vale*.

[29] *Ibid*., pp. 33–34.

Gene Savoy's *Project X* and Expanding the Mind Through the Sun and Astral Bodies

Bruce Ross

Abstract This paper exams Gene Savoy's *Project X, The Search for the Secrets of Immortality* (1977), a record of Savoy's (perhaps misguided) attempt to rediscover a perceived heightened awareness that he felt the Inca and related cultures achieved by staring at the sun to receive a heightened awareness. A subject of Peter Sercher's documentary *Eat the Sun* (2011), Savoy, noted for his discovery of many South American pre-Columbian ruins, practiced a form of spiritual meditation by staring at the sun and believed the sun had a kind of intelligence that permeated the universe beyond the Earth and human mind but could be integrated into that mind. Some of his ideas to this end, as well as personal accounts of meditation practices, will be discussed. This appeal to the sun as well as other heavenly bodies for a heightened awareness, an expanded consciousness, will be compared with similar metaphysical constructs in Taoism, Vedanta, and other spiritual traditions. In effect, the paper is a consideration of the nature of consciousness and its relation to the so-called material world. The approach to a pre-Socratic first philosophy based on one element or another is revisited and revitalized in a general sense by such focuses connected now to consciousness.

Keywords Gene Savoy • Consciousness • Heightened awareness • Meditation practices • Sun

> My heart beat with the sun… It seemed that my mind was expanding to embrace the external universe, the stars of the heavens, then contracting to embrace the internal. (Gene Savoy, *Project X*[1])
>
> The last function of reason is to recognize that there is an infinity of things which surpass it. (Blaise Pascal[2])
>
> He takes you through the sky [*cielo*].
>
> I mean, is it heaven [*cielo*] where God is?

[1] Gene Savoy, *Project X, The Search for the Secrets of Immortality* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), p. 90.

[2] Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (1670).

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A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5_23

> You are being stupid now. I don't know where God is. (*The teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui way of knowledge*[3])

Gene Savoy's *Project X* (1977) is an attempt to rediscover a perceived heightened awareness that he felt the Inca and other cultures achieved by staring at the sun. He notes in this context: "It seems to me that the ancient philosophers of the mystical schools and the priests of the old world religions evidently were able to contact the supreme creative force in the universe—a contact man is not experiencing today in the modern world."[4] Savoy, noted for his discovery of many South American pre-Columbian ruins, practiced a form of spiritual meditation by staring at the sun and believed the sun had a kind of intelligence that permeated the universe but could be integrated into the mind. He thus asserts early on in *Project X*:

> I have discovered that absorption of sunlight provides creative energy not only to the mind, but to a higher level of being—a spiritual consciousness—the activation of which takes man beyond the limits of the third-dimensional space-time continuum.[5]

His ideas perhaps may too easily be dismissed, along with his theories on the Essenes as precursors of Jesus and his being a model for the Hollywood archeologist adventurer Indiana Jones. He was, though, a product of the sixties exploration of the parameters of consciousness, as the recorded experiments in *Project X* suggest, including sense depravation, intensive meditation, dietary experiments, and the like. His project records his speeded-up mind slowing down his wristwatch and also his physical encounters with a solar being, provoked perhaps by his undocumented references to Spanish priests witnessing such beings at Inca ceremonies. Hallucinatory as his encounters might be, his project becomes a generalized metaphor for a first philosophy, such as those pre-Socratic ones based on elementals, and, by extension, an approach to metaphysical certainty.

Dismissed by some archeologists for his discoveries of various Inca sites as obvious finds, he founded a still functioning spiritual center for which he served as bishop until his death. The latter connection is included in the 2011 documentary *Eat the Sun* which was directed by Peter Sorcher. The film's focus is on Mason Dwinell's recent attempt to emulate an Indian referred to as HCM who was able to give up food for over a year under well-documented observation through his continuous direct meditation on the sun. The film follows Dwinell as he meets with other people experimenting with staring at the sun and presents various arguments for the extraordinary presumed results of such an exercise. It resurrects Descartes theories on the pineal gland as the so-called "seat of the soul." Savoy, accordingly, believes that the Sun can activate a spiritual faculty. In *Project X* he elaborates:

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[3] Carlos Castenada, *The teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui way of knowledge* (New York: Ballantine, 1968), p. 86.

[4] Savoy, Op. Cit., p. 106.

[5] Ibid., p. 35.

> Our research suggests that long and systematic exposure to sunlight not only enhances sensitivity of the photoreceptors (rods and cones) in the retina, but somehow brings forth new ones able to register a creative energy contained within sunlight, which introduces new images into the medullary area of the brain and stimulates or brings about a higher consciousness.[6]

Savoy then asserts that the pineal gland responds to solar radiation to produce biochemical changes that apparently produce a "third eye" that produces "heightened" vision.[7] His aim for this so-called discovery is to "stress the importance of man regaining the lost ability to photosynthesize light/energy."[8] Disregarding the unlikelihood of humans transforming into plants, Savoy's project is indirectly brought into question when HCM is found to be a fraud and Dwinell is diagnosed with eye damage, although other individuals following the sun regime appear to have achieved extraordinary physical and mental states.

Savoy asserts that "radiant solar energy is responsible not only for life, but also for thought on our planet."[9] He felt that humans need to process such energy to transform themselves and the world, and this forms the basis of his theosophy, Cosolargy, and the spiritual center derived from it. In *Eat the Sun* leaders of the center stated that humans should take in more solar energy and decode its use. This is seen as a spiritual process of awakening the spiritual faculty. Savoy justifies his theosophy in *Project X* by reviewing solar worship in earlier cultures, including the Zoroastrian, Greek, Roman, Hindu, Toltec, Mayan, Aztec, and Semitic.[10] Of the Assyrian and Syrian astrologers, he suggests that to them "the sun was not just a gaseous orb that sent light and heat into the solar system, but a living organism that charged men with a spiritual knowledge that purified their minds, bodies, souls, and spirits."[11] Savoy's mystical experience while viewing the sun that is cited as the first epigraph and serves as a model for his theosophy continues thus:

> Ninety-three million miles did not separate my being from the sun—in that very instant I was one with it. For the first time, I experienced the sun as the eye of God looking into the depths of the soul… I was also seeing the light of an invisible sun, the sun behind the sun, which is not seen by the organs of physical sight… Instantly I knew the sun was a manifestation of a supreme intelligence connected to every cell of every living thing, linked to the human mind and the human soul.[12]

Then Savoy's transformation reaches its conclusion:

> I was at peace with the whole cosmos for the first time in my life. I felt a subconscious urge to direct love and compassion beyond my physical being into the whole of the universe. If I had a soul, as I felt I did, then the universe had a greater soul, and I was one with it.[13]

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[6] Ibid., p. 43.

[7] Ibid., p. 43.

[8] Ibid., p. 150.

[9] Ibid., p. 42.

[10] Ibid., pp. 66–73.

[11] Ibid., pp. 67–68.

[12] Ibid., p. 91.

[13] Ibid., pp. 92–93.

It is clear that however mellifluous this testament's idiom is, it contains the conviction that fosters Savoy's Cosolargy. But, one must ask, is this a convincing theology or a restatement of Neoplatonism?

Turning to the Argument from Design in philosophy, we might examine Savoy's Cosolargy as an analogous argument for cosmic intelligence. Savoy, however, fine-tunes the argument for a superior intelligence because of the evident order in the universe by actually receiving intelligence from that superior intelligence through the intermediary of the sun. Savoy states it this way: "… the sun is a valve through which energy, obtained from a higher source, is then passed into the physical universe."[14] This "energy" is the "intelligence" that according to Savoy human beings need to assess and be transformed by, presumably in an intuitive-like act based on meditation on the sun.

The "intelligence" is expressed as metaphoric light. Savoy argues this light was the logos of the early philosophers and, alluding to Genesis, states that "it was a light body rather than physical body that man was made in the image of God…."[15] Thus in *Zohar*, the primary text of Jewish mysticism, it states: "Then the spirit descends together with the image [defined by the editor as "A garment of light in a corporeal form"], the one in whose likeness [the spirit] existed above."[16] The *Zohar* suggests then a kind of astral archetype, the image or *kelim*, what might be called a person's aura, is attached to the body at birth. Perhaps a matter of semantics, but what Savoy realized in his mystical experience with the sun, a soul-like personal aspect, was perceived by *Zohar* to surround the human body as a spiritual light form, in manner of the Platonic "hidden sun" Savoy refers to. Moreover, Savoy sees humanity as in a state of spiritual evolution and the reception of intelligence from the sun as a means to precipitate this evolution. Accordingly, here is a modern Hindu perspective of such evolution, that of Gopi Krishna:

> Coming now back to the issue of evolution, it is obvious that if a human brain is still in the process of organic growth to reach a predetermined target, it means that there is purpose in human existence and that the evolution is planned. If evolution is planned it follows that there is Intelligence behind the whole phenomenon of life on earth.[17]

Without belaboring the issue of specific evolutionary patterns in the human being, it might be possible to explore the idea of expanded solar consciousness from different spiritual perspectives.

One perspective, that of a Hawaiian elder, Hale Makua, is in accord with Savoy to the extent of a dialogue with a kind of higher intelligence, not unlike the Australian Aboriginal concept of the physical world's relation to the Dreaming of higher ancestral beings:

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[14] Ibid., p. 72.

[15] Ibid., p. 80.

[16] *The Wisdom of the ZOHAR, An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Fischel Lachhower and Isaiah Tishby, trans. David Goldstein (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), vol.II, p. 788 and see Gershom Scholem, "The Concept of the Astral Body" in his *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken, 1991), pp. 251–273.

[17] Gopi Krishna, "Enlightenment and Evolution," *Institute for Consciousness Research Newsletter* 28:3 (Fall 2011), p. 5.

> And our solar system? From the mystical perspective, this is and always will be sourced by the dreaming of the solar being that we call the Sun. And since our star's dream also includes the dreaming of everything in its system, ultimately our dreams are the Sun's dreams.[18]

In each similar perspective a superior, earlier intelligence or intelligences are projecting change in as well as sustaining the universe. Earlier cultures, aboriginal and otherwise, included the sun and other solar bodies as such intelligences. From a Vedanta perspective, explored by Gopi Krishna, there is an order in such intelligences, the one that is expressed in world myths:

> If mankind is growing in intelligence and this obvious growth results from an organic evolution of the brain, there must be a system in this upward drive, based on certain conditions, similar to those that govern the growth of all organic forms of life. It cannot be a random process, acting capriciously, carrying one brain in one direction and the other in another, or choosing some and discarding others at its own fickle will and choice.[19]

Einstein famously said somewhere, that, more or less, God does not play dice with the universe, which expresses this sense of order. He also said somewhere that there are only two ways to live your life: as though nothing is a miracle or as though everything is a miracle. Einstein's comments resonate in most spiritual traditions from the so-called primitive to the so-called higher religions of the developed cultures.

Gopi Krishna explores, like Savoy's *Project X*, and like such spiritual traditions, some practices available to form a connection to the experience of this intelligent fabric whether through personal or communal ritual, prayer, meditation, dance, song, or the like, as Gopi states:

> The practice of yoga and every other healthy form of religious discipline is designed to cause this altered activity of the cerebrospinal system. There is no other way to gain supersensory perception or a higher dimension of consciousness. It is this altered activity of the brain and the system that has been at the bottom of every case of illumination, seership and genius in the history of mankind.[20]

So Gopi's examination of Kundalini yoga and the cerebrospinal system matches Savoy's examination of sun meditation and the pineal gland. The ancient practices of energy collection, *qigong*, in Taoist shamanism reflect such bodily connections within the context of Taoist cosmology and traditional Chinese medicine, often reexamined by the contemporary *qigong* master Mantak Chia. He notes in his book on Taoist shamanism that "shamanic power comes from the ability to create energy fields that transcend time, space, and physical boundaries accepted as normal in the mundane dimension."[21] Chia offers a case study of a contemporary experience of such a state that generally resembles Savoy's solar epiphany: "I had entered the void, becoming not part of the universe or one with the universe but myself becoming the universe.

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[18] Hank Wesselman, *The Bowl of Light, Ancestral Wisdom from a Hawaiian Shaman* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2011), p. 86.

[19] Gobi Krishna, Op. Cit., p. 4.

[20] Ibid., p. 3.

[21] Mantak Chia and Kris Deva North, *Taoist Shaman, Practices from the Wheel of Life* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny, 2009), p. 130.

I had discovered the power of love that transcends all boundaries."[22] In another of Chia's *qigong* books he describes exercises with raised arms to "collect energy from the cosmos" while chanting *yin*, one of the central energy poles of Taoist cosmology, and then expanding this energy "out into the cosmos" while chanting *yang*, the other central energy pole.[23] In another exercise with upraised arms, one is said to "feel the energies from the depth of the universe enter."[24] These upraised arm positions are not unlike those that appear in Savoy's *Project X*: a bas relief of a Peruvian priest-king wearing a "solar crown"; a Colombian stone carving of a human; and a Brazilian pictograph of an abstract human with a solar crown.[25] Chia offers an illustration of a practitioner absorbing the energies of the North Star and Big Dipper, not unlike Savoy absorbing the solar intelligence.[26] That Savoy's meditative focus is on the sun is not surprising with his understanding of such solar crowns and Inca worship of their primary deity, Inti, the sun, but his so-called "remembered" documentation by the friar who was attached to the court of the last Inca king of solar beings attending a solar ritual stretches the imagination.[27] Nonetheless, Savoy's *Project X* as a whole adds something to the general consideration of mysticism, the traditional mind and body question, and a first philosophy based on our place in the material cosmos. That our bodies, like the Earth itself, are primarily water, complicates the philosophic issue of mind and matter, let alone consciousness itself.

Savoy, as a kind of thesis predicated on perceived electromagnetic bodies that respond to radiation, as from the sun, addresses these issues:

> … we must in fact consider the visible or physical organism as secondary to the invisible electromagnetic or cosmic/solar organism. (Here is strong support for the old metaphysical view that the human complex is more electrical than chemical, and more "spiritual" than physical.)[28]

He then sums up, echoing the psycho-physical exercises of various spiritual traditions:

> Man is a photo-complex. Photosensitization of the energy fields and the ionization of the physical organism through the irradiation of sunlight has certain therapeutic benefits. The net result is an expanded state of being through the development of the psychic attributes.[29]

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[22] Ibid., p. 75.

[23] Mantak Chia, *Fusion of the Eight Psychic Channels, Opening and Sealing the Energy* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny, 2006), p. 23.

[24] Ibid., p. 42.

[25] Gene Savoy, Op. Cit., up. photographs.

[26] Mantak Chia, *Fusion*, Op. Cit., p. 97. See also a similar drawing in Mantak Chia and Juan Li, *The Inner Structure of Tai Chi, Mastering the Classic Forms of Tai Chi Chi Kung* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny, 1996), p. 13.

[27] Gene Savoy, Op. Cit., p. 172.

[28] Ibid., p. 165.

[29] Ibid., p. 165.

As Descartes places mind before body and Pascal places limits to that reason, Savoy and those in spiritual traditions address consciousness beyond the limits of reason. Early in his project Savoy asserts, accordingly, "I learned that time is relative, and man is not limited to his physical body. He is ultra-dimensional—that is, he has access to other worlds of reality and existence."[30] Even more assertive toward the end of his project, Savoy states:

> Mysticism has never rejected the world—it has always tended to fuse earthly man with spiritual man. Consciousness can never be a product of physical law alone; it has an independent life that arises from a source outside the cause-and-effect principles of physics or biology.[31]

Savoy's project is to access altered states of consciousness and, like Don Juan in the epigraph, he does not know where God is. What he does know is discovered in his solar epiphany:

> It was clear to me that there is manifest in nature a consciousness and a beingness of a supreme order beyond anything man's rational mind can comprehend; that one participates in it by means of an inner faculty with which all men are endowed at birth—into the world of physical reality; and that this faculty is triggered into action by techniques I was practicing.[32]

As he states it somewhere else of his project's aim, "With spiritual generation we become participants in the spiritual universe, the non-physical world of reality."[33]

The central focus of *Project X* is the sun. In a kind of mystically and scientifically informed New Ageism, Savoy considers the sun as "a bridge between the physical and non-physical universes on the macrocosmic level… ."[34] He does experiments, such as sun viewing, because the sun and its macrocosmic order of radiation intelligence is the same thing as atoms of which the material world, our bodies, and the microcosm are made. In his words they are all "force centers for energy exchange between the physical and spiritual world…"[35] Unfortunately, Mason Dwinell and others practicing Savoy's solar meditation experienced eye damage. There are even yogi ascetics who stared at the sun until they became blind as an act of spiritual discipline. Savoy concludes his *Project X* in anticipation of what we would call today the depletion of the protective ozone layer. This practical aspect of his project, however preposterous, is to transform the human with an "X-variation" based on solar staring which he claims will produce an immunization to solar radiation.[36] However well-intentioned this scheme might be, the more laudatory aspect of his project is in his exploration of Pascal's "infinity of things" beyond simple reason.

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[30] Ibid., pp. 34–35.

[31] Ibid., p. 161.

[32] Ibid., p. 92.

[33] Ibid., p. 100.

[34] Ibid., p. 167.

[35] Ibid., p. 168.

[36] Ibid., p. 265.

Appendix

Programs from the two conferences on which this volume are based:

The 17th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology, Fine Arts and Aesthetics (An affiliate of the World Phenomenology Institute).
The 36th Annual Conference of the International Society of Phenomenology and Literature (An affiliate of the World Phenomenology Institute).

These conferences were held in May 2012 at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States.

A.-T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics*,
Analecta Husserliana 115, DOI 10.1007/978-94-017-9063-5

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF PHENOMENOLOGY, FINE ARTS AND AESTHETICS (AN AFFILIATE OF THE WORLD PHENOMENOLOGY INSTITUTE)

Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Secretary General, Program Director
Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, President and Program Coordinator
Daniela Verducci, Vice-President

17th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Topic: **ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE SKY EXPERIENCE**
Place: **Radcliffe Gymnasium, Room 112, 18 Mason Street, Radcliffe Yard, Cambridge, Massachusetts**
Date: May 23, 2012

P R O G R A M

Wednesday, May 23, 2012
REGISTRATION, 9:00 – 9:30 AM

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Wednesday, May 23, 2012 ***SESSION I:***
9:30 AM Chaired by: Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Siena College

Temporal Relevation (an art installation)
Anjana Bhattacharjee, Society of Phenomenology and the Human Sciences, London

Celestial Experience of Life
Alira Ashvo-Munoz, Temple University

Antoni Gaudi's La Sagrada De Familia in Barcelona: An Artistic Integration of Nature, Belief and the Celestial
Saundra Tara Weiss, Kingsborough Community College / CUNY

On Temporality and Steadiness in Philip Groning's *The Great Silence*
Victor G. Rivas Lopez, University of Puebla, Mexico

The Byzantine Sky
Paul Martin Ryan, Czech Republic

1:00 PM **Lunch at the Harvard Faculty Club**

3:00 – 5:00 PM ***SESSION II:***
Chaired by: Alira Ashvo-Munoz, Temple University

Reflecting the Sky Experience in a Japanese Garden
Lena Hopsch, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

A Meditation on the Oddness of Christian Love Through Bergman's *Winter Light*
Victor G. Rivas Lopez, University of Puebla, Mexico

The Moon as an Artistic Focus of the Illumination of Consciousness
Bruce Ross, Independent Scholar

The Sky's the Limit: Art and the Idea of Infinity
Brian Grassom, Gray's School of Art, The Robert Gordon University, Scotland

From the Infinitesimal to the Infinite: Rolano Brisno's *Celestial Tablescapes*
Scott A. Sherer, The University of Texas at San Antonio

The Universe as Excess, Part II
Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Siena College

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36th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Topic: ***DRAMA BETWEEN SKIES AND EARTH***
Place: **Radcliffe Gymnasium, Room 112, 18 Mason Street, Radcliffe Yard, Cambridge, Massachusetts**
Dates: May 21 and 22, 2012

P R O G R A M

Monday, May 21, 2012
ON SITE REGISTRATION, 9:00 – 9:30 AM

PUBLIC INVITED

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Monday, May 21, 2012 ***SESSION I***
9:30 AM Chaired by: Patricia Trutty-Coohill, Siena College

Temporal Relevation (an art installation)
Anjana Bhattacharjee, Society of Phenomenology and the Human Sciences, London

Phenomenology is a Humanism: Husserl's Hermeneutical-Historical Struggle to Determine the Genuine Meaning of Human Existence in the *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*
George Heffernan, Merrimack College

On the Inhumanness of Love in the Light of Lawrence's *Women in Love*
Victor G. Rivas Lopez, University of Puebla, Mexico

The Poetic Approach to History: Bertolt Brecht's Critique of the Aristotelian Drama
Aydan Turanli, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey

Jean Racine's Feud with William Shakespeare
Raymond J. Wilson III, Loras College

1:00 PM **Lunch at the Harvard Faculty Club**

3:00 – 5:00 PM ***SESSION II***
Chaired by: Victor G. Rivas Lopez, University of Puebla, Mexico

Toward an Aesthetic of the Cinematic Parisian Skyscape in Lamorisse's *Le Ballon Rouge* (1956) and Hou's 2007 Homage, *Le Voyage du Ballon Rouge*
Marcelline Block, Princeton University

Earth and Skies as Conflicting Complementary or Supplementary Dramas in the Eternal War between Epistemology and Ethics
Imafedia Okhamafe, University of Nebraska

Attention – Dark Energy of Literature and Life
Rebecca Painter, Marymount Manhattan College

More than a Common Pest: The Fly as Non-Human Companion in Emily Dickinson's "I Heard a Fly Buzz when I Died" and Samuel Beckett's *Company*
Mary Catanzaro, Independent Scholar

Flutter of a Butterfly
Alira Ashvo-Munoz, Temple University

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Tuesday, May 22, 2012 ***SESSION III***
9:00 AM Chaired by: Raymond J. Wilson III, Loras College

The Festive Spread – Its Laying and its Writing;
A Philosophical Study of Food Culture
Matti Itkonen, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland

Drama and Values in Nietzsche, Saint-John Perse, Yves Bonnefoy
Victor Kocay, St. Francis Xavier University, Canada

Milton's Sky-Earth Alchemy and Heidegger's Earth-Sky Continuum – A Comparative Analysis
Bernard Micallef, University of Malta

Forces of the Cosmos in Alam Minangkabau: A Phenomenological Perspective
A.L. Samian, The National University of Malaysia

Language, Meaning, and Culture: Research in the Humanities
Lawrence Kimmel, Trinity University

1:00 PM **Lunch together**

2:00 – 5:00 PM ***SESSION IV***
Chaired by: Rebecca Painter, Marymount Manhattan College

Ringing
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