Francis Halsall
Julia Jansen
Sinéad Murphy   *Editors*

Critical Communities and Aesthetic Practices

Dialogues with Tony O'Connor on Society, Art, and Friendship

Springer

Critical Communities and Aesthetic Practices

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Editors

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on Society, Art, and Friendship

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Editors
Francis Halsall
Faculty of Visual Culture
National College of Art and Design
Thomas St. 100
Dublin 8
Ireland
halsallf@ncad.ie

Julia Jansen
Department of Philosophy
University College Cork
Lucan Place 1-2
Western Road, Cork
Ireland
j.jansen@ucc.ie

Sinéad Murphy
Philosophical Studies
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne
Herschel Bldg., 6th Floor
United Kingdom

Contents

Contributors

Graham Allen is Professor in English Literature at University College Cork. His recent books are: *Mary Shelley* (Palgrave, 2008); *Readers Guide to Shelley's "Frankenstein"* (Continuum, 2008); *The Pupils of the University*, (ed.) (Routledge, 2006); *Figures of Bloom: The Salt Companion to Harold Bloom*, (co-edited with Roy Sellars), (London: SALT, January 2007) and *Roland Barthes*, (Korean translation), (LP Publishing, 2006). He is also working on longer term book projects on: theories of the university and teaching; the work of William Godwin; the relationship between P. B. Shelley and Mary Shelley.

Gary Banham was Reader in Transcendental Philosophy at Manchester Metropolitan University and is now editor of *Kant Studies Online*, and general editor of Palgrave Macmillan's series, *Renewing Philosophy*. Recent books include: *Kant's Transcendental Imagination* (2006, Palgrave Macmillan); *Kant's Practical Philosophy: From Critique to Doctrine* (2003, Palgrave Macmillan); *Kant and the Ends of Aesthetics* (2000, Macmillan).

Robert Bernasconi is the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Philosophy at Pennsylvania State University. He is well known as a reader of Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas, and for his work on the concept of race. His books include: *How to Read Sartre* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993); *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1985).

Douglas Burnham is Professor in Philosophy at the University of Staffordshire. His research areas include Kant, Nietzsche, recent European philosophy, philosophy and literature. His most recent publications include *Kant's Philosophies of Judgement* (Edinburgh, 2004), "Heidegger, Kant and 'Dirty' Politics" (European Journal of Political Thought, 2005), *Reading Nietzsche* (Acumen/ McGill-Queens, 2007), and *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Edinburgh, 2007), as well as a number of papers on philosophy and literature.

Edward S. Casey is Distinguished Professor for Philosophy at Stony Brook University and current President of the Eastern chapter of the APA. He works in aesthetics, philosophy of space and time, ethics, perception, and psychoanalytic theory. His published books include *The World At a Glance* (Indiana University Press, 2007); *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005); *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana University Press, 2000); and *The Fate of Place* (University of California Press, 1999).

Nicholas Davey is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dundee and a past president of the British Society for Phenomenology. His principle teaching and research interests are in aesthetics and hermeneutics. He has published widely in the fields of continental philosophy, aesthetics and hermeneutic theory. His recent book, *Unquiet Understanding: Reflections of Gadamer's Hermeneutics* was published by State University Press of New York in 2006. He is also completing *The Fiery Eye: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics and the Imagination* (forthcoming).

Duane H. Davis is associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. Recent publications focus on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and he is the editor of *Merleau-Ponty's Later Works and Their Practical Implications: The Dehiscence of Responsibility* (Humanity, 2001). His areas of specialization focus on ethics; nineteenth and twentieth century continental philosophy; and social and political philosophy. He is currently in charge of the Phi Sigma Tau Philosophy Honor Society.

Francis Halsall is lecturer in the history and theory of modern/contemporary art at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. His research focuses on theories of art after modernism (and in particular the systems-theoretical approach such as that of Niklas Luhmann). He is the author of *Systems of Art* (Peter Lang, 2008) and co-editor (with Julia Jansen & Tony O'Connor) of *Rediscovering Aesthetics*, (Stanford University Press, 2008). Recent articles include: 'One Sense is Never Enough' *Journal of Visual Art Practice* (October, 2004); 'Art History versus Aesthetics?' in Elkins, J, (ed.) *Art History Versus Aesthetics*, (Routledge, 2005); and 'Chaos, Fractals and the Pedagogical Challenge of Jackson Pollock's 'All-Over' Paintings', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, (2008).

William S. Hamrick is Professor Emeritus at Southern Illinois University. He holds a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University (1971). Dr. Hamrick's last book was *Kindness and the Good Society: Connections of the Heart* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002). In 2004, that work was the winner of the Edward Ballard Prize from the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology. He is also the co-editor, with Suzanne L. Cataldi, of *Merleau- Ponty and Environmental Philosophy: Dwelling on the Landscapes of Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007). Since retiring, he has remained professionally active as a member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, as a member of the Executive Council of the Metaphysical Society of America (MSA), and as the representative of that group to the American Council of Learned Societies.

Joanna Hodge is Professor of Philosophy at Manchester Metropolitan University and immediate past president of the British Society for Phenomenology. Recent publications include: *Derrida on Time* (Routledge, 2007); "Authenticity and Apriorism in Husserl's Phenomenology", for Gary Banham (ed.): *Husserl and the Logic of Experience*, (Palgrave: London, 2005); "Walter Benjamin on elective affinity", for Andrew Benjamin and Beatrice Hansen (eds.): *Walter Benjamin on Time*, (Continuum: London, 2005); "Ethics and Time: Levinas between Kant and Husserl", *Diacritics: Journal of contemporary criticism*, Vol. 32, number 3, Spring 2004. She is on the Editorial Boards of *Angelaki: Journal for Theoretical Humanities* and of the *Journal for the British Society for Phenomenology*.

Julia Jansen is current Head of Philosophy at University College Cork, Ireland. Her current research explores the intersections of Kant's Philosophy of Mind, Husserlian Phenomenology, Aesthetics, and Cognitive Science. Her recent publications include: 'Imagination in Phenomenology and Interdisciplinary Research' In: Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Schmicking (eds). *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (Springer, 2010) and "Husserl's First Philosophy of Phantasy: A Transcendental Phenomenology of Imagination," in: *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2005). She is the co-editor (with Francis Halsall & Tony O'Connor) of *Rediscovering Aesthetics* (Stanford University Press, 2008) and author of *Imagination in Transcendental Philosophy: Kant and Husserl Revisited* (forthcoming).

David Farrell Krell is professor of philosophy at DePaul University in Chicago and the founding director of the DePaul Humanities Center. He has written eleven scholarly books, translated six volumes of philosophy, and published three novels. His most recent work is an annotated translation of Hölderlin's mourning-play, *The Death of Empedocles* (SUNY Press, 2008). Among his other books are: *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Indiana University Press, 2005), *The Purest of Bastards: Works of Mourning, Art, and Affirmation in the Thought of Jacques Derrida* (Penn State Press, 2000), *Contagion: Sexuality, Disease, and Death in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Indiana, 1998), and *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image,* with Donald L. Bates (University of Chicago Press, 1997).

Alphonso Lingis is an American philosopher, writer and translator, currently Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Pennsylvania State University. His areas of specialization include phenomenology, existentialism, modern philosophy, and ethics. His publications include: *Excesses: Eros and Culture* (1984); *Libido: The French Existential Theories* (1985); *Phenomenological Explanations* (1986); *Deathbound Subjectivity* (1989); *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (1994); *Abuses* (1994); *Foreign Bodies* (1994); *Sensation: Intelligibility in Sensibility* (1995); *The Imperative* (1998); *Dangerous Emotions* (1999); *Trust* (University of Minnesota Press, 2004); *Body Transformations* (Routledge, 2005); *The First Person Singular* (Northwestern University Press, 2007); *Violence and Splendor* (Northwestern University Press, 2011).

John Mullarkey is Professor in Film and Television at Kingston University London. His recent books include: *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (Palgrave- Macmillan, 2009); *Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline,* (Continuum Press, 2006); *Bergson and Philosophy*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1999) and (ed.) *Henri Bergson: An Introduction to* Metaphysics (Bergson Centennial Series), Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007. He is also co-editor (with Beth Lorde) of *The Continuum Companion to Continental Philosophy* (Continuum Press, 2009).

Felix Ó Murchadha is Director of Graduate Studies in Philosophy, NUI, Galway. Recent publications include: Being Alive: The Place of Life in Merleau-Ponty and Descartes, *Chiasmi International* 'Glory, Idolatry, Kairos: Revelation and the Ontological Difference in Marion' in E. Cassidy & Leask, I (eds.): *Givenness and God. Questions of Jean-Luc Marion* (New York: Fordham University Press); 'Ruine als Werk. Die Grenze des Handelns als Urmoment der Geschichtlichkeit', in H Hüni & P. Trawney (eds.): *Die erscheinende Welt Berlin* (Duncker und Humblot 2002); 'The Time of History and the Responsibility of Philosophy. Heideggerian Reflections on the Origins of Philosophy', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (1999).

Sinéad Murphy lectures in Philosophy at the University of Newcastle, Ireland. Her background is in Aesthetics, Hermeneutics and literary theory, and her current research is into the extent to, and manner in, which hermeneutic philosophy exemplifies a constructive mode of philosophical practice. She has published on Kant's sublime, on feminist literary theory, on style and fashion, on literature and other related themes. She is author of *Effective History: On Critical Practice Under Historical Conditions* (Northwestern University Press, 2010).

Hugh J. Silverman is Professor of Philosophy and Comparative Literature and Executive Director of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL). The inaugural Fulbright-Distinguished Chair in the Humanities at the University of Vienna (2001), he has also been Visiting Professor at Warwick and Leeds (UK), Turin and Rome-Tor Vergata (Italy), Vienna and Klagenfurt (Austria), Helsinki and Tampere (Finland), Sydney and Tasmania (Australia), Trondheim (Norway) and Nice (France). In 1998–2000, he was President of the Stony Brook Arts & Sciences Senate. Author of *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (Routledge, 1994, German ed:, 1997, Italian ed:, 2004) and *Inscriptions: After Phenomenology and Structuralism* (2nd ed., Northwestern, 1997), editor of the Routledge Continental Philosophy series, including *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Merleau-Ponty* (1988/1997), *Derrida and Deconstruction* (1989), *Postmodernism, Philosophy and the Arts* (1990), *Gadamer and Hermeneutics* (1991), *Questioning Foundations* (1994), *Cultural Semiosis (*1998), *Philosophy and Desire* (2000) and *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics, and the Sublime* (2003), his many edited/co-edited books include studies of Piaget, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, hermeneutics, deconstruction, postmodernism.

Talia Welsh is associate professor in Philosophy at University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She has a Ph.D. from State University of New York. Her main areas of research are philosophy of psychology, phenomenology, nineteenth and twentieth century European philosophy, and Feminist Theory. In particular, she writes on the connection between phenomenology and psychology. She has published articles in French, German, and English. She is the translator of Merleau-Ponty's *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949–1952* (Northwestern University Press, 2010). In the past few years she has presented over 15 conference papers in Honolulu, Belgium, Boston, Philadelphia, Ottawa, and at several other venues. At UTC, she is a core faculty member in the UTC Women's Studies Program.

James Williams is professor of Philosophy at Dundee University. He has published widely on contemporary French philosophy (Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault, Kristeva, Derrida, Badiou, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism). His most recent book is a study of Gilles Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* (Edinburgh University, 2009). The book explains and evaluates Deleuze's philosophy of language, philosophy of events, philosophy of thought (as opposed to philosophy of mind) and moral philosophy. The work develops ideas from his earlier book on *Difference and Repetition*, also with Edinburgh (2004). He is also author of *Lyotard and the Political* (Routledge, 2000).

Chapter 1
Introduction: Critical Communities and Aesthetic Practices

Francis Halsall, Julia Jansen, and Sinéad Murphy

At the 2007 Venice Biennale, Sophie Calle filled the French Pavillon with responses, by more than 100 women, to a personal letter that had originally been addressed to her; an email, to be precise, with which a boyfriend informed her that he would leave her. 'Take care of yourself,' the email ends. This phrase became the title for the piece in which each participating woman responded to the email in her individual way and according to her profession.

'Take Care of Yourself' raises important questions and it challenges the expectations that are commonly brought to artworks. It also throws and interesting light on this book. Why would an artist make her own personal life public? Is it legitimate to turn the personal into art and to make art personal? Precisely four decades after Roland Barthes pronounced the death of the author,[1] can we allow Calle to be a 'first-person artist'?[2] Suspicions arise. Is this first-person really her? Is the email authentic? Is the personal that Calle so readily reveals in her work (but not in interviews, we might add) real, or is it just a clever fiction?

More interesting than answers to these complex questions is the possibility that these answers need not matter. What does matter is that the 'personal' origin of

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[1] Roland Barthes, "La Mort de L'Auteur" 1968, in *Essais Critiques IV, Le Bruissement De La Langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 61–66.

[2] Alfred Pacquement, "Preface," in *Sophie Calle, M'as-tu vue*, ed. Christine Macel (Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, 2003), 15.

F. Halsall
National College of Art and Design, Dublin, Ireland
e-mail: halsallf@ncad.ie

J. Jansen (✉)
School of Sociology and Philosophy, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland
e-mail: j.jansen@ucc.ie

S. Murphy
Philosophical Studies, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
e-mail: sinead.murphy@ncl.ac.uk

Calle's work enables something to emerge which *could not have been* without it; the collage of voices, performances and texts exhibited as 'Take Care of Yourself' can only be because of the personal; however 'real' or not, this may be.

The same is true of this book – with the important difference that we *do* know of the real existence of the philosopher Tony O' Connor, in honour of whom it was conceived.

Festschriften such as this, although meant as tributes to especially esteemed colleagues, are often considered of lesser academic value. Articles come together in them, it is said, only arbitrarily; that is, as random selections of texts written by groups of people linked only by their personal connections to the tributee. However, the articles in this book have been arranged to highlight coherent themes which are shared by the contributions and which always informed Tony's thought and work; these are: the hermeneutics of art, politics and ethics, and friendship. And there are two themes running throughout the book as a whole and contributing to the sense of community amongst all authors.

First, all papers are, broadly speaking, phenomenological in outlook and demonstrate how contributions to phenomenology are always applied to particular and practical examples. Second all papers engage in questions of aesthetics broadly conceived. It is for this reason that we have chosen to open this introduction with the example of a work of art. Sophie Calle's work suggests a different perspective on this very personal book. What matters is not only its real occasion – Tony's retirement from University College Cork in Ireland – but what emerges from this occasion. Here, we find a rare openness and experimental spirit among the contributors, which perhaps is only possible in this more personal (although still public and academic) context in which one feels justified in leaving (some) institutional conventions and constraints behind.

Douglas Burnham's contribution to this collection emerges from the research project at Staffordshire University, in which he collaborated with Tony and others to interrogate the similarities between making art and making philosophy. The commitment to inquiry is, Burnham explains, central to this project, to the extent that making art and making philosophy – if conceived of primarily as processes of inquiry and less centrally in terms of the objects they produce – can be understood, together. They are both modes of interaction, engagement and dialogue. Market, institutional, career pressures tend to obscure the potential of philosophy as a process of inquiry. Reflecting on the practice of philosophy, in conjunction with art practices (as in the Staffordshire 'Inquiry in Art and Philosophy' project) can have the effect of reducing these pressures and restoring to philosophy its potential as inviting process and open exchange. The articles in this book demonstrate this last point.

Thus, like Sophie Calle's 'Take Care of Yourself' artwork, this philosophical book brings together individuals who are united in their attempt to respond, with care and according to their expertise. They all respond to Tony O' Connor as philosopher and person, all in different ways: by interpreting Tony's work, by thinking through issues they know are on Tony's mind, by offering their own work for discussion, and by addressing Tony personally. What emerges in this open, inviting, but by no means uncritical, context reflects the breadth of processes that, as David Krell in this

collection puts it so succinctly, 'have almost all their life ahead of them,' processes that, as Krell describes, are not only not limited by original conditions – by an author's intention, by strong notions of text, by career interests, by personal circumstances – but live into the future in a manner that both foregrounds our human finitude and gestures towards the unbounded possibilities for interpretation that are the effects of this condition.

This is not, however, to deny that processes of inquiry, open and inviting as they may be, have their particular directions. And this book is no exception, collated as it is around its central concern with 'aesthetic practices and critical communities.' These two themes 'regulate' the articles in this volume and lend the book its focus and systematic character.

The theme of aesthetic practices has its starting point in the rich and suggestive openness of aesthetic experience, but reaches far beyond a preoccupation with art or issues of aesthetic appreciation. It rather addresses practices from the full range of human interests which involve views, values, and norms that are not settled, for once and for all, but do, by appeal to particular communities, still claim validity beyond their relative standpoint. Like Kantian aesthetic judgments, these views, values and norms are taken up 'freely,' that is, with a degree of independence from cognitive and moral laws. These judgements appeal to shared, contextual and communal, criteria, and not to universally objective standards. They do not function in any neutral and aboslute way, but as interlocutary, argumentative and open to agreement or dissent. Thus, aesthetic practices and critical communities are the two sides of a historical and social, hermeneutical, process from which common standards emerge and in which practices and communities are themselves continually co-constituted.

This process has its dangers, of course. It can, as Alphonso Lingis shows here, bring us to the very edge, even to the breakdown, of conventional conceptions of meaning. Ritualistic collective performances, such as initiations, ceremonies, parades, dances, do not just establish meaning by means of shared cultural symbols (identifiable by anthropologists); they can also open up a, potentially disruptive, space for creativity fuelled by feelings, movements and rhythms. It is not primarily through words and laws, then, but also through such concrete 'aesthetic' practices, that humans are able to partake in a 'historical consciousness' and, to borrow Nietzsche's term, 'eternally repeat' and reappropriate the frames and conditions of the communities to which they belong. Hence, as Lingis concludes, meaning is 'not just intellectual, conceptual meaning, grasped in conscious acts,' but also embodied, ritualised, and performed. Meaning is potentially transcendent not only of the conscious individual and the present in which the performance takes place, but also – in experiences of joy and splendour – of any attempt to grasp meaning with a settled interpretation.

The concern with 'aesthetic practices and critical communities,' then, immediately involves the basic insight that communities and critique are, given our irreducibly historical natures, inextricably associated. That is, critique is not an achievement abstracted from historical conditions and communities, and communities are neither established nor identified outside of conditions that are subject to, and constitutive of, possibilities for critical appraisal. When there is no single perspective available from which absolute judgments can be made and absolute laws established,

what remains is a 'sensus communis' – a sense shared – an appeal to which one cannot force assent but must use the available means of negotiation and persuasion. In the best cases, these practices of negotiation and persuasion, which rely upon and appeal to a sense of community, give rise to a critical sense of a community whose members are not only critical of the claims they are presented with but, in an awareness of the fundamental corrigibility of any adopted position, also self-critical.

Critique, then, can never be abstracted from historical conditions and particular communities. Communities, likewise, are neither established nor identified outside of conditions that are subject to, and constitutive of, possibilities for critical appraisal. This means that no critical communities can ever be politically neutral. It is for this reason that the contributors investigate politics, not in terms of laws, parties and state constitutions, but of critical communities of embodied, desiring human beings. In short, they discuss the politics of audiences, peers and friends.

Above all, the contributions share the hermeneutical commitment to dialogue, which has motivated the process of editing this collection and which most characterises Tony O'Connor, as a philosopher, colleague, and friend. James Williams' contribution to this collection convincingly demonstrates how communities without a strong, pre-given, or tenaciously assumed, identity reveal other modes of being, which can be experienced as valuable and important, in spite of (perhaps because of) their fragile and fragmentary qualities. Our hopes for this project have centred on the possibility that just such a valuable and important community might surface: a community constituted by association with Tony's philosophical interests and activities; a community that has been years (a professional philosopher's lifetime) in the making but only fleeting; and only here, in its full realisation. This is a community whose members, already in the business of being critical, might, by the juxtaposition of their voices, open up new and surprising possibilities for critique and anticipate a long and varied life out ahead.

The critical importance of the fragmentary communities that Williams describes – communities constituted, as in the case of this project for instance, around the occasional or personal – really comes to light with the philosophical acknowledgment that contexts, communities and contingencies affect even highly reflective practices. Critique occurs, as Foucault describes it, somewhere 'between the high Kantian enterprise and the little polemical professional activities,'[3] somewhere, that is, between the expectation that properly critical practices are beyond historical effect and the interested immersion of strongly purposeful pursuits. In this regard, Foucault directs us to Kant (Nicholas Davey's reference to the 'inescapable heritage of Kant' expresses well the extent to which the contributors to this collection are, in different ways, already there), specifically to Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?,' in which the title question is addressed, indirectly it would seem, via a series of reflections on 'the century of Frederick.'[4]

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[3]Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?," in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Lysa Hochroth & Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 42.

[4]Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment," in *On History*, trans. L. White Beck (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1963), 9.

Kant defines critique, not by defining critique but by defining something else.[5] Under historical conditions, critique exists, first and foremost, as a relation to something other than itself – it is not 'pure critique' (the 'high Kantian enterprise'), but it is an attitude to people, events, institutions (to 'little polemical professional activities') that partially annuls the effects of their prejudices and purposes.

The critical importance of engaging – with different disciplines, 'outside' interests, 'practical' and 'personal' concerns, and always with others – is, then, central to the hermeneutical commitment to what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls 'effective history.' Engaging accounts for the enthusiastic persistence with which Tony has, throughout his philosophical career, conducted a highly productive engagement, in particular with literature and film. This engagement has generated interdisciplinarity in his teaching and his research; constituted communities within the university and beyond; and provided Tony and his interlocutors with a whole set of possibilities for critique, where what is at stake is not simply the 'illustration' of abstract ideas but a genuine education of (his and others') philosophical practices in the ways of more conventionally creative experiences.

Those who know Tony will also know that this manner of dialogue with him can often be, in more than one sense of a word so provokingly discussed by Edward S. Casey in this collection, 'edgy.' Casey, very fruitfully, distinguishes between edge and limit; the limits, of a dialogue for instance, are its conditions of possibility, which are very difficult even to recognise let alone to submit to critical scrutiny. Philosophy, certainly since Kant, has placed many of its hopes on questioning its limits, but Casey very interestingly draws our attention to the, more accessible to 'everyday' philosophical dialogue but still hugely formative, operations of edges, which designate not so much the limit conditions of a particular discourse as its internal angles and props. To expose these to question, one does not require a radically different perspective; indeed, one must enter into the spirit of their particular commitment in order to address them at all. And, characteristically from an edge of the assembled crowd – from some corner in the back row and near the door – and often from deep within his own 'edge' philosophical interests in 1940s films and contemporary soap operas, this is precisely what Tony is so good at. Tony will generously enter into the particular question or commitment under the discussion but be always interested in exploring its edges, the ways in which it juts out in places, its repercussions for practices not immediately at stake. Edgy and engaged, with different disciplines, with 'outside' interests, with 'practical' and 'personal' concerns, and always with others.

But this engaged, this edgy, philosopher, is not any new and original figure, of course. Indeed, it returns us to the very beginnings of Western philosophy when, as Gadamer shows us, for Plato the questions that engage philosophers are not to be treated as constituting objects in themselves that can be 'held in safekeeping,' but are defined 'as referring to something else that alone really "exists" and is really "good" – and they are defined as something that really exists only in this referring,

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[5]Foucault, "What is Critique?," 47.

that is, as something depending on what they refer to.'[6] In short, the distinction between theory and practice – and between the academic and the personal – which removes the philosopher from responsibility for the application of her ideas, from engagement, is one we must continually throw open to question, in a general way and also in the more particular inquiries. Such particularities are demonstrated by John Mullarkey's analysis in this collection of the contextual nature of standard theories of film that distinguish between the realism of Hollywood, and the reflexivity of European cinema. Such theoretical designations of films, Mullarkey shows, are contingent upon the conditions of their audiences, in a manner that thoroughly upsets any straightforward 'theory' of films, conceived as somehow removed from (highly contextual) practices of viewing them.

Cinema is a reference point in this collection in honour of Tony, who, intermittently and very entertainingly, shares with students and friends his interpretations of Hollywood classics – especially from the 1940s and 1950s. He is interested in films precisely as reflections on themselves, on their medium, on their resources, and on their audiences. An avid film goer from his early youth, Tony's love of cinema began under conditions highly conducive to the development of such interpretive skills: packed into standing-room-only theatres among many for whom the occasion presented a chance to share (loudly!) their portion of weekly gossip, and often arriving half-way through the main feature, which meant one had to stay until the next showing if one wanted to catch the beginning. An earlier start on a career of hermeneutical interpretation, a greater encouragement towards the experience of realist cinema as a highly reflexive genre, and a more convincing reminder that 'theory' must not forget 'practice,' could hardly be deliberately devised.

What all of this brings to light, in the end, is that philosophy as critique is not, on any level, a single identifiable, homogenous activity. It is, we might say, in no sense itself. Rather, to the extent that it exhibits the kind of challenge to conceptions and foundations of identity that historical conditions pose to posited identities generally, it has suffered, and continues to suffer, from conventional definitions of 'philosophy' and 'critique' that have prevailed in our Western philosophical, and particularly Western Enlightenment, tradition. In this context, Duane Davis's project here of examining the provenance of Merleau-Ponty's ontological philosophy and the importance of reading a particular philosophy in terms of the horizon – in Davis' case, the political horizon – of its emergence, suggests a welcome corrective to the over-determinations of notions of 'critique' that make part of *our* philosophical provenance. Such analyses are energising of philosophy. Hermeneutical self-critique – so long as it is undertaken on the understanding that even critique is never itself – must open possibilities for critique and diminish possibilities for presumption in a manner that is less likely to privilege one critical possibility, and therefore one critical community, over any other.

[6]Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1991), 3.

Naturally, opening up possibilities for critique and diminishing possibilities for presumption, in this hermeneutical manner, tests many of our established tendencies, not least our tendency to isolate and objectify communities in such a way as to produce dangers and injustices at their margins. As Robert Bernasconi shows in what follows, one of the most important prejudices to be abandoned about processes of 'othering' is the notion that they are generated by a self-identical individual or group that turns against an other. Rather, 'othering' (through stereotyping, discrimination, persecution, and so on) constitutes as other not only the other (the Jew, the Arab, the African) but also the self (the Christian, the Westerner, the White) who, in these processes, acts precisely not as individual but in relation to an underdetermined group of others (Christians, Westerners, Whites) in whose name the self feels justified, perhaps compelled, to act. Thus, in order to understand the insidious mechanisms of 'othering,' our concepts of community must be rethought in terms of what Sartre calls 'seriality.' That is, a critical community is constituted not by individual selves but by the practices of selves who always already think and act in relation to others whose views and actions they can neither know nor predict.

One of the implications of this complexifying account of our identifications of, and interactions with, communities is that we cannot conceive of critical interventions that would redress the injustices and dangers of constituting communities as inevitably active, purposeful, and forward thinking *rather than* passive, purposeless, and laden with tradition. Felix Ó Murchadha's identification of the critical force of waiting provides a considered and convincing rebuke to such binarist thinking. Opposition not only lies in action and in a new future but it also needs to wait and look at the histories and traditions in whose names we think and act. The association of waiting with uncritical resignation belies the value in what Gadamer refers to as 'tarrying with,'[7] and what Kant so influentially describes as the 'playing with' of interpretive judgments. In fact, the extent to which the model of non-purposive rationality, which makes such an increasingly exciting aspect of our Kantian inheritance, provides fruitful focus for the essays in this collection. Such a model indicates how our practices of aesthetic judgement are bound up with our efforts as philosophers to adapt ourselves and our objects of interest to the inescapably historical and indeterminate conditions of experience. Talia Welsh's discussion of the manner in which Merleau-Ponty's analysis of perceptual experience as constituted by a shifting range of resistances to cultural categorizations, and as therefore challenging of conceptions of conscious and unconscious as separate, provides us with one example of the extent to which our experiences generally are much closer to the conditions that have traditionally been identified as *aesthetic* experiences than has yet been fully recognized. This insight suggests that the distinctions between determinate and indeterminate, between purpose and purposelessness, between moving and waiting, must undergo serious re-evaluation.

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[7]See Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. R. Bernasconi, trans. N. Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

    The waiting the waiting around, the 'tarrying with,' most conventionally associated with our appreciation of artworks, but now emerging as more generally operative, is associated by Gadamer with a temporality that is very different from the future oriented linearity presupposed by certain traditional accounts of enlightenment.[8] What Felix Ó Murchadha refers to as 'time beyond instrumentality' accounts, Gadamer shows, for our experiences of festivals in which duration is felt less as the accumulation of units of measured time and much more as internal to the festival itself. Does Christmas ever feel like the 3 days, or the 14 days holiday, that it, in one sense, is? Does a career in philosophy ever feel like the 30 years, 8 months and 7 days that it, in one sense, is? To the second, we must, perhaps, answer 'yes!' Gadamer describes the manner in which 'youth' and 'old age' have an 'autonomous' temporality, internal to the experience of youth and old age and not easily determinable in any strong sense, a temporality that trumps conventional measurement; but a career in an academic institution – particularly when one is retiring from that institution – is (and, we might think, painfully) counted out as the accumulation of days, months and years. Whether it is or has been experienced as such is open to question, and certainly subject to contingencies; the aim of this collection is to, in many senses, restore Tony to festival time and to honour the more autonomous, more playful, temporality that goes to define our experiences of youth and old age, of engagement and retirement. In Tony's unflagging enthusiasm for dialogue with, and support of, those around him, and in his so-impressive desire to continue to learn, is certain evidence of a temporality that defies conventional assignations and a philosophical life lived, hermeneutically, as if all of it is, in an important sense, ahead of it; we hope that the essays collected here will provoke the kind of tarrying, playful, hermeneutical reading and re-reading that will best pay tribute to this.

    And Tony is not excused from his share in this process. Four of the essays in this collection – those by Graham Allen, Gary Banham, William Hamrick, and Hugh Silverman – directly address the theme of friendship. How appropriate! It is, after all, a book of essays written and collected by friends of Tony O' Connor, friends he has made within and between academic institutions, friends he has made – interestingly, given Allen's view here of the crucial role Philosophy must play in our resistance to today's increasingly techno-scientific regulation of institutional relations – primarily through the discipline of Philosophy. Of course, since these friends of his conceived, contributed to, and collated this project as a surprise, Tony has, in one sense, been excluded from it. However, if we take as our model Silverman's conception here of friendship as 'postmodern,' we must acknowledge that the responsibility for what happens between friends is constituted less by some external standard of Justice, Law, or Friendship, or Fairness, and, more convincingly, by the relation between friends. Indeed, Tony's call, to which Hamrick responds so well here, for 'a more empirical approach' to the historical and cultural conditions of friendship than a Derridean deconstruction of extant definitions of friendship, taken on its own, can achieve, would seem to position Tony's philosophical response to the theme of

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[8] *Ibid*.

friendship firmly within the broadly 'postmodern' acknowledgment that responsibility between friends is precisely that: between friends and, to that extent, shared, particular, and on-going.

If so, however, Tony must realise that, although he has not contributed to this collection, undertaken as it has been by his friends and in friendship, he is certainly responsible for its effects. And its effects are uncertain, largely indeterminate, and above all partial – which is to be expected. As Banham demonstrates here through Kant, this is a show of friendship that aims at something other than an institutional giving to Tony his 'due.' For these effects, Tony too is accountable. They are the effects of his philosophical past, of his life lived, of his tradition entered into and critically fulfilled. But they are effects, too, for the future and presents the possibilities of alterity that Joanna Hodge identifies in Derrida's '*a-venir*' and engagingly juxtaposes with the always-to-be-accomplished process of remembering, where 'that which arrives, for good or ill, may arrive as much through the permissiveness of a certain forgetting as through the accumulations of memory.' Thus, since it is almost all yet to be done – the future that lies ahead but also the past that has yet to be remembered – this project places on Tony a continuing responsibility; not an imposition on him, we hope, but an invitation to him, a request of him, a gesture towards him. In friendship.

Hermeneutics and Aesthetic Practices: Art, Ritual, Interpretation

Chapter 2
Reflections on the Hermeneutics of Creative Acts

Douglas Burnham

2.1   Introduction

Do the practices of art making and philosophising have any interesting similarities?[1] One key example might lie in the concept of 'inquiry'. Can and should fine art (at least some forms of contemporary practice) be understood as a kind of inquiry in a way meaningfully similar to philosophical inquiry? Before one could even begin to address such a question, however, it becomes necessary to turn away from the fine art or philosophical outcome (the image, the installation, the book) towards the activity or process behind it. Now, this is something that philosophers are used to doing with respect to philosophy. Thus, for example, philosophy departments will generally offer courses in logic. This is mainly because logic is considered a kind of tool for philosophical activity, rather than an end in itself. Oddly, though, philosophers who think about art tend not to be interested in what happens behind the scenes, so to speak. Philosophical aesthetics has tended to start from the experiences of the viewers of finished (and historically preserved) objects, and think about concepts like judgement, taste, classification of objects, truth, and so forth. Arguably, this is like studying footprints even though the person who made them is standing next to you. This was not always the case. Greek philosophers, with their interest in the type of knowledge appropriate to practices, often addressed themselves to the process

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[1]To our great delight, Tony has joined as a founding member the "Critical Inquiry in Art and Philosophy" research group. This group comprises researchers and practitioners in philosophy, art and art history/theory departments from Cork, Dublin, Staffordshire, Loughborough and beyond. One of the questions that this group was set up to examine is whether the practices of making art, on the one hand, and making philosophy, on the other, have anything in common.

D. Burnham (✉)
Professor of Philosophy, University of Staffordshire, Staffordshire, UK
e-mail: H.D.Burnham@staffs.ac.uk

of making (Plato with 'inspiration' in the *Ion* and then 'mimesis' in the *Republic*; Aristotle with his *Poetics* which was effectively a handbook for aspiring writers of tragedy).

The philosophical tradition of hermeneutics – which Tony has espoused and advanced, even though he prefers to call it 'historical ontology'! – is no less culpable. This is hardly surprising since it spends so much of its energy on the concept of interpretation. Hermeneutics has grown out of an inquiry into the method proper to the 'human sciences', which study already given historical or cultural artefacts. Such artefacts are encountered as alienated – coming from another person, culture or era – and understanding them means somehow dealing with that alienation. Hans-Georg Gadamer, in *Truth and Method*, writes illuminatingly about the process by which a viewer of art must become involved in the 'play' offered by the work of art. The encounter with art is not a momentary, isolated 'experience', but an event in the ongoing process of meaning creation and understanding which spans the work's history.[2] Similarly, the historian's professional practice should enter into a dialogue with his or her subject, treating it neither with the objectivity of an entomologist viewing a bug in amber, nor with the solipsism of someone whose only real concern is with the present (and thus themselves). That is, the appropriate historical encounter with alienation needs to remain simultaneously open to the possibilities of both past and present. Gadamer famously calls this reciprocal structure a 'fusion of horizons'.[3] The same dialectical structure can be found in the French hermeneutician Paul Ricoeur, who, for example, analyses the strategies of any meaningful narrative as borrowing both from the professional historian and from fiction.[4]

As a consequence, philosophical hermeneutics shares the tendency of philosophical aesthetics to focus on completed objects and their reception. To be sure, the proper object of interpretation is not a thing (understood objectively) but an 'effective history'; the interpretative moment becomes part of the effective history of the object. The object is not a dead thing, but living, growing. Nevertheless, hermeneutic analysis seems to assume that some kind of object or thing comes to me, demanding interpretation, from elsewhere. About that 'elsewhere' itself, it seems, hermeneutics is and must be quiet. Quiet for good reasons, of course, to do with the historical situatedness of understanding. If understanding is a mode of my being in the world, then an 'understanding' of another's world *as such and as it is for that other* is a hopeless idealisation.

But there's more. In his history of hermeneutics and aesthetics, Gadamer gives particular attention to the period immediately after Kant. Kant belongs pretty clearly to the tradition of philosophy that focuses on products. Nevertheless, he also gives an important account of genius, that is, the capacity of an artist to

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[2]Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. rev. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2005) Part 1, II, 1.

[3]Ibid. p. 269.

[4]Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

create; Kant is close here to talking about practice. Romantic aesthetics took this notion of genius from Kant and made it central. Thus, romantic aesthetics is one of the exceptions to the general tendency of philosophy to focus on products and viewers. As far as Gadamer is concerned, however, this is an extreme point in the subjectivisation of aesthetics. Rather than art being a dialectical relation between the viewer (and the viewer's context, world or horizon) and the work (and the work's world), instead, with the concept of genius, everything is shoved onto the miraculously creative interior life of a human subject. Art is removed from the world, from the situation of alienation and from real history, and is located merely in the consciousness of (initially) the artist, and then (in, at best, an imitation) the viewer. Gadamer thus sees the notion of genius as the death-knell of any proper account of art.[5]

Romantic aesthetics bucked the trend and gave an account of artistic practice. Moreover, it conceives of genius quite explicitly as the achievement of philosophical ends but in the domain of art. This notion is the core of Schelling and Coleridge's account of artistic creativity, for example, and it is still important to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Artistic and philosophical practices do have important similarities for romantic thought. Because of this, one might have been tempted to have recourse to it for our project of a hermeneutics of artistic practice in its relation to philosophy. But, it was not to be. The creativity embodied in the genius turns out to be a truncated or shrivelled account of art, incapable of grasping the dialectics between self and other, present and past, consciousness and world, which are central to the hermeneutic account of what it means to exist as an *understanding being*.

Creativity is a hermeneutic deadend. Or is it?

In this paper I shall argue that there is something in the account of the creativity of genius that Gadamer overlooked. This 'something' I will call, for reasons that will hopefully be clear, the 'dark materials' of creation. I suggest that through this analysis the concept of the creative genius becomes much richer, such that the concept is no longer repugnant to the dialectical ontology of hermeneutics. We shall have no time to pursue the matter, but it is also conceivable that the new ontology of genius might consequently have a role to play in the hermeneutic task of describing the dialectic of understanding and interpretation that is involved in practices of art and of philosophy.

2.2   Back to the Origin

Hermeneutics teaches us to be suspicious of any attempt to recover the authentic, in-itself meaning of the past. We should be doubly suspicious of a move towards an origin, a first opening, as if that move were even possible as such. In the history of concepts, however, this is sometimes permissible as a provisional strategy. That is because certain concepts, found in certain texts, have a normative force that serves

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[5]Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *op.cit*., Part 1, I, 2.

to control, shape and limit subsequent interpretation. In such cases, the original moment may indeed have something important to tell us about the subsequent history of the concept, and of what kinds of latent potential might still lie within it. No text is more normative for European culture than the Bible; and no part of the bible more than the first book of the Old Testament, *Genesis*; and no part of *Genesis* more than its first few verses. These first few verses are about creativity, obviously enough. They also talk about the breath, wind or spirit of God, and thus have a concrete historical relation to the later notion of genius. So, do they have something to tell us about these over-familiar and under-rich notions?

> In the beginning, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was formless and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and God's spirit/mind/wind swept over the face of the waters. God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light; and God saw that the light was good, and he separated light from darkness. He called light day and the darkness night. So evening came, and morning came, and this was the first day.[6]

In best hermeneutic style, I claim that proper interpretation must begin both with something that is most familiar (and what is, if not this passage?) and something quite alien. The first aspect of alienness is that this passage as a whole and in a strict sense, the passage *doesn't exist*. *Genesis* is seen by modern scholarship as a kind of collage or palimpsest of contributions from many different sources separated by centuries of time and intent. Thus, if (wearing the hat of an objective historian) we think of the text as a coherent expression of the thoughts of one human mind, or even one historical civilisation, we will be disappointed. However, that is *modern* scholarship; for more than 2,000 years, this passage has been *interpreted as if it were* a single, coherent (albeit encoded, perhaps) message, not to mention divinely inspired. That mode of interpretation goes hand in hand with the normative force of the content of the message, which could have had no greater sanction. Since we are interested in the history of the concept, we are entitled to stay with this presumptive, fictional unity of text and meaning. So, I wish to pursue the alienness in a different direction. Let me pose a few questions about the first few verses of *Genesis* that, I hope, will alienate them from us in a quite productive manner.

We are, I believe, used to thinking of these first verses as constituting a single (in the sense of simple) act of creation. In fact, though, the text requires us to think of no less than five discrete moments. The most famous one is the second of these, the creation of light; in the third, light is judged to be good; fourth, the separation of light and darkness; and fifth, the naming. The first act of 'creation', if it should be so termed, is not represented: we just have 'when God made', and everything begins as spirit on the surface of the water, but where did the water (which throughout the Old Testament frequently stands in for the abyss) come from, or for that matter that spirit/wind? Since we have positioned ourselves as interpreters of a text whose organic unity is presumed (though fictional), it seems contradictory to then ignore

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[6] I make no pretence of being a Biblical scholar. The above is my 'translation', which is basically what I hope is a plausible combination of various recent translations, but especially the New English Bible which I use elsewhere unmodified.

this division into moments as a mere textual accident. Instead, we are compelled to ask what concept of creation is such as to require *precisely* such a division. There are two apparent answers compatible with our overall strategy here of unearthing the potential of a historical concept. First, the articulation of the act of creation is how the single divine act must be interpreted by finite human thought. This resembles a negative theology; and anyone who has read Kant's distinction between the *intellectus archetypus* and the *intellectus ectypus* would be tempted by this approach. Take, for example, calling the abyss both 'formless' and 'void' – it's hard to imagine a language that wouldn't flounder if confronted by the task of describing nothingness. Or again, the time sequence implied by the verses may be an interpretation of a timeless 'event', inexpressible as such. This is an interesting strategy, and we should certainly keep it in reserve as a fall back position.

The second answer tackles the issues head-on: we could attempt to take seriously such an articulation of the act of creation itself, and inquire as to its ontological meaning. To do so will require a certain anachronism. We will have to borrow concepts from later philosophy in order to explicate the meaning of the mythic terms in *Genesis*. This is justified only because our aim is not the interpretation of *Genesis*, but rather the detection in *later thought* (specifically, romanticism) of a way of conceiving of creativity and genius that can enrich hermeneutics.

The first act of creation listed above is notable because it pre-dates command: 'let there be light' is the *second* moment. This is our primary clue to the ontological significance of the passage. Again, of course, it is usual to interpret this creation as 'out of nothing'. But the 'out of nothing' is itself ambiguous, especially when confronted with the text of *Genesis*. Here, the spirit, water, abyss and darkness *are* indeed nothing, and thus their existence or form cannot yet be commanded, but yet *the materials of creation are there*. At this first moment of creation, even the spirit of God is also dark, and among these materials (right upon the surface of the water). This allows us to explain an apparent textual anomaly: how can that which is 'formless' have a 'surface'? There is no meaningful separation between God and the 'materials' of creation that are also 'nothing'. The water, we might say, has a surface only with respect to God as the as-yet-unrealised potential for command. God as spirit (breath, wind) is thus included among the primordial materials of creation, only *virtually* distinct from them. The creator has not yet self-formed, has not yet begun to be something rather than among those things which are nothing. God effectively becomes created in commanding light: No longer merely a dark spirit, but the one who commands light, and who is then and therefore capable of judging, separating and so forth.

In these verses, light is the possibility of form (the possibility of something being something – including something being God). Light, then, is the new presence of creator to creation *as a spirit that has transcended*. It is no longer along the surface of the nothing, but has 'pulled back' so as to judge or separate – that is, to create in an ordinary sense of the term. The light of spirit is the possibility of form insofar as it permits of the invention, making or judging of form. The next act, though, is not the first act of separation (light from darkness), which would be the first act of making or creating in that ordinary sense. Rather, the next act is the

judging that it (light) is good. Now, goodness here is generally interpreted as the correspondence of the newly created with the idea of God, the achievement of an end or purpose. However, light is not yet a thing, but the possibility of things, and effectively equivalent to the transcendence of God. What is 'good' (light) then is not a thing (corresponding to an idea), but the possibility *that* things could correspond to ideas, and this is the very transcendence of spirit to the field within which things will come to be. The goodness of light, then, is the transformation of an immanent potential or virtuality (spirit on the surface of nothing) into a possibility (transcendent spirit contemplating a creation that is about to be). Now there are possibilities, and these possibilities can then be actualised as the separation of zones or the forming of creatures.

Light happens, is judged, and then is partially withdrawn when light is separated from darkness. The first *forming* act is this separation, the first act in which some *thing* comes to be, a thing that can for the first time bear a name: day or night. Now, one could easily here become distracted by the fact that things, names and *time* ('and this was the first day') occur on the scene together. Fascinating, yes, and worthy of further meditation – but we mustn't miss something I believe more important still: that this is not the first appearance of darkness. Darkness has, in fact, reappeared. Is the dark that is formed by the withdrawal of light *the same as* the dark of the first, unrepresented, act? On the one hand, of course not: this darkness is a kind of thing (about to be named 'night'), formed by an act of separation. The text, however, does not distinguish the first and second darkness. Are there any other reasons for taking seriously the idea that the original darkness has reappeared in some way?

There are, of course, two different creation accounts in *Genesis*. The second begins at 2.5; the usual scholarly opinion is that this second one is of an earlier date. It begins like this

> When the Lord God made earth and heaven, there was neither shrub nor plant growing wild upon the earth, because the Lord God had sent no rain on the earth; nor was there any man to till the ground. A flood/mist used to rise out of the earth and water all the surface of the ground. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Thus the man became a living creature. Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden away to the east…[7]

Here, there appears to be no mention of primordial materials and the unrepresented first act of creation. Instead, a recognisable heaven and earth are created (one hesitates to say 'in a straight-forward manner'!) and then things upon the earth. But what is this 'flood' or 'mist'? It is (as we suggested already above, with respect to the 'water' in the first account) the abyss. '… [O]n that very day, all the springs of the great abyss broke through, the windows of the sky were opened, and rain fell on the earth for 40 days and 40 nights'. This is how the great flood is described at 6.11-2. That flood cleanses the earth by returning it to the abyss, by recreating it from

[7]Samuel Sandmel, general ed., *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press/Cambridge University Press, 1976).

primordial materials. So, in the second account of creation, as in the first, there must be an unstated first event (or situation) of creation that pre-dates command: God, and with God, differentiated only virtually, the waters of the abyss. Water is, of course, both destructive (*ultimately* destructive, since it dates from a time before things to be destroyed) but also nourishing ('the Lord God had [yet] sent no rain'; also a river nourishes Eden and thence the whole of the known world). Twice in a few verses the text tells us that the production of life requires two things: the working of the earth (tilling, planting, tending), and water. What about growing a man, though? Here we find two things also: the activity of working the earth ('formed a man from the [dry] dust of the ground') and then, not water, but *spirit* as breath ('breathed into his nostrils'). The rhythms of repetition in the passage force us to see the breath of life as akin to water, here as nurturing. God's spirit, when breathed out into creation (in the second narrative of creation), is no longer transcendent spirit, but that original spirit that was along the dark surface of the abyssal waters (in the first narrative).

In the act of creating man, God has put back into creation something of the primordial inseparability of spirit and the abyssal waters: something, that is, of the dark potentiality or virtuality of the first material condition of creation. In the second account of creation, the implications of this 'putting back' are drawn clearly. The 'most clever' serpent belongs to this creation; and from the first, human beings harbour the potentiality to deviate from God's plan, requiring first expulsion from the garden and then the great flood. The implications are drawn clearly, but narrowly, in the second creation narrative, for it is a narrative of sin, not of a general cosmology.

In the first account of creation, this 'putting back' means that the darkness of the first forming act (the night) must not be entirely distinguished from the darkness of the primordial materials. The potentiality of the origin has returned to the earth. A *forming creative act* involves the giving back to material (which has been stripped of virtual spirit and is mere material, inert and awaiting command from newly transcendent spirit) its dark potentiality. This new dark is the withdrawal of light in an act of separation. But light, we said, was the possibility of things due to the transcendence of God. Thus the reintroduction of God as undifferentiated spirit is also *the withdrawal of God qua transcending spirit*. This back and forth motion is elegantly figured in the second creation narrative as respiration. In the second narrative too the withdrawal is, again, stated most clearly (though narrowly): it is human beings who are given the privilege of naming. That is, human beings have the potential to take on the role of transcending their materials as creating spirits and proposing new possibilities for creation (including, of course, sin).

The withdrawal of God qua transcending spirit means that God has returned to earth as the primordial, dark, pre-formed spirit. This mode of God's being is all along the surface of existence. So now, *things* (forms) in general can be dark. In the first creation narrative this account of things is generalised to all things, qua created, and not just human beings. Things are inhabited by the dark potentiality that is prior even to the separation of spirit and matter.

2.3   Kant, Romanticism and Genius

The history of European aesthetics is littered with the after-effects of the *Genesis* narratives. Thus, there are many examples in Renaissance thought, for example, where the artist is conceived of such that he or she does not merely copy nature, but surpasses it (i.e. is capable of a genuine creation). The artist has the 'divine breath', as Sidney expresses it in the *Defence of Poesie*,[8] making clear the connection. From here it is a small step to the concept of 'genius'. The genius is a 'small god' who creates, and who *also* judges to be 'good'. That is, the genius creates and with creation creates a new law of judgement. Accordingly, with genius comes the notion of originality, although it receives variable stress. All these concepts can be outlined with respect to the *Genesis* narratives, but without having recourse to the first, unrepresented act or situation of creation. The Renaissance notion begins with what, above, we called the second act. It is only in German Idealism that something like the full potential of the *Genesis* account is unfolded (though Blake's *First book of Urizen* and the *Song of Los* should not be overlooked[9]).

This can be illustrated in Kant by mentioning only two notions. First, what is strikingly new in Kant, and what determines the philosophy of selfhood to this day, is the problem of the constitution of the self. Kant starts from the insubstantiality of the self. This comes from Hume, but Hume is unable to draw the ultimate conclusions ('I am sensible that my account is very defective', appendix to *A Treatise of Human Nature*[10]). On Kant's analysis, the self is not given in advance, it is formed in and through the very acts by which its intentional objects become given. The self exists because its world does; the world exists for a self. The second idea we need is that the beautiful is 'purposive without purpose'.[11] That which is encountered as beautiful lacks the conceptual determination which, for every other act of cognition, is its minimum condition. To be sure, the beautiful thing is *also* something else, something ordinary. The beautiful sunset is, also, a sunset; the beautiful music is, also, the sound of four pieces of wood with tensed strings. We have generic or conventional handles to fall back on. Nevertheless, beauty can be presented at all only because the principle of purposiveness, the legislating principle of judgement, serves it as a concept. (Although there are dramatic differences, on this point the sublime is similar. Failure of presentation is rescued by the rational idea of totality.) Things can be encountered as beautiful (and sublime), and the self is thereby constituted as the self that encounters them … albeit just barely. Thereby the door is opened to a later account of artistic experience as disruptive of the self.

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[8] Philip Sidney, *Works*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923).

[9] *The Illuminated Books of William Blake*, vol. 6, ed. David Worrall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[10] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 400.

[11] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987) §§ 10–11.

But what of genius? The genius is capable of constituting him or herself as a genius not through the presentation of already existing entities (as in the case of an observer judging beauty), but through the creation, over and over again, of art. The same problem recurs: where is the determining concept that allows the entity to be completed and presented as such? But the problem is much more radical here. Not only is this concept lacking, but because of the requirement of originality, so are the helpful handles of generic, conventional or other 'ordinary' concepts. The requirement to create law, not just things, marks the genius out and makes especially perilous his or her self-constitution. Moreover, the genius cannot stop at one creation but, *qua* genius, must commence another immediately. In a creative act, the genius-self cannot complete its world – and thus cannot complete itself. In Kant, these ideas are not pursued this far to be sure; but they are so pursued in multiple forms shortly thereafter. In romantic self-mythologising, genius is 'tormented', putting his or her 'sweat and blood' into the work. The self is *bound to or embedded in* its creation.

This account of genius is broadly characteristic of romantic thought. I suggest, however, that it also owes a great deal to a reactualisation of the *Genesis* account of creation, one that takes seriously what we above called the first act. (This connection is particularly clear in Schelling, for example in the *Philosophical Inquiries into the Essence of Human Freedom* from 1809.[12]) God comes to exist as transcendent spirit – withdrawing from the surface of the dark materials of the abyss – through the act of commanding light. So, here, the genius comes to exist as a constituted subject – escaping the fate of the 'many-coloured and diverse' self, as Kant puts it[13] – through the making of new things and the new criteria by which they are judged. Again, God's transcendence of the world is partially negated when abyssal darkness and potentiality is restored in the first act of forming or separating, and thereby the dark spirit, prior to its formation as transcendent, is replaced in things. So, here, the genius is 'tormented' by the fact that the 'little god' cannot simply create; rather, power over emergent selfhood is placed in the hands of the created, which is itself liberated from the concept. Finally, God's creation is given the potential to self-transcend and create, for itself, new possibilities that deviate (as world history) from the idea of creation. So, here, the work of genius in its liberation from the concept is open to a history of alienation and 'fusion of horizons'. This leaves the self-hood of the artist, as if umbilically tied to the work as *its* child, still more vulnerable, indeed constantly and from the beginning a being alienated from itself. Such reflections are one reason why Heidegger famously commences with the dialectic of art and artist in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'.[14] It allows him to

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[12]F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany: State University Press, 2006).

[13]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), B134.

[14]Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993).

dispense quickly with *that* way of thinking about origin. More famously still, such a potentially destructive dialectical relationship is the metaphysical meaning of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus*[15] (the subtitle is particularly significant) – a gothic, darkness-focused critique of the romantic genius as a 'little god'.

Gadamer accused the romantic aesthetics of genius of locking up the nature of art in momentary subjectivity, removing it from history and from any dialectical relationship with interpretation. However, genius (as reinterpreted using the *Genesis* account as a kind of mirror) is no longer incompatible with historical ontology, but can enrich it. Genius is a mode of the historical dialectic of understanding. The genius exists only insofar as the work's historical trajectory reciprocally permits him or her to exist as a genius (even after death). Reciprocally, the work exists only insofar as it offers potential meanings to history – that is, insofar as it is encountered as an effective history. Ontologically, the genius is not the first being that is the origin of a chain of beings leading up to events of interpretation. Rather, the genius is the *last* existence, and moreover the being that is always too late (cf. *Genealogy of Morality*, Preface 1).[16] That genius is not an origin also means that it cannot be considered a self-contained and ahistorical subjectivity. The alienation (the world of the work failing to coincide with the world of its reception) that hermeneutics addresses with the concept of 'fusion of horizons' does not begin when the work is torn from its self-contained creator and delivered into history. It is a commonplace that the artist is merely the first interpreter, already alienated. What is new here is to think of this alienation as belonging to the structure of the practices of genius as such. Alienation doesn't *begin* anywhere. Instead, using the concepts from our analysis of *Genesis*, the creative genius is akin to the first condition of God, spirit all along the dark waters. Alienation is already there, virtually, immanent within the first condition of creation.

So, the next question is: how does this virtual alienation manifest itself in the practices of art?

Oh dear, ran out of space. Fancy talking further about this, Tony? I'm buying!

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[15] Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus* (New York: Random House, 2000).

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

Chapter 3
In Between Word and Image: Philosophical Hermeneutics, Aesthetics and the Inescapable Heritage of Kant

Nicholas Davey

3.1 Introduction

Gadamer's aesthetic theory emerges in large part from a penetrating critique of Kant's grounding of aesthetic judgement. The indisputable attractiveness of his theory is its recognition of the spectator's deep involvement and participation in the subject matters of aesthetic experience. Yet, as we shall argue, Gadamer's account of aesthetic participation is seriously compromised if it does not embrace a version of what it adamantly rejects, namely, Kant's notion of aesthetic disinterestedness. Our principal thesis is, then, that Gadamer's hermeneutical account of the openness of aesthetic experience is practicable only if it incorporates an element of methodological disinterestedness. Such a claim contravenes a great deal of received Gadamer scholarship. Not withstanding, we shall substantiate it. We will do so, however, not to discredit Gadamer's central thesis about aesthetic participation but rather to strengthen it in terms of its philosophical credibility and its hermeneutical practicality.

Philosophical hermeneutics proffers an understanding of our reactions and responses to art and, indeed, of what lies within them art works retrieve, reassess and re-appraise what we have laid to one side or have come to take for granted in memory and the habitual. This hermeneutical *Hintergrund* is that stock of tacit knowledge (or what Gadamer's also calls prejudice) which effectively orientates us towards art works and their sense in the first place. Not only do seminal works have the capacity to make us rethink what we take for granted but they can also initiate a major change in the sub-conscious paradigms (*Weltanschauungen*) from which we negotiate experience.[1] Heidegger has accustomed us to the idea that a great work of

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[1] See Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity*, *On the Kantian Aftermath* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 68.

N. Davey (✉)
University of Dundee, Dundee, UK
e-mail: j.r.n.davey@dundee.ac.uk

art is not so much of a period but initiates an historical epoch.[2] In addition, it can be plausibly argued that the canonical art work is a paradigm shifter, changing previous pre-conceptions of a genre and dominating subsequent conceptions. The key point remains: it is our hermeneutical *Hintergrund* or setting which the experience of art disrupts and transforms. In this respect, Gadamer's criticism of Kant's account of aesthetic judgement is compelling. Aesthetic responses to art are not grounded in fleeting preference but in the extra-subjective, that is, in the hermeneutical sensibilities of a given tradition (which in no way implies as our essay will show, that aesthetic experience is based upon merely conservative norms). Yet, a central question remains. How do art works probe and provoke the terms of our understanding? We shall borrow a phrase from Kant and argue that philosophical hermeneutics offers a critique of our experience of art, a critique in the sense of enquiring not only into the ontological pre-conditions of aesthetic experience but also into its communicative structures. In this essay, we shall argue that Gadamer's aesthetic theory actually needs the intervention of disinterested interpretive method in order to (1) avoid unquestioning complacency within one's own hermeneutical setting and (2) to provoke precisely the unexpected responses to an art work that his theory strives to both stimulate and articulate.

3.2   The Ambiguous Image

Philosophical hermeneutics builds itself upon the immediacies of experiential encounter. (Schleiermacher once remarked that he hated all theory that did not emerge from practice.[3]) Hence a hermeneutic critique of aesthetics must consider what an art work does and how it does it. To this end we will turn to some of the images of the Scottish Artist Ian Hamilton Finlay who, like Gadamer, was a student of Classical Philosophy.

Hamilton Finlay is an artist who works in thematic series. Weaponry is a favoured motif in his early works not because of boyish delight in military paraphernalia but because such slight aphoristic imagery handles highly serious and complex subject matters with a simplicity and directness. For Hamilton Finlay, images of weapons have a neo-classical ambivalence: they signify order and chaos, law and anarchy, destruction and renewal (Fig. 3.1).

The print "Arcadia" refers in title directly to Nicolas Poussin's two masterpieces of the same name. The title has functioned as a *momenti mori* and derives from Virgil's *Eclogues* V 42. Hamilton Finlay's title places the image of a military vehicle into various fields of classical meaning and by so doing raises several

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[2] Martin Heidegger, "Origin of the Art Work," in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper, 1971).

[3] *Gadamer makes this remark in the (untranslated) essay "Word and Picture"*, 1992 (See Gesammelte Werke, J. C. B. Mohr, Band 8, s 374).

ARCADIA

IAN HAMILTON FINLAY/GEORGE OLIVER · WILD HAWTHORN PRESS

Fig. 3.1 Ian Hamilton Finlay and George Oliver, Arcadia

Fig. 3.2 Ian Hamilton Finlay, Thunderbolt Steers All

disconcerting questions. We might ask: "Death and destruction are supposedly absent from paradise but, on reflection, can death actually be absent from Arcadia? Does the wolf never prey upon the lambs of Poussin's shepherds? If the military vehicle roamed Arcadia, what was the misdemeanour that led to its fall?"

By inserting the image of an armoured vehicle into a set of hermeneutical horizons rich in classical nuance, Hamilton Finlay prompts a re-thinking about what we have come to think of Arcadia. The visual devices he uses to build on such hermeneutical associations are (1) the choice of forest green for the tank, (2) the leafy camouflage on the vehicle invokes Arcadia's glades, and (3) the form of the image itself, its simplicity, detail, and location on the page, is reminiscent of late eighteenth century folios of flora and fauna illustrations. The association with documenting primal archetypes is clear (Fig. 3.2).

The title of Hamilton Finlay's print "Thunderbolt Steers All", is a direct reference to Heracleitus, Fragment Nr 64 (Hippolytus) "Thunderbolt steers all things".[4] The three words suggest that the fire power of the vehicle has (at least) two symbolic meanings: the words invoke the status of power, the power of a dominant battlefield weapon and the metaphor of fire and its power to govern the universe. The ambiguity of the image is increased by the fact that that "thunderbolt" also refers to Zeus. The vehicle can therefore symbolize a violent guarantee of divine order in the cosmos.[5]

The speculative charge of word and image which the 'force' of Finlay's work relies on, pushes into deeper and, perhaps, more sinister complexes of meaning and association. As the Ancients knew, art marks on the one hand the collision of the forces of order and discipline with the disruptive energies of violence and disorder on the other.[6]

Of course, there is no one interpretation of Hamilton Finlay's images. Their possible meanings are indeterminate and multiple. Neither do they invent the meanings identified: they invoke them, establish an aesthetic space out of which significances present themselves. More to the point, many of these meanings are already at play within personal and collective memories. They constitute points of reference, way-markers within our hermeneutic fields. They illuminate living tissues of meaning taken for granted the nexi of meaning in which we as social and historical beings are immersed are, as Gadamer recognises, an ontological pre-condition of any experience of art. They constitute what we call after Ricoeur, the proper plurality of interpretation.[7] There is no need for interpretation to seize a (supposed) essential unchanging meaning. Rather, interpretation elicits different combinations and recombinations of meaning.

Hence we gain an insight into how images such as Hamilton Finlay's operate hermeneutically. We note that (1) their effectiveness pre-supposes the existence of an established set of semantic horizons in which a variety received shared and personal meanings and associations are accepted (although, as we shall argue, such horizons are inherently unstable). (2) What the well placed word or the carefully honed image does is to effectively disturb the web of established meaning and facilitate new combinations of meaning. Though Finlay's works are not "great art", they are simple effective, craftsman-like devices which function as visual aphorisms. And yet, precisely because of such modesty, they reveal their working more explicitly. The hermeneutical *Hintergrund* in which all art operates is made manifest.

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[4]G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven ed., *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 199.

[5]See Yves Abrioux, "Ian Hamilton Finlay," in *A Visual Primer* (London: Reaktion Books, 1895), 106.

[6]In this respect, Terry Eagleton follows Nietzsche in seeing the Dionysian and the Apollonian in art as reconciling energy and order, individual and universal, flux and stillness and, as such "is a riposte to political absolutism … " (and) "an argument against anarchy". See his *Holy Terror* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), 87.

[7]See Richard Kearney's observation about Ricoeur's though, in Paul Ricoeur, *On Translation* (London: Routledge, 2004), xx.

3.3   Openness and In Completeness

Neither Kant nor Gadamer question the fact of aesthetic experience. What concerns us in this essay is not, however, the fact of aesthetic experience, but the economy of semantic and hermeneutic elements which activate and animate aesthetic experience.

When Gadamer argues that a creative, intellectual practice is always more than it knows itself to be, he is not merely arguing that it holds unreflected fore-understandings. His argument implies something potentially more disruptive. Any interpretative practice can be both blind to what lies within it and vulnerable to the play of language circumscribing its outlook. The important insight here is that any interpretative practice formed within language or functioning in a language-like manner, will be based upon loose and unstable alignments of meaning and convention because of their linguistic nature, they will be implicitly connected to other configurations in ways unknown to the practitioner. It is impossible to anticipate what all these connections are, when, where and how they will be revealed. As is well known, philosophical hermeneutics emphasises the ontological primacy of language and its play. It insists that both the interpreted subject and the interpreted other participate in that play and are, as a consequence, reciprocally vulnerable to an alteration of perspective because of that mutual participation.

Why, then, are we drawn into exchanges with the other, be it a person or art work? It is, arguably, precisely because we have a deep involvement with the tensions, ambiguities and incompleteness of our individual horizons (wanting to see beyond them) that we are willing to be drawn out by that involvement and be drawn towards the other and, indeed, towards the risks that such openness entails. It is our involvement in our own incompleteness that draws us to art: immersion in its play of signs and symbols allow the sets of relations which constitute our understanding to be shifted into new syntheses and permutations. It is the participatory nature of our being and its language-like structure which makes it almost impossible (though callousness and selfishness have their power) for us to disassociate our individual understandings and narratives from those of others. It is not merely that we participate with others in common communicative frameworks but that we are sometimes drawn towards a deep involvement with others and their work contrary to our willing and expectations. A dialogical exchange, an unexpected remark, a surprise encounter with an image, may suddenly intimate a different way of thinking about ourselves, may reveal something not fully understood or something unresolved in our narrative and may even point to new and unanticipated ways of configuring the tensions within how we think of ourselves. That philosophical hermeneutics has its foundations within the play of communicative frameworks suggests that understanding involves not just an openness towards the unusual and the foreign but also entails an acceptance of risk and the "negativity of experience" at its most challenging.

Our involvement with art and its subject matters may promise transformation and transcendence but precisely because it does so, it will also bring with it the inevitability of disorientation and disquiet. Art is enlivening, but it can also disturb. Philosophical hermeneutics accounts for the openness of both the linguistic horizons,

offers an insight into the intelligible economy of the hermeneutic exchange between spectator and work and, indeed, proffers an explanation of how spectator and work are vulnerable to each others hermeneutic intervention.

3.4   The Instability of Aesthetic Understanding

Because it is primarily linguistic in nature, understanding's struggle for an ever tighter conceptual closure with regard to a work's content serves to promote, somewhat paradoxically, only a greater indeterminacy. The more it strives to seize a work's concept, to fill it out, and to complete its determinations, the more it stumbles upon words and yet more words. When it strives for a concept (which if fully grasped would bring interpretation to an end), understanding invariably only succeeds in dissipating its quest into a plethora of yet more words. Derrida argues that the linguistic slippage of meaning is due to linguistic difference and deferral. We suggest that it is more to do with the associative and dis-associative functions of interpretation itself.

Interpretation strives to overcome the gap between the intentional referent of a work (its concept) and its expression. Closing the gap obviously renders interpretation needless. Yet the quest for closure actually maintains the gap.[8] Thus it might be more helpful to think of interpretation as *filling out* a work's subject matter than to conceive it as seeking out the ground concept of a work. To speak in terms of a work being adequate to its concept suggests that there must be some determinate notion underlying a work which, were it astute enough, interpretation could lay bare. This makes interpretation reductive; it is designated to seek a specific conceptual determination. This view is quite contrary to what philosophical hermeneutics grasps interpretation as being about, namely a generative procedure which opens rather than closes lines of thought. Kant is correct to argue that no work can fully exemplify its concept. No work will ever be adequate to its subject matter since the latter is an ever shifting alignment of meaning rather than constitutive of a specific concept. Such alignments are more a plurality of associated meanings and as such can never be reduced to one. In this respect, subject matters are comparable to Kant's notion of an "aesthetic idea". Kant notes,

> By an aesthetic idea I mean that representation of the imagination which induces much thought. It induces much thought because it is without the possibility of any definitive thought whatever, i.e. a concept being adequate to it, and which language can never quite get on level terms with or render completely intelligible (*Critique of Judgement*, 175, 314).

Aesthetic ideas have intelligibility insofar as they aspire to be concepts (or have an intelligible dimension) but concepts do not constitute art. Insofar as aesthetic ideas are sensible ideas they can never (according to Kant) be reflective ideas, but insofar as aesthetic ideas are ideas they have an element in them which denies their

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[8] Wolfgang Iser is eloquent about this feature of interpretation. See his *The Range of Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 147, 153.

sensibility. This notion of straining after something lying beyond the confines of the given is an element of Kant's argument we wish to retain. We would like, however, to move away from the broader Kantian framework. However, whereas the straining of aesthetic ideas is a straining to be other than themselves, the straining of subject-matters is a straining to be more than themselves. Subject-matters do not strive to go beyond sensible experience (pass into pure reflection) but to extend the very boundaries of experience and alignments of meaning they spring from. Subject-matters like words have a speculative charge: they invariably point to something unsaid which is not equivalent to leaving sensible experience but, importantly, to extending it. This is why we would prefer to speak about interpretation filling out a work's subject matter rather than seeking to determine its grounding concept.

Accordingly, a subject-matter in Gadamer's sense of the term is not to be understood as an entity with a determinate meaning but as a constellation of meanings which cross relate, interpenetrate and, sometimes, disrupt one another. Wittgenstein's image of a word as having a shared core meaning with a variety of peripheral associated meanings is appropriate here. We all have a grasp of the commonly shared meaning of the word "lamp" but we will have different associations with it and will configure it in various ways. Subject-matter matters arguably operate in exactly the same way. They have numerous actual and possible determinations of meaning. The process of interpretation will of itself bring different determinations of meaning in relationship to one another, causing disruptions of previous configurations and generating new ones. Now we come to what is the crucial point.

The subject-matter of a work is not only that which we seek to grasp in a work but it is that which guides us towards a work. In so far as we have expectancies about death and love we have a pre-understanding, a pre-disposition towards works which take on such subject-matters. We find ourselves implicated in them and in turn they insinuate themselves into our existential interests. Subject-matters are matters of significance: they are zones of vulnerability. Precisely because we are disposed towards such spheres of mattering, we find the appearance of a subject-matter to be of consequence and something to which we are vulnerable. The appearance will have its blanks, have its inconsistencies and tensions and we will strive through the interpretation to fill them in, clarify their ambiguities, to body them forth, to make them completer to eye and mind. But it is precisely in this interpretative striving that something can happen contrary to our willing and doing.

When the hermeneutic imagination strives to penetrate the subject matter of a work on the basis of being guided by a pre-understanding of that subject-matter, the hermeneutic imagination can meet in the work and its horizons other satellite meanings not met before, satellite meanings which when encountered cause a disruption of what had previously been understood. Language, it would seem, is viral. Its subject matters can mutate in linguistic or interpretative encounters irrespective of the initial interlocutor's intentions or expectancies. Such a viral nature suggests that language is autopoetic. When certain linguistic configurations meet, a mutation of subject-matters becomes highly probable. Interpretation is an agent of transgression. In seeking more, it encounters more than it might expect and in that rupture, its initial interpretative coordinates vis à vis a subject matter are disrupted.

3.5   In Between Word and Image

In a famous section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which, quite contrary to Kant's original intentions, became seminal to the development of aesthetics, Kant argues that if a concept was to have a significant reference it must refer to sensible or experiential content.

> Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 51, B 75)

Let us propose the relevance of this argument to aesthetics and our understanding of art. A great deal of what is termed art occupies precisely the terrain in between the sensible and the idea, that is, it occupies the in-between space of Kant's aesthetic idea. Art works which deal only with the sensible would function not as signs or symbols. They would have no intelligible content and be stripped of their ability to communicate. Equally, art works which strive only to invoke concepts become untrue to their sensible nature. They serve only as vehicles for thought. It is this tension between sense and idea which marks out art as occupying the unstable of the in-between. The nature of this instability is easily understandable in terms that not only Kant and Gadamer but also Adorno would recognise.[9]

No matter how clearly a sculpture might invoke a conceptual referent, its sheer sensibility will eventually disrupt our contemplation of the piece as being an expression of "motherhood" or of the "heroic". The sensible object will, after a while, resist whatever conceptual architecture we try to impose on it. This in-betweenness can be presented as the appropriate domain of much art. It is essentially that unstable space in which (1) the sensible remains sensible and yet more than sensible in so far as it is pregnant with the ideational and (2) the idea, in as much as it is instantiated in the sensible, remains less than a pure concept albeit it that it is through such incarnations that concepts secure their relevance in the world.

Art cannot be involved with the pure realm of ideas alone for then it would become philosophy. Neither can art reside solely in the realm of the sensible since it would not be able to refer to anything beyond immediate sensation. Art is, then, definitively of the in-between. Similarly, Kant's aesthetic idea remains rooted in the sensible and cannot take flight into the purely conceptual. It is an inhabitant of the in-between: Its nature is, therefore, exactly like that of the word and the subject-matter, inherently unstable, forever oscillating between the sensual and the intelligible.

3.6   The Need for Interpretation

Gadamer is openly emphatic on three matters. (1) In the experience of art, the artwork speaks to us directly. It is not a matter of deciphering something ambiguous and then arriving at an understanding of it. The artwork addresses us directly.

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[9]Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 135 ff.

(2) When the artwork addresses us, all interpretation ceases. (3) Being attentive to the artwork's address is not the result of a methodological stratagem but of acquiring the appropriate mode of discernment towards the work. The general consensus of Gadamerian scholarship is that there is something inimical between the application of method and being receptive to the address of the artwork. The artwork addresses us contrary to our willing and doing whereas the deployment of method requires a wilful decision and, as such, speaks according to Gadamer of a certain alienation from the subject matter being analysed.

Pace Gadamer, we will claim that a version of Kant's disinterestedness and an element of methodical detachment is vital to philosophical hermeneutics if it is to succeed in enriching our experience of art. This implies another quite un-Gadamerian position: the need for the interpreting spectator to distance herself, to stand back from a work in a disinterested fashion in order to negotiate the enigma that constitutes it. This is the principal reason why we contend that within any hermeneutic orientation towards art, the influence of Kant is inescapable. We will strengthen the point shortly. However, certain qualifications in our argument are needed.

It is clear that when Kant talks of disinterestedness, he speaks of it in relation to the actual existence of the object represented in an art work. The aesthetic interest of the work lies in its manner of representation and not in the actuality of the object of representation. Philosophical hermeneutics takes a quite different stance. Gadamer's aesthetic theory eschews the representational account of images and opts for a presentational account: an artistic image does not re-present, copy, distort or enhance its objective co-relative. Whereas in the representational account, the object remains ontologically independent of its artistic depiction, in the presentational account, the subject-matter comes forth from within the image. It is not ontologically distinct from the work but increases its being in and through that work. Though the subject-matter is always more than any single depiction of it, it does not exist, historically speaking, apart from the totality of its depictions. We may choose out of ignorance or callousness to be indifferent towards the existence of subject-matters but Gadamer's position suggests that disinterestedness towards their existence is not an option. The fact that we are shaped by cultural subject-matters, that our self-understanding depends on them and, more important, that the incompleteness of our self understanding makes us deeply vulnerable to their claims, means that our being and the being of subject-matters are deeply entwined and interdependent. We will argue that it is because of such involvement that a degree of disinterested detachment is necessary. In so far as we are hermeneutically vulnerable to the incursions of other, new and challenging meanings, we cannot be indifferent towards the subject-matters which shape the horizons of our being. This, we argue, is precisely why a degree of detached methodological disinterestedness within Gadamer's aesthetics is necessary.

If we contend that we need disinterested method to unravel the enigma of a work, and if we believe that disinterested method in art interpretation unequivocally targets the meaning of a work, a meaning that method might establish independent of our subjectivity, then our argument would be completely and utterly at odds with philosophical hermeneutics. But why suppose that the supposed meaning of a work is what method targets? Why should we suppose that the aim of methodical, disinterested, distanced interpretation is objectivist: i.e. that it aims to seize the

supposed definitive meaning of a work? To suppose this is indeed to fall back onto precisely those objectivist accounts of meaning which philosophical hermeneutics and, indeed, deconstruction rightly berate. Underlying Niezsche's remark that it is not so much method that is critical but the insights its deployment gives rise to[10] is a sound point. Method is important not because it offers a privileged and zealously guarded gateway to the "truth" but for those unexpected insights that arise in the course of its application. In other words, it is not method per se that is crucial but its hermeneutical spin offs.

The deployment of method as a device to induce the emergence of serendipitous insights can be explained by reference to certain of our initial remarks about the work of Hamilton Finlay. It was argued that artwork and spectator are placed within a nexus of hermeneutical associations many of which will not be fully apparent to us. Such positioning within a plurality of interpretations and cultural commitments (many sub-conscious) is precisely that which enables the hermeneutical exchange between work and spectator to take place. It is such hermeneutical contiguity that makes work and viewer vulnerable. The deployment of method can, in effect, cause a disturbance in the hermeneutical fields of work and viewer. The aim however is not just to expand the number of insights available to us but to create circumstances in which the serendipitous insight can challenge received pre-suppositions and opinion. Methods are needed, then, to set the plurality of interpretation around work and viewer into play. This case for a deliberate methodological approach to the enigmatic nature of the art work which seems initially so un-Gadamerian can be properly defended in hermeneutical terms. Let us summarise the main argument.

We exist within hermeneutical fields of meaning and association. Though, ontologically speaking, such meanings and associations are never closed, our inter-action with them can become static. Habit, laziness, unthinking expectancy conspire to close horizons and limit responsiveness to the challenges of art and the other. Long standing involvement in ways of thinking and seeing can make us all unreceptive and blinkered. This, then, is the basis for the case for method as outlined. The disruptions they potentially induce act as a check against the blinkeredness of our involvements in received horizons of meaning. Philosophical hermeneutics should not belittle Kant's disinterestedness for two reasons. Granted that philosophical hermeneutics could never be disinterested with regard to the existence of those subject-matters which define our existential horizons, the case for detached aesthetic contemplation of art works is that without it the existence of a being whose understanding is based upon accumulated experience would be dangerously compromised. Not to question what is habitually taken for granted would be detrimental to such a being. Disinterested methodic intervention in our experience of art activates interaction in the horizons of meaning within which work and spectator are placed. Such inter-ventions can expose the overlooked and the unseen within our pre-suppositions. The seminal point is that in order to set the nexus of meanings and associations in which we are hermeneutically grounded into play, it is necessary to distance

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[10]F. Nietzsche, "The Most Valuable Insights Are Arrived at Last: But the Most Valuable Insights Are Methods," in *Will to Power* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968), sect. 469.

ourselves from our initial involvements with them. Such a posture of distanced disinterestedness has nothing to do with any illusory attempt to objectify the pre-suppositions of understanding but with activating them in such a way as to both challenge customary juxtapositions and generate hitherto unseen possibilities.

An invocation of method and disinterestedness seems very un-Gadamerian but we shall claim that when seen from a wider hermeneutic perspective, the invocation is far from heretical. Though enabled by deliberate methodical intervention, a new alignment of meaning will often arise independent of the intentions or expectations of the interpreter. We saw how Hamilton Finlay's images insert themselves into well established nuances of meaning, disturb them and induce new alignments to emerge. We contend that method and its interventions can achieve the same creative disturbances. By virtue of the everyday play of language, sudden insights can, of course, occur serendipitously. Our discussion of Wittgenstein made this clear. Though it is unable to predict the emergence of transformative insights, method can deliberately seek to prompt unexpected fusions of meaning. Deliberate intervention will not guarantee the emergence of new understanding. It will just make it more likely. Without it, the occurrence of insight will depend upon the contingencies of whether the artwork "speaks" to a viewer or not, or whether the chance and circumstantial play of language can achieve it.

If insight is achieved, a poignant hermeneutic reversal takes place. In any attempt to negotiate the enigma of a work, the work is subject to the methodological inquisition of the viewer. However, when an art work "speaks", the position is reversed. The spectator is subjected to the work. This is a key position in Gadamer's argument. When the engagement between work and spectator gives rise to a new alignment of meaning, its does so contrary to the willing and expectation of the viewer. The emergent re-alignment by no means confirms the primary hypothesis of a method but can promote insights quite contrary to its initial suppositions. Furthermore, when the emergence of a new alignment of meaning occurs, the distanciation and disinterestedness associated within the methodical also disappear and are replaced by the all encompassing address of the work. In the moment of its address, the work abolishes distance. Interpretation ceases. The enigma of a work is temporarily dissolved. In this experience, the horizons of the work and the viewer achieve a new fusion which can transform the way we think of ourselves and the work. Viewed ontologically, of course, such understanding is not an experience of the meaning of a work in any pejorative sense. Gadamer's ontology recognises that such moments certainly enhance the being of the subject-matters instantiated in the work. Now let us conclude.

3.7   Conclusion: Philosophical Hermeneutics and Kant's Inescapable Heritage

We claim that with regard to philosophical hermeneutics and its specific approach to the experience of art, Kant has an inescapable heritage. Firstly, Kant's aesthetic idea oscillating between word and image is like Gadamer's subject-matter,

Fig. 3.3 Unattributed Soviet image, Stalingrad, possibly by Olga Lander (www.datadat.org)

inherently unstable. Yet what Kant regards as the indeterminacy of the aesthetic idea is from a hermeneutical point of view, always the promise of further transformative alignments. Just note how the proper plurality of interpretation which clusters around Finlay's "aesthetic idea" can be altered and transformed by key hermeneutic variations on a similar image. The Soviet photograph of a woman walking past a seemingly wrecked tank raises nuances that force one to review those that orbit around Hamilton Finlay's images. Perhaps the gentle simplicities of daily life expose the fanciful violence of Greek mythology (and Finlay's masculine interest in it) as fundamentally harmful or, worse irrelevant. Or, does the image substantiate elements of that mythology by revealing the terrible price of everyday placidity? Perhaps there is a more sinister association still. Just as Hamilton Finlay's Arcadia images disturb a plurality of associations and meanings, so a photographic image can, in its turn, realign the lines of nuance implicit in Hamilton Finlay's works (Fig. 3.3).

Secondly, Kant's heritage is inescapable in as much that a dispassionate, disinterested approach to aesthetic objects is needed in order to bring the instability of word and image into further play. Here we clearly argue against Gadamer: methodical interpretive intervention is indeed necessary but neither as an end-in-itself and nor as a privileged road to truth. It is necessary to disturb our presuppositions about a work so as to activate and animate (in the way that Finlay's images do in their context) the network of associations which we are undeniably placed within. Methodic intervention may have as its first moment a disruptive, component but within that negativity there is the precondition of something which from a hermeneutic point of view is much more positive. It creates the possibility of new configuration of meaning when the subject is no longer in control, a moment when the work "speaks" and the spectator is once again spoken to.

Method, we argue, does not have to be anathema to Gadamer's aesthetic theory. Can it not be argued that methodic intervention might achieve a better attentiveness to a work, that it can encourage us to a degree to step aside from our most immediate prejudices many of which are ossified in institutional practices? To the contrary, given the openness of word and image and their consequent vulnerability to contiguous hermeneutic fields, methodic intervention can not only encourage a proper attentiveness to a work but also establish the conditions whereby as a result of its interventions, new structures of meaning can be prompted to emerge.

It remains the case that though such hermeneutic emergences might be prompted by methodic interventions, they arrive independent of the intentions of those who apply them. This suggests how method might be re-assimilated into a Gadamerian hermeneutics. Methodic intervention, as we have outlined it, is not a matter of subjugation or control but a question of achieving a point of entry into the enigma that is a work of art without knowing what the establishment of such an interpretive bridgehead could give rise to. Methodic intention and control appertain only to the application of the method: what emerges from the application remains serendipitous. Without the deliberate decision to engage a work, the occurrence of aesthetic experience will depend upon both the arbitrariness of exposure to artworks and exposure to chance happenings of language. The argument for methodic intervention has nothing to do with seeking control of the serendipitous but, on the contrary, with accelerating the likelihood of its occurrence. The languages of sign and symbol through which the aesthetic idea and subject-matter articulate themselves, afford a glimpse of the economies of meaning and association which sustain aesthetic experience. Just as Hamilton Finlay's images alter that economy, so methodical intervention can prompt new alignments of insight. Methodical intervention drives not towards an impartial disinterested description of the elements of aesthetic experience but towards its enhancement and deepening.

However, let us not mislead ourselves, revelatory moments are never final. Never will they arrive at the meaning of a work. All such meaning is essentially unstable. Yet that instability is the precondition of new accruals of meaningfulness. The revelatory moment must pass to be born again in new configurations. Hamilton Finlay's images touch on the deep pre-occupation that all art has with the primeval forces of order and disorder. What both our hermeneutic engagement with art and the instability of word and image reveal is something of the despair and hope at the ground of our being. Unavoidable losses of meaning are inseparable from the hope of new life and meaning. Through their phoenix-like achievement of ever new alignments of meaning, it is perhaps art and aesthetic experience which redeem the ever–present flaw in Arcadia.

Chapter 4
Merleau-Ponty on Cultural Schemas and Childhood Drawing

Talia Welsh

4.1   Introduction: Tony O'Connor and Merleau-Ponty

Tony O'Connor writes that Merleau-Ponty uses the unconscious to allow for a present and temporal but non-thematic experience. In particular O'Connor draws our attention to the fact that Merleau-Ponty's published writings continue the phenomenological tradition of viewing the unconscious as an aspect of intentional experience. Not necessarily less important or less meaningful than conscious intentional experience, the unconscious lives at a non-explicit, non-thematic level occurring alongside or intermixed with conscious experience:

> In phenomenology, particularly developed under the influence of Merleau-Ponty, stress is laid on the active, intentional behavior of man in his reciprocal interaction with a human environment. This leads to the view that the unconscious is reciprocal to consciousness in some way. It is a region of the psyche which is present in some manner but which has not yet been brought to explicit consciousness. (O'Connor 1981, p. 78)

Yet, this idea of the unconscious brings it close to Edmund Husserl's idea of passive synthesis (Husserl 2001) or even Leibniz's idea of petit perceptions (Leibniz 1996). It is inarguable that there are non-thematic elements to conscious experience, in other words not all consciousness is "conscious." We can view the unconscious as the infinite span of various perceived, but non-thematic, experiential elements; the sedimented and "forgotten" elements that create, surround and support what we naively take to be our conscious experience.

Freudian theory disputes such a conception of the unconscious. The unconscious is a collection of drives and desires that are formed upon childhood fantasies. These early experiences sharply determine our later behavior, often coming to odds with our

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T. Welsh (✉)
Department of Philosophy & Religion, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga,
Chattanooga, TN, USA
e-mail: Talia-Welsh@utc.edu

conscious desires since their formation was only loosely tied to reality. In Freudian terms, the "unconscious" affects our conscious experience but often runs contrary to what our lived experience tells us. We have a kind of battle between the unconscious "pleasure principle" and the conscious "reality principle" (Freud 1962).

We certainly can find both—the phenomenological unconscious and the psychoanalytic one—in our everyday experience. I can concentrate on a Helen Frankenthaler painting on the gallery's wall. A complex variety of non-thematic elements of my situation—the room, the lighting, my education, my previous experience with her work, the woman sneezing to my right—co-determine my perceptual focus on this particular piece. I might also realize upon reflection that my desire to appear interested in this famous artist comes from my upbringing where appearing to be of a certain class was stressed, i.e., appearing to be member of the group of people who appreciate fine art. I cannot separate out what part of my interest in Frankenthaler is "authentic" and what is part of my bourgeois education. Realizing this, I could admit that other parts of my behavior and my very experience are determined in ways I cannot recognize but that I assume exist. In a certain sense, these two kinds of unconscious experience—one stressing the unconscious aspects of the present lived experience and the other emphasizing underlying affective and conditioned experience—would seem to have radically different methods of investigation. They also appear to reside in different parts of our experience, one created by highly personal experience and the other by a general human perceptual experience.

Indeed, my desire to appear a certain way has everything to do not just with my parents and my own personal story, but with a historical, social and cultural situation where aesthetic-appreciation is valued. My parents have imparted to me their culturally-determined morals, ones they may or may not be aware of and able to articulate. The fact that gallery-going seems to be a highly culturally and historically-relative experience, makes the "psychoanalytic" unconscious elements that constitute my perception appear even more removed from present lived experience. They seem to be hidden, symbolic forces—caused by cultural, social, linguistic, economic and historical forces. While integral to understanding my experience, it is difficult to see how we could approach their essence in the same way we could discuss the essence of lived embodiment.

In the face of these different kinds of non-thematic elements of perception, unconscious drives and historical contingencies, Merleau-Ponty takes what one might call a cheerful and positive view of our intrinsic engagement with the world. He, unlike Edmund Husserl and like his contemporaries, agrees that the psychological and historical theories of thinkers like Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx are watershed theories that require acknowledgment. Indeed, he cites them as predecessors of phenomenology.[1] We cannot assume that phenomenology can place aside these aspects of our experience and answer them at a later date or that somehow a traditional

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[1] "It [phenomenology] has been long on the way, and its adherents have discovered it in every quarter, certainly in Hegel and Kierkegaard, but equally in Marx, Nietzsche and Freud" (Merleau-Ponty 1996, p. viii).

phenomenology will inevitably capture them. To do so would fail to capture how intimately psychological and historical situation constitutes not only the individual's experience but philosophy itself.

Nonetheless, in Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of childhood drawing, he does return to a more traditional phenomenological exploration of the unconscious, as O'Connor postulates. He lectures that our earliest expression of engagement with the world shows a freedom from cultural schemas. And, in the normal non-traumatized child, a real independence from parental overdetermination is demonstrated. As O'Connor notes in his article "Categorizing the Body," Merleau-Ponty does remain an essentialist despite more fully integrating the cultural and the psychological (O'Connor 1982). While aware and interested in considering cultural elements in childhood drawing, Merleau-Ponty sees in it a more general reflection of our experience rather than a particular expression of an individual child's family dynamics. Thus the child's unconscious experience is that of the first phenomenological order: a co-determining part of lived experience. With effort, modern painters have rediscovered this intimate phenomenological connection with experience.

4.1.1 Childhood Art

Merleau-Ponty writes, that "the efforts of modern painting grant a new meaning to children's drawings." We can no longer consider perspectival drawings as the only 'truth'…. The child is capable of certain spontaneous actions which are rendered impossible in the adult due to the influence of, and obedience to, cultural schemas (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 132).[2] Due to the linguistic limitations of children, psychologists use their drawings as diagnostic tools. For instance, psychologists note that when a child is being abused by a relative, her graphical depictions of that relative will likely be indicative of abuse. The abuser may appear in a threatening position compared to the child—she may be overly large or have harsh marks surrounding him. Or, the child might refuse to depict the abuser, almost in a kind of fear she will surface through the very two-dimensional image itself.

Such practices lead us to think of children's drawings as largely expressive of internal states: fear, happiness, boredom, etc., and not as representative of the external world. Thus, children draw what they *feel* rather than what they *see*. In the case of unexplainable events, such as magic tricks, the child is expected to rely upon beliefs in magic and fantasy. For instance, when a rabbit is pulled out of a hat, a child is expected to easily accept, if not even prefer, the "magical" explanation. What one might call the "scientific" or "philosophical" understanding would have to be provided to the child because, naturally, the child tends toward an internal, affective

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[2]Merleau-Ponty held a professorship in child psychology and pedagogy at the Sorbonne from 1949 to 1952 (Merleau-Ponty, 2010).

and superstitious worldview. As a result, we understand children as not seriously engaged with the world around them. Their experience is overrun with an unconscious affectivity that bars them from being fully present.

Merleau-Ponty's Sorbonne lectures in child psychology and pedagogy reject this view. Instead, he finds that children's comprehension of surprising events and their depictions and descriptions, albeit different from adult ones, arises from an engaged relationship with the world. Merleau-Ponty argues that we need to find a neutral language when considering our early interpretations and expressions of the world (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 143). Otherwise, our investment in scientific and philosophical concepts will cause us to misunderstand the uniqueness of the child's experience.

A phenomenology of perception, the exploration Merleau-Ponty is perhaps most famous for, reveals that our perceptual experience is far more critical to our cognition than we had previously assumed. Few psychologists or philosophers deny the obvious foundational role perception serves, but many treat it as a type of physiological collecting of experiential givens. The challenging question is how the proper intellectual or cognitive judgment applies itself to perception. Thus, a child might have the physical apparatus to collect the givens but since the child obviously lacks the intellectual and mental skills to process that data, her engagement will be limited. Merleau-Ponty argues strongly against interpreting perception in such a fashion. In the case of the child, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that the child is unsophisticated and lacks many cognitive skills. However, since perception precedes intellectual judgments about the objects of perception, the child is not partially or minimally experiencing the world. The child might not judge an object or be able to name it, but her perceptions are not therefore lacking. Childhood drawing provides an insight into the nature of childhood perception and, thereby, the basis of adult perception.

The child's experience also provides a counterpoint to aid us in analyzing certain unquestioned assumptions about adult experience, providing an insight into the workings of the adult psyche. Merleau-Ponty affirms the traditional conception that children draw expressively, but does not suggest that this means their drawing is not perceptual. Rather, it is the false premise that perception is only the psychological-physiological collecting of sense-data that is then interpreted by intellectual processing that permits one to draw a line between affective, internally motivated drawing and drawing as solely the representation of the perceived world.

While often connected to the givens that lie outside the body, artistic representations are always at the same time modified by the artist. Adults have often been trained to associate photographic representations as "realistic" depictions of our perceptual experience. While we may admire abstract art as aesthetically richer, it is the Norman Rockwell style artist who more accurately recreates what we see. However, as Merleau-Ponty goes to lengths to argue, this very idea that photo-realistic art is more accurate is itself a cultural, and not a perceptual, product. We do not actually encounter the world as a series of moving snapshots. Our experience of reality is not akin to a movie projected before our eyes. Adult ideas about art and perception are overdetermined by "conventional attitudes."

Regarding our perceptual experience, the child's artistic representation of the world is more revealing:

> *The study of the role of drawing leads us back to the capacity which it serves as its ground: perception.* We have seen that drawings express affectivity rather than understanding. Consequently, we must pay close attention to what the child's perception—and even that of the adult when it can be stripped of conventional attitudes—consists of when encountering things not only as objects of understanding, but also as affective stimulants. (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 171)

In many passages, Merleau-Ponty argues that childhood drawing possesses unique advantages to understanding the nature of perception in comparison to adult drawing, painting, and discourse. Merleau-Ponty lectures that children express a more sensually-integrated experience in their drawings than adults do. Not only do children use their sense of time, hearing, taste, and touch in their depictions, they also do not distinguish between what they feel and what they see. The characteristics of childhood drawing arise directly from the child's experience in an unmediated fashion, since children are not as integrated into the system of styles of representation. From accumulated experience witnessing paintings, photos, film, and being schooled in what "good" painting consists of, adults tend to be more occulocentric in their representations. In everyday experience, visual perception does not occur in a vacuum where sight is extracted from the other senses.

The traditional adult conception of drawing is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional visual object. One should draw a "thing" in a moment of time—the landscape, the chair, the person. Children weave context, time, and perspectives, as well as their affective life, into their depictions. When diagnosing children's disorders, psychoanalysis and psychology use the fact that children do not separate their affective relations with persons from their depictions of them. While adults latently retain this affective nature in their drawings and certainly artists endeavor to create beyond the concept of representing objects two-dimensionally as "faithfully" as possible, children's drawings reveal much about how adult drawing has become overlaid by socio-cultural determinations.

Psychologists often use drawing to measure the development of the child's visual and motor systems. Can the child successfully put a torso onto the body, or does the child merely draw a tadpole man? When asked to draw an object, does the child capture the main components of it? Merleau-Ponty considers the emphasis on such skills to misread child perception as a function of adult perception (i.e. the child's drawing is only valued as an expression of how far the child is on the path to adulthood). Such a conception does acknowledge that children's drawings possess unique characteristics (contrasted with a more outdated view holding child drawing as psychologically irrelevant), but it still views "children's drawings as imperfect sketches of adult drawings which are the 'true' representation of the object" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 132). Thus, their interpretative model constrains them to always find within the child what is present in the adult, not considering that the child may possess unique structures that are not merely miniature or reduced versions of adult ones. Consequently, such a conception of child drawing assumes that what is "wrong" in children's drawings is the lack of attention to the

real way in which the object appears. In fact, Merleau-Ponty counters, child drawing can often reveal the elements of the object's being (and one's own being) that adult repress.

Picasso's use of multiple perspectives in one human figure can be understood as grasping a truth about the perspectival nature of our perception. Likewise, the child-hood tendency to flatten perspective illustrates how our eyes do not tend to focus only simply on a one-point perspective but wander from place to place within a visual field. Children also distort comparative sizes of objects and persons depending on their affective relations. Merleau-Ponty credits psychoanalysis with discovering how childhood drawing demonstrates the manner in which affective associations are depicted, even when these objects are not in the visual field of the child. Merleau-Ponty cites Sophie Morgenstern's *Psychoanalyse infantile: symbolisme et valeur clinique des creations imaginatives chez l'enfant* which describes how "drawing is sublimation for both the child and the adult" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 175).[3] But in adults, one must search the painting for latent content that was deformed by psychic resistances—"However, in children, it is impossible to imagine that such a censor mechanism exists; rather than discovering a simple duality of manifest content and latent content, one finds a single text of undetermined meaning" (p. 175). For instance, we can understand how adult repression might occur in sexually-charged but taboo representations. However, given the child's nature, there is no sexual content "as sexual" to be repressed and then symbolized. We can say that for the child there is nothing distinctly sexual, rather sexuality is one color of the child's entire experience.

Merleau-Ponty returns to Politzer, citing his critique of Freudian notions of latent content and manifest content (for Politzer this distinction isn't operative in the child or the dreamer) (p. 175).[4] As written above, objects do not represent for children what they might for adults—"The child's symbolization does not stem from an understanding separated by the terms *object* and *symbol*, but rather sexual meaning is immanent in the drawing" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, pp. 175–176). Thus, affective relations are not behind or beneath children's perceptions (occasionally causing certain kinds of depictions); they are intrinsic to perception itself. The concept that

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[3]Sophie Morgenstern, a child psychoanalyst, wrote on the relevance of childhood drawing and other creative acts. Merleau-Ponty writes, "As a means of considering the psychoanalytic explora-tion of drawings, let us consider Sophie Morgenstern's (1937) *Psychanalyse infantile; symbolisme et valeur clinique des creations imaginatives chez l'enfant*. Morgenstern's interpretation of children's drawings stems from her observation of a particular child whom she could explore by no other means. The boy was mute and quite reticent and was capable of expressing himself only through the drawings which he produced. The doctor would interpret these drawings while the child nodded or shook his head at the interpretations provided. Morgenstern cites some of the child's productions to include: birds, tall animals, stick figures with hats, individuals with three arms, with a pipe, with a knife, men in the moon, wolfmen, parents without heads, etc." (2010, p. 174).

[4]Merleau-Ponty continues, "If someone dreams a house, they are not dreaming of sexual organs; they are thinking directly of the house which is immediately a sexual expression" (p. 175).

emotional states "cause" the child to draw in a certain manner—a theory of drawing as an expressive function—has a certain truth to it, but an incomplete one. It is true that children are expressive, emotional artists. However, it isn't the case that they have an emotion and subsequently are forced by this emotion to draw in a particular manner. This interpretation argues that the child's affective states are internal, removed from their perceptual experience. Children do not have a deep unconscious that motivates their experience, but a non-conscious, direct manner of perceiving with their entire being. We *learn* to create divisions between affects and the senses; we are not born with such distinctions.

We might object that such a position reifies childhood experience as if it were not influenced by the contingencies of the child's situation: her culture, social class and family. Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that "it is impossible to separate culture's influence from what properly speaking belongs to the child. Sociological, even ideological considerations always intervene in any discussion about drawing" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 163).[5] At the same time, Merleau-Ponty considers this kind of objection a false problem. Naturally, children are affected by their situation, others' attitudes toward them, the cultural norms of the society, etc. We need to ask now: What does such an admission entail? For Merleau-Ponty, such a statement is merely a truism and would not affect our ability to investigate the child's structures of perception. "Even a total absence of milieu (if this is conceivable) would affect the child as any particular milieu does" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 164). It is a given that environmental conditions shape any being that lives within that environment. The point of Merleau-Ponty's child psychology is to demonstrate to what degree cultural differences demonstrate plasticity in child development and which behaviors expose structural traits. Without such traits no comparison between cultures can be possible, for a comparison requires a framework, or form, that is similar enough in both to afford a comparison. Merleau-Ponty finds that cultural differences reveal structural similarities. In fact, anthropological investigations support the view that processes by which children perceive are similar (although the content of their responses varies widely due to class and culture).

Structural traits are not context-independent. Yet, they do allow for one to leave the description of the cultural, historical situation and consider the theoretical implications of childhood drawing, especially how it reveals childhood perception. Thus, to understand how childhood drawing is more than just a test or measure of motor development, one must recognize a "*positive meaning* within the child's drawing" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 132). Pointing out similarities with modern art, Merleau-Ponty writes that child drawing and modern painting challenge the postulate that "the geometrical perspective is truer" (p. 132). He continues by noting that, "the efforts of modern painting place this postulate in question and accord a positive significance to other manners of seeing (for example, for Picasso the plurality of profiles is a means of expression)." (p. 132).

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[5]Merleau-Ponty continues by citing a Marxist example of the over-determination of cultural experience, "thus, certain Marxists would see the child's non-figurative drawings as stemming strictly from the influence of the bourgeois cultural milieu" (p. 163).

Modern artists abandon traditional methods of creating the illusion of perspective within a two-dimensional canvas, and explore a variety of styles to compose their works. Since traditional Western, perspectival drawing and photography are considered to be more "accurate" visually, modern art is often analyzed in terms unrelated to accuracy or truth (for instance, one can discuss the use of color and line, social commentary, visual effect, etc.). Merleau-Ponty argues that, like childhood drawing, modern art better emphasizes the truth of *perception*. Additionally, we must realize that the idea that photographic representation of an object—its visual stimuli—is itself an intellectual exercise of isolation that always occurs post-perception.

Naturally, adult distinctions cannot be too hard and fast. Like children, we cannot be trapped in our own culturally overdetermined views lest we fail to recognize the ambiguous nature of children's perception. Because the modern artist (or psychologist or philosopher) calls into question unreflective assumptions about perception and representation, she achieves a degree of freedom from cultural norms. Although there is no complete liberty, there are greater and lesser degrees of independence and, thus, creativity with respect to social-cultural standards:

> We can see proof of children's freedom from our cultural postulates in their drawings. We do understand that a perceptual-motor insufficiency does in fact exist; children are not artists. However, the efforts of modern painting grant a new meaning to children's drawings. We can no longer consider perspectival drawings as the only 'truth'…. The child is capable of certain spontaneous actions which are rendered impossible in the adult due to the influence of, and obedience to, cultural schemas. (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 132)

To explore the world of child drawing and how it reflects child perception, one must find a method that integrates both the historical events of the child's life as well as the responses of the child to its environment. Merleau-Ponty takes a stance contrary to any kind of functionalism or strict developmental schema where children are viewed as either possessing or not possessing age-appropriate skills and behaviors—"Positive contents must be incorporated into explorations of the functional aspects of the child's behavior"(2010, p. 132). Childhood drawings represent an expressive grasp of nature that reflects the child's *global* perception of the world. A global perception is the general manner in which one relates to the world—one's vision, history, and emotive nature. Thus, what a child sees and what a child draws "are not exactly the same" (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 164) Children do not separate their "internal vision of things" from the sight of the object.

The expressive nature of children's drawing means that the object-representation and the affective state are not separate categories of intellect and emotion. Merleau-Ponty lectures that, for children, drawing is as much about self-expression as it is about thing-representation, but, as argued above, this is not to say that the child is motivated by some kind of internal state to express herself. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes himself from the child psychologist G.H. Luquet by denying the thesis that the child's drawing is a combination of an internal, affective model and a

direct representation of the child's vision.[6] Luquet assumes that drawing is about transmitting visual givens. Hence, both the child and the adult "see" the same way; it is a matter of attention that distinguishes their representations. Since he adheres to a notion that the object is constant (the "constancy hypothesis"), Luquet thinks perception is only a matter of paying attention well or poorly (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 348).

We must move away from object-constancy toward an analysis of perception's immediate meaning. Attention often does reveal more aspects of a particular experience. Yet, this isn't to say that when I consciously and carefully focus my attention on an object that I am thereby physiologically absorbing more visual givens in my perceptual field. We do not experience the world in a type of cloudy fog until we decide to focus on objects. Attention doesn't make me perceive "better" although it does re-structure my perception.

Merleau-Ponty lectures that "*The child's drawing springs from a mode of communication different from our own; one which is thoroughly affective*" (2010, p. 170). The object to be drawn is perceived as temporally, spatially and affectively immersed in its environment. In this sense, children are capturing the thing as it truly exists—with shifting profiles, contextual situation and one's intentions toward it meshed inextricably together. At the same time, the child includes her own feelings about the object within a drawing because, as stated previously, children do not take their emotions as belonging to them. Their lives are continuous with the world. Children's drawings are thus "at one and the same time more subjective and more objective than those of adults: more subjective because they are liberated from appearance, and more objective because they attempt to reproduce the thing as it really is, while adults only represent things from one point of view—their own" (p. 170).

Adult perception, tied to judgments received from prior experience, is also intractably tied to social-cultural significations. The child is also influenced by social-cultural conditions. But these conditions do not constitute child experience in the same manner as adult experience. On this topic, traditional psychologists are right to note the immaturity of the child. The child does not have a complete and functioning grasp of language and cultural norms. The mistake of traditional psychologists is to assume that it also follows that children have a chaotic, incomplete perceptual system because they do not articulate their experience clearly. Merleau-Ponty agrees with Koffka, among others, who affirms the notion of a *constancy phenomenon* within perception (and not, as in Luquet, an object-constancy).[7]

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[6]Georges Henri Luquet (1972) wrote an influential text on the relevance of childhood drawing. In Merleau-Ponty's view, "Luquet contradicts himself by stating on the one hand that the child draws according to an internal model, and on the other hand that the child's drawings are not schematic or idealist" (p. 167).

[7]Kurt Koffka (1886–1941) was an early Gestalt psychologist who worked with Wertheimer and Köhler. His text *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1935) is often cited by Merleau-Ponty.

Returning to the field-figure notion of Gestalt psychology, the constancy phenomenon states that perception always occurs in an organized field; there is no "chaotic" perception—"In the child, thanks to the phenomenon of constancy, a non-chaotic and structured vision of the perceptual field exists (though this is not to say that the structuration is the same as, or as perfect as, that of the adult)" (2010, p. 147). What children do not possess, given their immature state of linguistic development, is an interpretive system of judgments with which to symbolize their perceptions. For children, "[t]here is no secondary work of interpretation" (p. 147).

Merleau-Ponty reiterates many times that this thesis doesn't argue that everything one finds in adult perception is entirely nascent within the child. Gestalt psychology's notion of the constancy of perception argues that infantile perception is not identical to adult perception—"But, to say that infantile perception is structured from its first moment is not to declare the infant's perception and adult's the same. Rather, it is a question of a summary structure replete with lacunae and indeterminate regions, and not the precise structuration that characterizes adult perception" (2010, p. 148). As he argues in *The Structure of Behavior*, to declare that the child or the animal has a meaningful way to organize its experiential world is not to say that its mode of structuration is always an immature, less developed style of our own. Children must have an organized meaningful relationship between their various experiences, their past, present and future; however, this must be significantly different in many respects from adult perception. For adults, a thing has a certain intellectual judgment attached to it, even when the judgment is simply "this is an unknown thing I am witnessing." In Gestalt theory, things also have a *pre-intellectual* unity, indicating that a child can interact meaningfully with a thing without having any comprehension of it "as a thing."[8] Development brings with it significant transformations and re-structurations; these intellectual, linguistic developments are integrated into everyday mature experience. Infantile perception does possess a "world-view" insofar as it presents a whole, structured perceptual field—"In the developmental course of the child's perception a number of transformations and reorganizations occur. However, from the beginning certain totalities (which merit the name of things) do exist and together they constitute a 'world'" (pp. 148–149).

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[8] "In conclusion, we find that according to classical psychology the thing (perceived by the subject) is wholly intelligible for it is the intellection of certain functional relations to variables. According to Gestalt theory, the thing has a pre-intellectual unity. It can be defined for perception as a certain style. For classical psychology, a circle is a law conceived by me while producing this figure. For Gestalt theory, a circle is a certain physiognomy, a certain curvature. We learn to see the *unity of things*. For example, the yellow of a lemon in connection with its acidity reveals a structural community which renders the particular aspects (yellow, acidity) *synonymous*. Thus, all of this confirms the fact that the infant's experience does not begin as chaos, but as a *world already underway [un monde déjà]* of which only the structure is filled with lacuna" (p. 148).

4.2 Conclusion: Cultural Spaces

O'Connor points out that Merleau-Ponty's work can be critiqued by later figures, such as Michel Foucault, who argue against Merleau-Ponty's faith in the foundational nature of perception. We should acknowledge that "interpreted objects are constituted, and not merely described, by interpretation itself, and always within a specific epistemic and cultural space" (O'Connor 1994, pp. 14–15). Such a discussion is a direct challenge to a phenomenology which thinks that through careful examination, our descriptions can reveal essential, or at least general, truths about how we constitute objects. Post-structuralist, post-Freudian psychoanalytic and postmodern approaches call such a claim into question. The "cultural and epistemic space" in which I live not only contributes to the *content* of my judgments about my perceptions, it also constitutes the *form* of how I perceive and the *method* of my analysis of perception. Phenomenologists agree that our cultural world shapes our value judgments, but a post-structuralist argues that the cultural world intrudes deeply into our experience to the point where not only is a complete reduction impossible, the desire to even perform a reduction is itself as thoroughly "cultural" as my desire to appear to enjoy abstract art.[9]

We certainly can find this phenomenological faith in our ability to say something general about our experience in Merleau-Ponty's discussion of childhood drawing discussed above. His lectures on child psychology could be read as a kind of overly romantic view of a childhood where the child "really" experiences, whereas we must muddle through interpretive schemas. However, childhood art can rightly be understood as expressing a more general experience than the adult's. Children are less aware of the complexities of interpretative schemas, have less distance from any childhood traumas which will dictate their future models of repression, and thus less subject to having enough distance from their lived experience to overlay it. Merleau-Ponty takes up Piaget's discussion of childhood egocentrism and emphasizes it is not an egocentrism borne out of internal preoccupation, but one where one is unaware of the existence of subjectivities at all. Thus, the child has not yet acquired the same set of norms and expectations that arise from others' judgments since others qua "other subjectivities" are not yet a category for the child (Merleau-Ponty 2010, p. 176).

While acknowledging that a certain cultural influence exerts itself on the child, Merleau-Ponty contends that we *can* generalize about the experience itself from the depiction of that experience in the child's drawing because the "cultural space" and the interpretations of that space have not yet removed the child from the immediacy of her perceptual experience. In addition, in order for us to recognize this immediacy we too must retain a connection with that pre-cultural world. In child psychology,

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[9]Merleau-Ponty is famous for his assertion that Husserl himself did not think a complete reduction possible. He writes "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (Merleau-Ponty 1996, p. xiv).

then, we find support for an existential phenomenology. Acknowledging our immersion in the cultural, historical world, nonetheless, we are able to see our primordial pre-cultural selves in the child.

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Chapter 5
Art and Edge: Preliminary Reflections

Edward S. Casey

5.1

Jackson Pollock said that painting for him had "no limits, only edges." I shall take this as a leitmotif for reflecting on how edges inhabit and haunt artworks, especially paintings but also sculpture and earthworks, in an effort to grasp better this continually elusive entity, the edge, as it figures into these three forms of art.

No limits: what can this mean? Aren't artworks always delimited – by frames most obviously but also by the walls they hang on or the museums in which they repose? Aren't sculptures and earthworks limited by their sheer extent, bulk or site? However sizeable some of them are, no piece of sculpture or earthwork goes on forever: it comes to a stop somewhere in a sculpture park, in the desert or even in the water. But Pollock meant something else by lack of limit. He meant that the visual dynamics of an artwork could not be contained by any finite frame or wall or building; these dynamics are constituted by vectors of felt force that leap over, beyond, or even *through*, constraining structures – by the creation of a force field that is not strictly physical or electromagnetic but a kind of visual energy that catalyzes the viewer's vision and makes it something more than mere observation: an active visioning that knows "No limits."

Sometimes a painter will carry a painting directly into the frame itself: Seurat, Marin, and Harry Hopkins have done this. Sometimes the frame itself is omitted: that was Pollock's own preference, as it was Rothko's and de Kooning's. But these overt gestures do not tell the whole story. Pollock's paintings of the late 1940s and early 1950s, though not originally framed, now for the most part reside in frames on their owners' walls or in museums. But the presence or absence of a frame does not matter: the

E.S. Casey (✉)
Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, USA
e-mail: escasey3@aol.com

swirling masses refuse to be delimited; they press "onward and outward… and nothing collapses" (Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"). They do not go outward to infinity – as Mondrian claimed of the stripes in his elegant rectilinear paintings. We do not need to assert this much; it is aesthetic overkill. (Infinity, in any case, exists at quite another level, and is not an apt aim in art).

So too for earthworks. Part of their revolutionary fervor was to break out of frames – and of galleries and museums as institutional enclosures. Robert Smithson took the artwork outdoors, not in order to be himself in the presence of nature (like nineteenth century *plein air* painters) but to situate the work in a non-cultivated wildscape. In this case, the only limits were those of the natural forces to which the earthwork was exposed: gravity, erosion, corrosion. The materials of such a work – whether rock or earth or sand – were not limits but means of creation; and the earth on which the work was set (or into which it is dug) was undelimited: but again, not infinite (that predicate may apply to the universe but not to any cosmic whole such as the earth embodies). For in any given landscape (or seascape) the earth stretches out indefinitely, going outward through its horizons, which do not restrict (as would a border) but open up (as does a boundary).

And the edges in all this? What was Pollock talking about when he said that painting was about edges, "just edges"? An edge is technically defined as a "convex dihedral angle." What does this have to do with edges in art? More than one might think. For one thing, it signifies that something angular is at stake – something that juts or jars, that emerges noticeably and in a linear or quasi-linear fashion. Lines delineate edges; they present them to the eye. It is revealing that Pollock refused to distinguish between drawing and painting in his work, as if one were merely preliminary to the other. The two are not just coeval; they were for him the same act altogether. Thus edges in his work are linear in format and are convex to the extent that they are seen from their outer side, so to speak – just as we discern the edge of a table by looking at, or touching it, from beyond its physical substance as such. We look or feel *around* edges – whereas we look or feel our way *into* corners, which are the converse of edges (they are, topologically considered, concave dihedral angles).

The importance of line to edges in art is already evident in the caves of Altamira and Lascaux – arguably the first artworks in the West. They are at once paintings and earthworks, defying the usual distinction between these two genres of art by their forceful collaboration of the raw earth (i.e., the cave walls with their existing edges) with applied lines and colors (applied precisely to these walls, respecting their edges but also creating further edges at the level of the image).

In Pollock, we witness lines becoming painted images before our very eyes –creating palimpsests of traced and erased edges that finally cohere as whole works. In their complex internal differentiation, the edges in Pollock's paintings distinguish painted areas from each other, and at the same time they adumbrate directional vectors in the work. In their convexity, they open outward from within their own angularity in a show of pure visual display. The combinations of edges are endless – even within a single work, as we see in the case of Pollock's "action paintings." The active gesture of the artist's hand creates a nexus of lines that drips and flow on their own recognizance. In de Kooning's paintings of the 1960s the line is largely replaced by

areas of vibrant color that constitute gestures of their own; the edges of these areas are for the most part those which the color fields themselves bring about in their brash and subtle juxtapositions.

In the earthworks of Smithson and others, edges appear as folds – folds into, and of, materials taken from the earth. These folded edges *open inward* – in the earth or sea. The ultimate fold is that which folds back upon itself, as in Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, which is at once finite and unbounded since it can be traversed backward and forward indefinitely. But edges in earthworks can also be abrupt, as in the case of the Jetty itself. Neither a line or a fold as such, these brute edges serve to demarcate one elemental substance from another: say, rock from water. At the same time, edges of/in earthworks are edges of particular places or even entire regions.

5.2

I start by considering three paintings by Edward Hopper, archetypal American realist and regionalist. Despite them being initially appealing they are also disturbing – even "dangerous" as Wim Wenders describes one of them, "Nighthawks."[1] This is because of their depiction of edges – in people's lives, landscapes, and seascapes. Take, for example, this painting of 1939, "New York Movie." Here the interior wall of a movie theater acts as an occluding edge that separates the usherette from the movie patrons, allowing her the space in which to ponder her life. We know from Hopper's preparatory sketches that he carefully studied the inner architecture of New York movie "palaces." Prominent is the thick wall in the approximate middle of the painting – in virtually every sketch, it is a dark and opaque mass, unrelieved by decorative detail and drawn with insistent thick lines. It is as if he had been seeking an exemplar of a kind of edge that allows human beings to keep their own space – so as to realize their own brooding solitude.

Quite another sort of edge is present in "Nighthawks" (1942): Here the darkness is of the night itself. Rather than a dimly illuminated theater, we are shown a garishly lit café whose light source is not depicted but which creates a clearing for the four lonely figures who sit or stand in its glare. Edges are vanished or vanishing in this eerie scene. The apartment buildings recede from view, while the glass window of the café is so transparent as to be virtually non-existent. As glass, we know that it has distinct edges; but these have melted down in the luciferous nightlight. Rather than cutting off from view, as in the previous painting, here they *provide viewing*: we see through them, rather than having to move around them as in the theater. Once more, sketches for this emblematic work emphasize the openness of the scene: they feature no human figures but only the outer edges of the café's window, as if they are frames for an otherwise unfettered seeing.

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[1] Wim Wenders, interview on audio guide at Whitney Museum of Art, Hopper Exhibition, Fall, 2006.

Still another variation is found in a late painting of Hopper's: "South Carolina Morning" (1955): We notice immediately the greater luminosity overall, thanks to the outdoor setting and the daytime hour as well as to a higher-keyed palette and more thinly applied paint (both characteristic of Hopper's later work). But even more striking is the platform in the middle space, which mediates between the implicitly lurid enclosure of the cabin on the left (the prostitute has emerged from there to advertise herself) and the open marshes and broad horizon. The entire deck acts like an extended edge, left conspicuously empty to allow the daylight to be collected in it. It becomes something like a *Lichtung* in Heidegger's sense of the term: a disclosure space in which Being appears, though in no determinate form. As viewers of this extraordinary painting, we sense that almost *anything* could occur in this open-edged place: making love in the sunlight, a murder, whatever.

(The sinister edge is more apparent in "Nighthawks," which is Wenders' point: he imagines a car driving up and hired killers coming out to shoot the patrons of the café. The sense of threat in "South Carolina Morning" is more subtle but no less powerful.)

I have begun with three works by Edward Hopper to show the diversity of edge representation that can occur within the work of a single painter who is not known for focusing on edge as such. It is as if the presence of edge is irrepressible there – as if it cannot but come forward into painting that is representational in character. But the same is true of work that is overtly non-representational. For instance, Picasso's analytical cubist drawings and paintings, his collages, and his later synthetic cubist works, feature edges in striking and highly formative ways. In effect, the figure in "Standing Female Nude" (1910), (charcoal on paper Metropolitan Museum, NY) is *nothing but edge*: a series of edges (each indicated by a single line) that stack up vertically to convey, *in abstracto*, the structure of a standing figure, her out-lines or exo-skeleton. No space is left for flesh, much less for the psychic loneliness of the usherette or the nighthawk people or the prostitute in Hopper's paintings. There is no room for interiority; all has become exterior, a matter of surface – and even then, surface as deconstructed into fragments. Looking at such a sketch, one thinks of Lacan's notion of "le corps morcelé," the fragmented body that precedes the mirror stage in the human infant. As if to supplement this lack of continuity and solidity – so noticeable in his pre-World War I works – Picasso undertook after the War a series of collages and paintings that put the pieces back together again, literally "synthetic" in their conception and composition. In such work one observes an adroit presentation of edges, in this case those of the several picture planes from which the total image is constituted. Each such plane is a surface or, better, a "plane of immanence" in Deleuze's term for a place where things and events can co-exist in a vibrant co-existent union – in Picasso's case, a wholly visual union. All that distinguishes one such plane from another, beyond the differences in color (and in the case of the full-fledged collages, material and texture), are the edges that surround it: its effective outer limits, where it ends and ceases to be. At the same time, the various planes act to occlude parts of each other. This returns

us to our beginning in Hopper's "New York Movie," but also to this claim in Merleau-Ponty's "Eye and Mind":

> The enigma consists in the fact that I see things, each one in its place, precisely because they eclipse one another, and that they are rivals before my sight precisely because each one is in its place – in their exteriority, [they are] known through their envelopement, and their mutual dependence [arises from] their autonomy.[2]

Although Merleau-Ponty is speaking of things as they relate to each other in depth, it is clear that pictorial depth requires recession of surfaces and their overlap in depicted space for this "illusion" to emerge. This is an illusion that is no illusion at all, but something phenomenally *present* and actually *seen*: for such surfaces, effecting such depth, must be girded by edges – there are no infinite surfaces in painting. These edges act at once to define and to obscure: they reveal and yet cover over. This double destiny is shared by edges in painting as in perception of the surrounding world.

Given that all such edges appear around (at the limit of) surfaces, they are both self-standing and parasitic, autonomous and heteronomous. This peculiar pairing of seemingly incommensurable traits constitutes the First Antinomy of edges in art. If it is not resolved, it is at least understood when we keep in mind that edges of every sort are edges of surfaces and that surfaces, as the very basis of depth perception, must overlap and stand free of each other – the two together, one because of the other.

5.3

A Second Antinomy, closely related to the First, is found in the fact that edges, so construed, constitute a place as well as a surface. Yet, how can anything so slender as a mere edge make up a place? Aristotle suggests that for a place to be a place, it must have a strict "surrounder" (*periechon*) that is in effect its container or outer limit. In his own words: "a body is in place if, and only if, there is a body outside it which surrounds it… What is somewhere (*pou*) is both itself something and, in addition, there must be something else besides that, in which the thing is, and which surrounds."[3] If so, then edges will generate and maintain a place, for the body contained in that place has edges (like any physical thing).

In terms of painting, think only of the way in which Hopper presents to us not just figures in indifferent space but as forming part of a certain very specific *place* – a movie theater, a nocturnal café, a shoreline house in South Carolina. Such placement is integral to the impact of these paintings, and the edgework I have described

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[2] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, trans. C. Dallery, ed. G. A. Johnson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 140.

[3] Aristotle, *Physics* 212 a 31–2; 212 b 14–16; Edward Hussey's translation in *Aristotle's Physics*, Books III and IV (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 29–30.

is constitutive of the placement itself. <u>Edges make good places</u>, we might say. And the same is true for Picasso's drawings and paintings of his entire cubist period: these, too, put places before us. The fact that they are abstract and nameless does not disqualify them as valid visual places. For representational and abstract artist alike, then, *placework depends on edgework*.

For an even more convincing case of the collaboration of edge and place, consider the cave paintings found at Lascaux. Dating from Paleolithic times, they are remarkably suggestive combinations of edges and places.

At least three senses of edge are at stake in works such as these edges of surface, medium and line.

1. *edge of the surface*. These works cling precariously to, and constitute the outer edges of, the inner linings of limestone caves. The paleo-artist took express advantage of the contours and patterns inherent in these walls by fitting images into their naturally given fissures and fracture lines – while also creating independent forms. The result is a dense dialectic of the found and the constituted that observes the logic of the "rift-design," their *Riss* in Heidegger's term:

   The rift-design is the drawing together, into a unity, of sketch and basic design, breach and outline… What is to be brought forth, the rift, entrusts itself to the self-secluding factor that juts up in the Open. The rift must set itself back into the heavy weight of stone…[4]

   As rifts, the edges of the surfaces are already established by entirely natural means – long before the creator entered the scene. As designs, however, they are the devising of this tribally sanctioned artist or *thaumaturge*. The resultant edges are a complex commixture of the given and the meant, their subtle coincidence in a visual *Deckung* (in Husserl's term for the convergence of the intended and the provided). The scene is double-edged.

2. *edge of the material medium*. The first sense of edge is that of the outer surface of the cave wall, which offers itself *from below*; on the basis of this offering, the rift-design of the imagery arises upon the surface. But any particular image has *its own* edge: the place where the image comes to an end.

   This coincides with the termination of the paint or charcoal as the material medium employed by the maker: *its* edge as such, where it gives out. Heidegger might designate this as the *Umriss*, the 'common outline' as this term could be translated: the rift-design, says "Heidegger, brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline."[5] We can also call it the *contour* of the image. It is where the material medium of the image begins and ends in a particular place. As Heidegger adds, what we call "figure, shape, Gestalt" is "thus *fixed in place*."[6] The design is put into place on the obtrusive surface of the cave walls.

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[4]Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 61.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 62. My italics. Heidegger italicizes "figure, shape, Gestalt."

If the paradox of the first kind of edge is that it belongs both to the surface and to the image that lies upon it, that of the second sort of edge is that it is where a given figure simultaneously stops and starts. For it is indifferent whether our eye moves from the external edge inwards or darts outwards to its outer limit. These are simply two directionalities of vision which the spectator can assume at their volition (whether the original participant in cave rites had the same visual freedom is a moot matter).

3. *edge of the line as such*. I say "the line *as such*" in order to emphasize that it is a matter of *any* line, whatever exact form a given line may take: distinct and separate, continuous with a visual mass (as in a "border-line"), thick or thin, colored or not, etc. In each case *the line is itself an edge*: this is the corresponding paradox of this third avatar of edge. For a given visual phenomenon of this sort is equally well characterized as "line" or "edge." In view of this dual characterization, the very phrase "edge of the line" becomes pleonastic, and we could just as well speak of "the line of the edge": i.e., the line at least implicitly formed by a given edge. The fact is that by tracing out an edge we are very likely to produce a line, with only rare exceptions.

This points to, if not to a coincidence between edges and lines, at least to their extremely close alliance. I say "extremely close" and not "exactly equivalent," as the relationship between lines and edges is certainly reciprocal yet not precisely symmetrical. That is to say: although every line is an edge, not every edge is linear. Some edges are so blunted or smooth that it is difficult to find for them an adequate linear representation (examples include cartographic symbols for the slopes of mountains and other precipitous but non-angular geological entities: such symbols are typically gridded or shaded in suggestive ways). But in the instance of the images at Lascaux we witness a strong overlap between edges and lines: the pictorial line not only represents the edges of animals or humans: it is their edge, embodying and materializing them. It is perceived as both the edge of a recognizable figure and the line that presents that edge, the two interfusing in a single act of perceptual recognition.

A corollary is that edges as lines are not just depictive but in effect "lines of flight" – once more in Deleuze and Guattari's term for that aspect of lines that carries with it a special vectorial directionality – an intentionality of the line, as it were, by which it seems to aim itself somewhere in particular and at a certain non-quantifiable velocity, and that opens whole new dimensions by their energetic trajectories. Such lines deterritorialize space itself: "Each advances like a wave, but on the plane of consistency they are a single abstract Wave whose vibration propages following a line of flight or deterritorialization traversing the entire plane [of consistency]."[7] Without pretending to understand fully this dense statement – which would require a careful discussion of what "dimension" and "deterritorialization" signify – we can

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[7]Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 252.

agree that lines of force are not merely delineative or depictive, that is, they are not "representational" in the sense of being pictorial icons of certain pre-existing actualities. They have their own *élan* – their own vitality. Which is just what so many experience in viewing the animal and human figures at Lascaux even if these are conveyed solely by photographic images (the cave is now closed to direct viewing). These figures are not so much "life-like" (that is, accurately representational) as beings in vital movement, seemingly generated by the very lines by which they are drawn or painted – which is to say, by their bare edges: edges in full flight.

5.4

In truth, the paleolithic caves were among the first earthworks – along with the earth mounds in Ohio and the Nazca Lines in Peru (which, in their quasi-geometric form, are composed of pure edges). But these ways of being edge were abandoned, lost to the world, and only rediscovered by chance many millenia later. (Lascaux was chanced upon by two boys in 1940.) But the very idea of an earthwork was to be revived, and quite recently. In an extraordinary move in the art world of New York, Robert Smithson and others began to create their own earthworks, partly with an eye on the ancient world but mostly in a spirit of raw innovation that was spurred by a rebellion against the art market of the 1960s in its passion for minimal and pop art (itself a rebellion against the abstract expressionism of the 1950s).

What is different in the new earthworks is that they were not set exclusively within the internal folds of the earth as at Lascaux. Now the fold of the work folded outward, ex-posing itself to the public, whether in a brightly lit gallery or in a wholly natural setting such as a desert under the bright eye of the sun. In either case, we have to do with an open scene – a scene of exposure in the light.

Suggested here is the term "Open" from Heidegger, who finds an alliance between the Open and the notion of rift-design discussed earlier. In another passage from "The Origin of the Work of Art," he writes this: "As the earth takes the rift back into itself, the rift is first set forth into the Open and thus placed, that is, set, within that which towers up into the Open as self-closing and sheltering."[8] The idea here is not just that something previously concealed is now revealed – brought into the light of day. Rather, it is that that which, as belonging to earth, is inherently withdrawn is brought forward in its very self-seclusion – put into the Open in its own unopenness: "What is to be brought forth, the rift, entrusts itself to the self-secluding factor that juts up into the Open."[9] If we read "rift" as edge, we have the following formula: *the edge that is brought forth brings with it a factor of self-seclusion that is shown as such in the work of art.*

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[8]"The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 61.
[9]Ibid.

This powerful and particular way in which artworks enter the Open – or still better, "the openness of the Open," as Heidegger also puts it[10] – can certainly occur in painting. One thinks of El Greco's "View of Toledo" as a case in point.

In this earth-painting, we witness the earth opening itself to the sky from out of its very depths. Its depths are on its surface, as Wittgenstein might say. But it remains a two-dimensional work in which the pictorial surface, the picture plane, is resolutely two-dimensional, however rich its visual contents. What is different about earth-works, ancient or recent, is the fact that the solidity, the very volume, of the earth comes forward *on its own account* as it were. Otherwise put, the place that such works constitute is a place no longer represented *somewhere else*, say, Toledo, Spain, or the island of Patmos (where St. John lived in a cave), to which we would have to travel in fact or in fantasy, but *a place that our own body can occupy or at least circumnavigate*. The earthwork invites us into its own space, whether this be the underground space of a limestone cave or that of an earth mound we can walk around. The place they constitute has *room*, a word that connotes an openness of the spatial such that a lived body can occupy it, however briefly.

Take, for example, the early earthworks of Robert Smithson. He had collected rough rocks in New Jersey to exhibit in New York, sometimes simply dumped on the floor of a gallery and sometimes encased in wood containers that act as three-dimensional frames. These frames are in turn located on gallery floors, in turn set within the walls of the gallery space:

A work such as this is meant not just to be *seen* as would a painting attached to a wall but *circumambulated*. In fact, the latter is virtually irresistible. The whole body of the viewer, and not just the optical system, is engaged, including touch, given the very strong temptation to reach out and stroke the stone. This engagement is not just of the body taken in isolation but of *the body in place.* The gallery goer is conscious of being in a room in which the work is set: more so than when viewing a painting, since the action of walking around the work is a condensed or schematic retracing of the enclosed space of the room itself – its own rift-design, as in Heidegger's original description: "it is a basic design, an outline sketch, that draws the basic features of the rise of the lighting of beings."[11] Now the design or sketch takes the form of spontaneous bodily movements.

As if to reinforce these bodily-placial-roomful movements, Smithson often included a map in these early earthworks – as if the cartographic image attached to the work might guide the ambulations of the gallery goer.

In another phase of his earthworks, Smithson contrasted two versions of the same basic form, the spiral. One of these was highly geometric, as in "Gyrostasis" (1968).

This is a piece of steel sculpture and thus in three dimensions; but its major importance for Smithson was to suggest, in its formal shape, a contour that he wished to inscribe in *the earth*, with materials drawn from the earth itself, and not

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[10]"The openness of this Open, that is, truth, can be what it is, namely, *this* openness, only if and as long as it establishes itself within its Open." (Ibid., p. 59; his italics).

[11]"The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 61.

constrained by any precise geometry. He wished to embed the spiral in the earth – or rather, that part of the earth designated as a salt lake: to consider is "as a crystallized fragment of a gyroscopic rotation, or as an abstracta three dimensional map that points to the *SPIRAL JETTY*, 1970, in the Great Salt Lake, Utah."[12] Hence the genesis of his most famous earthwork

Spiral Jetty arises from the placid surface of a remote corner of the Great Salt Lake in Utah in an abrupt set of stones, now coated white in their salt coating. The spiral itself is broad enough to be traversed, and invites the visitor to do so – again and again, in an ever-narrowing circumambulation. The first-hand experience of the Jetty sets forth (in Smithson's own words) "the elemental in things."[13] Or rather, the elemental in place, the place of the earthwork itself, an Open turning away from the water and toward the sky as their pivot. The folding of the spiral, arising from earth's "stony essence," un-folds toward the cerulean heights. Thus it "towers up into the Open as the self-closing and sheltering."[14] It brings elemental things of the earth – the very rocks that make up the interior of caves – into this Open but only as still retaining the intrinsic enclosedness of stone, whose interior is closed in each and every case.

Differently regarded, the *Spiral Jetty* places one set of edges over against another: those of the Jetty contrasted with the edge of the shore from which its first and outer spiral extends. As Smithson put it himself:

> The shore of the lake became the edge of the sun, a boiling curve, an explosing rising into fiery prominence. Matter collapsing into the lake irried in the shape of a spiral. No sense wondering about classifications and categories, there were none.[15]

Let us say that Smithson is here creating not just "the elemental in things" but an *elemental edge* that belongs to earth, lake, and sky – all at once and through the same three-dimensional gyrostatic rift-design. Such an edge is made *of* elements and is to be experienced *through* them, and *by* a body that is moving *in* a place – a place that did not pre-exist the creation of the earthwork itself but arose from it and is re-created in each re-traversal by a visitor to its site. Smithson himself demonstrated the way this happens in a film that shows him walking to the tip of the Spiral and then back to its base in a rapid set of movements that seems to increase in speed with time.

Thanks to such body movements that constitute genuine lines of flight across the surface of the Great Salt Lake, we can see how Smithson's earthwork is simultaneously primitive and contemporary. As he put it with characteristic archness: in the *Spiral Jetty* "the prehistoric meets the posthistoric," for in this work he has made "a map that would show the prehistoric world as co-extensive with the world [I] existed in."[16] Between

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[12]Cited in Edward S. Casey, *Earth-Mapping: Artists Re-shaping Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 19.

[13]Cited in *Earth-Mapping*, p. 7.

[14]Ibid., p. 61.

[15]Cited in *Earth-Mapping*, p. 18.

[16]Cited in *Earth-Mapping*, p. 24.

Lascaux and the Spiral Jetty we come a long way: half way around the earth, and over most of known human history (from circa 20,000 B.C. to 1970 A.D.). We move between two kinds of Open, two sorts of earthwork that occur as edgeworks, each with its own form of folding and distinctive genius of rift-design and each providing a place for the viewer's active bodily engagement.

5.5

I have been bringing art not just to its particular edges – ranging from Hopper's comparatively circumspect edges to Smithson's wilder ones – but *art to its own edge*. Just as David Wood writes about "Thinking at the Limit,"[17] so I've been trying to take art to its limit – to that particular limit called "edge" in English. ("Limit," you see, is the supreme genus for edge itself: another future investigation.)

I began with Jackson Pollock's warning that in art there are, strictly speaking, "no limits, only edges." Pollock had it right: limits are further out than edges; they serve best as conditions or contexts or containers; no wonder they become such primary terms in epistemology and metaphysics – as we see most markedly with Kant's emphasis on "the limits of reason alone." Edges are better suited for experiencing and understanding the art world, for they are the outermost extensions of things, where their external surfaces end (and, sometimes, where their inner surfaces intersect). Artists, including earth artists, labor at getting edges to work, bringing the surface of the canvas to a certain kind of formal perfection, attempting to complete the earthwork by attending to its outer surface once the materials have been put into place. In the wake of Pollock's inspired remark, I am saying this: *artwork is edgework*. All artists, in one fashion or another, are working at the edge – putting themselves on the edge and drawing us as appreciators into that same edge once established.

The plot thickens, however, when we take account of the two antinomies I earlier identified. That of surface and edge – how can surfaces constitute edges? This is the question that Hopper's work raised for us. It was resolved by reference to various artists from Paleos to Picasso, each of whom made of the pictorial surface a tapestry of edges, whether those of animals and hunters engaged in a ritual of chase and death or those of a deconstructed cubist female figure. In the end, we saw that edges are essential to many, if not all, sketched or painted surfaces, either by way of their out-lines (the edge of the page or canvas; the frame) or their even more constitutive in-lines (those that define the identity and limits of that which is presented, or represented, on the picture plane of the art work).

The other antinomy, that of place and edge, took still more of our attention as we strove to think of edges of voluminous things, fully rounded human bodies and

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[17] This is the first chapter in David Wood, *Thinking After Heidegger* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).

roomy places in which these bodies move. Certain paintings are on the very edge of this antinomy yet they still hang on the wall of some museum and offer us a flat surface to observe. It may be a painting of a particular place – yet it does not give us a place itself, just as it does not engage our bodies fully in its apprehension. For these two things to happen, and for the antinomy of place and edge to be more completely explored, we have to move to earthworks.

Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* is emblematic of the intimate relationship of body, place, and edge in art. It does not just *suggest* that we are at the edge of water; to take it in, we must put ourselves at the actual edge of an actual body of water, the Great Salt Lake. It is a work in a particular place; or more exactly, it constitutes a place in that place, fold or pocket within it. Once there, we are drawn, irresistibly, to walk its spiral arm and the helical shape keeps us on the edge of water as we wend our way inward. The enclosing frame of the painting is replaced by the opening of the environment: standing on the Jetty, one looks out across the Lake, one sees *around* in an act of literal circum-spection that mirrors and extends the circumambulation of one's walking body on the rocks of the Spiral itself. The limits of this place are far out, even if its edges are held closely within – within the body that moves on the outer surface of the work that is in turn set within a larger landscape world.

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Even if we are not coming to the end of art as Hegel thought, we are at least coming to its edges here. By this I mean that *art emerges in its edges*. It occurs in other ways as well – for instance, as event and boundary. But when we emphasize edges in art, we take up aspects that have been neglected for the most part in aesthetics and art theory: aspects such as fold and surface, ambulation and room, and above all *place*. Art as place signifies art as edge – and vice versa, edge as art: an instance of "reversibility" in Merleau-Ponty's term (though his leading instance is the reversibility of the visible and the invisible, rather than art and edge).

And the earth in all this? Rilke identified earth and invisibility: "O Earth! Invisible! What, if not transformation, is your urgent command?"[18] How to make you visible once again in art? Perhaps Merleau-Ponty was pointing to the right path for us after all. Earth is certainly not origin or source alone; much less is it sheer material mass only; it is something closer to the "self-secluding," a close cousin of the invisible. I have been arguing, after Heidegger, that it is just as such, as withholding itself, that earth comes into the Open. Otherwise put, it is as a deep matrix that it comes forward in the elemental edges that are such prominent features of earthworks and of certain paintings such as those of El Greco. These are edges that

[18]Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Ninth Elegy," in *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke,* ed. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

exist *between* identifiable things – such as objects and persons – and that allow them to be demarcated from each other, thus to be *differ-entiated* in a sufficiently rich sense of this past participle.

Kant proclaimed that "nature makes itself specific,"[19] and if so this happens all the time in the differ-entiation effected by edges: all the time in nature, but also all the time in art as "second nature." Once we move beyond regarding edges as occlusive or obtrusive, we shall be able to embrace them openly – as if for the first time, with philosophical open arms which match those we extend to works of art that surprise and delight us by their novelty and vigor.

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[19] Immanuel Kant, First Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 403 (Ak. 20: 215).

Chapter 6
From Reflection to Refraction: On Bordwell's Cinema and the Viewing Event

John Mullarkey

6.1 Introduction

From his early 1985 work, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, through to the more recent *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (2006), David Bordwell has persistently argued for one filmic constant: that there is an enduring style of 'classical narration' originally created by and subsequently sustained through Hollywood film-making. It is a narrative style composed of individualised character-psychology, local agency as primary plot motivator, cause and effect logic, and canonical story-telling (from equilibrium through disequilibrium to a new equilibrium). This consistent style can even be found in contemporary Hollywood concept films and blockbusters, despite their increasingly exotic plotting, cinematography, acting, and editing. Moreover, other modes of narrative, especially those of the modern European 'art film', are equally defined and characterised by Bordwell in relation to this abiding Hollywood norm. Whereas Hollywood cinema has always had a *realist* trajectory, European film, since the 1950s at least, has mostly been *reflexive*, being less about the world than about itself, about the nature of film *per se* (Jean-Luc Godard's work being the prime example of this).

It is the purpose of this short essay to muddy these waters by showing how neither Hollywood nor European cinema have ever been so consistent, because any putative realism and reflexivity are insubstantial, temporal forms: whether a film is classical or avant-garde is a product less of the film than of its relationship with a viewing audience. Such temporal tags as 'classical', 'modern', or even 'postmodern' are themselves contextual rather than absolute, depending on the 'audience' (in the

J. Mullarkey (✉)
Kingston University, London, UK
e-mail: J.Mullarkey@kingston.ac.uk

largest sense of the word) a film receives. The impact of film is not located solely in the film but also in its *viewing event* – the time and place where it is viewed, who is viewing it, and how it is viewed. Each of these contextual variables of where, when, who, and how, *refract* the pure dualism of realism versus reflexivity.

6.2   Bordwell on Classical Cinema: Hurray for Hollywood

Of the core tenets of Bordwell's approach to cinema, the key one is the centrality of the Classical Hollywood style of narration. The clear use of events and actors; individuated characters who are psychologically rather than socially motivated; linear chains of cause and effect; the division between main and secondary plots; the use of mostly unrestricted narration, itself structured with a beginning, middle and end; the provision of a proper (often happy) resolution at the end; and the use of continuity editing: all of these principles are firmly rooted in the Hollywood mode of film-making such that even the more experimental strategies of plot and style, found in recent Hollywood output, actually only deviate from the norm at their margins. Indeed, even their deviations have precedents in the Hollywood norm, the peculiar use of extended travelling shots in Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* (2003), for example, being already pre-figured in films by 'Max Ophuls, Stanley Kubrick, or the Alfred Hitchcock of *Rope* (1948) and *Under Capricorn* (1949).'[1]

The Hollywood style of telling stories with 'classical continuity' is the rule against which other kinds of cinema, like the 1960s Art Film, for instance, characterised themselves: 'art-cinema narration has become a coherent mode partly by defining itself as a deviation from classical narrative.'[2] Jean-Luc Godard's adage that films should have a beginning, a middle and an end (though not necessarily in that order), gives some indication as to how that artful margin deviates from the norm for Bordwell too. If one doesn't follow the well-established laws for creating a 'fabula world' – flouting 'the most common assumptions, the most valid inferences, the most provable hypotheses, and the most appropriate schemas' – then one is in the realm of self-conscious art. But even art has its norms, be they extrinsic to the particular film (as part of the art genre), or intrinsic to it (as what it builds up gradually during its own development). In other words, a norm-breaking film can't break *every norm* – the art film too must abide by *some* norms: if 'every card is wild you can't play cards at all'.[3]

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[1]David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (University of California Press, 2006), 119: 'What has changed, in both the most conservative registers and the most adventurous ones, is not the stylistic system of classical filmmaking but rather certain technical devices functioning within that system. The new devices very often serve the traditional purposes. And the change hasn't been radical.'

[2]David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1987), 228.

[3]Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 80, 39, 151.

A specific example of Bordwell's approach to art cinema can be seen in his analysis of Godard's *Tout Va Bien* (1972), though he might easily have chosen any one of Godard's works. He alights immediately on the Brechtian elements of the film, especially in regard to the film's dilemma of a left-wing film-maker having to work within a Capitalist film industry.[4] In particular, Godard uses the Brechtian 'principles of separation' to describe how the audience of *Tout Va Bien* is prevented 'from being wholly absorbed in the illusionary aspects of the action'. These principles heighten the viewers' awareness of the artificiality of the film that they are actually watching, and so block any tendency they may have to naturalise its depictions as genuine realities. In this reflexivity, therefore, it is a *typical* art-film. It is a film about watching (a) film. Seeing that the reality depicted in a film is an effect allows us also to imagine alternative realities. It awakens in us the possibility of thinking about ourselves historically, the contingency of the *status quo* (the 'everything's fine' that is just a surface effect), and so the possibility of change.

In all, *Tout Va Bien* uses three principles of separation in its narrative – interruption, contradiction, and refraction. Here is what they mean. In a classical (Hollywood) film, the cause and effect chain of narrative links scene to scene, 'thoroughly' motivating each event. *Interrupting* this cause and effect series functions to confuse us as to the relation between one event and another. Yet such interruptions are common in *Tout Va Bien*, as with Susan's interview with the factory women, which is interrupted by another worker singing a radical song, or when Susan confronts Jacques with her dissatisfaction with their relationship, which is interrupted with scenes of their working lives.[5] We soon lose the plot or 'narrative causality' because of these interruptions. Secondly, *contradictions* arise when discontinuous editing is used to create spatial and temporal ambiguity, as when Susan sits down twice to begin her confrontation with Jacques at breakfast. Mismatches between visuals and soundtrack (often we hear a voice but don't see the character's mouth move) have a similar effect. But of the various modes of separation, it is the third of *refraction* that both stands apart and subsumes the prior two. It is defined as what

> …draws our attention to media that stand between the depicted events and our perception of those events. We do not seem to see a series of 'natural' events, as we might in a Hollywood style film. Rather, *Tout Va Bien* takes the media as part of its topic.[6]

Refraction works explicitly on various levels: in terms of the plot (Susan and Jacques both work in the media industries of film and radio); in terms of the narration (some of the film's voice-over narration is provided by factory-workers, some by a broadcaster, emphasising how the narration itself is 'arbitrarily selective, even capricious'); and in terms of symbolism (the mode of production of the media is clearly compared with that of a meat factory). Yet refraction can also be said to subsume contradiction and interruption given that these two phenomena, in their

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[4] This analysis was written in collaboration with Kristin Thompson in *Film Art: An Introduction*, fourth international edition (McGraw-Hill, 1993), 437.

[5] Bordwell and Thompson, p. 438.

[6] Bordwell and Thompson, p. 439.

own way, alert us to the artificiality of the medium by breaking with its conventions of seamless editing, synchronous sound, and cause-effect plotting. (Or so it appears.) As Bordwell puts it: 'the emphasis on *Tout Va Bien* as a "film about cinema" makes refraction an overriding principle as well.'[7] And, commensurately, this use of refraction is what makes Godard *the* 'art-cinema' filmmaker – his 'authorial presence hovering over the text', the '*superauteur*' playing cinema.[8]

As a refractive film, *Tout Va Bien* breaks the rules in Hollywood in typical fashion, for this *knowing* transgression marks it out as 'art-house'. If there wasn't the norm, there could be no disobedience to the norm. Admittedly, Bordwell does seem on the point of conceding something more intrinsic to the art film when he discusses Roland Barthes' idea of a 'third meaning' beyond denotation and connotation comprised of 'casual lines, colors, expressions, and textures'.[9] These are what Bordwell's colleague, Kristen Thompson, calls 'excess' materials. Art equals excess. Yet Bordwell admits that he is not interested in such excess, only in the central 'process of narration'. Some have argued, however that the division of filmic material into norm and transgression is illegitimate, and, moreover, disrupts the idea of a central process of narration outside of which an excess can be isolated. The art of film saturates every part of it. Yet the taming of the aesthetic dimension of cinema, be it in terms of transgression *or* excess, is absolutely necessary when trying to isolate and essentialise particular forms of narration. As Daniel Frampton notes:

> …in analysing typical art-cinema or parametric narratives Bordwell only seems to want to *rationalise* them. Radical cinema is reduced to *principles*, *systems*, all towards trying to bring artistic cinema into the *rational* fold of classic cinema.[10]

The inherent aspects of an 'art film' *really are inherent* and are not just relative to the classical norm.[11] And their 'excess' is not gratuitously exotic either, but must be understood as a different form of realism. Yet these are not thoughts that Bordwell is willing to support. Claims by the filmmakers themselves that new forms of realism are being innovated through film are dismissed by him as attempts to 'justify novelty' and cultivate ambiguity. The real offering of the art film is to *inform* the spectator of its reflexivity – it is a meta-level communication only: 'put crudely, the procedural slogan of art-cinema narration might be: "interpret this film, and interpret it so as to maximize ambiguity".'[12] For a science of film such as Bordwell's, therefore, ambiguity in film cannot be realistic because life really is clear cut. If there is any ambiguity, then it must be because the film is saying something about itself.

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[7] Bordwell and Thompson, p. 441.

[8] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 332.

[9] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 54.

[10] Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 104.

[11] Frampton, p. 108: 'Following Bordwell we might just get analyses of stylistically innovative films as simply *deformed* or *abnormal*'.

[12] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 206, 212.

6.3   From Reflection to Refraction

Let us consider this rendering of film a little further. The very opening of *Tout Va Bien* enters us into a realm of apparent reflexivity created through repetition: we hear the recurrence of the spoken title of the film while being shown images of endless cheques being writing to cover the production expenses for this film. The form of repetition supposedly reflects the content's own reflexive nature – showing us how a movie is made. Yet one can also see that, at another level, there is a *new* content created for an audience inured to this effect (which doesn't take very long in this particular case): this film becomes a film about making *other* films. After all, who believes that the *actual* cheques for the film were signed *in just this manner*, when the signatory *already* has a film-camera hovering over his shoulder recording the act? The signatures become a performance, no matter how subtle, and so a sign of *another* reality (how films are made) rather than *that* reality itself – the actual film being made. In other words, this film's attempt to reflect on itself is itself refracted such that it remains outside of its own reflection and misses its original target (itself): what we see is a film that is *really about* making (political) films. The 'really about' or referentiality of the film is not a failing on Godard's part, but stems from the tendency of any audience *to naturalise what it sees over time*. Presumably Godard did hope to highlight the artificial, constructed, and economic nature of his own creation, and yet, in doing so, he, or *the film-and-audience*, does eventually refer to something real, *viz.*, the naturalising, alienation effects of either film-making in general or other particular films. Alternatively, perhaps this is all that Godard wanted – to say something about *other* films. If that is the case, though, then perhaps we should also try to rethink Bordwell's depiction of self-reference in the realm of avant-garde film (and with that, the classical realism in Hollywood's output too).

Of course, the possibility that art-films are not about themselves (and thus, by proxy, about Hollywood or classicism) but about *other* realities, cannot be countenanced by Bordwell. He dismisses their redefinition of the real with scare quotes and condescension: their 'new aesthetic conventions claim to seize other "realities": the aleatoric world of "objective" reality and the fleeting states that characterize "subjective" reality.' Claims for a new realism on the part of artistic filmmakers, like Alain Resnais for instance, are subverted by having *their* "realism" (in scare quotes again) downgraded as 'wholly arbitrary'.[13] Yet, as Stanley Cavell for one notes, Godard's strange camera movements in *Contempt* (1967), for instance, while making 'an original and deep statement of the camera's presence' are also 'about its subjects, about their simultaneous distance and connection, about the sweeping desert of weary familiarity.'[14] These films are not essentially rebuffs to Hollywood – they are also real.

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[13] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 219. He is referring to *La guerre est fini* here.

[14] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Enlarged Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 129.

This reality is not something that is localisable, however, in either some subjective world (where Bordwell places art) nor an objective world (where he places the hard-wired cerebral dispositions that underwrite Hollywood's versions of realism). It is in the relationship between *all* the phases of the film process in as much as, through the process of time itself, they each can *become* real. In and of themselves, though, each phase is as real or unreal as the next. There are conventions for producing, distributing and consuming films that are conventions, symbols or metaphors *that we have become inured to*, that we have forgotten were conventions, symbols or metaphors. As Paul Douglass notes, everything about cinema was once an 'oddity' that has now lost its strangeness with time, from the two degrees angle of vision that it presents us (of our normal 200-degrees of vision), to all the other perspectivist conventions that we have internalised through repeated exposure.[15] Likewise, the interruptions and contradictions that Bordwell's own work analyses in Godard are just a *more recent* set of distortions of time and space. But such distortions are not new, as Bordwell knows, pointing to Jacques Tati's amazing ability in *Playtime* (1968) to present 6 h of story time in just 45 min of screen time, *even though he uses continuity cuts throughout*.[16] Even more bizarrely, Andy Warhol's supposedly real-time films, like *Empire* (1964), were actually taken to be *avant-garde* on account of their ultra-realism, that is, their *continuity*, regarding time. Indeed, the consequent question arises automatically: when has a film ever represented *real*, continuous time?

The answer, of course, is 'never', but not because film lacks the ability to capture real time so much as film itself being just *one instance* of the myriad forms of time: there is no pure continuous time to capture, or rather, real time just is the host of different kinds of time being continuously made. Continuity versus discontinuity or ellipsis is a false opposition when time actually comes in different varieties, when there is no one 'objective' time that can be taken as bedrock. The ellipsis is there in every film, only in some it has been normalised to seem real and continuous on account of the conventions of cutting internalised by the spectator. Most classical (that is, unreflexive) films are incredibly elliptical in their treatment of time – abbreviating conversations, actions, travel times, and so forth. They also lengthen time when necessary (think only of any action film where we count down to the

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[15] See Paul Douglass, "Bergson and Cinema: Friends or Foes?," in *The New Bergson*, ed. John Mullarkey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 209–227: p. 216: 'The "key-hole effect" of the very tight shot maximises awareness of this limitation, which does not disappear as the shot widens – rather, it becomes simply less occlusive, leaving us less *consciously* aware of our dependence upon the camera's movement to disclose what lies out of frame. As [William] Wees says, the peculiar thing is how desensitised audiences are to film's distortions: "The situation has become so thoroughly institutionalised that the dominant cinema, its audiences, and most critics who write about it happily accept perspectivist norms".' Conversely, it is now said that *Imax* is *not* good for narrative (faces are too large, cuts must be limited, there cannot be too much movement, close-ups are too grainy, and the overall effect is nauseating). But the same was said of Cinemascope at first – no doubt we'll get over it.

[16] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 82.

bomb exploding in 60s – it usually takes much longer than that). Films also shorten and lengthen spaces through the intercutting of long, medium and close-up shots, shot-reverse shots, and so on. But the supposed seamlessness of such editing is an acquired, that is *learnt*, convention that has *become* the sign of reality.

Though Bordwell obviously knows that the classical norms of editing are not *actually* continuous, his treatment of their transgression by 'art films' belies the presupposition that they are. I quote:

> These … factors go some way to explaining why the classical Hollywood style passes relatively unnoticed. Each film will recombine familiar devices within fairly predictable patterns and according to the demands of the subject. The spectator will almost never be at a loss to grasp a stylistic feature because *he or she is oriented in time and space* and because stylistic figures will be interpretable in the light of a paradigm.[17]

But how does this orientation in 'time and space' succeed? Is it because it conforms to the natural, Euclidean space of our everyday surroundings, or because it conforms to *habituated forms of space and time* that were once, nonetheless, inventions? Bordwell opts for the former view, taking realism to be some variant of the neo-classical unities of space, time, and action (with distinct cause and effect).[18] When it comes to Godard's famous discontinuities, for example, they yield 'the impression that footage has been excised from within a shot. …[but] the device signals one thing unequivocally: the intervention of the filmmaker at the editing stage.'[19] Art as reflexive again.

Yet many supposedly conventional action films today use both elliptical and overlapping editing (repeating part or all of an event, like an explosion, by showing it multiple times from different angles – an especially popular Hollywood import from Hong Kong cinema). But does the target audience or these films, adolescent American males, believe that there were five events instead of one when exposed to overlapping cuts? Of course not. Do the filmmakers worry that this recurrent editing will jar with the serial editing of the rest of their films? Obviously not, because they are both as equally 'real' as each other. What were once the hallmarks of experimental or *avant-garde* cinema have been domesticated as real, despite their huge deviations from previous versions of real or continuous editing. These devices no longer serve to reflect, but now, even in adult cinema, to forward the story. The jump cuts used throughout Thomas Vinterberg's *Festen* (1998) or sporadically in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976), for example, neither impede the narrative nor signal the author's presence: in both cases they propel the story forward and possess huge expressive powers. The fact that *Festen* can 'get away' with so much discontinuity is because it expresses the highly strung, enervated, and neurotic nature of the characters and situations, *as well as* how much we have been inured to the oddity of

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[17] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 164. My emphasis.

[18] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, pp. 157, 158: 'Spatial configurations are motivated by realism (a newspaper office must contain desks, typewriters, phones) and, chiefly, by compositional necessity).'

[19] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 328.

jump cuts. Indeed, the commercial success and normality of the 'independent' films of 1990s, which appropriated everything they could from European art-house cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, is a testament to how well popular audiences have internalised and naturalised the artistic style as a new realism.

Even as regards causal logic, it too is a mutable category. According to Bordwell, the causal chain is typically broken in art films such as Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960), where the crucial search for a lost woman eventually drops out of the plot as the story meanders to a inconclusive finale: when 'the recovery of Anna is no longer the causal nexus of the action', we have a 'loosening of causal relations'.[20] Leaving aside the fact that most Hollywood searches are pretexts for adventure (Hitchcock called their objects 'MacGuffins'), in the strict terms of ostensible cause and effect, 'what happens next' rarely follows a linear mode, or rather, what counts as a linear pursuit is always an *acquired* taste depending on the film and its audience. Films like Roman Polanski's *Frantic* (1988) and Paul Schrader's *Hardcore* (1979) are both classical in many ways, yet they also renege on their ostensive search in favour of other narrative pleasures. The search-object is a pretext for journey-entertainments (*Frantic*) and/or education (*Hardcore*). Like *L'Avventura*, both films have a man and a woman searching together for another missing woman, a man's wife and daughter respectively. The major difference is that in *L'Avventura* the search ostensibly ends while in the others it does not (indeed, they are ultimately successful). Yet the non-search pleasures, as we know from the genre-conventions of this kind of film, are central (these are films about what happens when you *don't* find what you're looking for). In *Frantic*, for instance, the sexual frisson between Richard and Michelle (especially during their dance at the club), the physical comedy of Richard (knocking his head twice in the interior of the barge where they hold up afterwards), and the situation-comedy created by Michelle (whose inopportune avarice leads to further capers and danger) – all these joys are narratively motivated by the genre (the search that is *not* a search). By the end, one wonders whether the pair really ought to find his wife Sondra (and whether the fact that he does find her is not a *inconclusive* ending for the film). It is not so much that cause and effect are totally absent, but that this is a different type of genre-causality, one often motivated by a regular, rather lifeless man encountering either a femme fatale or muse that inspires him into a new life of adventure: Peter Bogdanovich's *What's Up Doc?* (1972) and Jonathan Demme's *Something Wild* (1986) evince this type of causality too, but so does, in its own way, *L'Avventura*.

The fact that Antonioni's is serious and European does not render it any less 'realistic' than Hollywood-output. The meanderings in these films are examples of what Jacques Rancière describes as movements 'deflected by the imposition of another movement' (rather than movements brought to a 'fictional end').[21] There is always movement, only sometimes of a different, more adventurous kind. Conversely,

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[20] Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, p. 207.

[21] Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables*, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 13.

we should also recall that Michael Curtiz, whilst directing *the* Hollywood classic, *Casablanca* (1942), reassured those with doubts as regards the film's *illogical* story-line with the following disclaimer: 'don't worry what's logical. I make it so fast no one notices.'[22] He knew how important time is to belief, not simply as regards masking an illogic with speed, so much as creating a new logic with time. Paraphrasing Nietzsche on truth and metaphor, we might say that continuity (like space, time, and causality) is a worn out, forgotten ellipse. Or as Christian Metz writes: 'what is experienced as a simple figure of speech today was quite frequently, for the first spectators of the cinematograph, a magic "trick," a small miracle both futile and astonishing.'[23]

6.4   Conclusion: Towards the Viewing Event

In sum, I cannot think of any contravention of a so-called norm of film-making that cannot itself become a sign of reality. The formalistic transgressions of *Tout Va Bien*, far from only and ever alienating us from an identification with its ostensible characters' and narrative's motivations (by short-circuiting any reality-effects), *have become* but one other set of conventions for creating a message or depicting a reality (however strange it might be at first glance). Any one convention can *come to mean*, because form refracts through its associated content to create a different, though affiliated, content. And this 'coming to mean' is processual, because form and content is not a fixed duality but a dynamic tension of entities in continual exchange. In other words, we must not forget to think of the viewing context when assessing any film. By that, I don't simply mean the audience in isolation from the film (and embedded instead within its own separate social and economic sphere), but the audience in relation to the concrete context of the *viewing event*. The viewing event mutates with time and must be thought 'historically' (as Godard would say): we learn to read some of the formal incongruities encountered in *avant-garde* cinema as expressive of content, we can immerse ourselves in a film, no matter how abstract, because the 'reality-effect' is not the sadistic power of a film over us, but an exchange, refraction, or mixture within any one viewing event between audience and film. In other words, no method of separation or distancing is guaranteed its effect for long, because, with time, its novelty dissipates. To make the point even more striking, lens-flare – an *artefact* of 'conventional' film-making that was once avoided but eventually became a stylistic cliché of the 1960s and 1970s – is these days reproduced artificially in animation (both CGI and non-CGI) and computer software games. It is a token of realism. It has become what Baudrillard would call

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[22] Cited in Richard Maltby, '"A Brief Romantic Interlude": Dick and Jane Go to 3 1/2 Seconds of the Classical Hollywood Cinema', in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, ed. David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 434–459: p. 434.

[23] Christian Metz, "Trucage and the Film," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 657–675: p. 665.

a sign of the hyper-real, the artifice of media becoming a sign of the real that also 'eclipses the real', that is even better than the real thing.[24]

If refraction is thought through rigorously as relational rather than substantive, then *any* film can be *avant-garde* – it all depends on its relationship with the audience, and their context, on their natural or adopted naivety. A film's *avant-garde* or Modern status is not independent of its audience, for there is nothing natural or fixed about the conventions of the Classical mode. If modernism concerns itself with breaking those conventions by representing them, denaturalising them, then the 'postmodern' film, on this view, embodies a further refraction of that very act of representing representation to bring us back to see every filmic image in its raw specularity. The non-referentiality of the postmodern image does not indicate its *lack* (of referent), but its own visceral immediacy, *though as an event rather than as an object.*

However, while some film theorists like Steve Shaviro believe that this is *de facto* true of every film, I believe that it is only *de jure* true, and mostly untrue of actual films, or rather of most actual film viewing events.[25] This is again because of the differing nature of the audience: sometimes it will be open to the radical impact of a film (if only because of being rarely exposed to film, be it 'officially' *avant-garde* or not), but also at times because the audience can be jaded with and inured to the effects of classical *or* modern film. In other words, the impact of film is not located solely in the film, but in the film *viewing event*. Indeed, the postmodern image that fully refracts modernism's own representation of representation may not even be a film image at all or belong anymore to film as an art form, but may well proceed from new forms of media. If classical Hollywood has an opposite, it will not be in another form of film but in another form of image altogether.[26]

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[24] William Merrin, "Did You Ever Eat Tasty Wheat?: Baudrillard and *The Matrix*," *Scope: Online Journal of Film Studies*, June 2003, http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/articles/did-you-ever-eat.htm

[25] Despite claims (see Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 65, 266) for a restricted scope for his theory, he applies it most often to 'film' as such.

[26] For further discussion of this other image, see my *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009).

Chapter 7
A Note on Hölderlin-Translation

David Farrell Krell

[Editors' note: What follows is a letter, written to Tony by one who has sworn never to produce another article. At its opening, its author recalls with some nostalgia those Warwick Workshops of the early 1980s, in and around which there was possible a mode of philosophical engagement more or less free of the professionalism that so often dominates such enterprises and that, as his post-retirement vow never to produce another article implies, the author regards as, at some times at least, more of a stay upon philosophical thought than anything else. At Warwick, the work, which took place also over meals and in pubs, was *personal*, and it is in honour of the liveliness and the productivity of this kind of work that the author writes his letter, that most *personal* of communications: apparently "higgledly-piggledy" in form but in fact tightly bound up in the particular interests shared and developed by the Warwick friends; so *unprofessional* in tone and appearance but never for a moment unphilosophical in its import and sphere of reference.

And yet this letter, unlike the other contributions to this volume, is being given a preface, a professional garb, thrown over its shoulders at the last minute that it may be deemed to, in the least important of ways, "fit in." The irony is that, in this, it "fits in" best of all, being part of a *Festschrift* whose *personal* character has had to be in some sense excused in, and by, the editors' introduction; there, the suspicion that a *Festschrift* is, by virtue of being personal, a merely random (because unprofessional!) collection of texts, is undermined by the very evidently strong philosophical ties that bind the contributions to this collection. What, after all, could be less random than the interests shared and enhanced by a set of friends over decades of philosophical dialogue? And what could be more *fitting* than a letter, written between two whose friendship was founded on a set of philosophical problems for which the

D.F. Krell (✉)
DePaul University, Chicago, IL, USA
e-mail: davidfkrell@gmail.com

intimate account of a practice in practice – which is what this letter provides – cannot, without serious inconsistency (and consistency is valued by the profession, is it not?), be considered a merely personal concern?

"Never retouch a happy accident," we quote Picasso as saying: with the humblest of apologies for having retouched this happy accident by as much as we have done here, we invite the reader not fortunate enough to have been in Warwick in the early 1980s, to get a sense for what was possible there that generated such a set of professional and, much more importantly and not always coincidentally, *philosophical* lives. —F. Halsall/J.Jansen/S.Murphy]

Dear Tony—though this is an odd way to begin a note on Hölderlin translation, but then again I myself retired this past June and I vowed I would never write another article, and I know that you would not want me to break a vow—herewith a sort of open letter on translation, more specifically, translation of Hölderlin. Inasmuch as it will be a letter rather than an article, I may be permitted a few recollections that stray from my theme. That's the way letters go, is it not, one thought chasing after another, fairly higgledy-piggledy?

Was it at Warwick University, at David Wood's "Workshops in Continental Philosophy," that our paths first crossed? And was one of your earliest contributions to that group—Robert Bernasconi, John Llewelyn, David Wood, and you were the mainstays, as I recall—a paper on Merleau-Ponty's *Eye and Mind*? I no longer remember exactly what I was expecting, but I suppose reading a name like O'Connor on the program I was anticipating a lilting Hibernian rhapsody on Merleau, who was after all a fellow Celt. (And why should I not anticipate this? My mother's name, and my own middle name, derives from O'Fearghail.) Yet what I heard from you was not a cloudburst of emotions; I need not have feared the storm. It was neither a eulogy of Merleau-Ponty nor an elegy on the art of painting that you provided. Rather, it was a sober, painstaking reading of *L'Œil et l'esprit,* a work, I suspect, that you have never ceased studying, teaching, and enjoying.

From the beginning, then, it was the work of art that fascinated you. I remember your papers at each of the Warwick Workshops, serious, precise, quietly eloquent, with a very understated wit that came out in our discussions and especially in our more leisurely chats over meals. That was in the early 1980s, a time I recall with real nostalgia. I cannot say how these events struck you, but for me they were congenial occasions—devoted to work-in-progress, tentative and experimental, not without intensity, but altogether free of the professionalism that for me at least has marred almost all the philosophical gatherings of subsequent years. A kind of modesty prevailed there—what the Germans call *Bescheidenheit*—a willingness to listen and learn rather than score points. If David Wood ever decides to retire, Tony, you and I will have to write something in greater detail about the Warwick Workshops. However, I'm not about to give you assignments—presumably, that is what you are retiring *from.* Yet I did want to begin by saying how sad it is to me in retrospect that our ways parted: Robert, David, and I went Stateside, as though Reagan were an improvement over Thatcher, and not knowing that much worse was to follow, and the workshops (as far as I am aware) ceased.

Back in those days I was already translating, mostly Heidegger, but the gods alone know how or why. I certainly was not ready for it. In fact, each time I begin a translation project, I wonder when I'll ever be up to it. Does Dante reserve a circle of hell for translators? Well, at least you'll know where to find me. And now I've sinned more egregiously in thought, word, and deed: a verse translation of Hölderlin's *Der Tod des Empedokles,* in all three versions, along with the related essays, published in 2008 by SUNY Press. A year earlier I had begun an English translation of Hölderlin's translation into German of Sophocles' *Oedipus the Tyrant* and *Antigone.* I'd planned to have the English set alongside the 1555 Juntina or Brubachiana Greek text *and* Hölderlin's 1804 German text: a kind of triptych. Several scenes into the translation of *Oedipus,* however, David Constantine's translation appeared in England, and so, with a sense of disappointment and relief, I stopped. Not long after that, Dennis Schmidt (in whose series the translation of *Der Tod des Empedokles* appeared) encouraged me to take up the Empedoclean challenge. After I'd finished a first draft of all three versions, I became ill and had to have surgery. Much of the polishing and refining, and almost all the editorial work on the volume, the notes and introductions, was a work of convalescence. I discovered that one of the advantages of the fountain pen is that you can write with it while flat on your back. Yet the work got done, somehow or other, and what I would like to do here, with your colleagues' (my editors') concurrence, is to reflect a bit on the experience. What I'm really wondering is how much my own experience of translation dovetails with Hölderlin's. Delusions of grandeur, perhaps.

Hölderlin himself has little to say about the process of his translations from the Greek, whether of Sophocles or of Pindar, but one of his most assiduous and knowledgeable editors, Friedrich Beissner, tells us that one can distinguish four different "stages" in Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles. I've discussed these "stages" in a book called *The Tragic Absolute* (Indiana University Press, 2005, 261; for Beissner's own remarks, see the *Stuttgarter Ausgabe* of Hölderlin's works, 5:451), and in rough outline they are as follows:

1. A relatively free formulation of the sense or meaning of the Greek lines, without a great deal of attention being paid to the weight of the particular words chosen by Sophocles.

2. A stage in which Hölderlin revises his German lines in order to capture as faithfully as he can the prosody, meter, and rhythm of the Greek lines. By this time in his career, Hölderlin is an expert at capturing the rhythm and form of various Greek styles, for example, his rendition of Alcaean and Asclepiadic odes; even the most astute and experienced of his readers, Schiller and Goethe among them, acknowledged the young poet's extraordinary skill in this regard.

3. Beissner now identifies a stage of revision that is more difficult to understand: he calls it, after Hölderlin, the "procedure of attentive listening," *die "hinhörende Verfahrungsart."* But listening to what? To the particular words. One suspects that Beissner may be influenced by Heidegger in his description of this third stage. For Heidegger, from *Being and Time* onward, suggests that a *Zugehören* founds and enables all *Zuhören.* That is to say, we do not *belong to* a poet's work

until we have practiced the kind of *listening* that the work requires. Analytical philosophers have always hated this facet of Heidegger's thinking, scorning it as word fetishism and obfuscation. Yet the more one is plagued by the usual sorts of language analysis—think of Searle's unstoppable blab—the more one is compelled to accept the need for listening, even if it should seem mantic, manic, or maniac. At least, to come back to Hölderlin, there is no doubt that this poet took Sophocles' text to be a *religious* text—Karl Reinhardt is surely right about this (see *The Tragic Absolute,* 330). One listens very carefully to a sacred text before blabbing; indeed, as far back as the Orphics and Pythagoreans, blab is proscribed. So, then, the "procedure of attentive listening" is what Beissner sees as a third stage in Hölderlinian translation, and the primary earmark of such a heeding of the particular words, rather surprisingly, is an effort to restore in the German lines the *word order* of the Greek. One would have thought this to have been characteristic of an earlier stage: surely, as one polishes and refines a translation, one accepts the genius—and the word order—of the "target" language, the language *into* which one is translating? I would especially like to have heard Walter Benjamin's views on this third stage. A bit later I'll come back to Benjamin's "Task of the Translator," though only for a brief allusion or two.

4. Beissner identifies now a late stage of revision in Hölderlinian translation, thinking no doubt about the poet's final alterations to his *Antigone* in the autumn of 1803. At this late stage, Hölderlin takes ever greater risks, demanding the impossible of the German language of his time, stretching his own language to the point where the urbane German stylists of the day, reviewing the final product, could declare him mad and his work risible. Hölderlin himself, explaining the delay to his publisher, wrote about the need to translate in a "livelier," *lebendigeren*, fashion. Only a "more lively" translation could convey Sophoclean scripture to the modern Hesperian ear. Oddly, and decisively, Hölderlin identifies this livelier rendering with an *Orientalizing* of the Greek. Whereas the Greeks themselves suppressed their Oriental heritage—and for Hölderlin that heritage derives principally from the cult of Asian Dionysos—the modern translator must seek it out and bring it to bear on the translation. To put it in the form of a paradox: For the sake of a livelier translation, that is, one better suited to the *modern* ear, one must push farther back behind Greek antiquity to a more arcane and more archaic past. This is perhaps Hölderlin's most pervasive and most astonishing gesture. More than a gesture, it is a concerted praxis of translation. It has to do with the famous brotherhood of Heracles, Christ, and Dionysos, which we find invoked in the late hymns. However, the best Hölderlin scholars have written at length about this, so that I feel abashed at merely mentioning it in a letter, as though it were the most obvious thing in the world. Obvious it is not: even the young Nietzsche (recall in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* his anxiety in the face of the Oriental, his fear of all things Babylonian, especially the Sekaean orgies) and even the mature Heidegger (recall his readings of the Presocratics, which remain resolutely Hellenic, with nary a reference to *Ancient Near Eastern Texts,* avoiding all confrontations with either Gilgamesh or what Yeats calls "Galilean turbulence") are not up to it. Now, both Nietzsche and Heidegger are informed admirers of

Hölderlin, to say the least; yet both seem to have resisted and even repressed this crucial Orientalizing procedure (not in Said's sense, and not in Benjamin's, either) in Hölderlin's poetizing. I myself, influenced principally by Nietzsche and Heidegger, have never been receptive enough in this regard, although *Postponements* and *Daimon Life* both seem to me now to be signs of nervousness. In short, the third stage (attentive listening to the particular words and to the word order) and the fourth stage (seeking the livelier, more Oriental liquor of language) are the stages that most intrigue me. My question to myself is whether in my translation of *Der Tod des Empedokles* and even in those initial sketches toward a translation of Hölderlin's Sophocles I have undergone anything like these four "stages."

My response is inhibited by the fact that I no longer possess the notebook that contains the earliest drafts and revisions of the *Empedokles* translation. (My notebooks have gone into the archive at DePaul University's Richardson Library, an honor that pleased me primarily because otherwise I would have thrown them away and then promptly regretted having done so.) Yet the translation process is still present to my mind. Concerning the first stage, in which the general sense of the lines is rendered in the "target" language without much attention to the import of particular words—in either the original or the "target" languages, one must add—I have to make a confession. Among the very last changes I made to the *Empedokles* translation are a number that pertain precisely to the sense or meaning of certain lines. These were lines in which the "hard rhythmic jointures" (Beda Allemann) so baffled the syntax of the sentences, clauses, phrases, segments, or lines that I had to appeal to capable friends for help. In the case of *Empedokles* the friend was Ulrich Halfmann, emeritus professor of American Studies at Mannheim University, whose English equals mine and whose German far outstrips mine, to say nothing of his acuity as a reader in these two and many more languages. Here is one example of Halfmann's unraveling of the meaning of the rebarbative lines—a matter that ought to have belonged to stage one, but which occurred at stage five, if you will.

In the third and final version of the drama, the character called "the old man," later given the name Manes, chides Empedocles concerning his decision to take his life. In the course of his soliloquy Manes says:

> Der Tod, der jähe, er ist ja von Anbeginn,
> Das weißt du wohl, den Unverständigen
> Die deinesgleichen sind, zuvorbeschieden.

It was the last six words that gave me trouble. I first wrote:

> For death, the sudden steep, is there from the beginning,
> You know it well; the ignorant, your contemporaries,
> Have not been given it to know so soon.

I misunderstood the meaning of *zuvorbeschieden,* taking it to mean the *knowledge* of death which characterized Empedocles but not his besotted contemporaries. This had the effect of emphasizing the contrast between Empedocles and the citizens of Agrigent. Halfmann was able to convince me that the sense of the lines is that *death itself* is allotted to *all* mortals from the start, and that Manes is telling

Empedocles that in this respect he is precisely akin to his fellow citizens. This insight produced the following revision:

> For death, the sudden steep, looms from the beginning,
> As you know well; and to the baffled ones, to those
> Who are your kin, it has long since been allotted.

A second example. In Empedocles' reply to Manes the following appears:

> Und staunend hört ich oft die Wasser gehn
> Und sah die Sonne blühn, und sich an ihr
> Den Jugendtag der stillen Erd entzünden.

The phrase *sich an ihr . . . entzünden* confused me, and at first I had the sun catching fire on the surface of the waters:

> Astonished oftentimes I heard the waters' flow and saw
> The sun in bloom and catching fire upon the waters' skin
> All through the youthful day on our reposeful earth.

Halfmann was able to show me that what Empedocles saw at sunrise was the youthful day of the silent earth being ignited by the sun:

> Astonished oftentimes I heard the waters' flow and saw
> The sun burst into bloom; I saw our silent earth
> At youthful day catch fire from that sun.

There are doubtless dozens of other lines that I misconstrued at first, finding my way—with or without help—toward a more accurate reading of the sense.

With regard to stage one generally, I will only remark that in Hölderlin the most astonishing poetry sometimes flows like lava, hot and irresistible, such that the holograph shows virtually no emendations; sometimes, it is also true, my translations of him seem to have compressed all four of his stages into one. Those were instances of what Reiner Schürmann, in a letter to me decades ago, called *trouvailles.* One simply finds one's own language delivering the gift of a rendering that will endure all the later reexaminations and will smile upon all desires to improve. In these cases, the *sense* of the lines is given as the French *sens,* whereby not only the meaning but also the direction and flow of the words is given—by the ears and nose, as it were. Otherwise, Beissner is surely right: in Hölderlin's holograph one often finds that when the flow of the line(s) seem(s) entirely natural, automatic, and "just right," that flow was achieved only after endless alterations. I recall the case of the first three lines of the soliloquy that opens the third version of *Der Tod des Empedokles,* lines that in their *Duktus* seem so inevitable that they must have come all at once: however, in the holograph we find *eight* lines intervening after the second of these first three, eight lines that are later struck, allowing that third line to pretend that it was always there in place. True, as Picasso says concerning the lines of a drawing, *Never retouch a happy accident.* The problem is to know in what "happiness" consists. (Philosophy, anyone?)

Stage two, paying heed to the prosody of the original, occurred for me when I undertook a line-by-line comparison of my *revised* text with Hölderlin's German. In other words, a stage of revision occurred for me between stages one and two. Before I undertook a line-by-line comparison with the German, I worked through my

English version at least twice. Here I was preoccupied principally with the English text in my notebook, laboring on it in order to see if the English made any sense, and going back to the German only when things blurred or became hopelessly awkward. It was this twice-revised English text that was then read against the German, read with an ear to meter and rhythm. Those were days of iambs and nights of trochees, with visions of dactyls and anapests galloping in my head. Daylight iambs prevailed, of course, but even there it was essential to respect the meter while avoiding sing-song. "I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as one of the multitudinous species of dendrites." That became my motto. I had never been very conscious of Hölderlin's meters, but now I had to train both ear and eye for them. And even though iambic is as native to English as Shakespeare is to Stratford, I had to learn the native as though it were foreign; this made me think of that amazing letter that Hölderlin writes to Casimir von Böhlendorff, on the need to explore the foreign precisely in order to develop one's native gifts. Perhaps for the first time in my life I had to practice the *craft* of poetry. I cannot say how well or ill I've done. Maybe you'll do me the kindness some day of letting me know. As for my own judgment of the matter, I found myself writing a funny line about my tinkerings in the little shop of iambs—what the French, I am told, now call *va-VOOM-cinq*—and I put that funny line into the preface of the translation: "To those skeptics who wonder why I have here attempted the impossible—a verse translation of Hölderlin—and who may feel that I am not fit for the task, that I haven't got a poetic bone in my body, I insist that there is such a bone in me, just one, a thigh bone wrapped in endless folds of prosaic fat. I have burned that bone in joyous desperation on the altar of Hölderlin's Empedocles." I still don't know about that purported poetic bone of mine, and cannot be sure that I even made it as far as stage two of Hölderlin's itinerary.

At this point I keyboarded my translation into a computer—and wouldn't Hölderlin have smiled over that verb, "keyboarded," although he was no Luddite and would have keyboarded gleefully had the technology been there. The computer version is a translator's blessing, if only on account of the search-function. (During the 1970s and 1980s, when I was translating Heidegger, I certainly would have benefited from a PC. I started using one, a Mac, in the late 1980s, with *Daimon Life,* precisely at the time I stopped translating. I never could get my life poised.) The resulting typescript, *pace* Heidegger, helped me to get a sense of the "flow" and the "balance" of the lines. Yes, even the word order of original and "target" became more apparent to me. After a hasty correction of the printout, pretty much with attention to the English alone, a second line-by-line reading of the German and English occurred. No, not exactly line-by-line, but a reading aloud, or at least over the lips, of a varying number of lines of Hölderlin's text, anywhere from one to five or six lines, with a reading of the English following right on its heels. I recall trying to make my head roomy enough to hold these German and English lines together. Here, if I may make so bold, something like a belonging-to Hölderlin's lines transpired, a listening-to the words and to the sequence of the words, their tumult and their tranquillity. The first line of Empedocles' soliloquy in the first version reads:

In meine Stille kamst du leise wandelnd,

and I avoided both *tranquillity* (a word that I love, as you've seen) and every temptation to transpose the words, winding up with the simplest possible rendering:

> Into my stillness you came softly wandering.

As the German text became more and more familiar to me—I mean, the *sound* of it—I found myself listening out for possible parallel sounds in English. Walter Benjamin's figure is here quite apt: we do not inhabit language, neither the "original" nor the "target" (the scare-quotes tell you, Tony, that I'm getting fed up with both "originals" and "targets," as though translation were a shoot-out between languages); rather, we stand on the outside of even our own language, as though at the edge of an impenetrable forest. We call out, call *into* the forest, to see whether anything will come echoing back to us. Not the noise of calling but the silence of attunement-to-the-echo is important. Muffled noises, the falling of leaves, the scratchings of birds and rummagings of squirrels, interrupted every now and then by the echo of a word that seems to be the right word. Hölderlin calls this the *pure* word, *das reine Wort.* By this time, *va-VOOM* meant less to me than the sequence and flow of the words, with special attention to the line-breaks and enjambments, the continuities and cae-suras. I became more attentive to those moments when Hölderlin's Swabian dialect punctuated the high diction that otherwise prevailed. (A whole treatise would have to be written on Hölderlin's use of dialect: as one north-German mother complained when her daughter brought home a boy from Stuttgart, *"Aber er* schwäbelt *so!"*)

This listening-and-belonging process is not exactly an identifiable "stage," at least not in my case. It was in play from the beginning, albeit imperfectly. Indeed, something in my *handwritten* text, all the way back at stage one, was important for this listening, as though the cadence were in the pen. (Everything I have ever written, whether book or translation, prose or poetry, nonfiction or fiction, was first written and revised in fountain pen.) In spite of the excellent chances of self-deception here, I feel that my capacity to listen did improve over the months of work on the translation. If the listening was good enough, especially in the later "stages" of the work, there was something like a dancing of the words and phrases, accompanied by assonance and alliteration; there was both a sweet familiarity and an unheard-of uncanniness, simultaneously.

Is there a fourth stage in my case? To make the American (up to now I've been writing *English,* dear Tony, but one Celt will call a half-Celt to order and to greater honesty!) more lively—yes, that is surely an unspoken imperative. Heidegger once said, I believe in his 1935 *Introduction to Metaphysics,* that poetry is the sounding of a word as though for the first time. I became excited this past summer by Thomas Hardy's use of the word *purling,* as in "purling waters," a word I did not know. I heard its echo for the first time this summer. I plan now to insert it into one of two places in the translation that have been waiting for it, places that were tired of the waters flowing and streaming.

Lebendiger. It means much more than "with increased sparkle, animation, and vitality." It has to do with Hölderlin's conviction that life itself is a unity of circles, or of expanding rings, from the so-called inorganic (his friend Schelling has taught him to be suspicious of this category of physics) to plants, animals, humans, spirits, and gods—though even to list them in this way is wrong. Poets and thinkers, Empedocles

included, seek these greater unities of life, without being so adamant about making distinctions. Historically speaking, poets and thinkers try to enliven the past, to give it the vibrant colors of myth, even if they have to "mistranslate" in order to do this. For example, Hölderlin deliberately alters the apparent sense of Sophocles' lines concerning Danaë's "reception" of Zeus as a shower of gold. Rather than simply "receive" Zeus, Hölderlin's Danaë *teaches* him something essential:

> Sie zählete dem Vater der Zeit
> Die Stundenschläge, die goldnen.
>
> She counted off for the father of time
> The strokes of the hours, the golden strokes.

Hölderlin's "mistranslation," which is actually closer to the Greek than the usual translations, brings Zeus, the father of the earth, down to earth. Danaë brings the father of time into time. For the ears of modern mortals, and perhaps of postmodern mortals as well, she teaches the lord what it is he sees in her, why he is so taken with her. She teaches him the fecundity of mortality (see *The Tragic Absolute,* chapters 9–11).

Once again, however: *lebendiger,* molto vivace. Among the most lively emendations in Hölderlin's translation of *Antigone* are those in which he translates the names of the Olympian gods back to their more Titanic origins—perhaps even to their Oriental origins. Thus Zeus is "the father of time and the earth," Aphrodite "divine beauty," Hades "the future site of the dead," Persephone "furiously compassionate—a light," and her mother Demeter "that which is impenetrable."

It is not difficult for me to find examples of the final stage, the search for the livelier expression, in my own translation, although I am uncertain as to whether and how the word *Orientalizing* applies to my task. (Recall, however, my excitement over Thomas Hardy's lively *purling.*) The livelier echoes that come from the forest of language almost always come late in the process. Apart from those rare *trouvailles,* one has to let the unconscious do its work for many days and nights. The seemingly endless reading and re-reading of the German and the American, always over the lips, the endless polishings and touchings up, the ceaseless scratchings of the pen, as in Melville's *Pierre.* . . . So, how do we know when it is done? That is the question we put to every culinary genius, and the answer is always, "It's done whenever more cooking would harm it."

The time does seem to come when—to alter the metaphor—one is merely rearranging the furniture of a translation, scratching out proposed emendations and restoring earlier solutions. Perhaps it all comes down to exhaustion? One can stand at the forest's edge only so long. The stamina to stand and call comes from love of poetry, and that love intensifies, does not diminish, but in the end even lovers have their limits.

One of the thoughts that hovered as a shadow over all the stages of my work was that of *failure.* Not the failure of my own translation, which always seemed to be a given, but the failure of the *"originals."* The three versions that Hölderlin produced were for him botched efforts: he set each one aside, giving up all hope of completing them, publishing them, seeing them performed. It seemed important to me to understand the nature of the failure, of the botching, if you will; important to understand the caesura or counter-rhythmic interruption that revealed to Hölderlin, as though in

epiphany, the impossibility of the project. Why important? Certainly not so that I would translate "down," as it were, so that the failure would become palpable to my readers. For each of the versions contains magnificent poetry and trenchant dialogue, and these invariably surpassed my ability to render them. The failure, it seemed to me, had to do with the suicide itself, the "one full deed at the end" of which the hero dreams; the failure had to do with the reported suicide itself, precisely the death of Empedocles. Not simply the fact that the voluntary death of the thinker could not be dramatized: many such deaths in Greek tragedy are reported rather than shown. No, the problem had to do with Empedocles' death as an ostensibly affirmative act, one in which nature and art would successfully fuse. Perhaps that is why, in my view at least, the most powerful poetry comes in the third version, with the Egyptian priest's challenge to Empedocles, and Empedocles' highly charged yet futile response. Indeed, by the time I was in the final stages of the translation, it seemed to me that Manes's challenge to Empedocles, a challenge that frustrates both Empedocles and Hölderlin, produced the very best poetry. This paradox never resolved itself, but only deepened as my work advanced. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe was right to say that the three versions of the play lacked *théâtralité*. What Hölderlin in effect had produced was an oratorio without music—though also without a happy end, without what Lacan called "salvationist choirs." How did this failure of the *Trauerspiel*—of the tragedy or mourning-play as such—affect my translation? I'm not sure. But the failure to bring Empedocles—the man and the play—to his and its resolution did not mar the language; instead, it enabled the finest flowers of the work to flourish.

Here are a few lines from the speech of Manes, the Egyptian priest or "old man." From Hölderlin's holograph we see that these lines did not give him a lot of trouble, no matter how much difficulty they caused Empedocles. Very few emendations here, even though Hölderlin left about a third of his page (the left-hand margin) free in order to accommodate eventual alterations. The speech ends with some questions put to Empedocles that have all the directness and force of dialect:

> Nur Einem ist es Recht, in dieser Zeit,
> Nur Einen adelt deine schwarze Sünde.
> Ein größrer ists, denn ich! denn wie die Rebe
> Von Erd und Himmel zeugt, wenn sie getränkt
> Von hoher Sonn aus dunklem Boden steigt,
> So wächst er auf, aus Licht und Nacht geboren.
> Es gärt um ihn die Welt, was irgend nur
> Beweglich und verderbend ist im Busen
> Der Sterblichen, ist aufgeregt von Grund aus,
> Der Herr der Zeit, um seine Herrschaft bang,
> Thront finster blickend über der Empörung.
> Sein Tag erlischt, und seine Blitze leuchten,
> Doch was von oben flammt, entzündet nur
> Und was von unten strebt, die wilde Zwietracht.
> Der Eine doch, der neue Retter faßt
> Des Himmels Strahlen ruhig auf, und liebend
> Nimmt er, was sterblich ist, an seinen Busen,
> Und milde wird in ihm der Streit der Welt.

Die Menschen und die Götter söhnt er aus
Und nahe wieder leben sie, wie vormals.
Und daß, wenn er erschienen ist, der Sohn
Nicht größer, denn die Eltern sei, und nicht
Der heilge Lebensgeist gefesselt bleibe
Vergessen über ihn, dem Einzigen,
So lenkt er aus, der Abgott seiner Zeit,
Zerbricht, er selbst, damit durch reine Hand
Dem Reinen das Notwendige geschehe,
Sein eigen Glück, das ihm zu glücklich ist,
Und gibt, was er besaß, dem Element,
Das ihn verherrlichte, geläutert wieder.
Bist du der Mann? derselbe? bist du dies? (358–388)

The lines that gave me the most trouble and that required alteration at each stage of my work, appear toward the end, with the line *Und daß, wenn er erschienen ist, der Sohn,* on to the end. Two lines that had an immediate impact and whose sense was immediately clear to me, but whose prosody and power called for change upon change in my translation, were these two—as stark as though they were written in the Greek of Sophocles:

Doch was von oben flammt, entzündet nur
Und was von unten strebt, die wilde Zwietracht. (370–71)

I cannot take you through all my lucubrations, and I do not know if what follows is enlivened or Orientalized sufficiently, but here is where I am so far—for the "stages" of translation, as you know, will not come to an end until I do:

For one alone in our time is it fitting; one being
Alone ennobles your black sin.
That one is greater than I am! for as the vine
Bears witness to the earth and sky when, saturated by
The lofty sun it rises from dark soil, thus
This being grows, a child of light and night.
The world around him bubbles in ferment, and all
Disruption and corruption in the mortal breast
Is agitated, and from top to bottom; whereupon
The lord of time, grown apprehensive of his rule,
Looms with glowering gaze above the consternation.
His day extinguished, lightning bolts still flash, yet
What flames on high is inflammation, nothing more;
What strives from down below is savage discord.
The one, however, the newborn savior, grasps
The rays of heaven tranquilly, and lovingly
He takes mortality unto his bosom, and
The world's strife grows mild in him.
The human being and the gods he reconciles;
Again they live in close proximity, as in former times.
No sooner has the son appeared, that he may not
Surpass his parentage, and that the holy spirit
Of life may not remain in shameful fetters
On his account, forgotten up above, the unique one
Now turns aside, although he is the idol of his times,

Destroys himself, so that a pure hand executes
Whatever of necessity befalls the pure one;
He shatters his own fortune, now too fortunate for him,
Restores whatever he possessed unto the element
That glorified him, gives it back now wholly cleansed.
Are you that man? the very one? are you this?

If there is a touch of the Orient here, and that means of Dionysos, then it may be in the "bubbles" of fermentation, or in the "glowering gaze" of the lord of time, or in the "inflammation" in which the fire of heaven goes out. Or perhaps in the strange yet overwhelming challenge, spoken in dialect, "are you this?"

But it is time now to close. Translations appear to be acquisitions, at least when they show up as bound volumes on library shelves, but they are there only to encourage young persons to begin studying languages they do not yet know. All the beauty of a translation has this pedagogy as its goal; all the flaws of a translation are forgiven if the pedagogy succeeds. From time to time there must be a reader who says, in the present instance, "I need to be able to read this in German, I have to start now, there is another world awaiting me." Not acquisitions, then, but works, or settings-to-work. Works of art, then?

Perhaps translations *are* works of art in Merleau-Ponty's sense, which is the sense that for all their limitations, all their finitude, they at least gesture toward the unbounded, toward the greater freedom. Allow me, dear Tony, to paraphrase the final lines of *Eye and Mind,* which you know so well. If no translation accomplishes translation-as-such, and if no individual work of translation is ever itself accomplished once and for all, is never completed absolutely, then each work of translation alters, clarifies, deepens, confirms, exalts, recreates or creates in advance all the others. If translations are not acquisitions, it isn't only because like all things they are transitory and will pass, but also because they have almost all their life ahead of them.

Chapter 8
Violence and Splendor: At the Limits of Hermeneutics

Alphonso Lingis

From as far back as we can see into our history and across the planet, rituals, initiations, ceremonies, processions, dances have been celebrated. They were performed, anthropologist Victor Turner explained, to promote and increase fertility of men, crops, and animals, domestic and wild; to cure illness; to avert plague; to obtain success in raiding; to turn boys into men and girls into women; to make chiefs out of commoners; to transform ordinary people into shamans and shamanins; to "cool" those "hot" from the warpath, to ensure the proper succession of seasons and the hunting and agricultural responses of human beings to them.[1] These performances were also animal and cosmic epiphanies, and often awesome and terrifying revelations of dark compulsions and cruelties that are unleashed in tabooed places and sacred times. They called down plague and disaster on the leaders of enemy peoples, and curses on their children and livestock. Collective performances were also entertainments; people laugh freely at the grotesqueries in Balinese shadow plays, in African rituals, in Papuan initiation ceremonies so lavish in cruelties to the initiates; they laughingly recognize village louts arrayed in fancy costume and spouting pompous declamations, they gossip and feast on lavish meals.

Collective performances cannot be understood only from the intentions of the organizers, participants, and bystanders, and from their historical, political, economic, and ideological contexts. A cultural performance closes in on itself, its scenes and movements adjusting to one another, and evolves with its own logic, that of ceremony and festival.

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[1] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ, 1982), 32.

A. Lingis (✉)
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA
e-mail: allingis@hotmail.com

Did not Jean-Jacques Rousseau also provide an essential insight when he wrote that the dispersed families of hunter-gathering antiquity assembled for the collective joy of song and dance, and that this collective joy first gave them the ecstatic experience of collective humanity? Human society was not first assembled out of fear, but out of collective joy.

Interpretive anthropology views rituals, ceremonies, and dances, collective performances, and cultural systems generally as symbolic complexes that have meaning, and function to give meaning to human thoughts, feelings, and actions. Indeed, it is this meaning of cultural symbols that, Geertz affirms, first articulates, generates and regenerates thoughts. To think is to identify things and relate them with words and other cultural symbols. Further, indignation, a feeling of injustice, of frustration of our expectations and plans, envy, jealousy, triumph—words and cultural symbols make them possible. Words and cultural symbols determine what we laugh over and what we grieve over. Georges Bataille argued that it is taboos that produce extreme emotions, which burst forth through the transgression of taboos. "Not only ideas, but emotions too, are cultural artifacts in man," Geertz declares.[2] This thesis establishes a radical distinction between humans and the other animal species.

With the thesis that cultural performances, and cultural systems generally, have meaning, and produce effects through their meaning, goes the thesis that anthropology understands them by translating their meaning into that system of cultural and linguistic symbols which is the anthropological interpretation.[3] "The meanings that symbols, the material vehicles of thought, embody are often elusive, vague, fluctuating, and convoluted, but they are, in principle, as capable of being discovered through systematic empirical investigation—especially if the people who perceive them will cooperate a little—as the atomic weight of hydrogen or the function of the adrenal glands," Geertz declares.[4]

The anthropological discourse laying out the meanings of a cultural system and then of another, and the comparisons between them and between successive systems, is part of the general modern project that we can call our historical consciousness. The emergence of scientific history and the social sciences in the nineteenth century was borne by the conviction that if we could represent the forms human societies and events took across the centuries, and the relations between them, we would produce an encompassing and integrated knowledge of the meaning of social events and understand their consequences.

The concept of meaning, central to cultural hermeneutics, is, however, not very clear. It is not simply intellectual, conceptual meaning, grasped in conscious acts. Geertz reports that when the Javanese speak of their sense of rituals and ceremonies they speak of *rasa*, a term uniting taste, touch, and emotional feeling with

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[2] Ibid, 81.

[3] "The study of other peoples' cultures… involves discovering who they think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it…" Clifford Geertz, *Available Light* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

[4] Ibid, 362–363.

"meaning"—but "ultimate significance"—the deepest meaning at which one arrives by dint of mystical effort.[5]

Yet if, as Geertz asserts, the meanings that symbols, the material vehicles of thought, embody are, in principle, capable of being discovered, they are not fundamentally different from the intelligible meaning formulated in the anthropologists' concepts.[6] Indeed, collective performances have the same function as the anthropological discourse: the Balinese cockfight is for Balinese a sentimental education, Geertz explains, a text that articulates for and reflects to the Balinese the emotions with which individuals are put together and society is built, the look, uses, force of, and fascination with the violence in their highly stratified and ceremonious society.[7] That historical sense that we acquire through the objective representation of the forms of society and culture provided by our social sciences, among them anthropology, prior societies acquired or produced in and through their collective performances.

Geertz did find that most Balinese worshippers, and the priests themselves, have no idea who the gods in the temples are or what the sanskritic chants mean,[8] and Donald Cordry found that in the vast majority of Mexican masked processions, neither performers nor audience understood much at all of the costumes' significance.[9] Is not the concept of meaning here being stretched to designate only the patterns and periodicities of behavior that rituals impose, and perhaps also certain sentiments of group solidarity, awe, or fear? Pragmatists and rationalists, and religious reformers denounce behavior regulated by "meaningless rituals." Barbara Babcock notes that in carnivals and fiestas fireworks, exuberantly fantastic clothing, patchwork colors, the multiplication of apparently irrelevant masks and costumes "to the point of indeterminate nonsense," suspend customary meanings. Yet she says that "a surplus of signifiers… creates a self-transgressive discourse which mocks and subverts the monological arrogance of 'official' systems of signification."[10] But it is hard to argue or verify that "transgression" is the meaning that shaped these irrelevant and nonsensical masks and costumes. Is not this meaning indeed a cultural construction—of the interpreter?

The concept of meaning does not seem to designate the essential in the spectacularly theatrical Rangda-Barong cultural performance in Bali that Geertz depicts as an endless, inconclusive clash between the malignant and the ludicrous. Its effect is that people of both sexes fall into trance and rush out to stab themselves, wrestle with one another, devour live chicks or excrement, wallow convulsively in the mud, sink into a coma—"an orgy of futile violence and degradation."[11]

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[5] Ibid, 134–135.

[6] "Symbols… are tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs." Ibid, 91.

[7] Ibid, 449.

[8] Ibid, 177, 179.

[9] Donald Cordry, *Mexican Masks* (Austin/London: University of Texas Press, 1980), 23–31.

[10] Barbara Babcock, "Too Many, Too Few: Ritual Modes of Signification," *Semiotica* 23: 296.

[11] Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* 118–119, 181.

Could not some of the meanings the interpreter detects in cultural performances be absurd, designate nothing but blind pain, or indeed designate a world full of sound and fury, signifying nothing?

Collective performances do not only exhibit effigies and icons; they continue in throbbing, energizing, and transforming music, song, and dance. The interpretive movement of the mind that constructs meanings is different from, and clogged up by, deactivated by the rhythmic and melodic periodicities of movement.

Over and beyond, or beneath, meaning, there is power generated in collective performances. Victor Turner ponders over "what I have often seen in Africa, where thin, ill-nourished old ladies, with only occasional naps, dance, sing, and perform ritual activities for 2 or 3 days and nights on end." Collective performances release, in music, song, and dance and also in trance, resources of pleasure, pain, and expression in our bodies and in unconscious processes that are untapped in everyday life.

Equally striking, and equally enigmatic, is the production of splendor in collective performances. Here the concept of meaning breaks down. The Byzantine icono- clasts and the Protestant Reform denounced the splendor of gilt, color, form, music, and sumptuous liturgical processions for obscuring and engulfing the meaning of the religious symbols.

While collective performances have been much studied as generating political decisions and spiritual trances and visions, there is little about how they generate splendor, and little about that splendor. A people are transfigured in glorious adorn- ments and movements; their experience as they perform is transfigured; exalted emotions surge in them; their assembling becomes dramatic, epic, cosmic.

Now that anthropologists no longer study tribal peoples to exhibit primitive stages of human cultural evolution, when the agricultural and technical skills they studied have little relevance to our industrial mass-production of food and com- modities, will not the splendor produced in their collective performances be ever more important to us, in the petulant venality our global mercantile culture?

In 1964, in Papua New Guinea, some Australian colonial administrators, remem- bering the Highland festivals in Scotland they or their immigrant fathers told of, organized the first Mount Hagen Show. The Papuans, they thought, love body adornment and spectacle, it would be a joy to behold and a joy, for them, to cele- brate their beauty: a Carnival in the Pacific answering the Carnaval in Brazil on the opposite side of the planet. They summoned the tribes of the Western Highlands, who they perceived to be living in suspicion and hostility with one another, to come in ceremonial dress and parade together under Mount Hagen. The men came in tri- umphal war dress and with their weapons. But the Australians organized the show as a celebration of the end of tribal hostility, a festival of the new Pax Australiana.

Before the Second World War, the Australian colonial administration was very thinly staffed, and no effort had been made to extend control or even explore the mountainous tropical island. Then the European war extended to the Pacific, and Australians, Americans, and Japanese fought in New Guinea. The Australians enlisted Papuans in their war, and some 50,000 of them were killed. After the end of the war, as the Australians returned to their colony, they seriously set out to pacify the country. Not to put down armed opposition to them; from their first arrival their

guns had quickly showed the Papuans the futility of that. Pacification meant that conflict among the Papuans was not to be settled with weapons, but by recourse to Australian administrators and courts. The million-strong highlands Papuans, discovered so late, only in 1930, had been a journalistic sensation, where the Papuans were called Stone Age people and savages. When it was discovered that each high valley had its own language—eventually 867 languages were identified—and the societies so individualistic that defense of one's land was up to the individual and his kinsmen and clansmen, it was easy to imagine them as in a constant state of war. The Australian colonial administration did so depict them and made pacification its overriding priority.

In fact highlands men sought their wives from the neighboring tribe; this exogamy maintained contact with and negotiations between the big men of adjacent tribes. When battles did break out, they were so constrained by rules and fought with weapons so ineffective—the arrows that are without fletching are really inaccurate—that it would be rare that anyone was actually killed. If someone were killed, the big men immediately demanded and negotiated compensation. If compensation—in the form of pigs, foodstuffs, and shells—were refused, then the fighting would resume until someone of the opposing side was killed and balance restored. Although sickness that resulted in death was attributed to ancestral ghosts, spirits, or sorcery, most often material compensation was arranged if sorcery was recognized to be the cause.

For the Australians, these last, as for the first white imperialists, Cortez and Pizarro, the colony was seen as a source of gold. Later, of silver, copper, oil, and natural gas. The problem was that the prospectors and miners depended on large trains of native bearers to carry their equipment and supplies, and they found that again and again the bearers would not cross boundary lines into the territory of the next tribe. The boundaries were protected not so much by arrayed enemy warriors as by sorcery. To break down the tribal boundaries, the Australians, as they advanced into areas where gold panning or dredging was promising, decreed that all tribal conflicts be referred to the administrators and the courts they instituted and sent military patrols to punish tribes where conflicts being settled in the traditional ways.

The Mount Hagen Show was organized to demonstrate, to the United Nations Trusteeship Council and the home government, that pacification had been achieved. And to extend the forced pacification into highlands societies, since the clans and tribes of the highlands would be assembled where they could meet and communicate with their respective enemies. It was also organized to bring in tourists, for by now tourism had become a major industry around the world. An airstrip was laid out, several hotels were built, and 850 mostly Australian tourists were flown in.

The Australian organizers had announced prizes for the best costumes, the best drummers, the best marchers, the best dancers. However, as soon as the prizes were awarded, fights broke out between the losers and the winners; the prizes were subsequently suppressed. The show was to occur every other year, but it proved difficult to get the big men of enough clans and tribes to agree for a date, so that it was difficult for tourists to plan to get there.

Now the government of independent Papua New Guinea, whose army and police are effective only to protect the mines of multinational corporations, supports the Mount Hagen Show to affirm the national identity of the Papuan clans and tribes and to display to the outside world their cultural diversity. Last year there were only some 200 tourists, most of them flown in for just the 2 days of the Show by tour companies. After 30 years of independence, Papua New Guinea is judged by foreign chanceries and tour companies alike to be a primitive and violent place; indeed tribal war was raging across most of the highlands and in the capital, Port Moresby, all the bus companies and even taxis had been immobilized for the past 2 months by the conflict.

A local man I had come to know points out a Member of Parliament. I remark that there do not seem to be many government dignitaries here. My companion tells me that this man is the representative from this district. He introduces me to the Parliamentarian; I congratulate him on the splendor of the Show. He looks down. "It is getting hard to get young people interested in it," he says. I had noted that some participants in the Show were wearing fake kina shells of painted cardboard. The government-sponsored Show was beginning to produce its kitsch offspring. Later I think the Parliamentarian was thinking of the situation in Port Moresby and the coastal towns. I remembered that in Lae the arriving tourist is rushed by airport police into a van with steel plates bolted over its body and a heavy steel mesh grill over its windows; three armed soldiers are seated in the van as it speeds through stop signs to the tourist hotel. A government report had found that fully 50% of the inhabitants of Port Moresby live by theft.

Before the Second World War, the Australian colonial authority had refused to grant permits for missionaries in most of the territory; its military patrols were too few to protect anything but the places where mining companies were prospecting and dredging. After the war, when Australia set out to regain control of its vast colony, the missionaries were seen as effective and permanent agents of pacification. Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, and other fundamentalist missionaries quickly spread across the whole island, building churches and schools and clinics. They are the principal source of cash wages for most villages. Everywhere the missionaries enjoined their parishioners to demolish the men's house, and husbands and wives to live together as nuclear families. They ridiculed the taboos that had prohibited sex for the 5 years each child was weaned, and that limited most women to two children in their lives. The missionaries staffed clinics and inculcated hygiene; the population quickly doubled. Occupancy of the narrow fertile valleys in the mountainous highlands had always been the principle motive for conflict; now all the valleys are overpopulated. The export prices for what agricultural products and coffee that is raised continues to fall. Young men go down to Port Moresby, the coastal towns of Madang and Lae, where the great majority do not find work. The foreign gold, copper, silver mining companies, the US Interoil refinery, and the Australian Gas Light Company laying a pipeline to bring natural gas from the highlands across the Torres Strait to Australia are state-of-the-art high-tech projects that employ very few local people. With the abolition of the institution of the men's

house, these young men have not been acculturated with the loyalties, rituals, and duties and obligations of their tribe, and the village and clan elders have lost their authority over them. In the highlands communities men who lie in wait for travelers and kill them were feared rather than admired; they did not become respected leaders, organizers of exchanges, and orators, did not become big men, but "bad men." Now the term is "raskals." Those who return to the highlands do so to plant marijuana, coca, and poppies for the smugglers in the coastal towns. Some of these earn enough money to buy guns. The tribal wars that break out now result in far more deaths and the tribal big men are far less able to negotiate compensations.

At the Mount Hagen Show the marching groups bearing the now obsolete and purely ceremonial weapons, the presence of representatives of the government, and the large contingent of police and army affirm that henceforth violence is the monopoly of the state. However, the Westminster-style parliamentary government set in place by the Australians does not succeed in establishing political parties with national, or even provincial programs for development or even, malaria-researcher Dr Ivo Müller explained to me, for public health. The 109 parliamentarians are in effect tribal big men, working to divert some of the national budget to enrich themselves and their tribesmen. Corruption is rampant in the ill-trained and ill-paid army and police, who readily sell their guns to fellow-tribesmen in times of conflict and allege that their outposts had been raided. During the last elections, there were known cases of politicians arming their supporters; six of the nine Highlands electorates were invalidated by the High Court due to violence and intimidation. Once again individuals and clans take responsibility for exacting compensation for or avenging aggressions done to them.

With the dwindling number of tourists in attendance, the entrance fee for tourists has been increased from $30 to $100. Coca-Cola advertised itself as a sponsor this year, meaning, I suppose, that it contributed some money. The participating tribes are given 5 kina—about US$5—per performer to help in transportation costs. But some groups have come from the coastal towns of Madang and Lae, and even some from the outlying Bismark Archipelago. So they do not come for the money, but for the experience. I greet a doctor I had met in Madang; he had long practiced here and retired to New Zealand upon Independence. He tells me he had attended the first Mount Hagen Shows in the 1960s. I ask him how this one compares with the first ones. "Oh, it's much bigger now," he says.

Despite what the Parliamentarian said, there are indeed young men marching in the Show; the majority of the men are young. You watch them, holding on to archaic, but fearful weapons, chanting war chants the length of the day, and you think that this show, far from demonstrating the pacification of the highlands, celebrates a warrior culture, which continues in new dimensions in independent Papua New Guinea. In these marching groups of men without leaders zigzagging across other groups in the field, you see what warfare was to the highlands peoples, where battles were fought without leaders or strategies, each warrior darting and shooting his arrows where he could, exposed to volleys of arrows and spears, exposed not only to cunning and hostile humans but also to supernatural powers and the weapons of sorcery.

Battles where no territory was taken, nor women captured or wealth plundered. You are, despite all your ethics and your civilization, enthralled by the vision. You feel in your throbbing legs and arms the vulnerability and audacity of their bare legs and ballistic arms, not protected by camouflage and body armor but adorned with the most ostentatious plumage. The exultation of their battle cries and chants echoing across the mountains invades you and escalates in you. It is the fever and compulsion that in our civilization of computerized, robotized warfare and high-tech high-altitude surgical strikes, returns in the thousands of soldiers of fortune who go off to fight conflicts in Congo, in Sierra Leone, in Nigeria, the thousands of mercenaries in Iraq, conflicts in which they have no stake and for causes they do not believe in or understand; it is the fever and exultation of the commando with no army or nation behind them, their bodies driven by the pure force of their will, that crashed the jetliners into the command centers of the world's only superpower.

Here the tribal wars of today—the ragged young men defending with guns their drug smuggling, the bands of raskals holding up trucks on the roads, occasionally able to rob a foreign company manager or a tourist—give energy and passion to the spectacle of phalanxes of magnificently arrayed men holding ten-foot long lances, bows and arrows, and battle axes that are truly works of art. To the rages and triumphs of today are joined hopes and despairs, terrors and audacities, rages and triumphs from across thousands of years past. They are transfigured with a splendor that closes in upon itself and expands with its own logic.

These extravagant headdresses of plumes, these shell necklaces, these boars tusks and wigs were not only arrayed for war; they were donned for all the decisive events of the lives of individuals and community—for births, for initiations, for deaths, for the great pig feasts to which surrounding tribes, even enemy tribes, were invited. Traditionally, highlands young men did not have obligations to share in the work of building houses or work in the fields until they are married and set up their own household. Before marriage, young men have few interests in gardening, pig raising, payments or exchange; they spent their time in group festivities and displays.[12] All-night singing and courting parties were frequent; young women dress in their finery and invite young men who come unrecognizable in the extravagance of their facial painting and body decorations, singing long-rehearsed songs in the falsetto voices of birds. The Huli young men, wearing their red wigs decorated with flowers, their faces painted red and yellow, wearing the iridescent blue breast shield of the Superb Bird of Paradise over their bodies painted red, spent a year parading through the whole territory. They long to be like birds, fleet, brilliant, untamed. Today too one cannot wander in the highlands without coming upon groups gathering in splendor for such events. And some churches, especially the Catholic ones, now allow them.

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[12]Paula Brown, *Highland Peoples of New Guinea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 156.

In the Mount Hagen Show the highlands tribes assemble with all their different languages and cultures and conflicts and also with their past ordeals, combats, and triumphs and face the present and the uncertain and menacing future before them.

> Anyone who manages to experience the history of humanity as a whole as *his own history* will experience in an enormously generalized way all the grief of an invalid who thinks of health, of an old man who thinks of the dreams of his youth, of a lover deprived of his beloved, of the martyr whose ideal is perishing, of the hero on the evening after a battle that has decided nothing but brought him wounds and the loss of his friend. But if one endured, if one *could* endure this immense sum of grief of all kinds while yet being the hero who, as the second day of battle breaks, welcomes the dawn and his fortune, being a person whose horizon encompasses thousands of years past and future, being the heir of all the nobility of all past spirit—an heir with a sense of obligation, the most aristocratic of old nobles and at the same time the first of a new nobility—the like of which no age has yet seen or dreamed of; if one could burden one's soul with all of this—the oldest, the newest, losses, hopes, conquests, and the victories of humanity; if one could finally contain all this in one soul and crowd it into a single feeling—this would surely have to result in a happiness that humanity has not known so far: the happiness of a god full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness that, like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into the sea, feeling richest, as the sun does, when the poorest fisherman is rowing with golden oars! This godlike feeling would then be called—being human.[13]

This historical sense that Friedrich Nietzsche here invokes is not produced by an intellectual operation of constructing linguistic representations of the forms and meanings of past social structures, inventions, and conflicts; instead it is produced by a return of the passions that created them—the grief over suffering and mutilation and killing, over lost causes and defeats, over ideals one has betrayed, the courage that has endured all these, the hope that opens long-range horizons, the sense of honor that despises self-interest and cynicism. It is not the individual that willfully constructs these feelings in himself; the ancient passions themselves return.

Nietzsche's oldest and most fundamental source of his doctrine of the Eternal Return was his conviction that our emotions are not simply excited by the stimuli and cultural symbols at hand in our environment; they are transhistorical and animal in us and the most archaic emotions can return in the socialized modern man. It was the conviction that governed his first book: the conviction that he, and not the academic literary critics, understood the Greek tragedies because the passions of Aeschylus and Sophocles pounded in his heart. In the late nineteenth century of scientific, industrial, and mercantile Europe, he saw men and women in whom the instincts and passions of hunters and gatherers, of warriors, of sixth-century-BCE sages, and of Dark Ages saints return.

Nietzsche thinks that these ancient passions return in their full force when the representations a people now make of themselves no longer elicit them. Sigmund Freud found that when anxieties and cravings that date from some trauma or from infancy are brought to the light of consciousness, fixed in conscious representations, they lose their force to drive the individual. When those conscious representations

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[13]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), § 337.

fade out, or are lost in some traumatic event, then the old anxieties and cravings return. In Nietzsche's conception, when a people represents itself as wholly civilized, when its economy, political system, and ethics present only occasions for civilized behavior, here and there the old instincts of hunters and of warriors returns; when it represents its future as that of consumers in the global mercantilist economy that, here and there, the instincts of sages and of saints return. More profoundly, the instincts and emotions of our animality return. Behind instincts and emotions that are generated by culture Nietzsche found the wolf, cave bear, camel in us; Zarathustra's overman has the instincts of lion, serpent, and dove crowded in his soul.

Nietzsche sees in the specific historical sense acquired in collective performances the production of creativity, a creativity of splendor. In the crowded favelas of Rio full of immigrants from the Mato Grosso and from the Amazon, former slaves from Africa and wanderers from the old Inca provinces, invalids, old women, desperate lovers, martyrs of vanquished causes, defeated guerrillas, but also men and women who descend to the heart of the *cidade maravilhosa* and make it theirs, dressed in the garb of the old emperors and aristocrats but still more glamorous, full of nothing but alegria that pours out over the city and upon strangers from far-off lands—what is produced of splendor. The return of so many nonintegrated and conflicting passions, crowded together such that each intensifies the others, produces the discharge of excess forces, which are not channeled into economic or political projects but discharged without recompense, released gratuitously. It is this collective situation that is creative of splendor, for splendor is excessive and gratuitous.

The men and women marching, dancing, filling the air with cries and chants under Mount Hagen, are splendid with the nacreous shells of mollusks, the skeletons and fangs of serpents, the tusks of boars, the teeth of flying foxes, the plumes of birds. It is not humans who invented splendor. Everywhere humans have observed the dances of antelopes, sea lions, emperor penguins, ostriches, pheasants, butterflies, crabs, understood them in their own bodies, and taken them up—dancing crane dances, impala dances, oryx dances. "'O Zarathustra," the animals said, "to those who think as we do, all things themselves are dancing: they come and offer their hands and laugh and flee—and come back.'"[14] Since our brother apes do not sing, and indeed virtually no mammals sing, some anthropologists have speculated that we must have picked up song from birds. Charles Darwin separated natural selection for fitness from the sexual selection for splendor, and ornithologists today have experimentally verified that female peafowl, sage grouse, birds of paradise select for their sexual favors males that display with the most elaborate dances the most spectacular plumage, even though their ostentatious colors and entranced dances makes them easy prey for predators, and the males of these species contribute nothing to the nest building and guarding and nurturing tasks that ensure the reproduction of the species. Contemplating the spectacular plumage and 6-month-long

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[14]Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking, 1968), III, "The Convalescent," 2.

dances of the Malay Great Argus Pheasant, Darwin conceded that he could not find any functional meaning in these excesses of splendor.

We shall not define with one concept the splendor that glitters and resounds under Mount Hagen, in the liturgical processions in Byzantium and the high mass of Mediaeval cathedrals, in the Negara, the theater-state of old Bali, in Carnaval in Rio de Janeiro—in the plumage and dance of the Great Argus pheasant, in the sun's gold blended into the blue oceans, in the fisherman rowing with golden oars. But is not the drive creative of splendor nature in our nature? We are mesmerized by beauty as birds of paradise are mesmerized by their glittering plumes in their courtship dances; we create beauty as in the primordial ocean mollusks create the iridescent colors and intricate designs of their shells.

Part II
Critical Communities and Aesthetic
Subjects: Ethics, Politics, Action

Chapter 9
Community Beyond Instrumental Reason: The Idea of Donation in Deleuze and Lyotard

James Williams

> Passibility, as possibility of undergoing (*pathos*), presupposes a donation. If we are passible, it is because something happens to us, and when that possibility has a fundamental status donation is itself something fundamental, originary.[1]

> No less than a determination of signification, nonsense operates a donation of sense. But this is not at all in the same way. Since, from the point of view of sense, the regressive law no longer connects the names of different degrees to classes or to properties, but distributes them in heterogeneous series of events.[2]

9.1 "197.5"

It's your results: "197.5," written in a small box on the output from the doctor's printer. As the explanation begins, in the dispassionateness learned not from theories about objectivity but long experience of the mutual needs for distance and for the clarity of simple repetition, the number begins to take its place in longer series of meanings. Event turns into sensory effects. Effects coagulate into affects. Affects generate phantasms and images. We have come to expect more though – some of us, not all of us, and only very recently on any great scale. What will be done? How can the number become part of a chain that defuses its power to terrify and doom? How can the event be defused, rather than spread through our lives and over those we love and hate? Where is the cure? Images must become real.

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[1] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Quelque chose comme: "communication sans communication"' in *L'inhumain: causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), 119–130, esp. 121–122.

[2] Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), p. 87.

J. Williams (✉)
Philosophy, School of Humanities, Dundee University, Dundee, UK
e-mail: j.r.williams@dundee.ac.uk

So how could some philosophers in our hopeful scientific age call that small phrase, this fatal number, a donation? I do not want to be donated "197.5," give me "122.33". It's not a donation anyway. It's a curse, cruel revenge, fate, blind necessity, stupid chance, but not a gift, not a generous contribution to my lifecycle. Donation: the meaning of the word has become banal, in the way most of our words are now chained to dominant behaviours or scenes, snapshots from visual and aural media, rather than the products of a slower, more disciplined but perhaps also more free textual research. *I'll make a donation. Have you donated? Please donate now! Your gesture will make a difference! (It's also tax deductible…)* When Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard used the French word, *donation*, 20 years apart in the <u>Logic of Sense</u> and 'Something like "communication without communication"', in order to capture an important characteristic of events, perhaps even the essence of events, they not only relied on a different etymology than our young charitable meaning, but also took the word and bent it to different understandings of events. The stakes here then are not directly about the meaning of donation, but rather about whether events can properly be called donations, as opposed to facts, to meaningful information, or to 'particular things that happen to us'.

The scale of Deleuze and Lyotard's task can be measured against the tenacity and long tentacles of the current images. Today, a donation is from a subject: we give a donation. This giving is not symmetrical, though (something Deleuze and Lyotard understand very well and will make important use of). The modern charitable donation never goes to a subject. Who really wants to be the recipient of a donation? Who would not rather be in a possible world where the need for donation was absent, or where they were in the luxurious position of benefactor? The donation does not therefore go to a counter activity. It goes to a lack, or to a cause, or towards an image, or to a projection generated by the giving subject: *my good kind heart and their suffering; my conscience and those pictures with their unwanted power to haunt the most superficial levels of the unconscious, and shape deeper ones.* A donation is a gift, not the gift of legend implying authentic self-sacrifice, but the simulacrum of an offering, the holiday gift, the childhood bribe, the phantasm of boxed happiness, cleaned slate, unambiguous message. "With this broach I love you." "With these regular 72 florins, I express my humanity and make it universal." "With this 14 billion I change the world." A donation is good. Never good enough though, but relatively so; yet not wrong for all that, it is another of our modern accommodations with something like community without commonality, or community without equality. A donation is therefore always measurable and measured, weighed not for its absolute value ("I will always be your servant") but to set position within modern manners and self-analysis ("Is this enough?" "The tithe has always been more in this parish, of course if that's what you are comfortable with…" "Oh! You are too generous. No – it really is too much, really!" "I have worked hard in order to be able to give *and there lies my superior value and salvation*.")

This measurement or calculation and its relation to effectiveness and to objective facts, laid out before and after the act of giving, is one of the main worries behind

Deleuze's and Lyotard's work. The latter says it best in the title of his short article: 'Something like "communication without communication"…' Lyotard is discussing the possibility of art that does not depend on the communication of meaning and on the exchange of measurable goods and outcomes. He does not mean art without community. Rather, in a reading following Adorno, Kant and Heidegger,[3] Lyotard searches for a community presupposed by art when it interpolates, introduces a new event into the flow of phrases, and thereby connects, creating some kind of community, but without communicating a meaning or measured substance.[4] This community is a precondition for art as unmediated communication, where mediation must be understood as the presence of a representation in the transmission process of information. In the mediated art of representative communication, something is exchanged through the art-work – a message, a picture of an original, a perception, an experience, an affect, a monetary value, a concept. The event of art is therefore subsumed under the fact of that communication and the community called for by the artwork depends on 'getting' the communication. It is therefore a restricted community; some will 'connect', some will not, dependent on possession of the right meanings, feelings, prior experiences and interests (economic and libidinal). Communication in this representative form leads to a community of competing interests and calculations. According to Lyotard, in such a state art disappears. But is there ever a community dependent on the event as donation without measured or meaningful exchange?

9.1.1 La volonté du Ciel soit faite en toute chose

The original context of Lyotard's article was a conference on art and communication. His contribution, written in his ironic phase where a top-line message is undermined by subtle yet devastating counters, is a three-phase critique of the chosen topic. First, Lyotard makes the point that art has to be 'communication without communication' for otherwise it cannot differentiate itself from other modes of exchange, advertising or commentary. Second, Lyotard points out that in our postmodern age it has become much harder to achieve this communication without communication because the modes of art and its contexts have become largely conceptual. Not only is the artwork itself conceptual, where any material presence is mediated by a conceptual account, from the near-ubiquitous commentary label, *this work is an evocation of the fissure running through contemporary civilisation*, to the mass media and marketing demands on artists' lives, *tell us about your background and intentions – and the sex and desire – and then pose for the photo…* The work also depends on a conceptual environment for its transmission, commercial success, measure of value,

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[3] 'Quelque chose comme: "communication sans communication"' p. 119–122.
[4] Ibid. p. 120.

situation within society, and position as political. As communicators the works must enter a pre-existing flow of 'discourse' standing as a condition for their being as what is to be recognised as art. The artwork thereby bathes in conceptual mediation and one of Lyotard's questions is whether we can remove it from this discursive fluid yet keep it alive, that is, in a living relation with its community as resistant to mediated communication and representation.

Finally, Lyotard adds the most powerful ironic twist – indicated by the suspension points at the end of his title. There is nothing definite in this communication without communication; it is a question or a wager; itself a risky donation left hanging not only in his title but also the last lines of his text. In an era of electronic communication, of email and mobile phone, is there space for something like communication without communication?[5] Can those forms of communication achieve it: 'Can something *happen* through it? Can something happen to *it*?'[6] For Lyotard, the artwork does not presuppose a community of subjects based around shared meanings, a shared essence or properties, shared values, or even shared feelings. The presupposed community is determined by an inseparable dispossession and passibility, where the feeling of pathos is not a specific sensation that we could positively describe and value, but rather a negative state where we are shorn of meaning and direction. That's why he is interested in donation, not where we are subjects of the verb to donate, but where something is donated to us, something registers in our sense apparatus, but we know not what, 'something like communication without communication'. However, the fact that something arrives resistant to representation means that a community is created as the group of those capable of registering the arrival and the lack of set information. In registering this, the members of the community – in principle any being open to a combination of sensation and questioning – are obligated to the event. The sensation and questioning are that obligation.

In art we have a donation free of representation but not free of obligation. There is a remnant of this sense in our usage of the verb 'to donate', but it is one associated with everything tawdry about donation, where the donated to are supposedly obligated or beholden to those who give. *I would not want to be beholden… I'd rather die…* The subtlety of Lyotard's position is in its avoidance of an archaic, cap-doffing gratitude and debt, because nothing positive is demanded in the donation, it comes before exchange and active subjects, as a condition for any such representation or activity. There has to be a donation – an event, an arrival – before we can speak and act upon any happening thing.[7] The artwork in its materiality reveals the event prior to communication and thereby depends upon a community of those who can be donated to. Matter is therefore important for Lyotard as something that is given prior to signification. It is also important because in any communication there has to

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[5]Ibid., p. 127.

[6]Ibid., p. 129.

[7]Ibid., p 122.

be a material support – even in virtual media where sounds or colours are required to translate code into sensations.

The universality of the community addressed by this materiality is not empirical for Lyotard (nothing could be) but it is transcendental. The universal community is a condition for material communication. His argument goes through a series of steps that replicate the kind of transcendental deduction of community in his subsequent readings of Kant.[8] First, the community of those addressed must not have the contingent limitations of possession and capacity associated with meaning, because this would set signification as a prior condition for being addressed. Any member of the community must be able to register a difference beyond representation independent of their capacity to understand a meaning or assess an exchange. Second, in response to the question 'Why a community rather than a monadic individual or set of individuals?' those addressed must form a community through their obligation to the donation or event. It is a community of obligation but not of specific answers to that obligation. 'Why is this community in principle universal? If we accept that any communication depends on a material donation prior to signification, then, independent of whether those addressed acknowledge the donation, they must have been donated to if they are addressed in any way. The only restriction on the community is that its members must be capable of being donated to. Lyotard's argument is that underlying all communication there is a material event and, because this event is not itself significant, it is an invitation to decipher or respond to a donation that cannot be satisfactorily responded to. Any communication conceals a failure to communicate as its condition. This failure determines a universal community.

The original meaning of the French term *donation* is legal, signifying a gift without preconditions or a free gift (gratuitous, in its first non-pejorative sense). The Littré dictionary cites Molière's use in Tartuffe (Act 3 Scene 7) where the hypocritical manoeuvres of Tartuffe over his master, Orgon, come close to attaining their final goal in Orgon's donation of all his worldly goods to Tartuffe, the scheming false-zealot. Molière is then more of a cynic than Lyotard: the donation has been manufactured and is part of a struggle over wealth and influence (Tartuffe has just feinted to leave Orgon's family to save Orgon's relation with his wife who he also desires). For the playwright, donation is never unconditional and the sign of ever-present calculation is Tartuffe's duplicity in a smarmy thanks to a God he does not believe in, the guarantor of the unconditional, and a conspiratorial wink to powers he does give allegiance to, human gullibility and his own greed and their place in the operations of instrumental reason: '*La volonté du Ciel soit faite en toute chose*.'[9] Is Molière closer to the truth here than Lyotard? There are no free donations and everything is calculation and rational distribution? There is no

[8]Jean-François Lyotard, *Leçons sur l'analytique du sublime* (Paris: Galilée, 1991).
[9]Molière, *Le Tartuffe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999) acte 3, scène 7.

otherworldly power that can guarantee a free act? Even in law, a donation can always be rescinded? *He was not in his right mind, your honour.*

Lyotard's answer is a threefold challenge. First, he writes to convey the arrival of an event free of representation and therefore to show how communication can occur without having to be the communication of meaning or information. This writing is critical in showing the limits of representation; it shows what is missed if life is only communication taken as representation. When a determined fact, whether calculable or interpretable, is represented we miss the ethical and political import of differences we should be obligated to testify to rather than reduce to identities. Lyotard's writing is creative in fragmenting ideas and genres, thereby making disjointed spaces and times for experiences of events through ironic overlapping of inconsistent ideas and sensations. This disjointedness is designed to make way for the material side of any event, where matter is distinct from message. Many of his essays collected in The Inhuman therefore focus on the difficult task of forging times and spaces that are not those of unifying representation, that is, forms of space and time that contain representations and organise them into coherent order according to series of ideas (such as progress towards ideas such as the good or scalar increases in important measures such as profit, productivity or growth). The collection and its title are therefore misunderstood if taken as advocating inhumanity in the sense of an ethical value. The point is instead to reveal the role of instrumental reason, teleology and representation in the concept of the human. It is also to advocate forms of ethical community free of the demands and consequences of representation and measured equivalences and exchanges. If to be human is to follow an unconditional ethic, beyond even the Kantian test of universalisability, then Lyotard's inhuman is still humanist.

Second, according to Lyotard, events necessarily register initially through passivity by stunning us and forcing us into series of tentative questions. To follow these events is necessary; to follow them in a way that does justice to the form of donation is an obligation. The challenge is then how to respond and find new ways of testifying to the events and to the differences they gesture to. If we are to be true to the events that happen to us, we must not bury them under final representations and subsequent communications of information.

So, third, this is not to say that there must be no representative communication, but any claim for the sufficiency of the communication of meaning must be resisted. This resistance takes the form of an extension of the donation found in art into any phrase, at least as a possibility. There has to be an event in any representation and the challenge is to draw this out and thereby to draw out the ethical and political stakes underlying 'mere' communication. The obligation resulting from donation is then to sense and then to struggle to testify to the multiple and irreducibly different stakes in any event. The necessity of donation is that we cannot escape having to follow the donation. Donation is not therefore to be simply passive to events, but rather to be passive to the sensation that any given model of what the event means, of its value and future path, is necessarily insufficient and in a struggle with different models, despite the fact that following the event is necessary. This combination

of necessity and obligation allows Lyotard to claim that we can never have done with donation or with differends (the irreducibly multiple and agonistic side to any event). To follow is not an obligation, but to testify is.[10]

9.2   Points, Lines and Process

This essay started on the doctor's couch. Lyotard's prescription as outlined above can seem perverse and unsatisfactory when viewed from the urgency conveyed by a portentous number and a poor prognostic. His point though has never been to turn away from the message, context and rational understanding of any given phrase. It is rather that in addition to these are the many tracks competing for the legacy of the phrase. We also have to be aware that the phrase – even the diagnostic number – does not allow for a resolution of this competition. That's why it is a donation. Of course we should seek cures. The point is not to conceal the struggling pressures at work in any given choice, whether this be in terms of social equity, existential choices, balances of pain and longevity, awareness of our strength and fears and – above all – the differences these carry with them in our relations to others (*In the end it's my decision! – No it is not…*) Simply stated, Lyotard appeals to the obligation conveyed with the donation of an event in order to insist upon the political and ethical responsibility following on from any phrase. This appeal is a resistance to the way in which communication as representation tends towards the hegemony of a particular set of values.

It is a mistake to think that Lyotard's description of the event as a donation is incoherent, nihilistic or lacking in guidance for activity. It is reasonable to indicate the limits of instrumental reason. There is no nihilism or implied passivity in defending the obligation to difference and to insoluble conflict in the event, since part of that obligation is still to do something. In earlier writing, I criticised this work on the event for the nihilism implied by the lack of specific structures for activity to take place.[11] I now realise that the demand to testify has some such structures through the multiplication of genres and the effort to write forms of communication resistant to communication (as representation). This point is made forcefully and with great precision by Maria Prodromou in her thesis Writing, Event, Resistance.[12] Nonetheless, these structures are thin and dominated by aesthetic considerations. Perhaps though these are not necessary limitations and we can see a possible extension of Lyotard's use of donation in Deleuze's earlier use of the term in relation to the event. The problem with an aesthetic approach to the event lies in the line/interruption model it depends upon.

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[10] *Le différend,* p. 260.

[11] James Williams, *Lyotard and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), 133–134.

[12] Maria Prodromou, "Writing, Event, Resistance" (PhD thesis, University of Essex, 2008).

For Lyotard the event breaks a concatenation of phrases, flow of images, train of conceptual understanding, cycle of exchange, or indeed combinations of all of these linear developments.[13] Thus when he uses the term donation it is associated with a stop combined with a remnant of forward momentum. The silent actor teeters over the precipice shocked into a halt by its sudden appearance yet still shakily propelled towards the void. Whether before the paintings of Barnett Newman or in the ingression of a misplaced phrase, the sublime event in Lyotard combines this external ambiguous trigger and an internal sensual conflict: rupture and invitation; lack and desire; terror and pleasure; obligation and absence of rule.[14] The pragmatic effect of this structure is the concern to act in a state where no rules exist as to how to act. This lack invites the accusation of nihilism, but can be countered by the response that there is an invitation to create such rules in writing after the event. The fact that no rules exist does not mean that we cannot act.

However, the resulting line/interruption/creation model still seems to narrow down real situations. Life is rarely determined by all encompassing events, such as a transforming shock. It is not that such events do not occur (Lyotard is right to remind us of such devastating yet obligating events in his work on Auschwitz). It is rather that life is not always like this. So it could be that the form of any event depends on a more complicated and less linear background. Sublime events, on a grand scale, do occur but they do so within ongoing lines that can be pushed into the background yet continue. As you leave the doctor's office ordinary life continues, changed for sure, but not in a uniform manner and not such that the event can be taken as the key either to understanding its broad context, or even its own status as sublime interruption. The problem is therefore that in the paradoxical interruption put forward by Lyotard nothing is communicated other than a necessity to begin communication anew and an obligation to be faithful to the sublime event. His account of donation is extreme in repudiating that there is anything at all donated. This extremism has the strength of resisting the return of utility and restricted signification in communication (that it is about outcomes and particular transfers of meaning) yet it has weakness in setting out a narrow and implausible model for how the many lines of communication and creative thought take form around and through events. Real events are multiple and complex, as are real sentiments, they are neither linear nor defined according to dualistic opposition such as terror and pleasure, or repulsion and attraction around a single occurrence.

In Logic of Sense, Deleuze studies the relation of events to language and instead of situating the event as a break in a concatenation of sentences he extends the event as a process along multiple lines themselves divided into four linguistic forms: denotation (or reference), signification (or meaning), manifestation (or utterance) and sense (not meaning, but intensity).[15] An event therefore changes from the model

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[13] *Le différend*, p. 103.

[14] See L'instant, Newman' in *L'inhumain,* pp. 89–100.

[15] *Logique du sens*, pp. 22–35.

of a line punctuated by breaks to a process that travels along a series back and forward in time. The event therefore resonates, rather than interrupts. It creates interferences and disjunctions, rather than cuts and new beginnings. For instance, the mark on the note handed to you by the doctor has a well-defined denotation and this allows the note to refer to ulterior and future denotable things (your past body and future one, for example). Yet this denotation is incomplete unless it is accompanied by a signification, something that adds meaning to the denoted things (dying, suffering, growing). Without the signification the denotation is mere neutral fact. Again, this meaning travels back and forward along series (you thought you were dying, but you were not; you thought you had this future and it became that one). Yet this meaning is itself incomplete unless it is situated with respect to what manifests it. Without such manifestation we cannot judge the truth and falsity of the connection of denoted thing and signification. The manifestation gives the here, now and who which transform a statement such as 'a body has this property' to '*this* body has this property', or 'I love you' to '*I* love you'. Finally, neither denotation, nor signification, nor manifestation have any value unless they are associated with a sense, that is, a felt and expressed intensity turning brute fact into individuated significance, shared meaning into a singular effect, and manifestation by a well-determined individual into a process of becoming.

Deleuze calls this process 'the circle of the proposition.' It is movement from denotation, to signification, to manifestation and back to denotation via the role of sense. In other words, language is generated by the search for value and significance defined as the production of sense (as opposed to signification). The event works as sense unlocks paradoxes in language and its relation to the world: What is denotation without meaning? What is meaning without who and where that meaning is for? What is that location and identity without value? How can there be genuine value, if not through the transformation of those identities? The astonishing inventiveness of Deleuze's study of language in relation to the event lies not only in the claim that the paradoxes are what allows language to work without being reduced to the priority of one or other of its components, strictly to denoted facts, or to manifested intentions, for instance. The brilliance is also in the generating role of sense, that is, in the claim that the world referred to, the meanings about it and the individuals arise out of the production of sense and value, out of the intensities occurring in the world. Moreover, these values are themselves incomplete unless they are expressed in the world. The figure "197.5" is only complete when it is associated with a meaning, itself associated with an individual (or series of individuals), where all of these require the intensity of a value that transforms each one forward and back in time, or along series – since Deleuze claims that time is constituted by events, rather than events occurring in a pre-given time. An event is a transformation generated by the expression of a change in intensity.

So why does Deleuze use the term donation in the passage quoted in exergue? How can he respond to a critique based on Lyotard's intuitions that the event must somehow be beyond representation and exchange, if Deleuze's processes can be charted and evaluated? The answer is that sense is a donation for Deleuze. The process of generation cannot be represented, traced or repeated and, instead, sense and

the other components of the proposition are involved in asymmetrical processes where they determine one another but are neither reversible nor subject to rules and functions allowing for inductive moves or secure predictions.[16] That's why his work in <u>Logic of Sense</u> is so dependent on paradoxes to ensure that no logic comes to flatten denotation onto signification, or sense on to manifestation. This means that despite its character as process the event is still a donation in Lyotard's usage as resistant to interpretation and free of transcendent rules. The challenge for both thinkers is how a singular event is to be worked with or replayed in the absence of rules. Yet, for Deleuze, there is much more precise material to work on forward and back in time in terms of the structures that are transformed by the event. We are not hit by a wall that stops time and disrupts space, but rather by a series of waves or folds travelling through us, initiating transformations and demanding creative solutions. These will necessarily be creative in the radical sense of having to create themselves without external guidance and with the demand for genuine novelty (a thoroughgoing and detailed transformation of a world).

There is hence great closeness between Lyotard and Deleuze in their use of the concept of donation, because for both a donation is beyond meaning and beyond exchange. The discussions of language in <u>Le différend</u> and <u>Logique du sens</u> have many fascinating parallels, extending from the critique of the dominance of reference, through the importance of paradox for understanding how language works, on to the search for a domain of language beyond reference and meaning. For Deleuze, the donation of sense or value occurs through nonsense, an occurrence that registers, setting off puzzles and thereby having an effect, but where this effect resists incorporation into preset meanings, or forms for the reception of facts. Nonsense though is not rare; it a potential for any phrase, where its utterance has the effect of disruption and transformation (*It's a girl!* But it has to be a boy. *You failed.* I cannot afford to fail. *Never speak to me like that again.* Life is nothing without you. *I cannot believe anymore.* What is my life without belief?) For Lyotard, the donation occurs whenever a phrase resists the incorporation into genres such as a given account of the proper form of knowledge in its relation to progress, or a given discourse on the form and value of art. The difference between the two philosophies is therefore in the detailed effect of donation, rather than its essential form as disruptive, obligating and inviting creative responses. This leaves two pressing questions: What is at stake in these remaining differences? Are these differences so great as to mean we have to choose between the two models, or is at matter of inflexion and appropriateness for different situations, where Lyotard is the thinker better adapted to the reception of Newman's paintings, Kant's sublime and Adorno's aesthetic theory, but where Deleuze allows for a more intricate and open response to the relations between Bacon's figures and triptychs, Nietzsche and Foucault's genealogies and Hume's account of the role of repetition and the inventiveness of the imagination in habit and the passions?

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 217–218, 226–227.

9.3   Withdrawal and Donation

> The question of the sublime is tightly linked in some way to what Heidegger calls the withdrawal of Being, the withdrawal of donation. The welcome paid to the sensible, that is, to sense embodied in the here-and-now before any concept would no longer have place and moment. This withdrawal would signify our current destiny.[17]

Lyotard follows Heidegger up to the withdrawal in donation: any phrase is a withdrawal even when it is also a communication of meaning and the basis for an exchange. Even a phrase as simple as a command such as "Do your duty" is a withdrawal. In setting out an exchange of rights and responsibilities, of relations of belonging to a community and exclusion, of acts sanctioned and forbidden, of rewards and punishments, the phrase also invites questions about the justice of these rights, rewards and punishments, of the limits of community; the clashes occurring at those limits; and within any given community (which is never homogeneous.) These questions and our desire to answer them have no intrinsic limits and there are no rules as to their propriety or for determining the number or value of any questions. Questioning comes after a donation and can never determine it; on the contrary, that the questions remain undetermined depends on the donation defined as a withdrawal rather than a giving of any well-determined thing. For Lyotard the phrase can never simply command obedience and to give or receive it as such is to ignore what withdraws in the phrase as it is uttered and received. This ambiguity and openness of the phrase in all its linguistic relations (reference, meaning, manifestation and sense) is however not a fate for Lyotard, and this is where he departs from Heidegger. It is instead a political problem and state of affairs. We have to respond to the tension between what we can understand in the phrase, but also to what is beyond knowledge and understanding and therefore calling for new responses – ones that neither pretend that withdrawal is an inevitable fate, nor an eliminable passing phase.

Withdrawal is a translation of the French word *retrait*, or retreat. It can seem that if we think of donation as retreat we are ceding too much to ideas of abandonment and cessation, when action is called for and failure to act is a betrayal of life, desire and community. A joint reading of Lyotard and Deleuze's versions of donation allows the idea to move away from any association with retreat. Withdrawal becomes part of a creative and affirmative process. For Deleuze donation is dual: a withdrawal of sense and a donation of sense according to a division in structures between a placeless occupant signified by our questions and the intensities that fire them, and an empty space signified by our efforts to identify novel solutions to recurrent problems.[18] The occupant and the space run back and forward along parallel but separate series; each series is incomplete without the other, but whenever one is referred to the other it commences a disjunction within it. The new question splits answers to

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[17] 'Quelque chose comme: "communication sans communication",' p. 124.

[18] *Logique du sens*, pp. 54–56.

old ones and those answers transform old questions and demand new ones. Placeless occupant and empty place never finally coincide because they belong to asymmetrical processes and series; as the question finds an answer it changes into a new question, or, in Lyotard's terminology, each new phrase is itself an event and a donation. Everything is in the creative search, which is politically active but never secure, nor finished, nor satisfied. The event is always a donation, but this donation does give something: a problem.[19] The problem generates a creative search for its solutions. It also sunders those solutions and demands new ones. Lyotard's work defines phrases such that they are singularities as defined by Deleuze and, in turn, Deleuze defines events as problems determined by these singularities. A donation is then the gift of a problem, not an insoluble puzzle, but the genesis of series of temporary solutions invited to affirm multiplicity and impermanence.

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[19] Ibid., pp. 68–69.

Chapter 10
The Political Horizon of Merleau-Ponty's Ontology

To Tony O'Connor, in memory of Martin C. Dillon*

Duane H. Davis

> *Ange, plein de gaeité, connaissez-vous l'angoisse,*
> *La hante, les remords, les sanglots, les ennuis,*
> *Et les vague terreurs de ces affreuses nuits,*
> *Qui compriment la coeur comme un papier qu'on froisse?*
> *Ange, plein de gaeité, connaissez-vous l'angoisse?[1]*

Certainly, Merleau-Ponty was no angel, despite the conflicting testimony you may have heard from Sartre. In his 100-plus page eulogy of Merleau-Ponty, Sartre said

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*I dedicate this essay to my friend and colleague Tony O'Connor. From an outsider's perspective, Tony has done more than anyone to animate the venerable *British Society for Phenomenology* by painstakingly calling for dialogue between orthodox phenomenology (if indeed there is such a thing) and more contemporary Continental work. And please note that it is not the sort of stultifying dialogue of compromise and "meet in the middle" that I have in mind here. His spirit of friendship complements his infectious passion for philosophical argument. I am forever indebted to Tony for opening my eyes to new possibilities in the work of Michel Foucault. I salute Tony's generosity and dedication to philosophy and to his friends. I am proud to contribute this essay to this volume in his honor.

One very important mutual friend of ours was Martin C. Dillon, who died in spring 2005. I shall always cherish the memories with Tony of feasting and spirited conversation long into the night at the Dillons' house. The memories are as sweet as the loss is painful.

[1] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, "*Réversibilité*," (Paris: Garnier-Flannarion, 1964), 69.

> Angel full of happiness, do you know the anguish,
> The shame, the remorse, the sobs the ennui,
> And the vague terrors of these frightful nights
> That compress the heart like a paper one wads up?
> Angel full of happiness, do you know the anguish?
> [All translations are mine unless noted.]

D.H. Davis (✉)
Professor of Philosophy, The University of North Carolina, Asheville

Distinguished Scholar in Residence [Visiting Research Professor of Philosophy],
Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná Curitiba, Brasil
e-mail: ddavis@unca.edu

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that his contemporary's philosophy was hopelessly optimistic and insufficiently radical because he, Merleau-Ponty, "had never recovered from an incomparable childhood."[2] But Merleau-Ponty's ontology is not a warm existential hug, a nostalgic return to mother, a naively optimistic account of a unifying ideal Being, nor a pure foundation of any kind. Instead, it is my conviction that Merleau-Ponty's ontology is an account of an existence fraught with anguish,[3] remorse, dread, conflict, an existence where there be monsters. Without lapsing into a pessimistic "*l'enfer, c'est les autres*"[4] cartoon agon, where "each consciousness wills the death of the other,"[5] Merleau-Ponty nonetheless portrays an *unstable* existence, which we actively destabilize and disturb just by being together; and there is both promise and peril in this instability.

Here, by demonstrating the means, the motive, and the opportunity, I want to establish that Merleau-Ponty is "guilty" of crafting a compromised, contingent account of Being. (It will not be beyond the shadow of a doubt, but within it.) That is, contrary to the commonplace view initiated by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty's later work is not innocent or naïvely optimistic, nor does it eschew politics. Of course, Merleau-Ponty's ontology did not emerge in a vacuum. I will argue that his account of Being is best understood when we attend to its provenance, that is, when we situate it within the continuous development of his thought over his career. More specifically, we need to call attention to the *political* horizon of this ontology as it emerged in Merleau-Ponty's thought; this has received insufficient attention in secondary literature.

10.1   Means

Each of us was trying to understand the world insofar as he could, and with the access at his disposal. And we had the same *means*—then called Husserl and Heidegger—since we were similarly disposed.[6]

To begin, let us briefly assess Merleau-Ponty's existential-phenomenological approach. This will show *how* he came to develop his situated ontology. I will

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[2] Jean-Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, *Situations*, trans. B. Eisler (Braziller: New York, 1965), 228.

[3] Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and F. Alqui, eds., *Les Philosophes Célèbres* (Paris: Mazenod, 1956), 250–251; "*La découverte de l'histoire*," where Merleau-Ponty concludes that the structure of history is anguish. [Cf. also my translation: *Man and World* 25, no. 2 (April 1992):203–209]. Here I translated the aforementioned piece as well as "*Les fondateurs*." These short pieces were introductory blurbs that Merleau-Ponty wrote for the sections of the anthology he and Alqui edited together. He gathered all of the introductory blurbs—save these two—and published the rest as the essay "Everywhere and Nowhere," which appeared in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 203–258.

[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, "No Exit," in *No Exit and Three other Plays*, trans. S. Gilbert (New York: Vintage, 1989), 45.

[5] Simone de Beauvoir, *L'Invitée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 8 [quoting Hegel].

[6] Sartre, Merleau-Ponty (*op. cit.*), p. 228.

provide an indirect description, in keeping with Merleau-Ponty's *modus operandi*. Thus, I will proceed by considering four philosophical approaches, or means, each of which Merleau-Ponty rejects while allowing it to partially inform his own position.

First, Merleau-Ponty rejects any straightforward idealism ("*spiritualisme*") that maintains that the truth of the world is strictly a product of the human intellect. He rejects this position without trivializing it, but by pushing it as far as it can go toward accounting for our existence in the world. The promise of idealism, for Merleau-Ponty, is that it captures the activity we undertake in perceiving our world literally as we make sense of it. And Merleau-Ponty worked with this means of accounting for our labor of living until he drew his last breath—collapsing while reading Descartes in May of 1961. Nonetheless, idealism forsakes lived experience; and we do not seem to have direct, immediate access to the ideals through consciousness, as idealists of various sorts maintained.

Second, Merleau-Ponty rejects the straightforward empiricism ("*mechanisme*") that accounts for our sentient experience by explaining it away as a mechanical by-product or epiphenomenon. Once again, Merleau-Ponty tarries alongside empiricism throughout his career—from his youthful interest in psychophysics and psychological research in perception to his emphasis upon the bodily comportment of the artist and the materiality of painting in his last published work, *l'Oeil et l'Esprit*. Nonetheless, there is something more to life than the *partes extra partes* means of accounting for our existence in the world as "one damned thing after another." I do not seem to have immediate access to empirical truths. Life is situated empirically but is not reducible to empirical objectivity.

Third, Merleau-Ponty empirically rejects the brilliant innovation of transcendental idealism, which emerged from a productive tension between the aforementioned dogmatic idealism and dogmatic empiricism. This critical alternative safeguards the truth of Being in universal *a priori* conditions for the possibility of experience, and regards the self that dwells in the muck and mire of contingent experience with great suspicion. However, while a transcendental foundation for the truths of experience remedies the skepticism that one naturally adopts upon recognition of the contingency of experience, it does so a little *too* well, and lapses into a new form of idealism. Perhaps Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that a transcendental turn is the essence of the future of philosophy itself; but transcendental reflection cannot lay claim to truths that are pure. The magic of synthetic *a priori* judgments casts too powerful a spell upon a problem that Merleau-Ponty desperately wants to own up to: how to envision ideals and truths in the context of our mundane existence; in short, how we share a world that matters to us.

Finally, Merleau-Ponty rejects (*transforms!*) traditional Husserlian phenomenology. This, from a starting point of embracing the fundamental insight that consciousness is *intentional*, an insight that implies that consciousness had previously been too narrowly defined; consciousness, properly re-defined, is "consciousness *of* something." The first sentence of Merleau-Ponty's first book indicates that his research plan, which he carried out for the rest of his life, was precisely to pursue this insight: he states that he is investigating "the relations between consciousness

and nature—organic, psychological, or even social."[7] True to his word, during the first part of his career, Merleau-Ponty focused on a radical reconfiguration of consciousness, stressing an *embodied* consciousness. And the last part of his career can be seen as a radical reconfiguration of nature, as we shall see later in this essay.[8] Taken as a whole, then, Merleau-Ponty's life's work, his phenomenology of perception (the project), placed a new emphasis upon embodied consciousness, and called for a *bodily intentionality*; the body is situated within its world, conforming to a world that it shapes through its actions.

Thus, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is a departure from his predecessors'. He recognized within traditional phenomenology aspects of the idealism it was designed to overcome. Traditional phenomenology purported to approach phenomena through the *epochē*, or bracketing, of any theoretical and natural presuppositions. This led to a *reduction* of the phenomenon to its *essence*, with necessary and certain knowledge still as the expectation or goal. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty famously states that, while the traditional phenomenological approach was generally right-minded, "the greatest teaching of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction."[9] Thus, apodictic knowledge, the promise of traditional phenomenology, is compromised in Merleau-Ponty's approach, which determines rather to "put essences back into existence."[10] Historically, of course, only God's essence is said to entail its own existence. So there is something vaguely heretical about the project of so closely relating the two terms in human experience.

Most often, Merleau-Ponty's reinsertion of essences into existence is read as a corrective response to Husserl's traditional phenomenology. And surely, an important aspect of its contex is precisely that Husserl's phenomenology, in spite of its own avowed goal, demonstrates its relevance in its failure, that is, when we realize the inexhaustibility of the project. However, Merleau-Ponty's move can also be seen as an anticipatory response to Sartre's slogan that our "existence precedes our essence,"[11] for putting essences back into existence renders them contingent. Sartre's overstated claim that there *is* no essence to our existence, that we are essentially nothing at all, is more accurately stated as the claim that our lives are *indeterminate*.

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[7] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La Structure du comportement* (Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1990), 1.

[8] But cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La Nature* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995), 263: "For us, it is *not* a question of a theory of consciousness of nature…." This is consistent with various critiques of a philosophy of consciousness in the working notes to *Le Visible et l'invisible*. However, although Merleau-Ponty seemed to critically recast his own earlier work in *Phénoménologie de la perception* in this light, most of Merleau-Ponty's early work on consciousness is, contrary to his own account, consistent with the explicitly ontological reflections of his later work. His inquiry into consciousness was always very radical and ineluctably situated in the pre-personal. Cf. also *La Nature* (op. cit.), p. 267, when Merleau-Ponty calls for "a rapport of the nature in us with the nature beyond us."

[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), viii.

[10] *Ibid.*, 10.

[11] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kauffman (New York: Meridian, 1975), 348.

(That is surely what he meant by describing our lives as *projects*; but a book entitled *Being and Indeterminacy* would never sell!) Indeterminacy must be seen here in an *ontological* sense, and not only in an *epistemological* sense. That is, it is not only that we are uncertain about our existence, but that our existential state is indeterminate, or, as Merleau-Ponty sometimes preferred, *ambiguous*. The discrete moments of our lives *are* determinate indeterminacy. Thus, Merleau-Ponty "puts essences back into existence," rather than denying them altogether.

Merleau-Ponty developed a unique transformation of phenomenology, by: (1) situating consciousness in the body; (2) compromising the aim of the phenomenological reduction; and (3) firmly calling attention to the world in which we live by grounding the essences of phenomena within existence. These aspects of his existential phenomenology were the *means* at his disposal, by which he later developed a situated ontology that is mired in impurity and contingency. Having established the *means*, let us now turn our attention to the *motive* presented to Merleau-Ponty.

10.2   Motive

> Until now, we only silenced the collaborators and the objectionable nationals…. You tell me about your friendship…. How can you, if not condescendingly, speak about friendship when you are putting an end to this work?[12]

Next, we shall examine how Merleau-Ponty, using the existential phenomenological means at his disposal, was motivated to develop a situated ontology by his *political* reflections—most especially by his disassociation from his long-time ally and friend, Jean-Paul Sartre.

An exchange of letters, written between Merleau-Ponty and Sartre during 1953, was discovered and published in the mid-1990s, in which each expresses his opposition to the other. The controversy was ignited by Sartre's insistence that Merleau-Ponty should not publish in their journal an article he had written that was highly critical of Sartre's political and philosophical position. This article was most likely a version of the chapter of *Adventures of the Dialectic* that bears the title, "Sartre and Ultra-Bolshevism."[13] Merleau-Ponty draws a connection between the dualistic ontology of Sartre's early work and Sartre's political position, specifically as it is articulated in *The Communists and the Peace*. Merleau-Ponty presents Sartre's position as the latest adventure of the dialectic, as defining the dialectical

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[12] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Letters of the Break-up*, trans. B. Belay and, ed. Duane H. Davis, *Merleau-Ponty's Later Works and Their Practical Implications* (Amherst: Humanity Books, Prometheus Press, 2001), 49.

[13] Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. J. Bien (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 95–201. There is some uncertainty about what the piece was that Merleau-Ponty sent in to *Les Temps Modernes*. Also, Merleau-Ponty mentions another essay to follow along later. Claude Lefort could not remember exactly which essay was rejected when I asked him about this in 2003.

quest for freedom in the ontological terms of *Being and Nothingness*, and squarely addresses Sartre's political philosophy as a new stage of development of the Marxist dialectic. This, in Merleau-Ponty's view, has indeed transcended the mediating problems of: (1) Weber's "politics of understanding"; (2) Lukács' reconstrual of this critical engagement as a *subjective* engagement; (3) Lenin's corrective realism; and (4) Trotsky's idealism.[14] Merleau-Ponty portrays Sartre as transcending Bolshevism, yes, but only to introduce an "Ultrabolshevism" through his reduction of Marxism to existentialism, where the agency of the proletariat is defined as an absolute negation, and solidarity is reduced to a cult of personality. Despite this, and to compound Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Sartre, for Sartre philosophical critique remains external; this why he refused to join the Communist Party and assumed the role some French Marxists perceived to be one of the sympathetic spectator posing as an activist. (For Sartre, it seems that there was a *spectator* haunting Europe…)

When Merleau-Ponty submitted his article to *Les Temps Modernes*, Sartre censored it. Merleau-Ponty resigned his position of co-editor. Their opposition is expressed passionately in the three letters of 1953. The first, from Sartre, informs Merleau-Ponty that the article will not be able to be published in their journal, since publishing it would, in effect, be counter-revolutionary. Sartre writes that Merleau-Ponty should not take this personally, and that they will always, of course, be friends. In the long second letter, Merleau-Ponty, who has resigned his position as co-editor, states explicitly that the logic by which Sartre justifies the suppression of the article is an example of what is wrong with his political position in general, and that Sartre can only speak of friendship in condescension, as he has silenced Merleau-Ponty's voice. This letter of Merleau-Ponty's is really a valuable document, insofar as it allows Merleau-Ponty the opportunity to take a philosophical stance on the importance of critical political expression; furthermore, it shows Merleau-Ponty *putting into practice* his philosophical position. The third letter is Sartre's terse response. Sartre reiterates his accusation, his rationale for censorship, and his hope for their friendship. After the exchange of these letters, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty rarely spoke except at conferences and public lectures. Perhaps it was the fact that they never reconciled their differences that moved Sartre to write a scathing and spiteful 100-page obituary for his former friend after Merleau-Ponty's death in 1961. This might be seen as a sublimated anguish…[15]

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[14] Whether any of these stages of dialectical development accurately represent the positions of the individuals Merleau-Ponty names is a matter of great contention. I do not think that this discounts Merleau-Ponty's position, so long as one keeps in mind his penchant for using creative readings of his interlocutors as dialectical mediations. His analyses are brilliant; but I would not look to Merleau-Ponty as a paragon of hermeneutic fidelity.

[15] It is important to note that Albert Rabil stated long ago that Merleau-Ponty and Sartre later reached a "partial rapprochement." Rabil, who could not have had access to these letters in 1967, speculates that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty "put aside their intellectual differences" in 1958 to rekindle their friendship. Admittedly, Rabil notes that Sartre is surely overly optimistic—even downright revisionistic—in his reflections about the friendship after Merleau-Ponty's death; nonetheless, I think Rabil still relies too much on Sartre's reflections in his own account of the relationship.

It is telling that Sartre retrospectively described his entire friendship with Merleau-Ponty as a "quarrel which never took place."[16] In an interview with Simone de Beauvoir, Sartre claims that Merleau-Ponty never was much of a friend, that they never were comfortable with one another.[17] And in his long eulogy for Merleau-Ponty, he is obviously still troubled by their relationship. At any rate, the passionate tone of the 1953 letters reveals the degree of anger both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty were experiencing. This shows that both in some sense regarded the betrayal of their friendship to be intolerable. O, my friends, there is no friend. But, as interesting as this may be, their conceptions of friendship are not our principal topic here. What is relevant here is that we see the way in which this split with Sartre motivated Merleau-Ponty to develop his situated ontology. Let us look more closely, then, at the exchange of letters.

Merleau-Ponty explicitly states to Sartre, "I am no angel."[18] By this, he tries to respond to Sartre's charges that he has withdrawn from the practical world of politics to some sort of pure philosophical reflection. Sartre, in his first letter of the exchange, castigates Merleau-Ponty for absenting himself from taking political positions and for offering a philosophical perspective that Sartre thought was intended to do more than justify Merleau-Ponty's disengagement. According to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty's philosophical justification issued a nihilistic universal imperative for *all* people to disengage; he writes: "you remove yourself from politics…, you prefer to dedicate yourself to your philosophical research…"[19]

Rabil is not entirely accurate in his speculation that it was the somewhat friendly exchange at a 1958 conference that occasioned their partial rapprochement. There *was* a partial rapprochement, but the first steps toward that took place at a colloquium at the *École normale supérieure*. Alain Badiou, who was a student there at the time, and quite close to Jean Hyppolite, the Director of the Philosophy Program, told me that Hyppolite probably wanted to see Merleau-Ponty and Sartre mend their relationship. Badiou suggested to Hyppolite that he invite Sartre—the notorious anti-academic—to speak at the *École normale*. Hyppolite offered the invitation, and Sartre accepted. Perhaps Hyppolite privately suggested to Merleau-Ponty that he should attend. According to Badiou, no one knew that Merleau-Ponty was coming, especially Sartre. Apparently Sartre was moved by Merleau-Ponty's unexpectedly conciliatory gesture. So Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Hyppolite, Badiou, and one or two others, went to a café where the crucial conversation took place. According to Badiou, it was clear that they had not spoken except in the most formal ways since the 1953 break-up. And, after a long conversation, they parted—not as friends, as Rabil suggests—but at least with a newfound tolerance and renewed respect for one another. Mme. Merleau-Ponty confirmed this story when I spoke with her in 2002. She remembered vividly Merleau-Ponty's animated description of the conversation when he came home and told her about the evening. I asked her why she thought Sartre had written in his eulogy of Merleau-Ponty that the latter had died "unreconciled" with Sartre. Her response was immediate and visceral—even after more than 40 years: clenching her fists, her face turning red, she said, "*Certainly they were unreconciled—after what Sartre did to him!*"

[16] Jean-Paul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty (op. cit.), p. 227.

[17] Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux*, trans. P. O'Brian (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 269.

[18] Davis ed. (*op. cit*.), p. 47.

[19] *Ibid*., p. 33.

In short, Sartre strongly criticized Merleau-Ponty's choice of philosophy over politics:

> In a word, the philosopher *today* cannot take a political stance. This amounts to not so much *criticizing my position* in the name of another one as trying to neutralize it, to bracket it in the name of a non-position.[20]

Sartre's anger shows in his declaration that Merleau-Ponty not be allowed to use *Les Temps Modernes* to criticize Sartre and to offer his counter-revolutionary philosophical position:

> My conclusion: Your attitude is neither exemplary nor defensible; it is the result of your right to choose *for yourself* what suits you best. If you mean to criticize anybody [i.e., Sartre] from the perspective of this attitude, you play into the reactionaries and anti-communist game—period.[21]

According to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty has retreated into pure philosophy, thus abnegating his political responsibility and, therefore, his freedom to offer the proposed critique of Sartre:

> Only those who have satisfied these demands can criticize one in return, i.e., begin in a critical dialogue. In a word, I ask of my critics a preliminary question: You, what do you do today? If you are *not doing anything*, you do not have the right to criticize politically, you have the right to write your book, and that's it.[22]

On this basis, Sartre refuses Merleau-Ponty's work: "I vigorously and unhesitatingly condemn your attempts at condemning me. I will not accept them into *Les Temps Modernes*, for *I* might then risk confusing *my* readers."[23]

One sees immediately why Merleau-Ponty sought to articulate a position that diverges from Sartre's dogmatic self-importance and from the politics of "continued engagement" that led to the censorship of any political/philosophical critique of Sartre's position. Gary Madison puts this rather forcefully in his fine essay, "The Ethics and Politics of the Flesh":

> Sartre was a retrograde, pure and simple, a political dinosaur, and to the day he died, a living (albeit a somewhat fossilized) relic of the darkest days of the Cold War.[24]

Madison has his own agenda, which I do not share, but it is certainly correct to say that Sartre saw no irony in silencing, in the name of politics, the voice of his friend's political critique.

Merleau-Ponty's immediate response, in his letter to Sartre, is important insofar as it shows this split with Sartre as the motive for the development of Merleau-Ponty's situated ontology. The letter, one might say, is the immediate response that motivated the larger response—the direction of the rest of Merleau-Ponty's

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[20] *Ibid*., p. 36 (my emphasis).

[21] *Ibid*. (my emphasis).

[22] *Ibid*. (my emphasis).

[23] *Ibid.* (my emphasis).

[24] Gary B. Madison, *The Ethics and Politics of the Flesh*, in Davis (*op. cit*.), p. 175.

philosophical career. Merleau-Ponty pulls no punches in his rejection both of Sartre's decision and of Sartre's fundamental misrepresentation of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical position regarding politics. In short, Merleau-Ponty did *not* abandon political engagement for philosophy. He instead called for a *critical* engagement. Anything less—and Sartre had just advocated and demonstrated much less—was rash and irresponsible. Merleau-Ponty writes to Sartre, "You take a stance without worrying much about studying the content."[25] Indeed, this was a problem Merleau-Ponty had addressed before. As early as 1945, Merleau-Ponty criticized action for action's sake: "As Marx said, it is true that history does not walk on its head; but it is also true that it does not think with its feet."[26] And, no doubt hastily written down, Sartre's position does seem somewhat *pedestrian* here. Merleau-Ponty summarizes their differences thus: "I did not want events to decide for me, and you did not want to take a step back."[27] It is crucial to see that taking this critical step back does not, for Merleau-Ponty, aim to provide a purely objective perspective on political events, some God's-eye view of the situation, pure and comprehensive. Nor is it a pure, apathetic disinterest in political events. Again, at least 7 years prior to this, Merleau-Ponty emphasized that we are "condemned to meaning."[28] Consistent with the means Merleau-Ponty has at his disposal, he is not calling for a step into a pure, ideal world, a pure world of immanence, a pure transcendental reflection, nor a pure phenomenological laying-bare of the essences of the political situation. Indeed, there is nothing pure about this critical stepping-back at all. This is the uniquely transformed transcendental posture of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, as introduced in the first part of this essay.

Merleau-Ponty says that he has "decided, since the Korean War, to stop writing on events as they happen."[29] He explains to Sartre that "it is artificial and deceptive to act as if problems appeared one by one, and to take apart what is a historical set into a series of local questions"[30]; one can avoid missing the forest for the trees, by attending to human historicity from *within* history and from nowhere else. Merleau-Ponty wants to refrain from Sartre's "bellicose use of the situation," by which, once again, he is *not* advocating a withdrawal from the "political" to the "philosophical," as Sartre would frame it, which conjures up some pure realm of philosophy that would be as impotent with respect to politics as it is philosophically pure.

> Thus, I do not accept the benefit of this pure goodness that is generally bestowed upon animals and the sick, and which inspires you to let me do philosophy at the condition that it be only a pastime.[31]

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[25] *Letters of the Break-Up*, in Davis (*op. cit.*), p. 48.

[26] Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (*op. cit.*), p. xiv.

[27] *Letters of the Break-Up*, in Davis (*op. cit.*), p. 47.

[28] Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (*op. cit.*), p. xiv. [*Sens*: that is *directed* meaning.]

[29] *Letters of the Break-Up*, in Davis (*op. cit.*), p. 41.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Sartre seems to perceive himself as bravely leading the way into the future while Merleau-Ponty self-indulgently gazes at his navel. Indeed, he implies that Merleau-Ponty is wasting his time by accepting the highest honor France can bestow upon academics, a chair at the *Collège de France*. However, Merleau-Ponty explains carefully, if impatiently, that, for him, "philosophy is an attitude in the world, not an abstention."[32] Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty points out to Sartre, "I do not need to separate philosophy from the world at all to remain a philosopher and I never did so."[33] It is the critical step back that keeps Merleau-Ponty from being an "*écrivain d'actualité*"— a mere current events writer[34]—and avoids Sartre's error of willingly extricating his brand of *engagement* from the critical space that provides "*a right of rectification* that no serious action ever renounces."[35] Again, reclaiming this right to rectification is the fruit of Merleau-Ponty's unique brand of existential phenomenology.

Merleau-Ponty saw the need to engage in a productive interrogation of our historicity in order to account for practical directedness, in order to see how events can be understood critically from within a historical context in a manner that outstrips the "trap of the event" and is not mired in the moment in an inhuman way. Merleau-Ponty is motivated by his split with Sartre to reconsider at greater length and in a new way, a theme he saw as important, as early as his *Phenomenology of Perception*: the restoration of subjectivity to its inherence in history.[36]

And so, ladies and gentlemen, we have established the motive we were after. Merleau-Ponty, using the means of his existential phenomenology, finds the motive to develop a contingent, situated ontology in his political/philosophical rift with Sartre. We turn our attention, accordingly, to the opportunity.

10.3   Opportunity

In short, Merleau-Ponty found the opportunity to develop his situated ontology through his interrogation of our historical, dialectical, situation in nature. We can see evidence of this in the progression of his courses at the *Collège de France*, as well as in the few examples of the ontology as he began to articulate it at the very end of his career. Merleau-Ponty's courses at the *Collège de France* trace out a dialectical *parcours* from political issues to ontological reflection through two steps of mediation: history and nature.

Merleau-Ponty taught three courses explicitly about history, during 1953–1956: *Materials for a theory of History*, *Institution in Personal and Public History*, and finally *Dialectical Philosophy*. The course notes for *Materials for a Theory of*

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[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 43.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 40.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 42.

[36] Cf. John O'Neill's careful explication of this point in his *Perception*, *Expression*, *and History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 47.

History are missing from the collected notes and transcripts on reserve at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. But, from what we can see in his *resumés de cours*, it appears that Merleau-Ponty, in this course, closely followed the line of argument he adopts in parts of *Adventures of the Dialectic*—no doubt he was working out this line of argument in the process of preparing the course. In *Adventures of the Dialectic,* Merleau-Ponty provides readings of works by Weber and Lukács, in order to push dialectical materialism to allow for creativity and freedom in historical *praxis*.

> History is therefore a logic *within* contingence, a reason *within* unreason, where there is a historical perception, which, like perception in general, leaves in the background what cannot enter into the foreground but seizes the lines of force as they are generated and actively leads their traces to a conclusion.[37]

As we saw in the previous section, Merleau-Ponty wishes to account for the possibility of a kind of value within historicity that escapes the traps of subjectivism and historicism. The passage above is interesting because Merleau-Ponty begins by re-appropriating his familiar phenomenological critique of *Gestalt* psychology from his earliest work. He would further investigate the foregrounding/backgrounding of themes within history in terms of restructured institutions in his next course, *Institution in Private and Public History*. These fascinating course notes have recently been published. Here, Merleau-Ponty articulates the structure of institutions to be a productive and destructive oscillation that accounts for the relation of public and private historical perspectives; there is *instituting,* which establishes *institutions*. Once these institutions exist *as* institutions, they at once call for their own destruction through further instituting.

Merleau-Ponty's next course was *The Problem of Passivity*, in which he turns his attention back to Spinoza's themes of activity and passivity, and thereby begins to hint at interests in the theme of nature. But it is his 1955–1956 course notes for *Dialectical Philosophy* that constitute the most interesting of Merleau-Ponty's course material remaining to be transcribed. This course marks the transition between the mediation of history to nature. What I found most surprising about these course notes is that this transition is in no way indicated in his *résumé de cours*. Merleau-Ponty begins as announced, by posing the question of whether there is, in history, one dialectic or many dialectics. One can see that this picks right up where the *Institution* and *Passivity* courses leave off. However, Merleau-Ponty here frames these familiar themes in a way that is explicitly political. He says that it is necessary to reflect upon dialectical philosophy "to see what it is to *act*."[38] Having introduced the theme of dialectical philosophy explicitly in terms of *praxis*, he

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[37] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France," in *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. J. O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 97–98

[38] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La Philosophie dialectique*, vol. XIV, course notes in manuscript form on reserve in the Occidental Manuscripts Reading Room in the *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris, France, p. 5 [my emphasis].

proceeds to look at the role of dialectic in various philosophers' works: Plato, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Sartre, Husserl, and Heidegger. Surprisingly, given the résumé, and providing a foreshadowing of the ontological direction of his thought, he links Heidegger's framing of the history of philosophy, as the forgetting and retrieval of the *Seinsfrage*, with dialectic, that is, with the framing of history as the dialectical relation of being and non-being.[39] After, once again, asserting that dialectical philosophy is not an attempt at escaping contingency,[40] Merleau-Ponty outlines the rest of the course as a dialectical interrogation of: (1) the being of things; (2) being in the world; and (3) the being of the universe.[41] There is a priceless section entitled "Dialectic and Subjectivity," which initiates an analysis over several pages that employs for the first time terms that will inform his situated ontology in coming years, such as "*écart*" and "the non-unity of subjectivity,"[42] and even "a being that is reversible."[43] It is in terms of the third aspect of his dialectical investigation, "the universe as a whole," that he really bears down on the idea of nature in very careful readings of Hegel and Marx. There is a fascinating passage on the ontological status of capital. It is interesting that these pages were found among Merleau-Ponty's 1961 notes. He had pulled out and revisited these notes while working out the ontology at the end of his career.

Next, Merleau-Ponty taught the courses on nature, which have finally been published in English, and translated by Bob Vallier.[44] Once we see the direct progression of Merleau-Ponty's thought, we see how the courses on nature are not digressions between his political thought and his ontology, but crucial steps along a single path. Merleau-Ponty's extended analysis of nature has been seen by Renaud Barbaras to have significance because of Merleau-Ponty's rich dialogue with natural science and social science. Barbaras celebrates this dialogue, reminiscent of early work in *The Structure of Behavior*, and reads it as a departure from what he criticizes as the idealism of phenomenology. On the contrary, I prefer to situate Merleau-Ponty's analysis of nature as an integral transition in the political horizon of his ontology. (It would require another essay to address Barbaras' interesting but I think misguided approach.)

Having established this crucial transition from history to nature, we will gloss the details of the final courses written by Merleau-Ponty and only hint at the transition from nature to ontology. (There are courses that focus on the thought of Husserl, Heidegger, the limits of phenomenology, and the status of contemporary philosophy.) To do this, let us turn our attention briefly to the explicitly ontological work.

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[39] *Ibid*., p. 8.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 11: "Nothing exists in a pure state."

[41] *Ibid*., p. 13.

[42] *Ibid*., pp. 22f.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 28.

[44] Vallier has also pointed out the influence of Schelling on Merleau-Ponty's account of Nature. Given what we have just observed above of the course in *Dialectical Philosophy*, we can see even better why Schelling's dialectic is crucial to understanding the transition of the mediation of history to nature.

In the unfinished manuscript of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty describes his project as an "interrogation of *physis*."[45] He turns his attention to nature in order to sketch an ontology focusing on Being as *écart*, or the divergence of beings, rather than the identity of Being. He articulates a latent reversibility of the flesh of things, where Being is not so much a given whole but an implied horizon of differentiation. About the only clue to the implied political horizon of this text lies in its lengthy analysis of dialectic and hyper-dialectic, in which Merleau-Ponty was working in dialogue with Sartre's position once again, although not in any explicitly political sense. There are many working notes published along with *The Visible and Invisible*. Merleau-Ponty's student and assistant, and an important political philosopher on his own account, Claude Lefort, painstakingly sorted through the working notes, selecting some for inclusion alongside the incomplete manuscript. He selected these notes on a variety of grounds, including the publisher's demands for a work of reasonable length, the importance of certain themes in these notes, and the condition and legibility of some of the notes.[46] Many of the notes that remain untranscribed deal directly with Sartre's work.

But let us, for now, consider *Eye and Mind*, the final work published in Merleau-Ponty's lifetime. This work focuses primarily on science, art and vision, In short, Merleau-Ponty argues that, while science purports to provide the truth of the world that art distorts in its creative *representation*, it is better to see that science offers a distortion of the world that art *presents* in a superior manner. At the heart of his claim is an ontological explanation of art and vision. Science seeks an objective understanding of nature, which it achieves through operational thinking. However, Merleau-Ponty shows that art, by focusing on our ontological situation within the world, calls our attention to our active/passive process of making/discerning our world. By attending to line, depth, color, the status of the art work and its relation to the artist, our attention is drawn to a *fission* of Being.

Thus does Merleau-Ponty use art as the occasion to articulate his ontology. It is certainly a situated ontology, insofar as he is not pursuing a fundamental ontology that must be done in order to subsequently move to ancillary tasks like aesthetics, ethics, or politics. Clearly, the ontology is situated in the aesthetic account. But what can one say about its political horizon? To answer this question, we can look at some passages, usually misunderstood as suggesting a pure or fundamental aspect to Merleau-Ponty's ontology, which would be consistent with Sartre's charge that Merleau-Ponty retracts from the political in pursuit of a pure philosophical reflection. Simply put, such is not the case.

> But art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which operationalism would prefer to ignore. Art and only art does so *in full innocence*.[47]

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[45] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 237.

[46] I am drawing upon personal conversation with Lefort in 2003. As a kind of commiseration with someone who has struggled more than anyone with Merleau-Ponty's notorious handwriting, I joked with Lefort that I would 1 day write a book about reading the manuscripts that I would title, *Le Lisible et l'ilisible*.

[47] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Oeil et esprit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 13 [Eye and Mind, p. 161].

At first glance it appears that Merleau-Ponty is here claiming that painting provides some immediate access to a pure truth that science has distorted. And, insofar as his *ontology is* articulated in terms of art, this seems to lend support to Sartre's charge that Merleau-Ponty is committed to a "pure" philosophy. However, the context of the passage allows for a better reading. Merleau-Ponty is discussing the manner in which art calls our attention to the "*il y a*," to the "there is." But its innocence is not a pure vista upon Being. Indeed, that is what science purports to provide. The innocence of art is precisely an innocence of this innocence, of this arrogance. Art serves as an interruption of a naïve certainty and introduces meaning through discord, instability and contingency.

Likewise, Merleau-Ponty has been taken to task for his use of history in this work, as if it were a pure history that he presupposes. Yet, when we remember how his reflections upon history were occasioned by the political, we should not be surprised to see that it is inappropriate to attribute this kind of position to Merleau-Ponty. Levinas, for example, has criticized Merleau-Ponty for his talk of a "primordial historicity."[48] Four times in *Otherwise Than Being*, Levinas accuses Merleau-Ponty of offering a teleological guiding force in this "primordial historicity." But Merleau-Ponty never embraced such a monolithic view—one which, in fact, he referred to as a Hegelian monstrosity, as the "museum" of history.[49] For Merleau-Ponty, within history there must be a "retrograde motion of truth, an incompleteness," "a lack of coincidence," "perpetual" "transcendence," "divergence"—*écart*. Historicity is primordial for Merleau-Ponty in the sense that when we pretend to stand outside of the contingency wherein we are situated, we are pretending to stand outside of history and effectively denying our historicity. "True history gets its life entirely from us."[50] Far from the pretence of a pure historicity or a fundamental ontology, Merleau-Ponty writes in a 1958 unpublished note that he is not interested in any notion of history that does not "differ from itself."[51] There is no ground in the sense of an idealistic historical *telos*; there is rather a demand that we attend to "the soil of the sensible world."[52] However, even if the sensible world has been *soiled* in Merleau-Ponty's ontology, history is no more the guarantor of ignorance than it is the guarantor of truth. Painting has meaning *because* it is historical:

> There are, in the flesh of contingency, a structure of the event and a virtue peculiar to the scenario. These do not prevent the plurality of interpretations but, in fact, are the deepest reasons for this plurality. They make the event into a durable theme of historical life and have a right to philosophical status.[53]

Our historicity is shown in aesthetic terms in *Eye and Mind*, but it does have its political horizon. It is just that, in art, to the extent we can avoid, as Merleau-Ponty

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[48] *Ibid*.

[49] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "le langage indiret et les voix du silence", in *Signes*, p. 132. [*Signs*, p. 82].

[50] Ibid., p. 121 [*Signs*, p. 75].

[51] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, unpublished working note, 1958, Box III [old pagination, BnF].

[52] Merleau-Ponty, *L'Oeil et esprit*, p. 12 [*Eye and Mind*, p. 160].

[53] *Ibid*., pp61–62 [Eye and Mind, p. 179].

said to Sartre, an explicitly political context; we can step back from being "trapped" in events because of our historicity. Hence, the situation of Merleau-Ponty's ontology in terms of art is instructive for recognizing its political horizon; and no text better demonstrates this than the preface to *Signs*, written in 1960. Here, Merleau-Ponty writes in explicitly ontological terms about historicity and politics. He writes that Marxism is today reduced to a "secondary truth."[54] By this, he means that Marxism cannot take itself for granted as the be-all-and-end-all, the absolute arbiter of meaning. Instead, it must play the role analogous to that of a scientific or non-theoretical truth from a previous paradigm: it "keeps its truth," and is said to be an "error" not as "the converse of truth" or something that can be objectively refuted, but as a "failed truth."[55] "History never confesses, not even her lost illusions," Merleau-Ponty writes. This means that it never "comes clean" with a pure unadulterated truth. Nonetheless, Merleau-Ponty continues that while "history never confesses…, neither does she dream of them [her lost illusions] again."[56]

For Merleau-Ponty, the transcendence, the divergence, of history, though it precludes any ultimate meaning, provides for the very possibility of meaning. And this is discussed in ontological terms. Philosophy, because it is situated in the political, contingent world, "precisely discloses the Being we inhabit."[57] We are situated in history just as we are situated in language and meaning, according to Merleau-Ponty. This means that we may speak of historical intentions that exceed our individual intentions, and meanings that resonate beyond individual intentions, just as we say language speaks to us as well as us speaking in and to language. In an early draft manuscript version of the preface to *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty writes that "*history* is the house of Being,"—it is "the invisible living in the visible."[58] But if history is the house of Being, there is no question that we dwell there *politically*. This is not an inviolable house, but it offers us shelter for a while. Our situation in Being is contingent, not pure. Like a painting, our existence "changes, alters, enlightens, deepens, confirms, exalts, recreates, or creates in advance"[59] the existence of others

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[54] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960) [p. 9E?] One is reminded of Mao's primary and secondary contradictions.

[55] *Ibid*., pp. 20–21. [Signs, p. 10]. Again, one is reminded of what Alain Badiou and Sylvain Lazarus have called the saturation of the party-state in the cultural revolution. Cf. Badiou's brilliant analysis in his *La Révolution culturelle: la dernière révolution*?, *Les conférences du Rouge-Gorge*, *Paris*, 2002. What could account for this remarkable parallel, since the cultural revolution is several years away when Merleau-Ponty wrote these words?

[56] Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (*op. cit*.), p. 61 [Signs, p. 35]. And once more, one sees a striking resemblance between Merleau-Ponty's position here and Badiou's controversial movement beyond Maoism—or as I prefer, a movement through the ideal of the party-state in Mao. Is this a hidden dimension in Merleau-Ponty's thought—perhaps even hidden from himself? Or is it a manifestation that Badiou was never a Maoist? One could pose the question to Badiou: "Are you now, or were you ever *really*, a Maoist?" *One* could—*I wouldn't*!.

[57] *Ibid*., p. 26 [Signs, p. 13].

[58] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, unpublished notes *BnF*, Preface to *Signes*, vol. IV, p. 19 (back) (my emphasis).

[59] Merleau-Ponty, *L'Oeil et L'esprit* (*op. cit*.), pp. 92–93 [*Eye and Mind*, p. 190].

with whom we live. It is also the source of an "unremitting *virtu*."[60] The ontological approach offers a new way of accounting for what Merleau-Ponty, in his 1953 letter, called "a right to rectification that no serious action ever renounces."[61]

Thus, we have established that Merleau-Ponty had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to construct a contingent, situated ontology. We might, therefore, acknowledge that, in his own words, Merleau-Ponty is no angel. His ontology is mired in adversity and in the contingent and is in no manner pure. I think that the two main reasons Merleau-Ponty has come to be read as if his ontological reflection were innocent of politics are: (1) Sartre's influence, and the way he framed the discussion; and (2) the lack of access to notes and manuscripts that contradict the Sartrean perspective. My goal here was to illustrate that the impurity and contingency of Merleau-Ponty's situated ontology bespeak its political horizon. By this, I do not mean to reduce his ontology to the political. Nor do I intend to claim that a politics is "contained" in the ontology, and can somehow be "extracted." Merleau-Ponty is not Descartes, who separated his basis for truth from the world, and is saddled with the task of connecting the two. Merleau-Ponty finds this to be unacceptable. He has shown that such an unfortunate position would leave philosophy pure but irrelevant, innocent but impotent; it leaves us in a situation where "The politics of philosophers is what no one practices. Then is it politics?"[62] Obviously not. But when we attend to the political horizon of Merleau-Ponty's ontology, remembering its provenance and situating it within the continuous development of his thought as a whole, we see that, contrary to Sartre's claims—and all who have followed Sartre's impoverished interpretation—Merleau-Ponty never engaged in a radical separation of philosophy from the political. The unacceptable breech between theory and *praxis* is one which Sartre and others simply project onto Merleau-Ponty's work. Merleau-Ponty was no angel; and he recognized history as anguish. Of this charge, his "guilt" is established.[63]

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[60] Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (*op. cit.*), p. 61 [Signs, p. 35]. His reference to an "unremitting *virtu*" surely parallels the "*a right of rectification*" implicit in any event that he accused Sartre's position of abandoning. Cf. p. 13 above. Please also note that Dallery's translation of l'oeil et esprit misses the political use of *virtu* completely. Cf. Eye and Mind, p. 160, for example, where *virtu* is translated "meaning and force."

[61] Davis (*op. cit.*), p. 42.

[62] Signes *(op. cit.)*, p. 13 [Signs, p. 5].

[63] Versions of this essay were delivered at invited lectures at: McMaster University [Canada], DePaul University [USA], and Manchester University [UK]. I very much appreciate the questions and discussion on those occasions. This essay is stronger because of the kind attention it received there, and from the editors of this volume.

Chapter 11
Derrida's Specters: Futurity, Finitude, Forgetting

Joanna Hodge

The triple subtitle to Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) invokes the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International. This paper is intended to open out a discussion of these, both as distinct elements and as a single structure. The discussion here relocates the discussion of Marx and his New International back into the analyses of temporality invoked in the notions of debt and mourning, of the gift and the transmission of identity across actual deaths in the continuity, the "survivre", the survival or living on, which is constituted in the rituals of mourning. This paper is thus designed to re-situate Derrida's analysis of futurity, of an "a-venir", of the "to-come", as a modification of and challenge to Heidegger's insistence on the priority of the future, over past and present. My intention, overall, is a conceptual one; namely to show how notions of protention, prognosis and programme are simultaneously brought into view *and brought into question* by Derrida's twisting together of his responses to phenomenology, psychoanalysis and Marxism.

11.1 Specters of Marx

Derrida's invocation of the three themes of: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International is worthy of more attention than so far has been given to it.[1] My argument here is that they form a continuation of a response to what on a previous occasion Derrida calls the "Jewish-German psyche", a hybrid structure

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[1] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International,* 1993, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

J. Hodge (✉)
Department of Politics and Philosophy, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK
e-mail: J.Hodge@mmu.ac.uk

which he highlights in a footnote to his paper "Interpretations at war: Kant, the German and the Jew" (1988).[2] There Derrida proposes readings of texts on nation and patriotism by, amongst others, Hermann Cohen, who was, like Edmund Husserl, a passionate patriot in the First World War.[3] Hence, one of the themes of my argument here is that Derrida's proposal of a New International stands in marked contrast to the nationalisms of these earlier appeals to some connection between intellectual work and politics, while also, unlike that of Marx, proving resistant to appropriation by a Bolshevik deviation, in support of a "Socialism in One Country."

The first element of the sub-title, the State of the Debt, relates to my discussion here of that aspect of Husserl's legacy which is irreducibly marked by the destiny of a certain German Jewishness. For the falling out between Husserl and Heidegger and its reception are hugely over determined by the fate of European Jewry. Both Husserl and Freud found, to their surprise and increasing discomfort, that they were taken to be Jews, and not, in Husserl's case, a Protestant and a patriot, nor, in Freud's case, an atheist and a citizen of an ecumenical Vienna.

The second element of the sub-title, the Work of Mourning can be more obviously linked to the legacy of Freud, although Freud's legacy is itself internally divided in a way to which Derrida, from 1966 all the way through to "Psychoanalysis searches the states of its soul" (July 16, 2000), never ceases to draw attention.

And similarly, the third element, the invocation of a New International, obviously implicates Marx and a certain Marxism.[4] It is this last element of the title which receives most attention from Derrida in this text and which most of the subsequent discussion addresses, in a series of colloquia, the proceedings of some of which have been published.[5] However in this paper I proffer futurity, finitude and forgetting as an alternative framework grounded in temporality as a context for re-reading Derrida's text.

In a fine paper, 'Another Possibility', Catherine Malabou shows how that openness to a future which cannot be seen coming requires an opening up of both present

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[2] See 'Interpretations at war: Kant, the Jew, the German' (1988), in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion,* trans. and ed. Gil Anidjar (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), 138–139. When Derrida announces two exemplary Germans for analysis in terms of this German -Jewish psyche, it is a surprise to find that the names given are not those of Sigmund Freud and Edmund Husserl, but of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig.

[3] In the Foreword to Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship,* 1994, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 1999) Derrida sets out the topics of his seminar from 1983 onwards, under the general heading, *Nationality and Philosophical Nationalism* (p. vii). A fragment from this enquiry surfaces in *Oxford Literary Review* (OLR), vol. 14, nos. 1–2, Oxford 1992, under the title 'Onto-theology of National–Humanism', pp. 2–24.

[4] Derrida pays special attention to the reception of Marx by Maurice Blanchot and his essay, "Marx's Three Voices," in Blanchot, *Of Friendship,* 1971, trans. Elizabeth Rottenburg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) and by Michel Henry, with a long footnote about his work on Marx (pp. 187–188). It is marked that he does not discuss the analyses of Jean Paul Sartre.

[5] See Michael Sprinker, ed. *Ghostly demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx* (London: Verso, 1999).

and past, to "another possibility".[6] I suggest it also opens up for rethinking the nature of the connections between future, present and past. The analysis of finitude arrives in Freud's psychoanalysis and in Heidegger's analyses of a being towards death; and the analysis of forgetting arrives both in the work of psychoanalysis and in that of Husserl's analyses of memory. Heidegger's insistence on a forgetting of the question of the meaning of being is well enough known. But what is usually not noticed is the role of forgetting in setting out the differences for Husserl between, on the one hand, protention (which underpins the continuities of intentionality) and, on the other, the overcoming of the gaps (which emerge both within the memory of individuated consciousness and within the collective memory of traditions; which subsequently require the inscriptions of texts in order to preserve the results of intellectual discoveries of previous generations). There might be room here for a counter to the Heideggerian thematic of a forgetting of the meaning of being, in a Husserlian account of a forgetting of the meaning of forgetting. This can be retrieved with the assistance of some suggestions made by the third master of suspicion, alongside Marx and Freud: Friedrich Nietzsche. My argument thus suggests a perhaps surprising link to be made between (i) Nietzschean genealogies and an analysis of forgetting and (ii) Husserl's phenomenology and the analysis of memory, as retention and as a secondary supplementary structure, compensating for breaks in attention.

11.2   Debt, Gift and Economy

If 'debt' in the first instance signals monetary considerations and the politics of the World Bank, it is also to be linked back to the notions of the gift and givenness, to sacrifice as the unreturnable offering, as discussed by Derrida in "Faith and Knowledge: two sources of 'religion' at the limits of pure reason" (1994).[7] It links up to Derrida's early discussions, in papers published in *Writing and Difference* (1967), of Bataille, on restricted and general economies, and of inscription in relation to Freud.[8] The financial and economic themes are linked to these notions of an economy of energy, in the system of drives, as theorised by Freud, and are in turn linked by Derrida to the discussions of value and of givenness, in the inheritance of Husserl's phenomenology. The return of the name of Husserl in this text from 1994

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[6] See Catherine Malabou, 'Another Possibility', in *Research In Phenomenology*, vol. 36, Special Issue on Jacques Derrida (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2006), 115–129. This focuses on a modification of modality, which is also pursued at length across the various surfaces of Malabou and Derrida, *Counterpath: Travelling with Jacques Derrida,* 1999, trans. David Wills (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[7] See 'Faith and Knowledge: two sources of 'religion' at the limits of pure reason,' 1994, in *Acts of Religion*, Gil Anidjar, ed., 40–101.

[8] See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 1967, trans. Alan Bass (Routledge: London and New York, 1978).

becomes less surprising, once it is thought in the context of Derrida's return to a reading of Husserl, as guided by his responses to Jean Luc Nancy's meditations on Husserl's account of sense and of the constitution of world.[9] For the first part of Derrida's discussion of Nancy, 'Le Toucher', was published already in 1993 in a volume of the journal *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory*.[10] The return of the name of Husserl in this text, haunting Derrida's writings, takes up the themes reopened by the publication in France in 1990 of his 1953–1954 dissertation *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's philosophy*.[11]

The French reception of Husserl is marked by a split between the responses of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, who provide analyses of human beings as given in relations in a world, and the responses, by Cavailles and by Foucault, who critique the possibility of scientificity in an account of meaning as offered by Husserlian phenomenology. This split between analyses of the human and of scientificity is one which Husserl's own writings resist. Derrida is in agreement with Cavailles that Husserl's phenomenology cannot provide such a foundational account of scientificity although for the different reasons rehearsed, but not presented, in *Of Grammatology* (1967). He is less convinced by the emphasis in the writings of Merleau-Ponty on making sense of concepts of meaning simply by reference to givenness in the world, remaining committed to the Husserlian thought that the concept of givenness resists full presentation in the world. Derrida's account of the arrival of a meaning for a political context of activity, as an arrival out of the future, in a mode which cannot be anticipated, is to be situated in this context of a reception of Husserl. However, the affirmation of phenomenology in the thought of Sartre and of Merleau-Ponty is no more helpful as a guide to Husserl's own thinking than the critiques of Husserl developed variously by Cavailles and by Foucault. The account of phenomenology as one of lived experiences of human beings in a world in the absence of Husserl's transcendental grounding leaves it open to the charge of radical contingency, and does not do justice to the scope and ambition of Husserl's theories.

The detailed investigations of Cavailles, of Canguilhem, and of Foucault render implausible the thought that there is, in any substantive sense, a phenomenological foundation for the sciences. For it is simply implausible to suppose that there can be

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[9] For Jean Luc Nancy, see *The sense of the world,* 1993, trans. Jeffrey S Librett (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). It is safe to presume that Derrida had access to pre-publication material for this text. See also Jacques Derrida, *On touching: Jean Luc Nancy,* 2001, trans. Christine Irizarray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[10] See Jacques Derrida, 'Le Toucher', *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory,* vol. 16.2, On the Work of Jean-Luc Nancy, ed. Peggy Kamuf (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 122–157.

[11] Jacques Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl's Philosophy,* 1990, trans. Marion Hobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). This text refuted the canard that Derrida had insufficient grasp of Husserl's texts to be permitted to propose a critical transformation of them, as he does in *Speech and Phenomenon, Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology,* 1967, trans. David Allison, *Speech and Phenomena and other essays on Husserl's theory of the sign* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1978). It is this text which gives rise to the identification of genesis as the basic problem of phenomenology.

a general theory of foundation for all the sciences, especially granted the immense variety and internal dynamism of those forms of scientific research in which activity and progress in the twentieth century has been most marked. What Husserl can be shown to put forward is an account of meaning without which no claim in relation to scientific enquiry can be thought to make sense. Only by putting these two parts of Husserl's inheritance back together, that of a history of scientificity and that of the life world as lived (both of which are marked up for attention in *The Crisis of the European Sciences*) can sense be made, and the conception itself be motivated, of meaning arriving as "another possibility" out of the future. Husserlian fulfilled meaning is to be contrasted to any previous partially intended meaning and is to be thought as always "to-come". The futurity of fulfilled meaning contrasts with the thinking of futurity based on a resemblance and continuity between future and past; for there never has been fulfilled meaning.

The thematics of Husserl on the givenness of phenomena and his enquiries about meaning and being are linked by Derrida to both Freud and his considerations concerning systems of psychic energy, and Marx on the differences between a circulation of commodities, as use value, and the economy as exchange value.

Psyche is the classical object of enquiry in Aristotle's founding text of philosophy *De Anima* to which Derrida returns in his longer analyses of the fate of phenomenology in *On Touching: Jean Luc Nancy* (2001). The conception of an Aristotelian psyche, as the pure life of the living, the principle of life itself, is rewritten in a different way in the Freudian encounter with the effects of psychic pathologies, where the expression of the psyche renders the body inert and incapable of activity. This exchange between pure life and pure passivity is also important for Husserl's analyses. Husserl's return to a concept of the lived world, as the only source of meaning, in his late series of enquiries gathered together under title *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (1939), follows up this thought, concerning a concealment of pure life in the fallen lives of empirically given human beings. The empirical transcendental doubling traced out by Husserl from 1907 onwards is a doubling of pure life in the given lives of human beings, which are terminated in the natural deaths to which we are all destined. Heidegger's contribution at this point is to think, in the analytic of Dasein, of human life as the site at which the meaning of being arrives. He marks up being towards death as marking a limit point, the impossibility of possibility, where being can no longer arrive. In an early review of volume nine of the Husserliana edition, *Phenomenological Psychology*, Derrida registers the absolute importance for Husserl of a double instantiation of meaning, in its ideal form as transcendentally pure and as given only in its specifically lived modes.[12]

The Marxian distinction between use value and exchange value has analogues in the distinction between manifest dream content and that to which it gives access: the repressed drives and affects generating the pathologies from which their bearers

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[12] This is discussed by Len Lawlor, in his path breaking study, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), and see Jacques Derrida, "Review of Edmund Husserl: *Phaenomenologische Psychologie: Vorlesungen Sommer Semester 1925* (HUA 9)", *Etudes Philosophiques* 18, no. 2 (1963): 203–206.

suffer. Each system of masking is disrupted by the arrival of a more adequate mode of living the contradictory relations which the system of masking covers over. The systems of psychic energy form, on one level of analysis, a single system, but, on another, are composed of mutually non-communicating elements, in a manner duplicated in the account of distinct levels, or modes of psychic activity theorised by Husserl in his transcendental phenomenology. As psychic activities these levels are linked, but as systems of meaning of which sense can be made, there are discontinuities from one level to another. These linkages are in evidence as concerns for Derrida in various places in his writings, and most clearly in the incomplete text *Given Time: 1: Counterfeit Money* (1991). The open-endedness of this enquiry prompts more questions than can be responded to, but it is all the same important to mark up their role here.

The contrast developed by Freud between a completable work of mourning and an interminable condition of melancholy also applies to the impasses of intellectual enquiry. It takes a special kind of investment of energy in a project of enquiry to bring it to a conclusion, rather than simply to break it off. This then brings into focus the question of the time horizon for enquiry, for the work of mourning sets out a determinate time of human living, by contrast to a melancholy which sets out an indefinite in-between time, of survival without affirmation. The former, the time structure of mourning, attaches to the status of writings, when there is deemed to be an author assigning meaning to them; the latter, of melancholy, is the status of writings detached from such an authorial origin. In the absence of such authority widely divergent interpretations of authoritative texts can arise, with no final adjudication between them. The polemics, splits and murders committed in the names of Third, Fourth, and Fifth Internationals bear witness to the fratricidal nature of the differences between the various factions involved, and a full elaboration of this last would form a lengthy addition to the considerations pursued by Derrida under the title *Politics of Friendship* (1994*)*. This text might also be supplemented by a thorough analysis of Derrida's uneasy relation to Lacan, through which his responses to Freud remain channelled from *The Post card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980), up to the essays in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* (1995*)*.

In relation to an account of meaning, then, the sub-title of *Specters* intimates a need to think meaning as held in place by a series of differential relations: the difference between incomplete and completed enquiries; the difference between the temporality of mourning and the temporality of melancholy; and the differences between amicable and hostile fraternities. The latter then opens on to the most hidden question of all: the inability even for men of good will to dislodge the dissymmetry between invocations of fraternity and invocations of sorority. For all these names of history so far invoked are names of men, and this aspect of a spectral haunting of the inheritance of ontology, as supposedly written under the sign of a gender neutrality, but in fact pursued under that of the silent subordination of women, is a feature of the legacy of philosophy to which Derrida draws attention in his Foreword to *Politics of Friendship*, but which individuals appear powerless to shift. For while the thinkers invoked: Husserl, Freud, Marx, did not in the first instance understand themselves to write under the sign of a certain "German-Jewish

psyche" they are clear on a series of differences between the situations of women and of men. Derrida ruefully remarks in that Foreword:

> Democracy has seldom represented itself without the possibility of at least that which always resembles- if one is willing to nudge the accent of this word- the possibility of a *fraternization*. The fratriarchy may *include* cousins and sisters but, as we will see, including may also come to mean neutralizing. Including may dictate forgetting, for example, with 'the best of all intentions', that the sister will never provide a docile example for the concept of fraternity. This is why the concept must be rendered docile, and there we have the whole of political education. What happens when, in taking up the case of sister, the woman is made a sister? And a sister a case of the brother? This could be one of our most insistent questions, even if, having done so too often elsewhere, we will here avoid convoking Antigone… (p. viii-ix).

This is a paradoxical non-invocation which perpetuates a certain silencing of all the other sisters of history, starting with Ismene. The analysis, however, is arresting: first, the woman is thought as sister, and then the sister is thought as brother and then the woman disappears.

The invocation of a certain Freud and a certain Marx is clear enough in this subtitle. It is the third strand, an invocation of the master of phenomenology, in addition to the now customary intertwining of psychoanalysis and Marxism, which requires some additional comment. For here, in the place of the classically designated masters of suspicion, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, the name Husserl arrives in the place of that of Nietzsche. With this name, there arrives the gesture of affirming a notion of a philosophical scientificity, assigning a certain priority to the claim of reason, in answer to the question, of what distinguishes the human. These are the marks distinctive of Husserl's phenomenology, to which Derrida returns in the essay printed as a supplement to *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2003), "The World of the Enlightenment to Come (Exception, Calculation and Sovereignty)". The stakes of alternating the claim of Nietzsche, as the third man in this triptych, with that of Husserl, is to shift the emphasis in this combined legacy from one of suspicion with respect to inherited values, to that other feature of the legacy: an affirmation of a certain Enlightenment disenchantment of nature and of reality, opening them up to enquiry, and as no longer to be predicated on a certain "mystical authority" as invoked by Michel de Montaigne. On the other side, this opens out a question to Husserl's phenomenology as potentially inheriting a certain version of a critical genealogy of philosophical concepts, which would begin to do justice to Husserl's detailed readings of and appropriations of conceptuality from David Hume and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

Derrida's attention, in his early readings of Husserl, to Husserl's account of the sedimentation and reactivation of philosophical concepts can be linked to a Freudian attention to the distinction between manifest and hidden dream contents. This reveals, alongside the Husserlian emphasis on a silent speech of soliloquy, another layer of inscription in which transcendental intersubjectivity takes on some of the characteristics of the notion of écriture, as deployed by Derrida (and Barthes before him). This layer permits a transmission of meaning above and beyond the meaning intending of empirically given consciousness, as the potentiality of meaning in, say,

the geometrical forms, first entertained for analysis by Euclid and his generation of geometers. The substitution of the name, 'Husserl', for that of Nietzsche has the advantage of highlighting the extended footnote in *Specters* (p. 189) on the non-reality of the noematic correlates of noetic acts. It draws attention to a contribution in Husserl's phenomenology to a thinking of that which does not appear in an empirical reality, but to which there is access by means of what Husserl in the sixth *Logical Investigation* calls categorial intuition. This, in conjunction with a transcendental logic of wholes and parts, already motivated in the second and third Investigations, gives rise to an account of meanings and essences, as that which provide the structuring principles of that which appears immediately.

These principles can be set out, as a result of giving detailed accounts of that which does appear, and which, in appearing, presents these structuring principles for attention, and for further futural enquiry. These structuring principles then are intimated but not determinately given in an empirically given, determinate moment, and are thus of a different ontological order from that which does have a determinate given temporality. In this footnote to chapter five of *Specters,* "Apparition of the inapparent, 'the phenomenological conjuring trick'", Derrida points out that, of the four basic components of the analysis of lived experience: *content-form* (hyle-morphe) and *noesis-noema*, three of them: content, form, and *noesis* (the act of intending) are all assigned a status of independent, autonomous reality. It is the fourth, the noematic correlate which, as constituted through inter-subjective, inter-generational negotiations about meaning conditions, permits the arrival of the non-apparent, the unanticipated, that which is not as yet real, in short, the arrival of futurity as alterity, and of alterity as futurity. This is the opening in phenomenology, through which another futurity arrives, and it is thus that politics arrives into phenomenology.

11.3   Further Remains

Before turning to this more directly it is important to notice that, in the closing pages of *Specters of Marx*, Derrida invokes not Husserl, but Heidegger, the treacherous disciple. For at this point, it is more important to Derrida to mark up a connection, already marked in *The Post card: from Socrates to Freud and beyond*, between Heidegger on the uncanniness of the call of Dasein to itself, and the uncanniness of Freud's analyses of the return of the repressed, in the repetition compulsion. The temptation to pursue a series of analogies between Heidegger's relation to Husserl, Jung's relation to Freud, and Lenin's relation to Marx must be resisted, although such an enquiry, too, would provide an instructive addition to the discussions in *Politics of Friendship*, on the politics of discipleship, and to those in "Interpretations at war" on German-Jewish hybridity. It may be that in each case, psychoanalysis, communism and phenomenology, with Freud, Marx, and Husserl, the disciple who was not Jewish was needed to effect permanent entry into the history of European culture. These issues of how writings come to remain within a transmission of culture would require lengthy discussion. My intent here is rather conceptual: to show

how notions of protention, prognosis and programme are both highlighted and interrogated by the ways in which Derrida twists together his responses to phenomenology, to psycho-analysis and to Marxism.

The concept of "protention" is formed by Husserl, in his analyses of intentionality, to denote the futural horizon implied by what currently appears. It can be disrupted by the arrival of the possibility of intending itself out of a re-configuration of what there is, which has yet to come into view. "Prognosis" is a medical term inflected by Freud's psychoanalytical sessions, while the "programme" for political activism is the legacy of Marxism. It is the last which has been the more discussed relation to Derrida's study, but the invitation is to think all three together. In place of the analyses of memory, which take pride of place in Husserl's accounts of time and meaning, there arrives a certain emancipatory forgetting. In the place of any claim to provide a cure for all human ills, in a therapeutic practice marked by success, there arrives the more modest claim, advanced by Freud, that his analyses can put ordinary human unhappiness in the place of pathological delusion. For through analysis, human beings come to recognise their finitude, in place of giving way to the delirium of omnipotence. In place of a certain Marxist triumphalism about an end to oppression, and the beginning of a more fully human history, Derrida opens up a horizon of futurity in which what will come hangs in the balance between disaster now and disaster later. This is the shift of register from Husserl's attempt to affirm a certain Enlightenment inheritance, thinking a responsibility for each individual in continuing to assign meaning, to the more modest thought that a thinking of meaning is always only as formally indicated, not, as yet, as fully given. This would be one way of thinking Husserl's remark from the 1930s, "The dream is over". The Husserlian move is then to be redescribed as affirming the destiny of the human, not as now in our grasp, but as that of seeking to achieve a rational potential, as not yet realised, and as never to be realised.

In place of this modified Enlightenment view concerning human endeavour, with a continuing, and in principle unlimited, expansion of the domain of rational inquiry, Heidegger's reversion to a pre-Socratic Geek inheritance reveals the workings of darker forces of violence and uncertainty in the human inheritance. This darkening of the emancipatory intent can also be seen at work in the relation of Jung to Freud, and of Lenin to Marx. The originary *polemos* of the Parmenidean origin returns for attention, in the danger marked up for attention in the third of Heidegger's Bremen lectures, and indeed in Heidegger's own catastrophic political interventions. While divided from this by less than a generation, Husserl's politics reveal a certain impossible nineteenth century optimism, which is put to flight by the cumulative uncovering by, for example, Marx, Engels and V.I. Lenin, of the hidden sources of nineteenth century wealth and philanthropy: slavery, massacre, ruthless exploitation. Indeed one might even identify in Husserl a certain migrant naiveté concerning the sources of European wealth, and a gratitude for being permitted to share in its benefits. This naiveté is not shared by Derrida. *Specters of Marx* pursues an analysis of the haunting of a present moment by that which as yet has not happened, but which would give that present moment meaning, and which, furthermore, if it were to happen, would break the time series within which that present moment falls. This breaking

open of the time series is thought as necessary for that present moment to present itself with a claim on meaning. This is the necessary and impossible rupture of time, as condition for a concept of a fully determinate meaningfulness, which is analysed, variously, by Marx, Freud and Husserl. As remarked, "State of the Debt" does not simply invoke a financial consideration, but is also closely tied into the reflections carried out by Derrida shortly before the publication of this text, on the givenness of death and of time, in both *The Gift of Death* (1991) and *Aporias: dying/awaiting one another* at *the limits of truth* (1993).

These analyses of givens open up an enquiry into the structure of the given as differentially thematised, and as constitutive of a certain set of systematic transformations of phenomenological enquiry. The modes of givenness analysed by Husserl, become the mode of withholding invoked by Heidegger, and are subsequently transformed by Jean Luc Marion and Michel Henry into the donation of a divine intending and the essence of a manifestation of divine unity. This disambiguation of Husserl's thought of that which resists presentation in a life world into a donation of a divine order is no less violent than the violence of Heidegger's insistence on the primordial status of the finitude of Dasein. The return of religious commitment, no longer in objectively constituted structures of onto-theology, but in the mode of theophany, and in the mode of attestations of faith opens the way to the new politics of martyrdom, where lives are lost, not in the name of the emancipation of the oppressed, but in the cause of attesting to the glory of some god of punishment and reward. This is where a retrieval of Nietzsche's thinking of the politics of ressentiment and the ascetic ideal is so urgently needed, to provide an analysis of who benefits when young men are seized by enthusiasm, in response to the preaching of old men, who speak on behalf of long dead gods. The interleaving in *Specters of Marx* of Hamlet's ghost, Freudian analysis, the figure of Marx, and phenomenological themes reveals how any presumed permanence is disrupted, by the return of a repressed, in the form of the revenant, which in turn might make room for a genealogy of what is to come: as an enquiry into provenance.

The emphasis on a futurity, the invocations of an 'a-venir' in Derrida's writings is well enough known. In this paper I have drawn attention to an inter-dependence of this version of futurity, with the workings through of a certain finitude, in relation to an intertwining of themes from Freud and from Heidegger, and with the role of forgetting, to be excavated by intertwining themes from Nietzsche and from Husserl. That which arrives for good or ill may arrive as much through the permissiveness of a certain forgetting as through the accumulations of memory. A "New International" can arrive only once the old theorisings and practices of the Marxist and Marxian Internationals have been put to one side, along with the old nationalisms, which marked the responses of Cohen and Husserl to the First World War. A "Work of Mourning" is to be thought in relation to the contrasting dynamics of terminable and interminable analysis. The state of the debt, in the narrower sense, conjures up monetary and financial considerations as well as those of the wider economy, alongside the Freudian notions of a circulation of energy. It also intimates the relation of current research to an inheritance which it seeks both to reactivate and to forget. Derrida draws attention to a certain forgetting of Marx, even when he is invoked, and it is

possible to see a certain forgetting of Husserl, here, even when he is invoked. These various interwoven strands of enquiry constitute a complicated series of temporalisations and thematisations of temporality, which cannot be done justice to under the rubric of a "time out of joint". This "time out of joint" indicates rather a series of phenomena to be analysed than a determinate result of a completed enquiry.

It is tempting to attempt to align the three figures invoked in the sub-title of this text, the state of the debt, the work of mourning and the New International to the three dimensions of a naturalised time, thought in terms of the past, the present and the future. However, the effect of Derrida's invocation of the a-venir is to unhinge conceptions of futurity such that a different sequence of past, present and future may arrive. 'Another possibility', another way of thinking modality, presupposes a much more radical upheaval of present modes of existing and conceptualising than are so far canvassed. It is important to show how these three sub-titles are all in the first instance turned towards a reception of the past, and not towards the future. The attempt to turn them around can lead to the very foreclosure of the future which Derrida warns against. The state of the debt can be rethought in terms of a gesture of an infinite giving of thanks for what has been inherited, but this renders it a question for religion. It can be thought as an opening of time, between past and present, within which there can arrive an abstract schema, permitting a re-organisation of concepts and of thought. This renders it a question for philosophy. It can also be articulated as a work of mourning, turned around into the mode of an infinite repetition of the death drive, in the mode of denegation: 'the possibility that nothing happened'.[13] This renders the state of the debt as trauma, blocking all further development. If another kind of future is to be allowed to arrive, this possibility too has to be transformed into a mode of thinking what happened otherwise. This is what leads to an opening of time not between past and present, but between present and future. Thinking Husserlian futurity through a Nietzschean suspicion of what is inherited opens up Derrida's thinking of the a-venir in a way which might release it from its dangerous proximity to religious sectarianism, in the figure of the messianic.[14]

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[13] See again Catherine Malabou, 'Another possibility' p. 127. This is the mode of denegation described, but not directly invoked in the remarkable analyses provided by Derrida in his contribution to Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror, dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

[14] These remarks form an extended footnote to my study, Joanna Hodge, *Derrida on Time* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2007).

Chapter 12
The Political and Ethical Significance of Waiting: Heidegger and the Legacy of Thinking*

Felix Ó Murchadha

"All things come to those who wait." This saying implies an understanding of waiting which is anything but resigned, quietist and fatalist. Waiting, in such an understanding, is a preparedness for the future, a withdrawal from the busyness of the now and an acceptance of things as that which comes rather than what is conquered or appropriated. Philosophy, which begins in wonder we are told by Plato and by Aristotle, must similarly wait; it must perhaps cultivate waiting above all and have patience as its greatest virtue. Philosophers fail – and in some cases have failed scandalously – when they lapse in their exercise of that virtue. The legacy of philosophy remains tied to the patience of waiting, however, and despite his failures Heidegger remains true to that legacy. It is a legacy which is politically and ethically significant, but is so only indirectly. Philosophy for Heidegger concerns the possibility of action, but can only understand that possibility through a withdrawal from ethical and political action, a withdrawal which is neither ethically nor politically justifiable.

Heidegger's thought has become a legacy with which we struggle. This struggle is one with the history of the past century, in particular that of the Nazi regime. This struggle has been there almost since the beginning of the reception of Heidegger's work, but – in the English and French speaking worlds – only became a central issue since the late 1980s. But such a struggle with the legacy of Heidegger is part of a wider struggle with the legacy of philosophy. This should not be surprising: unless with culpable smugness we distort the history of the Nazi period as simply an aberration, then the traces of Heidegger's response to the political and ethical situation of his time must in part be related to wider issues of the legacy of philosophy in its

F.Ó. Murchadha (✉)
NUI, Galway, Ireland
e-mail: felix.omurchadha@nuigalway.ie

relation to politics and ethics. The following cannot hope to do any more than suggest certain directions of investigation regarding the legacy of Heidegger's thought within the legacy of philosophy. The debates regarding Heidegger's Nazi engagement are barely mentioned. Instead, I try to situate Heidegger in terms of the place of philosophy in relation to politics and ethics and the manner in which phenomenology redefines that place.

This essay is divided into three parts. The first argues that in an important respect the legacy of philosophy is apolitical and unethical. The second asks about the place of phenomenology in this legacy and attempts to show how, precisely as apolitical and unethical, the comportment of waiting is essential to phenomenology. The third section then goes on to show how Heidegger is true to this essential element of phenomenology and how his thought leads to an encounter between philosophy and poetry.

12.1

Philosophy, at least since Socrates, has required a withdrawal from the world of political and ethical engagement.[1] This motif of withdrawal arises again and again in the history of philosophy and for reasons essential to philosophy itself. Philosophy asks about the 'taking' and the 'granting' of the 'taken-for-granted'. It is not concerned with the imperative of a certain politically or ethically constituted act, but rather with the possibility of such an imperative at all. In the case of any action I take in response to my political or ethical commitments the context of such action is put behind me, is taken-for-granted. The actor, Goethe says, is without conscience;[2] but philosophy *is* only as listening to the claims of conscience.[3] That is the paradox: to question responsibility, to question the place of the human being in being (*Sein*), indeed to question being, all that involves the breaking away from those commitments, those ties of responsibility, of love and friendship, of duty and service, through which we are persons, citizens, friends. To ask about the possibility of politics or the nature of ethics is to open oneself to the contingency of all political and ethical claims and this makes philosophy apolitical and unethical. It is apolitical because only by a lack of engagement in the political can philosophy ask what it is for a being to be or not to be concerned with justice. It is unethical because philosophy is rooted in self-responsibility, which is not the responsibility to act well towards

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[1] Cf. Plato, "The Apology," trans. H. Tredennick in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989) 23b8 "This occupation [testing the truth of the oracle's pronouncement on Socrates] has kept me too busy to do much either in politics or in my own affairs."

[2] "Der Handelnde ist immer gewissenlos", Goethe, J.W.: Maximenen und Reflexionen. Werke, Hamburger Ausgabe XII, Munich: DTV, 1998, p. 399.

[3] This is an insight which we can find already with Socrates and the figure of the daimon and one which is deepened in Stoicism and given further articulation by Saint Augustine. The place of conscience for philosophy is, however, first given truly systematic treatment by Heidegger in sections 54–60 of *Being and Time*.

others and oneself, but rather to question the grounds of all such action.[4] To ask such questions is to open up the contingency of justice and responsibility in a way which our normal political and ethical commitments cannot justify.[5]

That is the crucial point here: philosophy is politically and ethically unjustifiable and it is so because it claims to put ethics and politics into question in such a manner that is politically and ethically irresponsible. Philosophy is not responsible to society, it is responsible to nothing, to no entity (*Seiende*). Philosophy is by its very calling irresponsible politically, ethically, personally. It is so for a reason which phenomenology first uncovered explicitly: only in breaking the *ties* of responsibility can responsibility be allowed to appear as itself.

In other words, philosophy as the pursuit of the taking and granting of the taken-for-granted, is only possible if thought is free to pursue that which gives itself to thought and has no other responsibility except to that. This may mean that the very pursuit of philosophy is questionable, but if so only on grounds which are philosophically question-begging.

Of course the philosopher is also a citizen, a lover, a friend, a colleague. What she thinks influences what she is in these relations and what she is in these relations influences what she thinks philosophically. But this influence is merely empirical: why *in fact* she thinks the way she does is something different to why she thinks, i.e. which way of thinking gives rise to, that same thought. Only the latter is relevant philosophically: only in relation to thinking, not to praxis, is a philosophical position open to question.

At another level, though, at the origins of philosophy the life of the philosopher was and is relevant. This is captured in the Socratic idea that virtue is knowledge. Contrary to Aristotle's critique, this does not amount to an unjustifiable optimism concerning human continence, but rather is the reverse side of a profound insight, that knowledge is virtue. In other words, to know the good is to be good, is to correspond proportionately to the good[6]: reasoning is proportional correspondence to the logos and only that which is of the same (*koinos*) nature can correspond. The fascination with the human arose essentially not out of some anthropological navel

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[4] It is only on the basis of such responsibility of the philosopher (one which in different ways was already made thematic by Nietzsche and Husserl) that Heidegger's account of authenticity in *Being and Time* can be understood.

[5] It may be objected that throughout the history of philosophy the claim has been made to the political relevance of philosophy. But philosophy is thinking and thinking has no effects, it alone brings nothing about. To act politically is to attempt to bring things about and such an attempt requires an understanding of the specific situation in which one finds oneself. If I may quote from Plato's seventh letter (325d–326a): "I who had at first been full of eagerness for a public career, as I gazed upon the whirlpool of public life and saw the incessant movement of shifting currents, at last felt dizzy, and while I did not cease to consider means of improving this particular situation and indeed of reforming the whole constitution, yet, in regard to action, I kept waiting for favourable moments". The time of action is not the time of philosophy (although I will attempt to show that they are closer for Heidegger than for Plato).

[6] Cf. Plato, "The Republic," trans. P. Shorey in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 508b7–508c1I.

gazing, but rather with the realisation that the human ultimately had nothing to which *out of necessity* it could correspond, but rather that such a correspondence was a task to be completed. The question how this was to be fulfilled depended on what that was to which human beings could strive to correspond. Philosophy's vocation was to aid this completion. Heidegger in *Being and Time* with the figure of Dasein and in later works with that of the 'mortal', repeats and at the same time disrupts that vocation.

12.2

The Greek legacy of philosophy is responded to differently in each epoch and phenomenology is characterized by the radicality of its response. A first clue can be taken from the slogan "*zu den Sachen selbst*", "back to that which itself matters".[7] That which matters to philosophy is the granting and taking of things, the appearing of things in their appearing for those to whom they appear. It is the great service of phenomenology to have renewed this age-old philosophical impulse. It is this which lies at the core of Husserl's claim to a presuppositionless science. The way to such a position for Husserl began and ended with the phenomenon: only there, with the appearance of things, with their granting, can philosophy begin to reach knowledge which is absolute – freed, ab-solved, of societal connections. This absolving from what Husserl termed the natural attitude took the form of a reduction, of a leading back (*re-ducere*), to that which came before all relationships, all commitments. Here quite strongly we can hear the echoes of the first paragraph of Descartes' *Meditations*, which themselves however merely echo Socrates' *Apology*. The leading back is not a return to some empirical ego, a return which would in effect amount to a reaffirming of the societal connections he wished to overcome, but rather a return to the very possibility of the ego. It is there in the transcendental ego that the taking and the granting of things are seen in their inner unity.

The epoché is a putting out of play of all worldly involvements. This sounds innocuous enough when discussed epistemologically, but it amounts to a radical putting out of play of all interested engagements, such that the ego is disinterested even – indeed especially – with respect to itself. All ongoing political and ethical relations and their attendant commitments and responsibilities are to be put out of play: only thus can we move from the natural to the philosophical attitude. It is not surprising that Husserl throughout his reflections on the epoché and the reduction questioned the motivation of what he sometimes termed a "conversion" to the philosophical attitude.[8] Finally the only appropriate justification is that of wonder: philosophical wonder points beyond the natural attitude. But what it points towards is not anything new, not something to be done, but rather the "phenomenological

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[7] This translation is of course tendentious, but no more so than "to the things themselves". In the end "*Sache*" is not translatable into English.

[8] For an illustrative example of this c.f. Husserl, E., *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 137.

residuum" which the epoché reveals, is one in which "we have not lost anything, but rather gained the total absolute being, which understood correctly contains all worldly transcendents within it".[9] This gain, however, is won precisely at the cost of my ethical and political relations as embedded in my natural attitude – in the philosophical attitude they are disclosed as those in which I am only disinterestedly involved.

If the philosopher must withdraw from societal connections, then the question arises as to whether he finds himself "beyond good and evil". Is he unconstrained and free from all convention? Certainly the case of Alcibiades shows how a limited appreciation of philosophy can suggest just that. Philosophy though is concerned with thinking, concerned with that which gives itself to thought. Such thinking is not calculation, but rather the becoming *as* that which is to be thought. It is first and foremost a responding to what calls to be thought. To respond it is necessary to wait. Philosophy from its beginnings knew of the necessity. To quote Heraclitus: "being (*phusis*) loves to conceal itself". (Diels/Kranz, B 123) Only a patient waiting can bring to sight what conceals itself. Phenomenology is rooted in this insight. "Back to that which itself matters" is a return *from* philosophy as argumentation, as the neutral working out of plausible positions, to that which shows itself as mattering, as being a matter which matters. The impatience of argument – which we often witness among analytic philosophers – is avoided in favour of a form of intellectual fitness programme which trains the philosopher to see and hear and feel and even smell and taste in a new and purified manner. The philosopher needs to correspond to that which shows itself. This is an exercise in patience and waiting, by which we can allow the thing to show itself to us.

That which itself matters in perception is an object which shows itself only in profile. To perceive the object fully, from all aspects, requires time or intersubjectivity: either the assumption of another point of view or of my own future point of view on the object. For the latter I must wait: that appearance as much with the house as with the boat coming up the river – to allude to Kant's examples[10] – is an appearance *to come*. And this waiting is in fact constitutive of appearance itself. For something to appear to me it must appear *as* something and how it appears either fulfils or disappoints my expectations. Either way I must wait on the thing, on its appearance. Waiting – and this is a basic phenomenological insight – is at the basis of all experience to the extent to which experience is temporal.

Now, certainly for Husserl phenomenology was governed by the paradigm of consciousness, in particular perceptual consciousness. Heidegger, for reasons central to his reworking of phenomenology, breaks with this paradigm. But for him too waiting lies at the core of philosophy. As he puts it at the end of his *Introduction to Metaphysics*,"to be able to question means to be able to wait" (*Fragen können heisst*

[9] E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Book One*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), 1950, 113.

[10] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929), B 232/A 189 – B256/A 211.

warten können).[11] Questioning meant for Heidegger being responsive to where we find ourselves (*sich befinden*). For him – as indeed for the later Husserl – we find ourselves in a time of crisis.

12.3

Philosophy for Husserl neither stands above the world nor acts within it, but rather reflects on the world as phenomenon. For Heidegger – as indeed for the later Husserl – such reflection requires a thinking of the crisis (the danger and the decision) which faces humankind at this historical time. The response to this crisis animates Heidegger's thinking from the 1919 "War Emergency" lectures to his last testament in the *Spiegel* interview. If philosophy asks about the possibility of politics and ethics, it must think historically.

I wish briefly to indicate what the crisis in which we find ourselves is for Heidegger, then look at what it is to be in a crisis, and finally how in thinking that crisis Heidegger opens up the possibility of a radically new politics and ethics. In all of this I wish to stress the element of correspondence (*Entsprechung*) which Heidegger never ceases to emphasise.

The crisis in which we live is not immediately evident. Certainly the signs are there, but what in fact the crisis is remains initially obscure. The crisis revolves around being, but the obscurity of the crisis is indicated by the fact that we think being is no longer an issue. "There is no crisis" because the issue has long been decided. To reveal the crisis Heidegger has to dig beneath the surface, his method for doing so he calls *Destruktion*. This method upsets the taken-for-grantedness of the taken-for-granted, or in Heidegger's terms the forgetting of the forgetting. *Destruktion* is a method of reduction. It leads back to an originating experience.[12] This does not mean that it brings us back to a primal stage, but rather to that which gets covered over when we – we in the legacy of Plato – start to philosophise.[13] We ask about the presence of things to consciousness, but we do not question the presencing itself. The granting of entities remains unthought. *Destruktion* is not the wilful destroying of ontology, but the listening to what is unsaid. While Husserlian phenomenology waited on the appearing of things, it did not allow that appearing as granting to appear because it made all appearing subject to consciousness. The problem for Heidegger is not so much the impossibility of the completion of the

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[11] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 206 (translation modified).

[12] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 20; "We understand this task as the destructuring [*Destruktion*] of the traditional content of ancient ontology … This destructuring is based upon the original experiences in which the first and subsequently guiding determinations of being were gained."

[13] Ibid., "its [destructuring's] critique concerns 'today'".

reduction,[14] as that Husserl did not carry the project far enough. While Husserl reduced things to their appearance for consciousness, Heidegger attempted to reduce entities to being.[15] To speak of a phenomenological reduction in Heidegger does not imply that he takes over the reduction as practiced by Husserl, manifestly he does not.[16] For Heidegger Dasein is not to be understood in terms of its sensual *kinaesthesia* in the manner of Husserl's account of sensibility, but rather as an entity (*Seiendes)* through which being is disclosed. "Dasein is its disclosedness [*Dasein ist seine Erschlossenheit*]."[17] Phenomena are reduced from the self-evidence of their appearance, to the *how* of their appearing.[18]

On the basis of fundamental moods, Heidegger questions the presence of entities as phenomena as to the coming to presence of such phenomena. This coming to presence which Heidegger terms unconcealment, indicates a concealment at the heart of appearance. This concealment cannot appear as an entity, cannot be made present (to consciousness), but – and this is Heidegger's attempt – may be allowed appear precisely as non-presence. This non-presence is – as Heidegger never tires of pointing out – addressed whenever we speak of the entity: this *is* a table, this *is* a jug. It comes to appearance not as a thing, rather as the granting of things to presence. Heidegger asks of the givenness of things, their granting. While for Husserl this question always meant givenness to consciousness (hence the principle of all principles),[19] for Heidegger the question is how being is given. To answer that question it is necessary to wait not simply for the appearance of a thing, but for that which makes both granting and taking possible. The unconcealment of entities which Heidegger calls truth (*aletheia*) is that which makes Dasein possible. But the emphasis on Dasein obscured the search for that which lies at the root both of taking and of granting. This could not itself be an entity, because then the question as to *its*

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[14] As Merleau-Ponty suggests, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C.Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1964*)*, viii.

[15] Cf. J-L. Marion, "Beings and Phenomenon" and "The Nothing and the Claim" in *Reduction and Givenness* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998). Far from discounting the need for the *epoché*, Heidegger's own account of the relation of the inauthentic to the authentic can best be understood precisely as an *epoché* which however happens to Dasein rather than being an act of Dasein. So understood the analysis of *Angst* becomes less (as is sometimes alleged) a psychological and firmly a phenomenological account as can be seen in the following famous passage: "In Angst the things at hand in the surrounding world sink away, and so do innerworldly beings in general. …Angst individuates Dasein to its ownmost being-in-the world [and] … discloses Dasein and *being-possible*." (Being and Time, pp. 175f.).

[16] Rudolf Bernet, indeed, states that "the difference [between Husserl and Heidegger] concerns the concept of the phenomenological reduction and the manner of carrying it out." (Bernet, "Phenomenological Reduction and the Double Life of the Subject" in T. Kisiel and J. van Buren, *Reading Heidegger from the Start. Essays in his earliest thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 258).

[17] *Being and Time*, p. 125 (translation modified).

[18] "To let that what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself." (*Being and Time*, p. 30).

[19] Cf. *Ideas I*, p. 52.

granting would arise. Rather, this is an event, a happening. This conclusion is glimpsed at the end of *Being and Time* in the section on historicity,[20] but receives its explicit statement only in the *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1938).[21]

The appearance of entities is possible only insofar as the granting of their appearance does not appear. But, for us, all that *is* what appears as objects. The crisis in which we find ourselves results hence from the almost total concealing of that granting, such that the human only meets the human.[22] But implicit since the Greek concept of proportional correspondence as task is that alterity is essential to being human: to be human is only possible in response to a claim which comes from elsewhere. This alterity though does not simply stand outside the human being, that would mean that the human was already decided. Rather, to be human is to be other, to be placed in the play of alterity. The crisis is precisely that the possibility of decision (*kritein*) has been removed. Decision involves the initiation of the new, the opening up of the future. Decision requires alterity. In Homer we read whenever the hero comes to a point of decision they are approached by a god or goddess.[23] From the goddess comes the beginning (*Anfang*), to which they then respond to in starting a new course of action. The beginning is not in human power because it is a break with what was, a move beyond all existing grounds (principle of sufficient reason). In Christianity this was known as *kairos*. This is a time which cannot be calculated, only prepared for; the time when an epiphany – the appearance of the wholly other – calls for response. This appearance is the appearing of appearing, the bringing to light of light, which both is and is not of the visible. Such alterity comes not from human beings, is not of human beings, but is only possible for human beings and by human beings. It calls for response.[24]

Response begins with an initiation from an other. The one who responds is the one upon whom a claim is made.. This claim – *Anspruch* – calls for a response, indeed a correspondence – *Entsprechen*. This speaking is not the expression of opinion or of knowledge, it arises out of a fundamental mood (*Grundstimmung*) where we are affected and speechless. Speechless because here is experienced not the given but the event of givenness itself. It is this which philosophy since its beginnings has attempted to respond to. Speechlessness though seems an unlikely place from which to approach politics or ethics. Yet while ethics and politics are in the

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[20] *Being and Time*, § 75.

[21] M. Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[22] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 27.

[23] Homer, *Iliad*, book 1 (200–260) where Achilles at a decisive moment in his confrontation with Agamemnon is approached by Athena who initiates a course of action which sets the course of much of the rest of the *Iliad*.

[24] On the importance of the concept of kairos for an understanding of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* and beyond see the author's *Zeit des Handelns und Moglichkeit der Verwandlung: Kairologie und Chronologie bei Heidegger im Jahrzehnt nach* "*Sein und Zeit*" (Wurzburg: Konigshausen & N., 1999).

realm of speech, the fluency of speech gliding over the rough edges actually spells their demise. To answer the claim of being is not to rehearse long learnt words, but rather the words which emerge from the speechlessness of mood arise out of response.[25] The speaking, which lies at the base of politics and ethics, responds to the claim and either corresponds to it or does not. The possibility to be human depends on such speaking, out of which political and ethical being with others emerges. Such speech attempts at response, its success cannot be known in advance, because it depends on no past. It is a speaking which allows the possibility of acting and dwelling.

The place of judgement here becomes particularly problematic and its basis essentially fragile. Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger speaks of the choice of a hero,[26] and this theme is continued in the 1930s with the discussion of the demi-gods in relation to Hölderlin.[27] Heidegger's own choice in 1933 of Hitler as 'hero' was a disastrous one. But in making that choice he had already given up the place of philosophy and mistaken his role as philosopher. That role was not to enter into the political domain, but to think the very possibility of speech out of speechlessness, a possibility which is essentially a-political, because it comes before any polis. It is here that Heidegger turns to the poet, in the hope that the poet has an ear for that which can be brought to language. But this does not amount to a turning away from the political. In his first lecture course on Hölderlin, in 1934, Heidegger makes clear that the poet, the statesman and the thinker are all three the creators (*die Schaffenden*) of the polis.[28] All three act outside the polis, but aim to establish the polis, i.e. the domain in which speech and discourse is possible.[29] Each of these three creators acts in the midst of the struggle of revealing and concealing, which in the "Artwork Lectures" Heidegger understood as a struggle between world and earth and later as a struggle of earth and sky, mortals and gods. Central to these accounts is the experience of making – poiesis. Poiesis, however, has been levelled off into mere production: the earth and all upon it, including human beings, have become mere material, standing reserve. The poetic ear for alterity has been deafened.

Yet the claim of being is to be heard, precisely as the claim of technology. Technology is, for Heidegger, not a human doing but rather is how entities are unhidden, how they are granted, in the current epoch. This sounds like fatalism and as such the death knell of any ethics and any politics. But that which is not a human doing, and not in human control, is not on that account blind necessity: such a conclusion would be based on a metaphysical dichotomy of human freedom and natural

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[25] See "Postscript to 'What Is Metaphysics?'" in *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 237.

[26] *Being and Time*, p. 352.

[27] M. Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen 'Germanien' und 'der* Rhein' Gesamtausgabe vol. 39, ed. S. Ziegler (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989).

[28] *Ibid*, p. 51 f.

[29] *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 152.

necessity. Freedom, for Heidegger, is not the realm of politics and ethics in contrast to nature as necessity. Freedom is rather that which makes politics and ethics possible in the first place and this possibility is a possibility of 'nature' (earth and sky). Freedom is a gift, a giving of space. It is in this sense that Heidegger can say that freedom is not a property of human beings, but rather that freedom is letting be of entities.[30] It is the opening in which entities appear. Freedom in the sense of the open is what politics and ethics require; they *are* indeed only through letting the open be. Without such opening, without the future as an aspect of time, action would be impossible. The open, however, *is* not except for the closed, the open is the disclosed. The possibility of freedom lies in the destining of being (*Seinsgeschick*), which is the gift of opening. This gift is contingent, is changeable.[31]

Such change Heidegger frequently characterises by a small word, *jäh*, which is generally translated as sudden or suddenly. The sudden is that which brings past and future to be in a decisive moment, precisely by differentiating them. This moment is not to be planned, not to be produced. If it were, it would simply amount to a continuation of what went before. Production depends on continuity, on the absence of surprise. The political and the ethical though can only arise through surprise, or at least a preparedness for surprise. Freedom is not the spontaneous capacity to control the future, but rather the preparedness for a future which is other. Such a preparedness opens up the possibility of change and transformation: it is a preparedness for the granting of a future which can only be taken in the mode of response. When the claim of technology is recognised, the granting of entities is disclosed. The taking of those entities is not a separate matter as the very entity which we are is itself standing reserve, is itself granted through technology. The taking is obscured because the granting is such that it hides itself as granting by making the one who takes – the human – into one more material resource. The possibility of corresponding to technology resides in the human capacity to see this granting as granting. How is that possible? It is possible precisely through the recognition that technology is not a human product. This recognition is the beginning of a response. Response begins with a recognition of our position as in the accusative case, of being subject to a claim, the claim of being itself which shows itself as that which matters.

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[30] "The Essence of Truth", in *Pathmarks*, p. 145 f.

[31] The implications of this are quite far-reaching in terms of Heidegger's critique of modernity. It is modernity which understands freedom purely as spontaneity. In such a view destiny as the givenness of a situation can only seem a curb on freedom. But freedom for Heidegger is the setting forth of a situation in which to act, and that lies not in the power of the individual actors but is a matter of destiny (*moira*, *fortuna*). In this Heidegger's position only seems strange to moderns. It is revealing to remember that for the Greeks even Zeus himself was subject to *moira*. Modernity, by subjectivising the Judaeo-Christian creator god, has distorted the relation of freedom and necessity. Cf.. Heidegger, "Moira" in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. D.F. Krell and F. Capuzzi (New York: Harper Collins, 1985), 50 ff.; see also W. McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye. Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory* (New York: SUNY Press, 1999), 143.

   With the exception of some oblique references, this essay has passed over Heidegger's Nazi engagement in silence. This engagement for all its sordid and scandalous nature can in its philosophical significance only be understood with reference to the wider legacy of philosophy. That legacy encountered a radicalisation with the phenomenological performance of the epoché and reduction which Heidegger brought to its political and ethical significance. As I have attempted to show, such a radicalisation does not amount to a 'holiday' from such ethical and political commitments and responsibilities, but a profound reflection upon them. Such a reflection places philosophy in essential relation to the time of politics and of ethics, to the historical. As such philosophy can neither be timeless nor engaged, but rather a thinking of the present *kairos*, the present decisive moment, in the opening of which ethics and politics are possible. Heidegger's legacy is to radicalize the philosophic disengagement from politics and ethics into a timely thinking of the historical destiny of the present in which, if at all, it is possible to act politically and ethically. Such thinking is a thinking which is prepared to wait.

Chapter 13
Othering

Robert Bernasconi

In this paper I address "othering," the differentiating that human beings sometimes employ in relation to each other in an effort to establish a distance between them. I limit "othering" to the relation with human beings and leave for another time consideration of a comparable process that can take place in relation to animals, to imaginary beings, and to things. The form of othering that I am concerned with here, othering between humans, thus takes shape across a certain sameness which constitutes a bond between the people being differentiated. Sometimes the very humanity of the other can be called into question, because the focus on differentiation can be so extreme. But even when this othering takes the form of denying that another human being is human, as has sometimes been the case in racial thinking, this still can take place across sameness. As Sartre liked to say, "To treat a man like a dog, you must first recognize him as a man." My concern in this paper is to expose as a gross oversimplification the model whereby one individual distances himself or herself from an other by objectifying them through a system of classification or through the gaze. One is oneself always implicated in this othering in complex ways and I will appeal to some of Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis in his late works to illustrate this.

What I am here calling "othering" has thus got nothing to do with what Emmanuel Levinas calls the relation to the Other. Levinas describes the face to face relation to the Other as a relation with an abstract face.[1] Levinas's Other is not different from me by virtue of any characteristics that he or she possesses, although

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[1] Emmanuel Levinas, "La signification et le sens," *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Montpelier: Fata Morgana, 1972), 57; trans. Alphonso Lingis, "Meaning and Sense," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. A. Peperzak, S. Critchley, and R. Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 59.

R. Bernasconi (✉)
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA
e-mail: rlb43@psu.edu.

at one time Levinas seems to have wondered if what we now call gender is an exception.[2] It is true that Levinas offers an account of the Other as widow, orphan, poor person, or stranger, but I believe that it is a mistake to think of these terms as sociological categories in this context. Levinas's Other arrives without a place in society. I am dispossessed in the face of the Other, but without my having to calculate which of us has more. By contrast, my concern here is with how othering operates concretely in society, beyond the artificial abstractions of the usual philosophical models of a dialectic of recognition, an objectifying gaze, or the radical separation of absolute alterity. I can leave open the question of whether or not Levinas's account can and should be reconciled with mine, because othering as I mean it here is always determinate.

The usual models for thinking about the categories by which people designate themselves or others as members of some group or other are far too simple. They tend to rely on a form of oppositional thinking, as when one thinks in terms of Catholic and Protestant, Christian and Jew, Black and White, male and female. Social identities are never formed in isolation but always shaped within a complex intersecting network that implicates all the other social identities operative at a given time. To group individuals according to identifiable features such as skin color, size, gender, length of hair, choice of clothing and so on, usually means that they do not conform to some norm that we have established for ourselves. But this does not mean that their otherness constitutes a simple negation, and one should not forget those other others who are not the others against whom I define myself but with whom I identify in spite of their otherness. We often associate some group or other with a certain set of qualities as a way of denying that our group shares these same characteristics. Nevertheless, to the extent that we associate these characteristics with a group to the point where we identify it with them, then they cease merely to embody these characteristics: they *are* these things for us pure and simply. Suburban Whites often see young Black men as a potential source of danger irrespective of the true circumstances. They see a threat, even where there is none. By the same token, one group is lazy, another is dishonest or miserly, and so on, in spite of all evidence to the contrary.

Anxieties are not the only source of othering. There are, for example, also desires. When I desire something I readily assume that others share the same desire. But in those cases when I do not admit the existence of this desire in myself, then it is othering. Nor is this limited to desire, but extends to other concerns. I plot so I see plots everywhere, but I imagine that it is everybody else who plots, whereas I am merely goal-directed. Furthermore, my outrage at certain things have their source in me. It seems that among the most vociferous opponents in Congress of President Clinton's sexual "indiscretions" as President were some who were themselves adulterers.

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[2] "The notion of a transcendent alterity – one that opens time – is at first sought starting with an *alterity-content* – that is, starting with femininity." Emmanuel Levinas, "Preface," in *Le temps et l'autre* (Montpelier: Fata Morgana, 1979), 14; trans. Richard Cohen, "Preface," in *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 36.

In stereotyping, someone, whether an individual or a collective does not matter, sees another or others in terms of some abstract quality or character which has come to be linked with some other more obvious feature. Presented in this way it might seem that we are dealing with false inferences, and racism and sexism are sometimes attacked as such. So the question of whether it is rational or right for Whites to fear a Black man walking toward them on a lonely street after dark is debated in part with reference to statistics, just as government agencies may target people with a certain profile as appropriate objects for scrutiny as potential terrorists. Clearly it is important to know what the statistics say and to allow reason its role, but it is also important to know how our prejudices operate, so that we can scrutinize them effectively. An analysis that shows the complexity of our othering will remain incomplete if it does not also enrich correspondingly the means we employ to combat its worst effects when othering becomes prejudicial. For example, there was a time when one could combat racism by pointing to exceptions to the dominant racial characterizations. This was persuasive in a time of racial essentialism but with the advent of statistical racism enshrined since Galton in Quetelet's bell-curve, occasional exceptions confirm the account as much they refute it. This indeed is why "the exception proves the rule" no longer means that the exception tests or disproves the rule.

Stereotyping as a form of othering says almost as much about the perceiver as about the perceived. It reveals my concerns, very often my anxieties about myself. The attempt to project elsewhere, to thrust away, what I most dislike about myself is often central to the process of othering. I characterize the other as superstitious or spontaneous as part of my ambivalence about my own superstitions or spontaneity. To be sure, it only strikes us that someone is projecting in this way when the original observation is so implausible that those who hear it find themselves obliged to seek an explanation for it in the speaker. It can happen that the projected characteristics are ultimately positive, but even in such cases the process of stereotyping remains negative because of the expectations it creates.

When White people labeled certain groups "primitive," a whole set of assumptions come into play not just about them, but also about the Whites in relation to them: an alleged White superiority, reasonableness, and rationality, was being posited in contrast with their supposed inferiority, illogicality, and ignorance. A similar logic persisted in the contrast between "the civilized" and "savages" in spite of the fact that those called "civilized" perpetrated atrocities on those they called savages. Indeed, they could act that way only because these others were characterized as savage, whereas we who abuse them are not.

Another form of othering is exoticisation. Nothing is inherently exotic. The exotic is produced by a process which recontextualizes specifically in ways relative to us.[3] A culture can similarly be made to appear exotic. To characterize the other as primitive or exotic is in a sense to silence the other; it is to enclose the other in a cocoon

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[3] Peter Mason, *Infelicities. Representations of the Exotic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 3.

from which he or she does not and cannot speak to me as an equal.[4] Although not excluded from reason altogether, the other as primitive or exotic is not rational in the same way or to the same degree as I am. Nevertheless, what is decisive here is that both the primitive and the exotic are in their otherness also ourselves. In the case of primitives, they are ourselves in an entirely different guise: they are what we believe we were and are no longer and can never be again. In primitivisation, we recognize something of ourselves but at the same time we disown that part of ourselves. Hence the primitives are not yet like us, although we might think that perhaps they could become so over time under our direction. In exoticisation, we romanticize what we disown. The exotic are also ourselves by virtue of the way in which they are not like us. They are usually a projection of our desires for ourselves.[5]

For example, some Europeans chose to identify themselves with reason and so came to identify emotion as African. This was a way of disowning passion brought about in part by a certain religious culture which highlighted the practice of self-control. But subsequently these Europeans or their heirs developed a passion for passion. This resulted in the exoticisation of African art, African music, African culture and so on – albeit one that did not alter the hierarchy of societies in any fundamental way – and that in addition tended to understand that culture in simplistic ways.

There are cultures where "the man" comes to understand himself as the embodiment of discursive reason and mastery, and so he thinks of "the woman" as emotional, intuitive and subservient. In such cultures, when the man falls in love, loses his head, prostrates himself before his beloved, his emotions are paramount as he awaits the time when the object of his affections accepts his offer of marriage, which is presented to her as a rational decision: "I have property, an income. I bring you the promise of security." And yet acceptance of the offer is supposed to restore the proper order: the mastery of reason over passion, the mastery of the man over the woman. Insofar as anything like this actually happens, it happens because each one is performing a role, acting not as themselves but as they are supposed to act, acting as other men and women act. This observation leads naturally to a consideration of Sartre's contribution to this theme.

I am not thinking so much of Sartre's account in *Being and Nothingness* where the Other threatens me with his or her gaze and takes the initiative away from me, but *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, which is unfortunately less well-known. In *Critique of Dialectical Reason* Sartre describes how, particularly in cities, people tend to live their lives as a plurality of isolations. This does not mean that they are independent individuals. Sartre shows how the isolated individual is a myth, a false abstraction, a distortion of reality. Each one of us lives our isolation by living

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[4] There was a time when a society or a people could be both primitive and exotic, but the dominance of certain ideas of economic and social development have made this less likely. Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity. Nationalism, Racism and Exoticism in French Thought*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 266.

[5] See further, Robert Bernasconi, "Lévy-Bruhl among the Phenomenologists: Exoticisation and the Logic of the Primitive," *Social Identities* 11, no. 3 (May 2005): 229–245.

in everyone else's project negatively. Sartre calls this process "seriality" and his most famous example is the bus queue where we are formally identical insofar as we share the same aim of getting on the bus, but have a unity that is simply negative insofar as my place in line cannot be explained simply by reference to me, but must refer to all the others whose place in line is equally not a function of themselves but relative to the others. Sartre summarizes this idea by saying that everyone's fate is determined "as Other *by every Other as Other*."[6] That is to say, each person has their place in line not on their own account but as other than the others, whereas these others equally depend on everyone else for having the place in line that they have. Each is not only other than the other but also other than himself.[7]

Sartre applies this notion of a serial unity in order to explicate social identities. So, for example, Jews, as members of a minority grouping, submit to a "perpetual being-outside-themselves-in-the-other" which, when it is embraced with conscious lucidity, amounts to a responsibility for all other Jews and being at mercy in turn for what they do insofar as what one Jew does comes to be associated with them all.[8] Similarly a colonialist who beats his colonial servant may do so for no better reason than that this is what a colonialist does in such circumstances.[9]

These are Sartre's examples, but it is easy to supplement them with other examples. Consider a Black family in the United States that buys a house in a predominately White area. White families may start to put their houses on the market not because they are at all impacted by the family directly, but because of a conviction that Others – other White families – might do so, and prices will fall. They act not as themselves but as other than themselves, that is to say, as White families act. What makes Sartre's analysis so rich is that he clarifies that it is a mistake to think of othering simply as a differentiation relative to me or my group because I can be another to myself, as in a case like this one where the White family acts as a White family in spite of itself because the social context makes a certain set of actions rational even though nobody is willing to own them. Thus even in a situation where there might in fact be no White family that would refuse to buy a house in a certain neighborhood simply because a Black family has moved there, so long as that is not known for sure then White families will act as if they were that family. Or to put it otherwise there need be no racists, one need not even think that there are racists, one need only think that some other people might think that there are racists for one to believe it rational to act as a racist would act, at least according to a short-term calculative conception of rationality.

Seriality can also be used to explicate the charged character of politics that arises from the passivity of receiving political messages through the media as opposed to being at a meeting where one's reaction is an integral part of the event.[10] Listening

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[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London: Verso, 1976), 261.

[7] Sartre, *Critique*, 266.

[8] Sartre, *Critique*, 268.

[9] See further, Robert Bernasconi, "Sartre and Levinas: Philosophers Against Racism and Antisemitism" in *Race after Sartre*, ed. Jonathan Judaken (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 113–127.

[10] Sartre, *Critique*, 270–272.

to a distant voice on the radio or on television, one is conscious not only of the impotence that arises from being in no position to respond, but also of the fact that others are listening and one has no way to reach these others directly, except possibly by a letter to the newspaper, which is simply to answer seriality with seriality. In any event, one is no longer listening to this voice coming from the Other as oneself, but listening to it as it might be listened to by Others.[11] Furthermore, to apply Sartre's analysis to contemporary politics in the United States, this voice often presents itself as expressing not simply the beliefs of the individual speaker, but the views of everyone it addresses. It tells them what they are supposed to think already: "The American people stand for x;" "the American people know y." A loyal United States citizen who wants to be a "good American" and who hears this and who does not share these beliefs is faced with a discrepancy within him- or herself. But that same person will likely at the same time be concerned about this form of rhetoric which is designed to make passive listeners go along with it without thinking, because it tells them what they are supposed already to know. They are being invited by the speaker no longer to think according to their individual will, their particularity, but to submit to the general will. This amounts to a manipulation of the series. Sartre discusses it with relation to the phenomenon whereby once a recording hits the top ten then its sales tend to multiply: it becomes a recording I must have because the Other has it and so I listen to it "as an Other, adapting my reactions to those which I anticipate in Others."[12] Of course, this applies to all aspects of fashion.

At the heart of Sartre's account of seriality is the impotence of the individual.[13] This impotence is perhaps nowhere more clearly experienced today than in the seriality of the secret ballot and the discrepancy that exists between our ideas of what democracy should be and the reality we exist. When voting took place in public, as, for example, through much of the nineteenth century or even in trade union student union meetings in Europe in the 1960s, there was a sense of a collective coming together to express itself. These collectives were not a collection of individuals whose views were established mathematically. They came into existence in the process and disappeared as easily. However, voting privately behind a curtain one's action has no meaning until later when the count is announced and even then the results await the interpretation that is put on it by politicians and media before it actually counts as saying something beyond "I prefer this one to the others." My individual reasons for voting one way or another may never be known, but some will say that this politician was given a mandate by the electorate to do certain things, whereas others will say it was simply a protest vote. There is no controlling mechanism to interpret it. Knowing this, the voter now has to second guess the process. Smart politicians manipulate the votes by suggesting ahead of time how their vote might be interpreted: this vote which happens to be for a representative of a political party that is for withdrawing the troops is apparently going to tell the

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[11] Sartre, *Critique*, 274–275.

[12] Sartre, *Critique*, 646.

[13] Sartre, *Critique*, 227 and 309.

terrorists they can attack with impunity. In this way my vote is no longer my own. It has been wrested from me.

That is not to say that I cannot try to take my vote back. So I watch the opinion polls and if I see one side winning easily or without my help, I strategically shift my vote to register a protest. I am now voting, not as this individual operating in isolation without any communication, as Rousseau had wanted,[14] but in relation to how I anticipate the others will vote and with an eye to how still other others will interpret the sum of all our votes.

I have argued here that the problem with the conventional understanding of othering is that the other is thought of as differentiated from me following the simple model of the gaze, as in the early Sartre. This tends to underwrite the individualism of modern society. Particularly in the United States people like to think they somehow have a right to be seen as they want to be seen, that each individual can choose his or her own social identity. This is an understandable reaction to unjust stereotyping, but it seems to be an attempt to replace the violence of imposing a false identity on someone with an impossible ideal of how society might work, impossible because it neglects the action of othering. By contrast, the later Sartre points with unprecedented clarity to structures that radically displace this highly exaggerated abstract individualism. I hope to have done enough here to suggest that Sartre's account in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* takes us beyond individual projection, because it is rooted in the social conditions that transcend, even as they implicate, the individual. Othering may be employed as a way of differentiating oneself from some others, but it does not always accomplish what it sets out to establish. We must learn to read this process differently in order both to understand better what lies behind it and to counter it when necessary.

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[14] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 61.

Part III
Aesthetic Practice and Critical Community: Friendship

Chapter 14
Otogogy, or Friendship, Teaching and the Ear of the Other

Graham Allen

14.1   Teaching, Friendship, Responsibility

> Efforts to determine the character of friendship and its entailment from the perspective of humanity itself would include individual human beings, persons in one-to-one relationships and in larger relational groups, such as families, local communities, societies, states, societies of nations, etc. The deconstructive perspective would highlight changed and changing contextual perspectives on issues and hold open to question and challenge all claims regarding universal ideals and principles and the evaluation criteria appropriate to them.[1]

It would also, I'd like to add, include teaching, a philosophical and historical understanding of the relationship between friendship and teaching, and a deconstructive analysis of the problematics of that relationship accompanied by the more "empiricist" approach envisaged by Tony O'Connor in his "O Friend, Where Art Thou?." It's a good question, my friend's question. It immediately takes me back to the text which made me first realise quite how inextricably linked teaching and friendship were for those writers (philosophers, novelists, poets, political theorists) who emerged from the Age of Reason and found themselves in a post-revolutionary nineteenth-century. Friendship, by the way, would also include literature and the relationship between literature and philosophy. There is thus a kind of inevitable surplus force created by this kind of list, and this paper will attempt to exploit some part of that force in its focus on teaching and friendship.

The text I have just referred to is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a novel in which the need for friendship, the call for friendship, and the possibility or impossibility of

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[1] Tony O'Connor, "O Friend, Where Art Thou?: Derridean Deconstruction and Friendship" in *Formless: Ways In and Out of Form*, ed. Patrick Crowley and Paul Hegarty (Oxford and Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 39–51; here: p. 51.

G. Allen (✉)
School of English, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland
e-mail: g.allen@ucc.ie

friendship are central concerns. To emphasize this fact, Shelley added a passage, an echo of lines from Shakespeare's *Richard III*, in the 1831 edition of her novel. Walton and Frankenstein ("the stranger") are discussing their common desire to find a friend, and the latter states: "I agree with you … we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves – such a friend ought to be – do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures."[2] Without the friend, so Frankenstein's logic runs, and so the novel dramatically shows, we are half-creatures, or to employ the phrase used by her father, William Godwin, abortive men. A friend is the other who teaches us to become that perfectionized unity we are capable of becoming, who enables an ontological redoubling memorably articulated in Montaigne's text.[3] But a friend also acts as a teacher, an instructor beyond or outside of the malforming structures of power, hierarchy and force normally associated with the teaching scene. This is, at least, what the Rousseauvian account of teaching attempts to establish in *Émile*, but in a staged, physically and verbally rhetorical manner which made Mary Shelley's father attack Rousseau for perverting the idea of a friendship based teaching.[4] The problem must be surmounted, according to Godwin, if we are to ever produce that truly rational mode of education which would in its turn help to establish a truly rational society. The dream of the Enlightenment depends upon the idea of a coincidence between friendship and teaching.

This is where the work of Derrida can help us as thinkers and teachers. Derrida's work allows us to contemplate and even live an approach to ethics and to knowledge which recognizes the unattainable nature of universalist ideas (concerning justice, responsibility, hospitality) without giving up on them. Enlightenment ideas of justice, responsibility and hospitality are, to employ a phrase Derrida often uses in his later work, *impossibly possible*, they are ideas which can never be fully and finally established, founded, authorized, and yet they are the ideas we should face towards, that we cannot do without.[5] So, instead of taking sides in a move already compromised

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[2] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; Or*, *The Modern Prometheus*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, 8 vols., ed. Nora Crook, vol. 1, p. 187. The Shakespeare reference is to Richard's self-image in his first speech, *Richard III*, I.i. 20–21.

[3] "Our souls were yoked together in such unity, and contemplated each other with so ardent affection, and with the same affection revealed each other to each other right down to the entrails, that not only did I know his mind as well as I knew my own but I would have entrusted myself to him with greater assurance than to myself." Montaigne, "On affectionate relationships" in *The Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 205 – 219; here: p. 213.

[4] "There is an essential disparity between youth and age; and the parent or preceptor is perhaps always an old man to the pupil …. Rousseau has endeavoured to surmount this difficulty by the introduction of a fictitious equality. It is unnecessary perhaps to say more of his system upon the present occasion, than that it is a system of incessant hypocrisy and lying." *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7 Vols, Gen. ed. Mark Philp (London: William Pickering, 1993) vol. 5, p. 131.

[5] See, for instance, Derrida's *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago/London: The Chicago University Press, 1996); *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); *On Cosmopolitabism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London/New York: Routledge, 2002).

by its assumption that there are clear and stable sides to be taken, we preserve and defend the Enlightenment by asking questions of it, and we preserve and defend teaching by asking questions of it; questions which, currently, are illegitimate in an academic environment in which transparency and calculability are the law.

I have always admired and loved my friend's, Tony O'Connor's, teaching, having seen its results time and time again in the thought and the behaviour of the students who have received it as a gift. Yet Tony O'Connor, my friend, is leaving the academic teaching environment at a moment in which the dominant force is a linguistic and an economic performativity: *teaching must be calculable*; *teaching must be transparent*; *teaching must be productive*; *teaching must be responsible*; *teaching must be evaluatable, auditable*; *teaching must be visible, its methods reproducible and shareable*. All these demands on teaching might sound reasonable, until we register the fact that they come to us by way of legalistic demands which implicitly, and increasingly explicitly, put a bar on what my friend and I might call philosophical thinking on teaching. A techno-bureaucratic statement of the current performative culture might demand that teaching must be calculable; a philosophical question might be to ask whether teaching concerns or does not concern *Bildung*, and if it does whether it could ever, logically, rationally, anticipate (in advance) its own effects. Techno-bureaucratic agencies, however, are quite capable of demanding that teaching include *Bildung* and be calculable. Philosophy and teaching, at that point, find themselves eased out of the picture, sidelined as non-economic luxuries, part of the expendable, side issues of reason and thought, where thought is defined as that mental process which does not already know, in advance, its own outcome, its own products.

But is it responsible, in this performative environment of transparency, where everything must be visible, calculable and productive, simply to return to the questions such a transparent ideology conceals? To stock-pile the questions and aporias, the contradictions and incompatibilities? As if, in the name of a reason to come, one were building an arsenal of weapons not yet available for use? I would venture to say that the answer is no, that responsibility, responsible teaching, must involve something more. There are, after all, students in front of us, people whose futures we as teachers will effect one way or another. I think Tony O'Connor would argue that responsibility cannot simply be posited in the to-come, and I think Derrida would and indeed did say the same thing. The link I have been remembering, in the name of my friend, between teaching and friendship is the marker of this unavoidable responsibility, since friendship (whether or not it is possible in its Enlightenment senses) would have to be extended towards the students, offered as a gift, without reserve and without calculation (or at least without the calculable) for teaching to occur.

14.2 Otogogy

Derrida, in "Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name," remarks on having too little time. The rhythm he employs is fast paced, the pace of a spoken address. Derrida evokes and utilizes a certain freedom—he cites in

this context "academic freedom," he says "I repeat: a-ca-dem-ic free-dom—you can take it or leave it" (*O*, p. 4).[6] This freedom is the academic freedom of the philosopher who could say more, who could fill in the gaps between and within his aphorisms, who could make the connections between the texts discussed and all the countless other texts which could connect to those discussed. The academic freedom of the philosopher who is speaking to the ears of the other and wants those ears to be small ones, capable of registering differences.

What I want to talk about is otogogy, a neologism of my own making which I do not intend to expressly define (you will hear it or you will not), and I want to do so by looking a bit more closely and a bit more slowly than Derrida does at Nietzsche's *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*.[7] Derrida's "Otobiographies" text concerns the legacy of Nietzsche's texts and Nietzsche's name; it concerns how Nietzsche's name inherits from the future to which it calls. It is about how autobiography ultimately becomes biography, that is how the text by the author on himself, the text which ventures (puts forth) the author's name, must ultimately come to mean what it means because it is read and signed (given meaning) by those who read it (rather than by the author him-or-herself). The essay is also about how the worst returns in the future, in place of the future. The essay is about this and about how Nietzsche already knows it. Nietzsche writes: "I know my fate …. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something monstrous." (*O*, p. 31) Even though the real monster for Nietzsche is society, the culture machine, the "hypocritical hound" which "whispers in your ear through his educational systems, which are actually acroustic and acroamatic devices" which make "your ears grow larger" until you turn into long-eared asses—even though there is a whole critique of the "culture machine" in Nietzsche's text(s), it remains the fact, as Derrida states, that "[t]here is nothing contingent about the fact that the only political regimen to have *effectively* brandished his [F.N 's] name as a major and official banner was Nazi." (*O*, p. 31) It remains a fact that Nietzsche, at least Derrida's Nietzsche, knew this, knew and argued that, to quote Derrida's reading, "all post-Hegelian texts have this potential to go in two ways—left or right—including, by implication, his own texts—there is no guarantee—there is only a destination of the text—to the ear of the other—the post-Hegelian other." (*O*, p. 32) There is no guarantee. No calculability in one's texts and, by implication, one's teaching. It can always, potentially, end up resembling what Derrida calls the "poisoned milk which has …. gotten mixed up in advance with the worst of our times." (*O*, p. 7)

Nietzsche's 1872 *On the Future of our Educational Institutions* is full of monsters and full of ears. It is the text in which Hitler saw confirmation of his own ideologies in Nietzsche's references to a great *Führer* (someone we—students and teachers—need, according to Nietzsche). It is a text against the modernizing of university and

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[6]Derrida, Jacques, 'Otobiographies : The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name,' Jacques Derrida (ed.), *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques* Derrida (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985) Hereafter cited as O.

[7]Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, trans. Michael W. Grenke (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2004). Hereafter cited as FEI.

secondary school (the German Gymnasium) and in particular the tendencies of *extension* (democratization or massification) and *diminution* (service to the state). Nietzsche's text is uncanny and disturbing, if we listen to it closely. It is a text which seems to speak against our basic political ideas and ideals, and yet in which we cannot help but see the voice of something that looks like friendship. I will return to this.

Against the modern trends of *extension* and *diminution*, Nietzsche argues for the "truly German" tendencies of *narrowing* and *concentration*. Nietzsche's argument involves a wholesale critique of the modern idea of academic freedom: the academic freedom of the teacher and the academic freedom of the student. Academic freedom concerns our ears and our hands, as well as our mouths, Nietzsche argues. In the fifth lecture, Nietzsche's old, grey-haired philosopher (of whom more in a moment) imagines a hypothetical conversation with a foreigner about the "university only as an educational institution [Bildungsanstalt]." (*FEI*, p. 106) The foreigner asks: "how is the student connected with the university with you?" And the old, grey-haired philosopher states: "through the ear." Yes, repeats the old, grey-haired philosopher, "Only through the ear." He explains:

> The student listens. When he speaks, when he sees, when he walks, when he is sociable, when he practices the arts, in short, when he lives, he is independent, i.e. not dependent on the educational institution. Very frequently the student immediately writes something as he hears it. These are the moments in which he hangs on the umbilical cord of the university. He can chose what he wants to hear, he does not need to believe what he hears, he can close his ears if he does not like to hear. This is the "acroamatic"[8] method of teaching. (ibid)

We could come back to that tantalising word "acroamatic" later, perhaps. Nietzsche goes on to describe how the teacher, separated from the students by a "monstrous gap," speaks whatever he wants to the students. So that the scene of modern Gymnasium teaching, becomes that of

> One speaking mouth and very many ears with half as many writing hands—that is the external academic apparatus, that is the educational [culture – bildung] machine of the university in action. (*FEI*, pp. 106)

This is the "acroamatic" "mouth to ear" scene of modern "academic freedom," which ultimately leaves the student able to open or close his ears at will. This is the vision of education against which the old, grey-haired philosopher speaks. *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* is cast in a fictional, operatic, one might almost say Wagernian form (Wagner was in the audience for the second lecture). The text has an introduction and a preface. In the latter Nietzsche dedicates his text to the few "calm readers," a "few human beings," "not swept up in the dizzying haste of our rolling age," readers (only a few) who "still have time" to contemplate "our education" and who have "still not unlearned how to think" while they read; they "still understand[s] how to read the secret between the lines" (*FEI*, p. 19).[9]

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[8] "Acroama," "Acroamata": "1580. from *Gk*. Anything heard, f. hear. 1. A rhetorical declamation (as opp. to an argument); 2. *Anc. Phil.* Oral teaching heard only by the initiated; *esoteric* as opp. to *exoteric* doctrines. Hence: Acroamatic adj. orally communicated; esoteric; secret." (OED).

[9] Of course, as Derrida makes clear, the addresses or lectures were not published in Nietzsche's time. Whenever they have subsequently been published they have been so against Nietzsche's express prohibition.

    The plot of this text involves two young students (one of whom is Nietzsche) who, 5 year's previously, dedicated their lives to founding a "small union of a few comrades, with the intention to find for our productive inclinations in art and literature a firm and obligatory organization." (*FEI*, p. 23) The two young students have come back to Rolandseck on the Rhine to celebrate in "a thankful, indeed ceremonious, feeling" this initial founding "inspiration." In shooting their pistols they disturb the old, grey-haired philosopher, his dog and a "somewhat younger man" who accompanies him. The old man is furious, since he says that the shooting of their pistols represents "a true assassination attempt against philosophy." (*FEI*, p. 28) The old man is, it turns out, waiting for his "old friend," one of "our first philosophers" and the young students have disturbed his preparatory thoughts. (*FEI*, p. 31) Nietzsche's student (the student that is "Nietzsche") realizes that there may indeed be something to be gained by listening to the old philosopher's conversation with his younger companion (*FEI*, pp. 33–34). This latter is a man who has given up a teaching career in disgust. Repeating on demand the philosopher's "cardinal principle" concerning education, "how unbelievably small the number of really educated ones finally is and can be in general" (p. 34), it is the younger companion who presents a critique of the current educational trends of extension and diminution. The old philosopher at one point interrupts him in agreement: "The most general education is just barbarism." (*FEI*, p. 38) and, prompted by his companion, begins a sustained critique of the current Gymnasium system; a critique which rests on the manner in which German youth have been barbarously emancipated from a strict education in the German classics. This is a betrayal, he argues, of the most fundamental aspect of education, the "*one* healthy and natural starting point" of education, which is "the artistic, serious, and rigorous habituation in the use of the mother tongue." (*FEI*, p. 54) The true task of the educator is to bring "the ones little gifted" into "a holy terror [Schreck] before the language, the gifted ones into a noble inspiration for the same." (*FEI*, p. 45)

    The old man insists that the only thing that will bring back to the masses a genuine culture (*Bildung*) is an educational system which serves to inspire a few heroes of the mother tongue: "Thus education of the mass cannot be our goal: rather education of the individual, selected human beings equipped for great and lasting works." (*FEI*, p. 66) The current educational institutions, the Gymnasium and the university, serve the state; whereas educational institutions which genuinely give birth to culture, which form culture, serve the masses and the mother tongue by breeding out of them men of genius which should be "ripened and nourished in the mother's lap of the culture of a people." (*FEI*, p. 67). The two young students, enthused by hearing a philosophy not intended for them, leap up to thank the philosopher, who has completely forgotten their presence. The students, however, insist that the philosopher stay to speak to them more and wait for the arrival of his philosophical friend. Finally, they hear the sounds of the philosopher's friend (one of "our first philosophers") travelling towards them on the lake. The old man asks the students to fire their pistols in rhythm to the song emanating from the friend's boat, but they misfire, shoot unrhythmically, and it turns out that the friend is arriving with a bunch of students, friends of the young students who have already so inconvenienced the

philosopher. This sends him into a rage and his anger is hardly appeased when the students and the companion ask the philosopher to now speak about the university, adding that surely it can be said that the Gymnasium at least fits some young men to embark on an independent course of study. That they have not been listening carefully enough is obvious here; and it is here that we get the philosopher's long discourse on the university as a place of ears and mouths and scribbling hands: an education (culture) machine for the service of the state. The Gymnasium gives no guidance to the young student, academic freedom turns out to be isolation: "Free!" the philosopher says, mockingly: "Test this freedom you knowers of human beings!" (*FEI*, p. 108) Instead of an education (*Bildung* – formation, cultural formation) the young student of the Gymnasium and the University is left bewildered by "the unendurable burden of standing alone." (*FEI*, p. 112)

Derrida writes, paraphrasing the argument of this section of the text (which, in many ways, is the argument of the whole text): "The whole misfortune of today's students can be explained by the fact that they have not found a *Führer*. They remain *führerlos*, without a leader." (*O*, p. 28) This is the part of the text, in other words, in which the infamous references to the need for a great *Führer* occur. I would, however, add that there are two sides to the misfortune, or tragedy, of "today's students." One side is, indeed, being *führerlos*; but the other side is being isolated, bewildered, burdened, lost. I say these are two sides, I separate them, since it is where come the most direct calls for a great *Führer*, that we also get the most humane, the most touching, the most affective and pathos-driven, the most teacherly speech from that cross, irritated, irascible, contrary, apparently flawed, friendless, or at least lingering (friend-lingering) grey-haired, old philosopher. This is the moment, in other words, when the constantly erupting anger of the old, grey-haired philosopher displays what? Sensibility? Parental concern? Fatherly outrage? Maternal care? What would we call—and how do we hear—this anger for the lost student?

> …. for that time, in which he is apparently the single free man in clerk's and servants' reality, he pays for that grandiose illusion of freedom through ever-renewing torments and doubts. He feels that he cannot lead himself, he cannot help himself: then he dives poor in hopes into the daily world and into daily work: the *most trivial* activity envelops him, his members sink into flabbiness. Suddenly he again rouses himself: he still feels the power, not waned, that enabled him to hold himself aloft. Pride and noble resolution form [bilden] and grow in him. It terrifies him to sink so early into the narrow, petty moderation of a speciality, and now he grasps after supports and pillars in order not to be dragged along in that course. In vain! These supports give way; for he had made a mistake and held tight to brittle reeds. In an empty and disconsolate mood he sees his plans go up in smoke: his condition is abominable and undignified … And thus his helplessness and the lack of a leader toward culture [Bildung] drives him from one form of existence into another: doubt, upswing, life's necessity, hope, despair, everything throws him to and fro, as a sign, that all the stars above him according to which he could pilot his ship are extinguished. (*FEI*, pp. 111–112)

I will say— without hiding anything—that I see myself in this picture. That is me, there, in the picture! Driven this way and that way, with no foundation, with no steady, guiding principle, method or, dare I say it (me a university lecturer!), *Bildung*. A formless thing, elevating my work, only then to see it as nothing, striving after a voice and a vision, only to plummet into a sea of texts I feel I will never master or

even assimilate. I also see my students in that passage. My post-graduate students, most definitely. But also my best (and what does that mean?) undergraduate students. The ones that show themselves from within the mass (massified) ranks. And show themselves, usually, almost invariably, because they are lost, awakened to something they cannot live with and now cannot live without. Those students who show themselves to me for what? For guidance? For leadership? Me? Students who often seem to want me to say *this is it*, say, *deconstruction is it*, say *be a deconstructionist*, or say *be a Marxist*, *or a psychoanalytical literary critic*, or *this kind of feminist*, or *that kind*, say *be a historicist*, or *a formalist*. Students who seem to want me to guide them, to lead them, the ones who have somehow (is it through me?) learnt the difference between *Erziehung* and *Bildung*. So, imagine my reading, you may well be able to hear it, it may be entirely lost on you, when the old, grey-haired philosopher goes on, in his anger, thus:

> Oh the miserable guilty-innocents …. For they lack something, each of them must have come up against this. They lack a true educational institution that could give them goals, masters, methods, models, fellows and from whose interior the powerful and elevating breath of the true German spirit would stream toward them. Thus they starve in the wilderness; thus they degenerate into enemies of that spirit which at bottom is intimately related to them; thus they pile up guilt upon guilt more heavily than any other generation ever has piled up, soiling the pure, desecrating the holy, pre-canonizing the false and the phoney. In them you may come to consciousness about the educational power of our universities and lay before yourselves in all seriousness the question: What do you promote in them? (*FEI*, p. 114)

What do you promote in them? The old, grey-haired philosopher finishes this speech by returning to the true "German spirit" which the teacher should promote in those few who are capable of rising out of the mother tongue and the maternal womb of the people. But that is monstrous to us. That is the beginning of the monstrosity which Nietzsche somehow knew would attach itself, someday, to his name. So the question remains for us, at least for me: What do you (I) promote in them?

There was supposed to be a sixth and maybe even a seventh lecture to complete *The Future of Our Educational Institutions*, but they never came to be. Nietzsche never wrote them. Like the philosophical friend, the final lectures did not arrive. Nietzsche's text finishes (without being complete) with the imminent arrival of the philosophical friend, although potentially spoilt by his being in the company of students. Well, that is going a bit fast. The philosopher moves, in the speech I have just been focusing on, into a description of the post-Napoleonic youth movement, the *Burschenschaft* who learnt "on the slaughtering field" of battle what they couldn't learn in today's educational institutions: "that one needs great leaders, and that all education begins with obedience." He goes over, quickly, the history of those students, who fought in the name of Schiller, who, taken from them too early, "could have been a leader, a master, an organiser" for those students "and whom … now missed [him] with such heart-felt rage." Those students who, in that desire for a leader, learnt on the battle field, committed the instinctive and "short-sighted," overly angry, overly enraged "bloody deed[s], in the murder of Kotzebue." A deed which demonstrated their tragic situation: "the doom of those portentous students: they did not find the leader that they needed." (*FEI*, p. 117)

But there is one more thing, if we are going slowly, or trying to, before the end and the friend's imminent (non) arrival. It comes in the way of a similie, a musical figure of an orchestra—peopled with "shrivelled, good-natured" musicians, not much too look at really, a rather unpromising, motley crew—until the great conductor beats them into glorious music. That is the end, apart from the fact that we wait for the friend, one of "our first philosophers." At the end, having been instructed by a philosopher that we need a leader, we wait with that philosopher on the arrival of the friend. In fact, we wait the arrival of friends, since the arriving philosopher is accompanied by students. Are we waiting for a philosopher who will also be a leader? Or a friend who will turn out simply to be another philosopher reiterating the call for a leader? Does the friend's apparent alliance with the arriving students suggest that he is in fact an enemy? If he is an enemy rather than a friend to the old philosopher will he turn out to be a friend to the students? And if so how? Is not the philosopher, despite his bad temper, a friend to those students who he has awakened to a desire for a genuine German education and culture? Or is he not, rather, in doing that, their enemy? What, in the context of teaching, of *Erziehung* and *Bildung*, is the difference between a friend and a leader and an enemy? So many questions, so many acroamatic questions ringing in our ears.

But that is not the end, not for me anyway. Nor is it the end for Derrida, nor, I imagine, for my philosopher friend, Tony O'Connor. Derrida ends "Otobiographies" with a warning. "The temptation is strong for all of us," he writes, "to recognize ourselves on the program of this staged scene or in the pieces of this musical score." (*O*, p. 38) Perhaps I was going too fast all along and should have reminded myself of this temptation earlier. But that is not all. Derrida ends with the other who does not enter into this scene. Not the friend, but rather woman: "woman, if I have read correctly," he says, "never appears at any point along the umbilical cord, either to study or to teach …. No woman or trace of woman." He adds: "And I do not make this remark in order to benefit from that supplement of seduction which today enters into all courtships or courtrooms. This vulgar procedure is part of what I propose to call 'gynegogy.'" Quickly, he adds one more, small paragraph:

> No woman or trace of woman, if I have read correctly – save the mother, that's understood. But this is part of the system. The mother is the faceless figure of a *figurant*, an extra. She gives rise to all the figures by losing herself in the background of the scene like an anonymous persona. Everything comes back to her, beginning with life; everything addresses and destines itself to her. She survives on the condition of remaining at bottom. (*O*, p. 38)

And that is it, that is the end. Very quickly, at the very end, woman and the Mother come in only to be lost to figuration.

Time is one of the reasons it happens: this quickness, this speed, and this "No woman or trace of woman." The feminine, the possibility of the feminine, gets lost because of the quickness of time, because we go so quickly that we lose her, lose sight of her. The feminine I am here – with Derrida – associating with the surprising pathos and concern for the student. The rhetoric of transparency and performativity are so quick that they demand what our students will learn from our teaching before we have even met those students and before we have begun to teach them. Teaching

must occur so quickly, in other words, that friendship, even if it is rhetorically and juridically demanded, finds no space to enter the scene of teaching. I am associating friendship in teaching with the appearance of the feminine. Am I going too fast in that, my friend? Possibly. But I need some ground upon which to responsibly respond to my current students, and I need it quick. They get lost so quickly. So I try to go as slow as I can, in this situation of high velocity. It is something, the need for care, attention, rigour, and above all reading (which is always slow if it is reading), that my friend, Tony O'Connor, has taught many, many people to understand and practice.

Chapter 15
Kantian Friendship

Gary Banham

Kant's culminating work in practical philosophy, the *Metaphysics of Morals*, concludes its account of the elements of ethics with a very brief discussion of friendship. The discussion of the elements of ethics forms the largest part of the second half of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the half entitled the *Tugendlehre* or Doctrine of Virtue. The main division within the discussion of virtue is between duties to oneself and duties to others and the concluding discussion of friendship is part of the latter. However the account of duties to others is itself divided between a discussion of duties of *love* to other human beings and duties of virtue towards them in the strict sense. The duties of virtue in the strict sense arise from the *respect* we owe to others. Given this division of the discussion of duties to others the fact that the concluding discussion of friendship is articulated as indicative of an intimate union of love and respect suggests that this concluding discussion is inserted as a way of bridging the division between the two areas just demarcated. The cultivation of friendship would appear then to be a way to overcome the division between these two kinds of duty. However, whilst this appears a first clue to comprehending the importance of the concluding discussion of friendship, it also points us to a couple of questions. The first question could be put in terms of the status of the reference to love and respect in the division of duties since Kant describes them as "feelings that accompany the carrying out of these duties" (Ak. 6: 448). This reference to feeling is one that has one clear advantage in Kant's account which is that it allows for the contrast between the two types of duty to others in terms of *forces* as when Kant suggests an analogy between the relationship of love and respect with that of attraction and repulsion in the physical world (Ak. 6: 449). However, whilst the advantage of the reference to feeling is that it makes this comparison intuitively plausible, the disadvantage concerns the fact that Kant's general account would

G. Banham (✉)
Managing Editor, Kant Studies Online
e-mail: garybanham@me.com

seem at odds with such a reference to feeling and furthermore he subsequently states that in this context love is not to be understood as a feeling but as the ground of the maxim of benevolence (Ak. 6: 449).[1] Similarly, he moves on to state that respect is not to be grasped here as a sense of comparative worth, which would be a mere feeling but rather as the basis of a maxim of "limiting our self-esteem by the dignity of humanity in another person" (Ak. 6: 449). So once again it is a practical sense, which is being given to the notion of the "feeling" in question and a pathological sense is being discarded. However, whilst the advantage of this element of Kant's account is that it preserves the purity of the moral motivation, it undermines the analogous reference to forces and creates a problem with seeing the contrast between the two types of duties as one that is based on them pulling us in different directions.

This gives us our first set of problems. They can be summarized as follows. Either Kant is serious in viewing the division between two forms of duty to others as grounded in some sense on feeling and hence can justify the comparison of the relationship between them with the physical forces of attraction and repulsion or he is not serious about this reference to feeling and can maintain the purity of moral motivation but not the analogy between the two types of duty to others and physical forces. Either way part of the account seems to be lost. If we lose the reference to the comparison with physical forces it is not merely that the reconciling role of friendship appears less necessary it is also that the nature of the division between the two duties seems not to be one that can be captured in the terms Kant seems to wish.

Before moving on to stating the second sort of problem I want to consider, there is something that should be mentioned as possibly mitigating the concern with the general contrast between the two types of duty to others that underlies the concluding account of friendship. This mitigation is grounded on the point that Kant makes that whilst we can treat the two types of duty to others separately and they can even exist separately that they are nonetheless basically always united "by the law into one duty" (Ak. 6: 448). Since this is so then the division between the two types of duty to others has to do with the relative standing of the reference to one of the principles in relation to the circumstances of moral judgment. However in some respects this mitigating comment complicates the problem further since if we regard the two types of duty to others as essentially two aspects of one and the same law then does this not weaken further the analogy between the two types of duty to others and physical forces?

This first set of questions arises from considering the background to the introduction of friendship at the conclusion of the Doctrine of Virtue. Some of these questions are connected however to the ones arising on turning to the account of friendship itself. Kant opens this treatment with three determinations of friendship in his first sentence concerning it: "*Friendship* (considered in its perfection) is the union of two persons through equal mutual love and respect." (Ak. 6: 469) Friendship is presented in its perfection. Hence the treatment of friendship will be part of Kant's

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[1] The maxim of benevolence is equated with practical love and said to result in beneficence.

general perfectionism as indicated in his earlier reference to the "ethical law of perfection" (Ak. 6: 450), the law to love your neighbour as yourself. However the oddity of treating friendship in terms of perfection is that the general basis of the division between duties to oneself and duties to others is that the former are based on cultivation of one's own perfection, the latter on the happiness of others (Ak. 6: 385). If friendship is to be considered in terms of perfection but friendship clearly involves a relation with others then it would appear that the discussion of friendship will in a sense cross the divide between duties to oneself and duties to others.

The second determination of friendship in the above citation states that friendship involves the union of two persons. This second determination of friendship is interesting in two different respects. The relation between two persons friendship involves is particularly intimate if it involves *union* as this implies a comparison with a type of physical conjunction as Kant treated in the Doctrine of Right.[2] Not only is there a reference to union, but Kant also treats the union as one between *two* persons. The final element of this determination of friendship is that it involves not merely love and respect but an equal mutuality of them.

The first point to bring out is that Kant treats the discussion of friendship as clearly part of the description of duties declaring that human beings have a *duty* of friendship although he qualifies this point by stating that friendship is unattainable in practice and that it is the *striving* for it which is a duty. Since to strive is to exercise a willed volition then the duty concerns the summoning of a kind of force within us. The impossibility of the ideal of friendship being achieved is indicated to be connected to the forces in question which are none other those of love and respect which we have already been focusing on. Kant here clearly refers to feelings that come from the different duties and he explicitly again draws the parallel between these feelings and the physical forces: "For love can be regarded as an attraction and respect as a repulsion, and if the principle of love bids friends to draw closer, the principle of respect requires them to stay at a proper distance from each other" (Ak. 6: 470). Despite the oscillation we noted above between speaking of the distinction between the duties to others in terms of feelings and speaking of it in terms of maxims the reference to feelings is of cardinal import for the treatment of friendship. Not only does this reference emerge here clearly but it also does so once again in connection with the same analogy between the feelings in question and physical forces that was mobilised at the beginning of Kant's treatment of duties to others.

The next point of focus concerns the manner in which the principle of love is limited by the principle of respect in the striving for friendship. Kant brings out both a key rule that governs such striving and connects the two involved in this striving to a wider social network: "This limitation on intimacy, which is expressed in the rule that even the best of friends should not make themselves too familiar with each other, contains a maxim that holds not only for the superior in relation to the inferior but also in reverse." (Ak. 6: 470). The limitation of love by respect follows the

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[2]"*Sexual union* (*consummation*) is the reciprocal use that one human being makes of the sexual organs and capacities of another" (Ak. 6: 277).

model of a restriction and realization schema as love is restricted precisely with regard to expression. There is only so much one should say to one's friend: limitation of what one says is the means by which respect governs love. This first point concerning limitation of expression is connected however to a recognition that whilst the friends may themselves be striving for a relation in which each is united to the other in a bond that involves equality (of love and respect), that this does not prevent it from being the case that they are in fact not equal to each other in social standing as one will always be (in some degree) the superior of the other. The importance of this point is that there are relations that require respect of the position of the other.[3] So one of the problems the striving for friendship has to deal with is precisely the unequal standing of the two involved in the striving with regard to social networks that exist over and beyond that of their attempted union.

The general social inequality that marks the relation between the two involved in striving for friendship affects the degree to which these two can be candid with each other. The limitation of love by respect is one that we have found concerns this ability for candid expression. If friendship was approached as resting on feelings says Kant it would never be safe from interruption so he re-determines his notion of perfect friendship as moral friendship and describes it now in terms of the exchange between the two of secrets: "*Moral friendship*….is the complete confidence of two persons in revealing their secret judgments and feelings to each other, as far as such disclosures are consistent with mutual respect" (Ak. 6: 471).

Whilst the relation in question is demarcated from feeling it is also intricately connected to it since the secrets the friends will wish to reveal to each other concern not only judgments but feelings also. The risks are considerable in such exchanges since secret judgments will include views on such sensitive matters as religion and politics which may be imprudently disclosed but also because in speaking of feelings candidly faults may be openly stated which others can take advantage of. So in tying friendship in to a consideration of society Kant brings out the publicity that we often wish for judgments and feelings runs into a barrier of fear concerning how others will use and abuse our declarations.

So our second set of questions can now be stated as arising directly from the treatment of friendship itself rather than from the division of duties towards others that precedes it. Firstly, the fact that friendship involves an ideal brings in an element of perfectionism to duties to others that is otherwise contained within the treatment of duties to oneself alone. This suggests a kind of crossing of this divide, a crossing that possibly has something to do with the point that there is a striving in friendship for union with the other so that they are treated as like oneself in some sense. During the course of discussion of the striving for this union with the other Kant both insists on the role of feeling—stressing as central to understanding it the need to harmonize the feelings of respect and love in a manner analogous to that of physical forces—and he constantly marginalizes the place of feeling in the treatment of friendship, regarding friendships based on feeling as unsafe. Finally the

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[3] See also Stephen Darwall, "Two Kinds of Respect," *Ethics* 88 (1977): 36–49.

striving for friendship with the other involves a desire for communication up to and including mutual exchange of secretly held feelings and judgments and yet is also circumscribed by a clear need for limitation on intimacy. Just as the general treatment of duties to others pointed to what appeared to be a need for a decision between two options neither of which would allow for the breadth of discussion Kant appeared to wish so also the direct treatment of friendship itself seems to require a similar set of choices whilst also preventing either pole being chosen.

In order to begin tackling these problems we need to isolate the central elements of them. In fact, it is the same apparent tension that underlies both the division of duties to others and the specific treatment of friendship. This is that there appears to be a reference to feeling that is both required and yet unsustainable within the terms of the account given. Additionally to this we note also however that the specificity of friendship carries with it the feature that it appears to complicate the question of the range of Kant's perfectionism and that there is an apparent *aporia* in Kant's view of the place of communication of secrets in his model of striving for friendship. These three points: the problem about the role and status of feeling, the range of Kant's perfectionism and the point of reference to a communication that is also strictly limited point to all the problems enumerated as concerning the *scope* of something in Kant's treatment. Questions of scope are modal questions for Kant and are thus connected to the possibility of friendship, a possibility which Kant declares on, when he states that moral friendship is not merely an ideal but "actually exists here and there in its perfection" (Ak. 6: 472). Since this is so then the scope of feeling, perfectionism and allowable communicability must be such that we are capable of them.

If we begin with the question of the role and status of feeling in Kant's general moral psychology it is so that we can start to clarify the reference to feeling we have noted both in his discussion of the division of duties to others and specifically in the treatment of friendship. As early as the *Groundwork* Kant treated of respect and indeed did so within the first section of this work. Kant here responds to the accusation that reference to respect is no more than seeking refuge in obscure feelings by stating that whilst respect is a feeling it is "not one *received* by means of influence" but is rather self-wrought by means of a rational concept and hence *different* from the type of feeling that can be understood as a product of inclination. Kant then adds:

> What I cognize immediately as a law for me I cognize with respect, which signifies merely consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law without the modification of other influences on my sense. Immediate determination of the will by means of the law and consciousness of this is called *respect*, so that this is regarded as the *effect* of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law. Respect is properly the representation of a worth that infringes upon my self-love. Hence there is something that is regarded as an object neither of inclination nor of fear, though it has something analogous to both. (Ak. 4: 401n)

There are a number of interesting elements involved in this account of respect. Since the feeling of respect is distinguished from the inclinations and from fear by means of its relation to reason the arrival at the feeling of respect has something to do with a self-limitation. Consciousness of the law is effectively equivalent to a feeling of respect for it and this respect for it causes a restriction of self-love indicating a possible basis for Kant's subsequent view of friendship as concerning

more than one. The thing that is an object for our feeling but not for inclination or fear nonetheless can be analogically compared with these latter just as we note that Kant later analogically compares respect to the physical force of repulsion. The following through of the analogy with inclination and fear is by means of the feeling of subordination which compromises self-love. The analogy with inclination by contrast is based on the fact that the subordination of us to the law is something that we ourselves bring about. Another person can be invoked however as an *example* of the law (Ak. 4: 401n).

The importance of the other being an example of the law is returned to in the *Critique of Practical Reason* where this example is used to demonstrate the practicability of submission to the law. Once again Kant makes the point here that respect is a feeling quite distinct from anything pathological and to mark the difference he speaks here of "moral feeling" (Ak. 5: 76), an expression that recurs in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where it is defined in the following way: "a *susceptibility* on the part of free choice to be moved by pure practical reason (and its law)…this is what we call moral feeling" (Ak. 6: 400). However whilst these determinations go someway to addressing the question as to why there is a discussion of feeling in the treatment of duties to others they also primarily suggest that the reference to the other is one in which the other stands in for the law. However whilst there is something to this way of putting the matter we need to amend it slightly in view of our comprehension of what the moral law is really concerned with. In the *Groundwork* Kant lays out the basis for a contrast that is repeated on a number of subsequent occasions in his later ethical writings. This is the contrast between conditional and unconditional worth. Objects of inclination have only conditional worth as they first require that there are needs that they are grasped as meeting. This is the ground of Kant's notorious remark to the effect that any rational being would wish to be without inclinations (Ak. 4: 428) but whilst this remark may in some respects be problematic the key point underlying it here concerns the limited value of objects that we wish to *acquire*.[4] Discussion of beings that arise from nature but are without reason falls under the heading of *things* and such beings effectively are related to as candidates for hypothetical imperatives. By contrast the relation to a *person* is quite different: "because their nature already marks them out as an end in itself, that is, as something that may not be used merely as a means, and hence so far limits all choice (and is an object of respect)" (Ak. 4: 428).

On the basis of this treatment Kant arrives at the so-called Formula of Humanity (Ak. 4: 429) the formula of treating humanity in others and oneself as never merely a means but also always as an end in itself. This reference to ends is repeated in the supreme principle of the doctrine of virtue: "act in accordance with a maxim of *ends* that it can be a universal principle for everyone to have" (Ak. 6: 395). These

[4] See Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics (Almost) Without Apology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) *passim*. My point, however, is somewhat surprisingly missing from Baron's extended and fascinating analysis, namely, that it is in the context of establishing the essential relativity of all objects of acquisition that Kant makes this remark about inclination. This is important in terms of his point that what has an end-in-itself is beyond all market price.

two formulas are importantly related as including such a key reference to ends although the formula from the *Groundwork* is one that treats an end as something self-subsistent, "something the *existence of which in itself* has absolute worth" (Ak. 4: 428), as *given* in other words, not as an aim to be achieved. This self-subsistent end is, as it were, that which we have to have regard for. It limits the permissible ends that can be adopted as the basis of maxims whether those ends be thought of as involving aim-oriented action or as concerning the preservation and promotion of the self-subsistent end-in-itself. That there is a difference between these two senses of "end" is the point of David Velleman's comment: "Self-existent ends are the objects of motivating attitudes that regard and value them as they already are; other ends are the objects of attitudes that value them as possibilities to be brought about".[5] The key point here is that the person is valued in a way distinct from an end thought of as an aim despite the fact that our relations with persons include actions in which we work with them to achieve aims. Were it permissible to relate to persons simply in terms of aims there would be no inherent problem in slavery. So the distinction between the two forms of end is essential to the understanding of the formula of humanity.

What is key from what we have uncovered in our treatment here of the formula of humanity is the understanding that whilst the other can serve as an example of the law, the basis of them so serving is not merely that they can act in ways that humble my self-love. It is also that the law is revealed in the formula of humanity as centred on respect for persons. Persons are thus that the value of which the law enjoins us to care for. Having established this much I now wish to turn to how Kant builds on this point in the *Groundwork* in order to establish the basis of his analogical comparison between moral motivations in the discussion of duties to others and physical forces. Uncovering the basis of this comparison should subsequently aid us in describing ways of understanding the relation between the two forms of duty to others and how they are combined in friendship.

In the subsequent development of the discussion in the *Groundwork* Kant makes a reflexive turn in his consideration of the formula of humanity. It is not merely with regard to others after all that the formula applies as it is what will be related in the Doctrine of Virtue as the basis of duties to oneself. This is made clear in the *Groundwork* when Kant states that: "to say that in the use of means to any end I am to limit my maxim to the condition of its universal validity as a law for every subject is tantamount to saying that the subject of ends, that is, the rational being itself, must be made the basis of all maxims of actions" and from this "it follows incontestably that every rational being, as an end in itself, must be able to regard himself as also giving universal laws with respect to any law whatsoever to which he may be subject" (Ak. 4: 438). Hence the law is founded in what Kant terms *autonomy* but the key point about this foundation is that we are each united with all other rational beings in the capacity of such law-giving and that the possible communion with others that it provides is what can be envisaged as the kingdom of ends which is analogous

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[5]J. David Velleman, "Love as A Moral Emotion," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (1999): 357–358.

to the kingdom of nature (Ak. 4: 438). The analogy is founded on the way of thinking the law. Whilst with nature we deal with law in general in relation to sensuous determination, with the moral law we have a "schema of the law itself" (Ak. 5: 69) whereby the law of nature is made "the type of a *law of freedom*" (Ak. 5: 70).[6]

The use of this practical form of schematism is at work in the comparison of the relationship between the division of the duties to others and the operation of physical forces. Just as the fundamental move between attraction and repulsion is determinative for physical phenomena so, it is suggested, the oscillation between the attraction to others manifested in a practical orientation of love and a practical repulsion of respect is at work in the intelligible moral world. How does the contrast work with the moral-practical (non-pathological) feelings and the maxims that are founded on them? We have noted in our treatment of respect to date that the operation of it is in terms of self-limitation by reference to the recognition of the worth of the other. If duties of respect are connected to this feeling of self-limitation the maxim that accompanies such a feeling is described by Kant in accordance with the feeling, that is, it is a maxim of self-limitation that is primarily at work in the duties in question. This is the reason why Kant describes the duties of respect as negative in character as in performing them we merely do what is owed to others in their capacity as fellows in the kingdom of ends which is to give respect to their humanity. The key to such an approach is not to exalt oneself above others in a moral sense and this indicates a moral egalitarianism. Others are not, insists Kant, put under obligation to me when I carry out duties of respect to them as I am here safeguarding the moral world by treating persons as they should be treated, as ends that are self-subsistent. These duties are described in broadly negative ways as it is acting in ways that are opposed to respect that is covered by the duties of respect rather than direct commands to act in ways that manifest respect in some positive sense (with the examples given including arrogance, defamation and ridicule).

By contrast the duties of love are determined as duties that do put others under obligation to me, and the cardinal example here, is the cultivation of the feeling of benevolence that will produce actions in accordance with the maxim of beneficence. The standard problem with placing value on benevolence however (which is typically the key virtue for utilitarians) is that it would appear to express an impersonal wish for the good of others that is precisely at odds with loyalties to specific others such as loved ones and friends. However Kant precisely denies this impersonal valuation of benevolence stating that it arises from thinking of benevolence in terms of wishes rather than in terms of maxims. Whilst one may wish everyone well this is not how action in accordance with ends can be structured. Rather: "in acting I can, without violating the universality of my maxim, vary the degree greatly in accordance with the different objects of my love (one of whom concerns me more closely than another)" (Ak. 6: 452).

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[6]The most extensive use of this notion is in *Religion within the Limits* where the notion of a "schematism of analogy" is explicitly set forward, a notion which I argue elsewhere is determinative for this work's decisive stages of argument. See G. Banham, *Kant's Practical Philosophy: From Critique to Doctrine* (London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Chap. 5.

The partiality that is at work in the maxim of benevolence is intrinsic to it since there is a physical limitation on the actions that can be performed. However the limitation is not only physical. If we return now to the example of friendship we do so with the understanding that what Kant is picturing in this relation is an engagement between two moral equals who embrace each other as such and wish to be engaged with as such. The problem that emerges within their relationship indicates the basis of the partiality that is at work in pursuing it. The friend is one to whom I reveal myself: this is the nature of the love I express in coming close to him. But in revealing myself to my friend I also request the discretion of the friend in terms of the way they subsequently treat my public image. Just as we noted that the duties of respect concerned essentially the standing and reputation of others (arrogance, defamation and ridicule) so the response of the friend to me is manifested most clearly in how they care for my standing and reputation. If they repeat my disclosures of secret judgments and feelings as matter for further diffusion they open me to the possible censure and contempt of others. Hence the relationship of candid disclosure that Kant treats as being that of friendship is one in which the force of my attraction to the other is expressed in my treating them as worthy of my confidence and trust. This confidence and trust however is not only something that the friend is under an obligation to respect: they are also mutually bound to me in an equivalence of disclosure.

So the mutual respect that is envisaged by Kant in friendship is concentrated on the relationship we have to the other of, as he puts it, "the ethical law of perfection" (Ak. 6: 450). The scope of this perfectionism is one in which my love for the friend is a love that is akin to that I must cultivate for my own rational nature. This parallel between the rational nature of myself and that of the other is the ground for the apparent crossing of the duties to oneself and duties to others involved in friendship. Whilst my duty to myself is to make myself morally perfect, my fundamental duty to others is to concern myself with their happiness inasmuch as they are worthy of happiness. But to form a bond of friendship is to engage with the other in a way that requires attention to their moral standing in a sense that is equivalent to the interest I have in my own. This, and not merely the mutual bond of respect, is the ground of Kant's picture of friendship. Were the bond merely one of respect then the disclosure of secret judgments and feelings would be bound by a self-limitation in each of the friend's case that would apply primarily to their own self-expression. However the relation with the friend is more intimate than this as friendship in Kant's moral sense includes duties of love such as the benevolent duty to make clear to the other their failings (Ak. 6: 470). This element of the love for the other is the other delicate element of friendship. Such critical response to the friend is a permission embodied in the friendship but is one that has to be approached as selectively permitted and as always carefully limited by the respect for the other that the friendship also has to manifest.

The treatment of friendship hence is indeed integrally linked to the division of duties to others between duties of respect and duties of love. The division of duties to others is based primarily on the type of attitude our action is manifesting towards the other and how this attitude constitutes a kind of relation to them. In the case of

duties of respect we are offering only that which is due.[7] With duties of love we are offering rather more than this and it is precisely because we are that there is partiality at work in the exercise of duties of love. Without such partiality the attitude expressed towards others of practical love would not be able to be made manifest but this limitation is not merely physical but also moral as without limitation of practical love the delicacy required in specific relations would be necessary in all and this would provoke constant moral dangers. The reference to physical forces in the picture of friendship is a specification of the general procedure of Kant's "schema of the law itself" and helps to make clearer the kinds of maxim at work in friendship. The maxim is the manner in which the attitude expressed by the feeling has to made operative. Finally, the mitigation of the contrast between the two types of duty to others that is offered by the reference to them having been artificially isolated when in fact they are part of one duty is clarified by the location of them both as ways of recognising autonomy. Kantian friendship is hence a picture of the kingdom of ends in relations of partiality that, in their very partiality, render more visible the publicity required for moral relations to thrive.[8]

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[7] When Kant states that one's neighbour may be little worthy of respect he is, as suggested above, indicating a more specific sense of respect than is at work in the formal treatment of duties of respect. It would be the work of another piece to see the extent to which the recognition of this additional determination of respect relates to Kant's standard sense but the suggestion that someone can be seen as not meriting respect is evidently connected to the attitudes they express to ourselves and others in such actions as arrogance.

[8] For a more political treatment of some of these themes that involves a discussion of the value placed on publicity in Kant's treatment of right see G. Banham, "Publicity and Provisional Right," *Politics and Ethics Review* 3, no. 1 (2007): 73–89.

Chapter 16
Just Friends: The Ethics of (Postmodern) Relationships

Hugh J. Silverman

…for my friend Tony O'Connor…*

'O my friends, there is no friend.'
If there is 'no friend', then how could I call you my friends,
my friends?
By what right/law?

—Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*[1]

"Is it true that the common ground includes me and not you?"

—Lou Reed, *New York*, 1989 (CD Album, Sire/London/Rhino)[2]

Just Friends… Is it possible to be just friends? To be friends requires a certain understanding of friendship and that one stands on common ground. How can two people decide to be just friends or for the one to ask of the other to be "just friends"

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* With deepest respect and friendship, I dedicate this essay to Tony O'Conner whom I first met at a Workshop on Continental Philosophy, organized by David Wood, at the University of Warwick (UK) in 1978. Tony later spent his sabbatical semester in residence at Stony Brook University in 1980. He has heard two earlier versions for this essay, once at the International Philosophical Seminar, held in the South Tyrol (Italy), and the second time as an invited lecture for the Philosophy Department at the University College Cork (Ireland).

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Politique de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994), 17. *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London/New York: Verso, 1997), 1. Henceforth cited as *PF* for the English translation.

[2] Lou Reed, "Good Evening Mr Waldheim," in *New York* (CD Album, Sire:London/Rhino, 1989).

Hugh J. Silverman (✉)
Executive Director, The International Association for Philosophy
and Literature/Professor of Philosophy, and of Comparative Literary
and Cultural Studies, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook,
New York 11794-3750, USA
e-mail: hugh.silverman@stonybrook.edu

if there is no notion of friendship in the first place? In this essay I discuss how friendship need not be some transcendental concept, some condition for the possibility of knowledge about friends. I do this by asking what it means to be *just* friends; to be only friends, and to be friends whose relationship is a just one. For friendship is a responsibility that cannot be denied or affirmed. It is quite simply just there *entre nous* ("between us") – a matter of justice.

Friendships happen because of relationships, and relationships are constituted by persons who effect friendships – nothing more and nothing less. Friendship arises because of a relationship and relationships are always already in a context. The social and political context is the place in which friendships happen. And just friendships mark out the spaces in which to be only friends is the only way to be friends; friends in which the differences between persons in friendship are matters of justice. These differences, like justice itself, are *in*deconstructible. They happen. They cannot not be true, and they cannot not be just – just friendships…

16.1   Justice Without Friendship

Can there be justice without friendship? And what justice, or virtue is there in being just friends?

In Plato's *Republic*, the topic at hand is Justice (*dikaiosyne*). To be concerned with justice is to go around (*peri*) justice (*dikaiosyne*). But around justice, there is injustice, the absence of justice. To be "in" justice is not to be "around" justice but rather to be in the place where justice is located. For Plato, in Socrates' account, the ideal state will be a just state, not just a state, but an ideal, just state. Justice, according to the account, is the performance of one's natural function. And if everyone in the ideal, just state, performs his or her natural function, then the whole state will be just and everyone in it will be just. But if everyone in the ideal state is just, then would there be any virtue in being just friends in the just state?

The irony of Plato's account is that in the first book, the second account offered (following the one offered by the host Cephalus) is that of his son Polymarchus. Polymarchus claims that "justice is paying back one's friends and harming one's enemies." This version is in response to Socrates' criticism of his first account in which he claims that justice is "giving each person his due."

The problem with this account is that receiving one's due is not available to everyone in a society and hence injustice would prevail. After all, "paying back one's friends and harming one's enemies" is a straight-forward reward/punishment system (not unlike behaviourist models as in B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*.)

What does it mean to "help one's friends and harm one's enemies?" Does one always know who one's friends are? Such a system of exchange (or *potlatch*, as Lévi-Strauss would describe it) presumes knowledge of who are one's friends and who are one's enemies. Otherwise the reward/punish model would quickly go awry. If I know who my friends are, I can exclude my enemies. But such a model assumes a subject whose authority can bring advantage to those who belong to the

circle of friends. If granting benefits to my friends has value, it is to me that the value accrues – my friends are supported, my enemies not.

Helping friends, then, is not just—like being a "good Samaritan." Seeking advantage—"justice" as defined here—promotes a condition of including some and excluding others. It presumes that there are already friends and enemies and that I just need to decide which are which. Then I will know whom to help and whom to harm. Polymarchus' revised view is one that presumes a friendship model, and correspondingly an account of friendship in which justice will be meted out to help my friends and execute harm to my enemies. Perhaps, then, justice is the meting out itself, the division and separation between two categories of help and harm–both of which are related to, or constituted by, a single subject, and both establish their identity by their corresponding affirmation of that single subject.

Socrates shows that such a model is hardly adequate. How can justice depend upon this kind of discriminatory inclusion or exclusion? Would there be any common ground in claiming that some are friends and the others are enemies? Could Lou Reed's ironic song (to the Austrian Kurt Waldheim) be true: that the common ground includes me and not you? Would not such a model of justice produce bias, bigotry, indeed injustice?

But then Socrates goes on to give his own account of justice—justice that constitutes the ideal state. Such justice—along with wisdom, even courage and moderation—will establish harmony, unity, cooperation, the full and complete distribution of functions, duties, goods, benefits, advantages, and values. Doing one's own thing takes place within the broader social context. Relationships will be established according to function and social value. There would be no place for, no need for, no justification for—friendships or the absence thereof. Friendships would simply not play a role in the Platonic ideal state. They would be irrelevant since knowledge of the good, knowledge of justice would be distributed in practice to all members of the state, no one would be denied, no one would be favoured, no one would need to be a friend or foe of anyone. And if they were, it would be irrelevant to the smooth determination of the just state. Functions rather than relationships would be determinative. Polymarchus' account—whereby one could help one's friends and harm one's enemies—would be entirely irrelevant.

Citing Derrida, citing Montaigne, citing Aristotle: "O my friends, there are no friends." What this could mean, quite simply, is that in Plato's just *polis*, it would make no difference whether two or more people are good friends, bad friends, even just friends, since friends would be irrelevant. So it should be quite a simple act of affirmation, for someone in Plato's ideal state, to address someone else in the ideal state since friends and friendships are irrelevant anyway. The ideal state will be just, but friendship will have no function at all.

If one reads Derrida's account of Montaigne's repetition of Aristotle, the Platonic view would be open for challenge. After all, Aristotle is very much concerned with both friendship and justice. He thinks that both are needed together. Derrida writes:

> There are, then, three kinds of friendship, respectively founded, as we recall, on (1) virtue (this is primary friendship); usefulness (for example, political friendship); and (3) pleasure. Now each species divides up into two: according to equality or according to difference

(Aristotle says: according to superiority). In this move, justice too will divide into two, following numerical or proportional equality. Communities will organize this sharing out sometimes in terms of equality, sometimes in terms of the other.[3]

If friendship (the first type) is a virtue—and we know that for Aristotle, there are many more virtues than were ever dreamed of in Plato's philosophy, then friendship would become a value for its own sake. Such friendship would simply be there as part of the political arena. All good relationships would be based on friendship—but would some be excluded and others included? The second type—based on utility would have a clear function: to realize something like what Polymarchus was suggesting, namely to use one's friendships for personal or political gain. Maintaining the right friendships will bring the right (political and personal) advantages. But the third would be something other than *eudaimonia*—the happiness achieved by those in a just state (such as Plato's) or the happiness achieved if one does what a virtuous person would do (as in Aristotle's view). The third has to do with pleasure—the pleasure of being just, of enjoying the relationship, but once again, where the pleasure belongs to one person or another.

But Derrida notes, following Aristotle, that there is a division between the three types of friendship. On the one hand, there is "equality," and on the other hand, there is "difference." Equality among friends—not a bad idea when both or all are just friends. But although Aristotle argues for equality in friendship, this account does not, it seems, include relations with and among women, slaves, and non-citizens (barbarians). So the common ground for friendship in Aristotle includes and excludes—those excluded are not part of the equality. They come under another model—a model of ruler/ruled, husband/wife, master/slave, parent/child—all hierarchical and hardly equal. In these cases, the possibility of friendship is not even available, not a chance. So the only opportunity for being friends is in the case of male citizens of the *polis*. Male citizens, however, can be friends only if they are equal, i.e. only if each citizen has an equal status with the others. But is this model, as with Plato, an ideal condition? Presumably not as such since friends are equal only if there is also justice, and equality is one of the versions of justice. Justice for Aristotle can also be distributive and corrective. The distribution of goods is quite other than equality, for goods can be distributed unequally and still be just. Justice as correction is designed to make both sides equal again—if one person suffers a loss, the other must pay. Aristotle's hope is that it will not be an endless generational retribution as in the House of Atreus (and the plight of Orestes). Even Aeschylus saw a way to bring an end to the repeated correction of one crime for another. In the *Oresteia*, he offered a trial in which twelve jurors would judge whether Orestes could be set free or whether he must pay for the murder of his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. After all, they had murdered Orestes' father and his "war prize" (Cassandra, daughter of the Trojan king Priam) in retaliation for Atreus' murder of his brother's children, and so on. The trial would bring justice to Argos. But none of the participants were friends at all. They were each performing their functions, carrying out their respective duties, following the codes. They were not

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[3] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 203.

even just friends. At least in Aristotle, there is a chance that if there is already equality, there could be friendship.

As Derrida points out, the other condition of friendship—of each of the Aristotelian types—would occur because of difference. But difference here means "superiority," that is, the advantage of one over the other because of position, authority, or some other condition that distinguishes the one from the other.

Similarly justice divides into (1) numerical equality and (2) legal proportionality.

1. numerical equality means that everyone of one sort will be able to be counted as equals;
2. legal proportionality means distributing the advantages across those who legally have access to the goods that are available.

But how do these two formulations relate to one another, that is, what is the connection between friendship and justice? If both appeal to equality, then it should be possible to have friends who are just. But the problem is that equality does not imply friendship and friendship does not necessarily imply equality. If justice includes numerical equality, then it should be possible to count up the gains on each side. The Hebrew *lex talionis* calls for numerical equality–an eye for an eye. Justice based on numerical equality requires "restitution"[4] in the amount of the loss. Similarly legal proportionality means that if your house is adjacent to the beach and your neighbour's house is adjacent to the beach, then both should have proportional access. But can such a corrective rectification of an imbalance apply to friends as well?

Indeed, how do I "measure" your friendship? Do I count it by how often you greet me, how late you arrive at my conference paper, or how early you leave, how willing you are to talk philosophy with me, how good your paper is, etc.? If I stay for the full conference, can I expect that you will too? Could I assume that you will devote a proportional amount of energy into the discussion and debate? Clearly friendship cannot be measured in these kinds of terms. The saying goes: "How much do you love me? Let me count the ways." This was King Lear's mistake: he judged his daughters' love by how much they *professed* their love. What about Derrida's friendship with Paul de Man? Must Derrida pay a corresponding price for each political errancy in de Man's youth? I think not…

If one applies the Aristotelian model of equality as numerical correction or legal proportionality, then justice will be of a very different order than friendship. Friendship will not be able to be counted in this way—even if it might be counted on.

Friendship remains, then, entirely other than justice in the Aristotelian model. Friendship may be a virtue unto itself and therefore not in any way measurable. If so, can it have anything to do with justice, which is no longer, as in Plato, a virtue, but rather an operation of equality and proportion? If friendship is based on utility, then a calculus may apply, but such friendship is indeed a calculated friendship and

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[4]See Jacques Derrida, "Restitutions of the Truth in Shoe Size," in *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

of dubious status. Friendship according to pleasure, the pleasure it brings to be in friendship with another person surely has nothing to do with the measurement and amount of the friendship. Such pleasures—of dialogue, of companionship, of comraderie, of spending time together—are doubtless of another order than the equity of justice.

16.2   Friendship Without Justice

Although there may still have been a "perhaps" inscribed between Aristotelian friendship and Aristotelian justice, let us consider now friendship where justice plays no role at all. Shakespeare's Othello depended upon his friend and advisor Iago in whom he places unswerving trust. But Iago was unjust, devious and unloyal. Iago placed the doubt–not just a "perhaps" but a gnawing conviction–that Desdemona had been unfaithful. Tortured by his doubts, Othello, anguished by his suspicions, contorted by the trust he placed in his friend Iago, snuffed out his wife's life with a pillow while she slept. "O my friends, there are no friends" – for if one's friends are like Iago, how can one trust anyone.

Montaigne's presumed citation of Aristotle: "O my friends, there are no friends" could have been exclaimed by Othello years later as advice to others – his associates whom he calls "friends"—how foul a deed Iago exerted upon him by introducing more and more distrust into his fragile psychology. The exclamation would be one of despair that one's friends cannot be trusted—that there are "no friends" whom one can trust, that effectively there are no friends any more. And Shakespeare is replete with such instances. Julius Caesar should never have trusted Cassius and Brutus. "*Et tu Brute*" was his final cry of despair as his friend Brutus and Cassius stabbed him repeatedly. King Lear trusted his two deceitful daughters and did not believe in his only loving daughter Cordelia. Furthermore, Mark Antony (in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*) when calling upon his countrymen to hear his public appeal begins with "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears…" to persuade them with his rhetoric, not with the truth or with anything genuine or just.

In retrospect, Othello would hardly have considered the advice he received from Iago to be just; Julius Caesar would hardly want his "friends" to constitute the basis for justice in the Roman Empire; and Lear would hardly consider his two daughters' deceit to be just. These kinds of friendship would not have anything to do with being just.

No wonder Montaigne's remembrances of his departed friend La Boétie was not based on justice but a very deep, personal relationship—one that stood outside the frame of justice. Montaigne's loss was profound and sincere. His dead friend left a profound impact, but not on any claim to a just state. Rather the relationship was genuine and devoted—Montaigne's essay "Of Friendship" was an attempt to remember his friend, to give him the status he was due, but not in any way to appeal to justice. "O my friends, there are no friends" for friends come and go, one cannot count on their eternity, one cannot count on their continued presence, one cannot

count on their undying fraternity. At best, one can realize that "to philosophize is to learn to die"—a lesson Montaigne offers from his reading of Seneca and the stoics.

Read in another way, La Boetie would have been a "true" friend. Derrida writes: "Favorinus in the second book of his *Memorabilia* mentions as one of his habitual sayings that 'He who has friends can have no (true) friend.'"[5] If one has lots of friends, and hence the question of the number of friends one can/should have, could any one of them be a "true" friend? One can have many official friends, but few if any "true" friends. So the uniqueness and singularity of the "true" friend is indeed memorable and remarkable. But such a true friend can be quite personal and need not depend on any particular social formation.

16.3   The Justice of Friendships

16.3.1   Modern Friends – With Justice and Liberty for All (vielleicht/peut-être/maybe)

The Enlightenment, and even the French Revolution, bring justice and friendship into concert; but in a markedly modern fashion. Friends will be friends because they can reason together, and if they can reason together, they can even constitute a just state—one designed according to a contract in which friendship will not only be welcomed but encouraged. Once a *sensus communis* is established, a *sensus fraternitatis* is also constituted No longer must friendship be understood as an individual, personal, irrelevant pleasure, need, or utility. Friendship can become the backbone of the social contract.

"O my friends, there are no friends" need not be simply an apostrophe, an expression of exasperation and joy at the same time – as when Rimbaud writes: "*O saisons, ô chateaux, quel âme est sans defaut?*" "O my friends," can be more than a "vocative" form. It can also be a dative form (as Derrida points out). "O my friends" can be a decisive address to (dative) specific people, not many please, but perhaps more than one might think. "O my friends"—imagining an address to members of a contractarian state—"there are no friends" would mean that there are none outside of the social contract. After all, Rousseau described, in the Second Discourse *On the Origins of Inequality among Mankind,* how some "noble savage"—one without friends or interlocutors—would have to submit someday to a society which seeks to overcome social corruption by forming together (as impersonal friends and comrades) and constituting a viable society according to the general will. "O my friends, there are no (particular) friends"—just friends in a contractarian enlightenment democratic society.

If in a contractarian enlightenment democratic society, there are no particular friends, the question remains as to whether there are any "true" (veritable) friends

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[5]Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 207; parentheses added.

as was, presumably, La Boétie for Montaigne—a dead friend who is remembered fondly. Enlightenment friends are supported by a social organization that makes friendship possible. Without the democratic practice, there would be no friendship possible. "O my friends, there are no friends." Once the enlightenment society based on rationality—Hobbesian, Lockean, Humean, and particularly Kantian—takes hold, attachments and relationships will take a very different shape. Charles Fourier, for instance, could argue for a utopian society in which personal affections will be organized into phalanges—where people of different character and characteristics are organised according to those criteria. If they are to be friends, their friendships will have to be based on compatibility—not identity or similarity. So if such a utopian society could be just, then the passionate attractions could also be called friendships. But here, oddly, none would be excluded. There would be no strangers in a society based on passionate attraction.

This search for a just society, one in which friendships could also be possible, produced the French Revolution when aristocracy and hierarchy came under the guillotine. Equality, Liberty, Fraternity would be the motto–printed on each and every coin–until erased by the Euro. Fraternity—male bonding at the social level— should make friendships possible, and the link with equality and liberty would be definitive. To be in friendship—as fraternity (and Derrida devotes considerable attention to this development)—would no longer be separated from equality (equal rights in any case) and liberty (the freedom from dominance and subjugation). Friendships could arise freely, equally, and in fraternal concert. The declaration of equality, liberty, and fraternity is not the same as its achievement. Declaration is not an address. "There shall be equality, liberty, fraternity" does not mean that all persons can actualize relations on such grounds. The declaration of independence forms a right and law according to which it should be possible for all sorts of friendships to arise—freely. But these rights establish the conditions for the possibility of friendships. They do not mean that there *are* in fact any. For there to be such friendships, one needs to address another as a friend and to enact the relation to (and with the other as) a friend. That this may be possible is only the first step.

Once possible, the romantic appeal to individuality, personal affect, proximity to nature, the one-on-one relation of friendship can thrive. But the romantic appeal to friendship is only possible once the French Revolution has taken place, once the *Declaration of Independence* has been affirmed. "Elective Affinities" are relationships of love and friendship *(philia, amour/amitié)*, but they require a context in which the justice of those relationships–affirmed and confirmed by law *(droit)*—can be realized. By what right *(droit)* can we have relationships? What affirms these relationships, what prohibits or limits them? This is Derrida's question to the postrevolutionary and romantic *Weltanschauung*.

The justice of modern friendships will depend upon a political law/right *(droit)* that authorizes the personal and the interpersonal. But this same kind of authorization can produce dystopian models as well. Zamiatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984* – all worlds in which affinities are authorized and limited by law, by social formation, by a determinate conception of the political. They produce equality, but exclude and delimit possible relationships by circumscribing certain

freedoms and interactions: O my friends, there can be no friends in a society like this. O my friends, there can be no friends in a society without justice. O my friends, there can be no friends until justice and friendship happen in the same place… maybe (*peut-être*, *veilleicht*).

16.3.2   The Justice of Postmodern Friendships

"Is it true that the common ground includes me and not you?" Lou Reed, "Good Evening Mr Waldheim" *New York* (1989).

The irony of the question suggests that the common ground is illusory, a phantom of a modern theory of tolerance in which there is no common ground other than the one constituted from one position or the other. I choose to tolerate you—as long as I can tolerate you. You can hardly be my friend if I have to tolerate you. I can hardly be your friend if you have to tolerate me. Yes, you may come as a stranger and leave as a friend[6]—you may be drawn into a world of eros, proximity, affinity, but this does not mean that we are friends for more than an hour or two. But this is not friendship. It is not a common ground. It is utility, or pleasure, bought and sold out of utility.

Utility will hardly make a relationship of friendship what it should be. The romantic achievement would be lost, the revolutionary gains would have failed, the liberties that overcome exclusion would be erased. And tolerance is a model of inclusion by way of exclusion. Tolerance retains alterity, strangeness, and hierarchy. I cannot be a friend of someone whom I have to tolerate. O my friends, there are no friends if I have to tolerate you.

Tolerance can be legitimated by law. Equality can be the basis for tolerating someone (else). If we are equal by law, then I am obligated to tolerate you. If I don't tolerate you, then I can be held accountable (by law). But tolerance can hardly be the basis for a friendship–even if friendship requires some form of equal status. Can a governor be friends with a garbage collector or a teacher with a student? Or if the unequal status is of one order, the demand for equality would have to be on another level–common interests, common concerns, common love. Common-al-ity (community) can overcome differences of status. But commonality does not belong to one or the other in the friendship relation. Commonality belongs to the community in which the friendship arises. But Derrida cites Bataille when speaking of a "community in which there is no community"[7]—a condition of what Blanchot calls the "inavowable community" and Jean-Luc Nancy calls "an inoperative community" (*une communauté desoeuvrée*).

These are each "communities" that do not function as communities, as something held in common. In these "communities," the common ground is effaced in

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[6] "*Du kommst als Fremder und gehst als Freund.*" (Bilibi Bar, Seegasse, 1090 Wien) This place of "encounter" no longer exists. But the sign outside stating "You come as a stranger, and you leave as a friend," suggests the "erotic friendship" indicated here.

[7] Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 48, note 15.

favor of a community in which there is no community; a network of relationships and friendships in which there is nothing in common.

But what is a friendship in which there is nothing in common? It is a fabric of differences. We are friends because we are different. If there were no differences, there could not be any friendship. But these differences do not arise as an articulation of myself in relation to another, nor from another back to myself in order to affirm the other. These differences arise between us. O my friends, there are no friends (who constitute themselves as friends). I can address my friends, I can call out "*aux amis*!" but I do not constitute the other as a friend when I do so. The reciprocity of friendship requires that I receive the other and the other shall receive me. But this does not make for friendship since friendship happens between us, between friends and is not shared with any one else. To be shared (*partager*, as we learn from Nancy) means to be both brought together and separated. What is between friends is the friendship that does not belong to either of us. We share a friendship and yet the friendship is not anything other than the relation we have between us, namely, the differences we share between us. And yet, we live the differences and sometimes they constitute friendship.

Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* is a modern (capitalist, bourgeois) community in which there are no friends. All relations, Mack the Knife (Mack Heath, leader of the thieves, bank robbers, gangsters), Peacham (leader of the beggars who dress up in order to lure good Samaritans into giving them money), the women of the brothel, the police captain and his corrupt daughter Polly (who seems to have fallen in love with Mack Heath), indeed all the characters in the play are engaged in relations of utility. Maybe there is a love relation–but it is one-sided–Mack Heath is just as happy with his whores as he is accepting Polly's somewhat exaggerated love for him. So even that relation is one of utility. All the figures are engaged in acts of injustice; all relationships are unfriendly–in any sense of virtue. The pleasures are passing and just for momentary pleasure and gain. These modern relations are based on injustice, deceit, conflict. The absence of the enlightenment ideals is precisely what keeps the relations alive. They are all transgressive, disingenuous and conflict-ual. Each person is essentially solitary, isolated, and narcissistic. In this sense, they are all equal, but this does not make them friends; or just–not even just friends. As modern relations–one subject constitutes the other, one position or identity seeks the advantage of the other, one self takes the other as an object. And yet, read in a postmodern way, there are differences. Reading the relations as relations of differ-ence reconstructs the set of relations in the play–opens the possibility (perhaps) of thinking relations otherwise, of thinking the relations postmodernly.

In Jim Jarmusch's film *Ghost Dog*, the question of the justice of friendship is engaged in a different way. Ghost Dog (played by Forrest Whitaker), as he is called, owes his life to the one who saved him from being beaten and possibly shot. Ghost Dog follows the "Code of the Samurai." He is a "hit man." He carries out his func-tion with skill, precision, and expertise. Ghost Dog lives alone—on the rooftop of a New York apartment house. No one knows who he is—he is a ghost, even to those who call upon his services. He has no personal acquaintances, no collaborators, no friends. He carries out his function independently. He steals cars, listens to his music, carries out the executions.

And yet he remains invisible. But one job goes wrong, the daughter of one of the bosses, who is having an affair with another gang member, is present when one of the executions takes place. She is herself like a ghost, but she comes back to haunt him in the end. His execution is then called for. According to the Mafia code, he knows that he must go down—and (according to the Code of the Samurai) at the hand of the "master" who saved his life.

Ghost Dog has no friends—except for the Haitian Ice Cream Man at the edge of the park and the little girl who befriends him as well. But the Ice Cream man speaks only French—Creole—and yet they understand each other across the different languages. Just as Derrida is concerned (in *Force of Law*)[8] that he must address the lawyers at Cardoza Law School in their language (English), the question of address becomes crucial in Ghost Dog's relations with the Ice Cream Man. The one speaks French, the other English—and yet they understand each other perfectly. Something happens in the friendship relation, based on difference, and yet out of that difference communication. Ghost Dog knows that he must die. He leaves his possessions with the Ice Cream Man and then allows himself to be shot down by the man to whom he owes his life. For all they had in common was the compact—one in which Ghost Dog followed the Code of the Samurai and the other followed the Code of the Mafia. These two codes intersected for a time—in part by virtue of utility, in part by an order other than that of the one or the other—the double codes. The juxtaposition of codes is the marking off of differences—differences that intersect but that do not require tolerance, that do not require utility, that do not even require pleasure.

And what of the little girl in the park? Ghost Dog befriends her. Other than the Ice Cream Man, she is the only one who comes to like him, to be his friend. Is this an equal relation? Surely not. She is a little girl; he a hired killer. But she reads his book– the code of the Samurai–and she has a way to understand him. Out of this relation of understanding–she for him, him for her– the friendship happens in between. And there is much that they keep between friends (*entre eux*). Between friends–that is the justice of relation–not anything either can take away with them. Justice gives them the relation and the relation gives its own justice. Ghost Dog and the little girl are just friends–friends whose relation is such that neither can take anything away with him or herself. All that remains is the justice of their relation–the *giusto*, the exactitude, the precision, the justness of their relationship of difference.

Derrida writes:

> When will we be ready for an experience of freedom and equality that is capable of respectfully experiencing that friendship, which would at last be just, just beyond the law, and measured up against its measurelessness?[9]

The relation of Ghost Dog to the little girl, as with his relation with the Haitian Ice Cream Man, are just that, relations of friendship that are slightly beyond the

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[8] Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson (London: Routledge, 1992).

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

law–beyond the law in that they cannot be measured in their measurelessness. The friendships happen in between persons–not from one or the other. The differences are measured in their measurelessness. Their justness is the between. Derrida writes further:

> Justice in itself, if such a thing exists, outside or beyond law, is not deconstructible. No more than deconstruction itself, if such a thing exists. Deconstruction is justice. It is perhaps because law (*droit*) (which I will consistently try to distinguish from justice) is constructible, in a sense that goes beyond the opposition between convention and nature, it is perhaps insofar as it goes beyond this opposition that it is constructible and so deconstructible and, what's more, construction that, fundamentally, always proceeds to questions of *droit* and to the subject of *droit*.[10]

The law of the relation between Ghost Dog and the little girl is established by reading, meeting in the park, sharing the codes. But the justice of their relation cannot be anything other than the *between* of that relation. What do they have between them? Understanding, truth, differences. But none of these are anything more than the un(in)deconstructible differences between them–the justice of the friendship relation.

Hence, according to Derrida–already in an autobiographical mode (thinking of his relation to Paul de Man)[11]:

> …the friendship of a justice that transcends right [*le droit*], the law [*la loi*] of friendship above laws – is this acceptable? Acceptable in the name of what, precisely? In the name of politics? Ethics? Law? Or in the name of a sacred friendship which would no longer answer to any other agency than itself? The gravity of these questions finds its examples – endless ones – every time a faithful friend wonders whether he or she should judge, condemn, forgive what he decides is a political fault of his or her friend: a political moment of madness, error, breakdown, crime, whatever their context, consequence, or duration.[12]

Is the little girl responsible for the assassinations that Ghost Dog carried out? Surely not. And yet, they can be friends. They can have something–that is nothing–between them. Derrida is not responsible for the acts and writings that Paul de Man put into print in his youth,. Derrida is not responsible for Martin Heidegger's outrageous political attitudes. But if responsibility does not depend on one or the other, if responsibility happens between them, then they will be responsible for what happens between them (*entre eux*), and not for what happens before they ever met.

The responsibility of friendship is not something that belongs to one friend or the other. "O my friends, there are no friends" who are not responsible for what happens between them. They may be just friends, but the justice of their friendship means that the differences between them mark (precisely and only–*juste*) what

[10]Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" p. 14f.

[11]See Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, Eduardo Cadava, and Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[12]Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, p. 183.

happens between them. What they have in common is what they are both responsible for. And that responsibility cannot be denied nor affirmed. It is quite simply and justly just there. It is a matter of justice. Any further clarification is the "democracy *à venir*, to come"—the community of democratic persons who have nothing in common. "O my (democratic) friends," Derrida writes. And yet he addresses none of them–only the fabric of (postmodern) differences between them… these just friends…of the here and now in the name of a democracy (of the future) '*à venir*' (to come)."Is it true there is no common ground between me and you?" But perhaps there is friendship *entre nous*, between us…

Chapter 17
The Art of Friendship

William S. Hamrick

It is an honor to take part in this celebration of Tony O'Connor's career and philosophical accomplishments, which I have observed at first hand across many years together in the British Society for Phenomenology. I wish to do this here by analyzing his delightful and challenging essay, "O Friend, Where Art Thou?: Derridean Deconstruction and Friendship."[1] In Part I, I will show how the essay reflects critically on Jacques Derrida's book, *Politics of Friendship*,[2] the first chapter of which begins with the strange and provocative quotation from Montaigne of a remark attributed to Aristotle, "O my friends, there is no friend" (PF 1). I will also offer some criticisms of the analysis of Aristotle. Then, in the second part of the essay, I will take up Tony O'Connor's invitation to "a more empirical approach" (TOC 49) to supplement Derrida's deconstructive remarks about definitions of friendship.

17.1

The salient points of Derrida's text, as O'Connor succinctly and clearly explicates them, are as follows. He begins with the claim of Derrida's earlier work, *Of Grammatology*,[3] that "texts, or text analogues, do not have fixed essences" (TOC 39)—a claim reflected in Jean-Paul Sartre's contention in *What is Literature?*

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[1] The essay appears in Patrick Crowley and Paul Hegarty, eds. *Formless: Ways In and Out of Form* (Oxford, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2005), 39–51 (hereafter referred to as "TOC").

[2] Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (New York/London: Verso, 1997) (hereafter referred to as "PF").

[3] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

W.S. Hamrick (✉)
Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL, USA
e-mail: whamrick@sbcglobal.net

that "the literary work is an open-ended construction by both author and reader" and Roland Barthes' arguments for "intertextuality" in *S/Z* (*Ibid.*).[4] By extension, for Derrida, friendship has no fixed essence. More specifically, he is concerned to undermine "canonical," "logocentric," universal definitions of friendship by displaying their "limitations, untested presuppositions and paradoxes" as well as "to use paradox and the limited character of evidence to indicate something positive, but not absolutely essential, about friendship" (TOC 41).

As regards the deconstructive critique, Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* offers us a series of analyses of major accounts of friendship from ancient to modern times, all of which, on his view, rest on paradox, question-begging, and display substantial lack of supporting evidence. It is especially with regard to the latter that the analogy with textual indetermination takes shape, for Derrida holds that traditional ("canonical") definitions of friendship are never supported by complete, objective evidence. The reason is that they make up "part of a series of interpretive networks through which friendship is both described *and* constituted" (TOC 43).

This can be seen clearly, for Derrida, in Cicero's distinction between friendships among "ordinary folk, or of ordinary people (*de vulgari aut de mediocri*)" and "true and perfect friendship (*de vera et perfecta*)" (PF 3). On Cicero's view, these "great and rare friendships…. take on the value of exemplary heritage;" they resonate with "light, brilliance and glory" (*Ibid.*). However, for Derrida, there is no "independent justification" for this "valorization of friendship as exemplary" because it underestimates the significance of the context and the "underdetermination of evidence, in the constitution of values and theories" (TOC 43). When these factors are taken into account, we can see, for Derrida, that Cicero's "true and perfect friendship" is a "narcissistic projection of the ideal image," the image of oneself" (PF 4), in the friend. This projected exemplar is the "ideal double … the same as self but improved" (PF 4).

The ecstatic future hope offered to the friend as one's exemplar, in the sense of what can be copied, is the future, immortal preservation of the image in the friend. Long before Maurice Merleau-Ponty described the reversibility of flesh and the narcissism of all vision,[5] Cicero's view of the true friend was that, "since we watch him looking at us, thus watching ourselves, because we see him keeping our image in his eyes—in truth in ours—survival is then hoped for, illuminated in advanced, if not assured, for this Narcissus who dreams of immortality" (PF 4). Yet, Cicero's concept of friendship rests on a distinction between the same and the other, and even though concerned action for the sake of the other would reasonably be thought to be a hallmark of friendship, Cicero privileges the same, the projection and attempted realization of one's own (improved) image (*Ibid.*).

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[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*, trans. B. Frechtman (London: Methuen, 1978) and Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. R. Miller (New York: The Noonday Press, 1974).

[5] In Merleau-Ponty's later ontology, body and world "form a couple, a couple more real than either of them. Thus since the seer is caught up in what he sees it is still himself he sees: there is a fundamental narcissism of all vision." *The Visible and the Invisible*, *Followed by Working Notes*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 139.

Derrida's analysis of Cicero serves as an introduction to the much more substantial analysis of Aristotle's discussion of the "essential and unchanging characteristics" of friendship that prepare the ground for the emergence of "the Canonical View of Friendship" (TOC 44). The principal and well known themes of Aristotle's analysis make their appearance here: the three kinds of friendship (the primary one rooted in virtue and its derivative versions based on utility and pleasure), the recognition that the Greek conception of friendship (*philia*) is much wider than what the English word designates ("civic friendship functions in a mode of unanimity so as to 'hold states together'" (*Ibid.*), and that friendship is both founded in and the expression of self-love ("Being a good person, therefore, primarily involves loving oneself, where noble actions are performed which will be of benefit to others" (*Ibid.*, 45)).

As a result, for Derrida, Aristotle's view of friendship, just as the later Ciceronian version, rests on the distinction between the same and the other and privileges the former. The friend is "another myself" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 1166 a32[6]; see also PF 276), and reciprocity with the other gets reduced to self-interest. Given Aristotle's view that one should love in a certain way rather than in others, and that loving is more important than being loved (*Nic. Ethics*, Book VIII, 1159 a27), Derrida considers that Aristotle's view "has led to the emergence of the subject-object division in the subsequent history of Western philosophy which, in turn, gives rise to the canonical view of friendship" (TOC 45) that gives prominence to "the subjective side of the relationship of self and other" (*Ibid.*).

This stress on knowledge behind the formation of bonds of friendship creates for Derrida an unacknowledged paradox for Aristotle and the subsequent canonical view of friendship. It appears to prevent loving when one does not know it, although the other can love me without my knowing it. This a-symmetry creates the unrecognized effect that "reciprocity has only a secondary status in the determination of friendship" (TOC 46). However, reciprocity can be said to be valuable in itself because of the mutual obligations and benefits it confers on friends, in the widest sense possible. Yet, the author states, "Derrida might argue plausibly, however, that this picture of friendship is too narrow and one-sided, insofar as friendship, especially on the Aristotelian model, cannot be determined without a role for selfishness" (*Ibid.*, 47).

Difficulties in the notion of reciprocity lead O'Connor to take up the difficult subject of the meaning of fraternity. Before following him that far, however, some corrective observations about Aristotle are plainly called for. First, as Sir David Ross observes, although there is very little trace of altruism in Aristotle's account of friendship, the fact that loving is more important than being loved can be construed as doing justice to "the altruistic element."[7] For instance, Aristotle tells us, a mother sometimes "gives her child away to be brought up, and loves him as long as she

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[6] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis/London: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985) (referred to hereafter as "Nic. Ethics").

[7] Sir David Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1966 [1923]), 230.

knows about him; but she does not seek the child's love, if she cannot both [love and be loved]. She would seem to be satisfied if she sees the child doing well, and she loves the child even if ignorance prevents him from according to her what befits a mother" (*Nic. Ethics,* Book VIII, 1159 a30–33).

We would not normally construe this relationship to be one of friendship, but we need to bear in mind that Aristotle uses *philia* to refer to "any mutual attraction between two human beings."[8] This is but a single example, for Aristotle, of the moral general altruistic point that, towards a friend, "you must wish goods for his own sake" (*Ibid.*, 1155 b31). Moreover, the philosopher adds immediately, reciprocity, so far from being secondary in friendship, is a necessary condition of its existence in the first place. Without reciprocity, "you would be said to have [only] goodwill for the other. For friendship is said to be *reciprocated* goodwill" (*Ibid.*, 1155 b33).

A second modification consists of inserting into O'Connor's discussion Aristotle's distinction between good and bad self-love. The former's characterization of self-love as "selfishness" applies only to bad self-love, that is, greed for "money, honours and bodily pleasures" (*Nic. Ethics*, Book IX, 1168 b17). These desires exploit the non-rational part of the soul, whereas good self-love is an honest appreciation (in both senses) of one's virtue and dedication to the interest of friends (narrowly conceived) and fellow citizens. As Ross indicates, the virtuous person can spend money for the sake of others, but "he gets the better of the bargain: they get only money, but he gets 'the noble,' the satisfaction of doing what is right. And even if he dies for others, he gains more than he loses."[9]

Finally, something should be said about Derrida's claim that Aristotle's stress on the primacy of self-interest and loving as opposed to being loved "has led to the emergence of the subject-object division in the subsequent history of Western philosophy" (TOC 45), which has in turn formed the canonical definition of friendship that emphasizes "the subjective side of the relationship of self and other." The phrase, "has led to," is highly vague, and the precision required to defend the alleged causal connection almost impossible to obtain. A putative cause so far removed from its alleged effect and blended with so many other historical antecedents of modern philosophy would be nearly impossible to trace. Moreover, even if we adopt hypothetically the language of modern philosophy and think in terms of consciousness and its objects, the previous paragraph shows that it still would not be quite right to think of Aristotle privileging the "subjective" side of friendship. Reciprocity is essential to the definition of friendship and the good sense of self-love focuses on the effects of one's actions on others.

With these adjustments in mind, let us then continue to follow O'Connor's analysis of the theme of fraternity. Spurred by Blanchot's comment that the evils of Nazism made "us" recognize that the Jews were "our brothers," Derrida questions what fraternity might mean in this case. The meanings of "brothers," "our," and

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[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 232. Aristotle's text on which Ross draws here is *Nic. Ethics*, Book IX, 1168 a28–1169 b2.

"we" become problematic in such a context. "What can the name 'brother' or the call to fraternity still mean," he asks us, "when one or the other arises in the speech of friendship which, like that of Blanchot … has so radically delivered itself from the hold of all determined communities" (PF 304)? O'Connor is quite right to note that the stakes here for Derrida are how to formulate our responsibility to and for others without "any express commitment, or prior to any assumption of responsibility in the name of autonomy" (TOC 47). In the absence of any defensible universal definition of friendship, how can deconstruction articulate "some implications for the theory and practice of friendship of the tensions arising from the competition between the claims of reciprocity and self-interest in the canonical tradition" (*Ibid.*)?[10] Indeed, does it make sense to speak of "friendship *in the literal sense*? Does this question still make sense, precisely" (PF 240)?

Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* offers us designedly open, challenging questions about friendship that are provisional and seek to interrupt "a variety of canonical readings and their universalist presuppositions" (TOC 49). At the same time, the deconstructive enterprise, as O'Connor quite correctly observes, is confined more nearly to "speculative rather than empirical and distributive questions in philosophy" (*Ibid.*). Consequently, he points out, a "more empirical approach to friendship" could provide a useful "supplement" (*Ibid.*) to Derridean deconstruction. Such an empirical investigation would avoid universalist definitions, and remain sensitive to "contextual, or cultural, influences on interpretation" as well as to the fact that "evidence is always underdetermined" (*Ibid.*). If Derrida were to object to the necessary presence or implication of some universal assumptions in such an empirical inquiry, O'Connor replies that the risks are no greater or less necessary than those entailed in deconstructive critique itself. Nevertheless, the risks here do reinforce the requirement of sticking to contextual, particular descriptions. These contexts are "bounded" by "language, history, culture, institutions, and practices" (TOC 50).

Once these contexts are acknowledged and observed, O'Connor argues, certain explicit and implicit questions present themselves for analysis. In the last two pages of his essay, he only raises these questions as a way of pointing toward future investigations. They are suggestions—hints, really—of the directions that his future thinking might take. For that reason, they remain not fully formed; they are underdeveloped, like photographs just emerging from developing liquid. Nevertheless, these questions are of vital importance, so I will list them here only a bit more briefly than the author himself poses them.

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[10]It is in the context of asking this question that O'Connor writes, as noted earlier, "friendship, especially on the Aristotelian model, cannot be determined without a role for selfishness" (TOC 47). We have already seen that, with regard to what Aristotle calls "good self-love," there is no tension between reciprocity and self-interest. Also, the discussion of the relationship between reciprocity and self-interest has a long history. It is as least as old as Plato, and its modern history begins with Machiavelli and Hobbes. I wish that the author had ventured an opinion as to what Derrida might have made of this history and also of the fact that even Hobbes, as well as all other psychological egoists, would see no "tension" between reciprocity and self-interest because they are in fact identical. Cannot psychological egoists be friends, at least in Aristotle's senses of utility and pleasure, and if not, why not?.

The first question is whether "Derrida's anti-Aristotelian point about the need to deconstruct a view of friendship, as linked to both kinship and the primacy of self-interest, could be seen to have pragmatic value" (TOC 50). This "pragmatic value" is cashed in terms of whether historical evidence provides a warrant for the usual belief that "we have special duties toward, and responsibilities in respect of, kin, but not to outsiders or strangers" (*Ibid.*). Anyone who has not slept throughout an entire introductory course in anthropology knows about the changing nature of families across the centuries and the correspondingly changing ways that they adopt, conserve, and adapt their values. They also know that the lines separating oppositional insiders and outsiders are drawn differently. The same question also arises *within* families in the changing treatment of spouses and children along gender lines and whether, by implication, if "traditional marriage is fundamentally exploitative of the female partner," this exploitative framework eliminates "the possibility that heterosexual marriage partners, or even males and females generally, could ever become equal friends" (*Ibid.*, 51).

To come to grips with such questions, O'Connor brings us back to "the Aristotelian attempt to account for friendship in terms of reciprocity, this time around the principle of mutual assistance" (TOC 51). This principle takes for granted the traditional view of special duties towards insiders as opposed to outsiders, this time phrased slightly differently: "that mutual assistance is due *primarily* to members, friends, and to those who cooperate as part of some personal and social arrangement" (*Ibid.*, emphasis mine). However, as the author immediately adds, even this principle is not complete or self-sufficient, for no sooner is stated than it immediately invokes "the wider question of what is due to persons generally" (*Ibid.*). These questions taken together point directly to two crucial problems currently roiling the social, political, legal, and moral waters throughout the world: immigration and the use of natural resources and its impact on global warming.

17.2

Such are, in rapid summary, the principal themes of Tony O'Connor's stimulating essay. To adapt a well known expression, the "covers" of this article are too close together. The last two pages, especially, provoke and authorize us to go further, both in terms of questioning what has been said and then responding to the implicit challenge to provide "a more empirical approach to friendship." Here I would like to do both.

In terms of critical questioning, I would first like to recur to "Derrida's anti-Aristotelian point about the need to deconstruct a view of friendship, as linked to both kinship and the primacy of self-interest." Some discussion on the connection, for Derrida, between the "primacy of self-interest" that he finds in Aristotle and the latter's view that the friend is "another myself"—the same, not the truly other— would have been valuable. For, as we have already seen, there is for Aristotle an altruistic element in self-love. Furthermore, Aristotle's sense of good self-love, so

far from being inconsistent with friendship, is essential to it. This claim falls far short of a universalist definition, for it states only a necessary condition. And it is plain that it is a necessary condition because it amounts to a basic self-respect, an acknowledgement of having some goodness to offer the other, in the absence of which relationships fail. This is old news to marriage counselors and therapists, among others, and anyone can perceive its truth in cases in which one or more parties in a relationship of emerging friendship have nothing to offer the other(s). They are emotionally needy and dependent: as an acquaintance once phrased it, they "come on all needy and suck you dry."

Finally, self-interest and conceiving the friend as "the same" are not identical. On some views of self-interest, the two concepts may converge, but they need not, and a "more empirical approach to friendship" would show that their relationship is contingent. For example, Alfred North Whitehead expresses this non-identity when he writes, "When man ceases to wander, he will cease to ascend in the scale of being…. A diversification among human communities is essential for the provision of the incentive and material for the Odyssey of the human spirit. Other nations of different habits are not enemies: they are godsends."[11]

A second critical remark concerns the justification for the traditional belief that "we have special duties toward, and responsibilities in respect of, in, but not to outsiders or strangers." It would have been instructive had the author evaluated, however briefly, some of the traditional rationales that have accompanied those traditional beliefs and that still inform corresponding legal concepts. I am thinking of special responsibilities created by unequal power relations, as in the case of young children, who are involuntarily dependent upon their parents for their survival, and the duty of society at large to care for its most vulnerable members: children, the aged, and the indigent. One could also take into account reciprocal obligations as a way of fleshing out the "principle of mutual assistance," as in the case of adult children's obligations to care for aging and infirm parents.

Accepting the author's invitation to provide "a more empirical approach to friendship," I would now like to adapt certain ideas from my recent work on kindness,[12] but in a very compressed summary. More than half of the book consists of a descriptive phenomenology of kindness as found in acts and omissions to act, persons, social atmospheres, technology, institutions, and communities. In Part II, these phenomenological evidences are exposed to hermeneutical questioning in a variety of contexts, and as guided by Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, whom Paul Ricoeur terms the three "masters of suspicion."[13] Finally, the last chapter, "Critical Kindness: Toward an Aesthetic Humanism," discusses and defends a residuum of kindness can

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[11] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967 [1925]), 207.

[12] *Kindness and the Good Society*, *Connections of the Heart* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

[13] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 80. See the extended discussion, pp. 80–86.

be rescued from that hermeneutical questioning. This chapter focuses on necessary conditions of and concrete strategies for bringing genuine kindness into being.

Accordingly, much of this chapter focuses on the type of decision making required for such a task. I argued that it is analogous to the way that artists solve problems by unifying disparate elements into the form that is most meaningful considering the conditions imposed on their creativity by limited materials, time, and resources. Such decision making is also central to establishing and maintaining friendships. It is likewise integrative by conjugating trust with suspicion, or at least caution, and by requiring informed judgments about how to bring into being the greatest possible good of the friend (analogous to the artist's richest possible creation from the materials before her). In so doing, the will embodied in such decision making becomes poetic—that is, "the power of unification unfurled by the configuring act constituting *poeisis* itself."[14]

This integrative quality that is central to acts of kindness also applies to friendships because, analogous to the artistic creation, it likewise unifies external events in the course of social life as well as brings about an internal unity that presents itself to us as personal integrity. This integrity, or wholeness (from the Latin, *integer*), is also closely linked to what Gabriel Marcel terms "*disponibilité*," our active disposition to be at the service of the other, and which constitutes the origin of the self's "activity and creativeness."[15] Central also to the experience of friendship is Marcel's observation that we have a sense of "admiration" for those who are actively ready to be of service to others. In fact, "admiration" is itself "a form of readiness."[16]

Aesthetic experience, from the perspective of both artist and spectator, has other features that illumine relations of friendship. Such experience can, as Monroe Beardsley points out, encourage the development of discrimination and refined perception, as well as an internal unity that emerges from the way that through the aesthetic object we are "taken in hand," as it were, and then "feel a remarkable kind of *clarification*."[17] This clarification goes hand in hand with refined perception in that it gives us what Marcel called having an "ear" for experience. In aesthetic experience as in friendship, the word "ear" designates something subtle, "a certain faculty for appreciating relationships."[18] Lacking this feeling of attunement to the

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[14] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press), 142. Ricoeur often spoke of the unwritten third volume of *The Philosophy of the Will* as a "poetics of the will." The poetics of the will best suited for the realization of acts of kindness is not necessarily what Ricoeur had in mind, but it is consistent with all of his discussions of willing.

[15] Gabriel Marcel, "On the Ontological Mystery," in *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: The Citadel Press, 1964), 43.

[16] Marcel, "Reply to Otto Friedrich Bollnow," trans. Susan Gruenheck, in *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*, ed. Paul Schillp and Lewis Hahn (LaSalle: Open Court Press, 1984), 202.

[17] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World), 574.

[18] Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 6.

desires and needs of others would make it very difficult to appreciate the good of a friend. Therefore, Beardsley concludes that the sensitivity and perceptiveness that can be gained from aesthetic experience "would have a wide bearing upon all other aspects of our lives—our emotional relations with other people, for example."[19] It certainly has a bearing on one's ability to create and maintain friendships, particularly by way of resisting tendencies to construe the other as "the same." Also, as Merleau-Ponty's analyses of the esthesiology of the body have shown, the feeling attunement to the other's needs and desires is already schematized in the flesh. The *Ineinander* of intercorporeity grounds social relationships such as friendship, narrowly or widely construed.

Beardsley also shows how other aspects of aesthetic experience effectively argue against the logic of "the same." Such experience can foster the growth of the imagination such that we can learn to see the aesthetic object from another person's point of view, that of the artist and/or other spectators, and even when we find that perspective alien and off-putting. This is an attitude, he proposes, that "fosters mutual sympathy and understanding."[20] It is also an attitude that is crucial to the way that lines are drawn between insiders and outsiders, to the types of experiences that Whitehead values, and as Tony O'Connor has pointed out, raises the question of what we owe to people generally. In addition, it is an attitude that speaks to Max Scheler's desire to make phenomenology the "guardian of dialogue."[21]

The approach to the other that Beardsley advocates is also one that, in friendship as in the art world, consists of a unity of activity and receptivity, and both are essential to resisting the logic of "the same" in friendship. The artist's *activity* is one of creative expression. As Mikel Dufrenne notes, "Expression is the revelation of the self, simply because it causes us to actually *be* what is expressed."[22] He is perhaps thinking here of Gaston Bachelard's comment about the "awakening of poetic creation … in the soul of the reader." The poem expresses us by making us what it expresses, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being."[23]

This might well sound like the logic of "the same," and it would be if we attempted to inscribe our values in the lives of our friends as an artist expresses his or her vision on the canvas, in the marble, dance, or musical composition. However, with friendship, although there is an expression of self and values, it is of a very

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19 Beardsley, p. 574.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 575.

21 On this subject, see Michael D. Barber's excellent book, *Guardian of Dialogue*, *Max Scheler's Phenomenology*, *Sociology of Knowledge*, *and Philosophy of Love* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1993). See particularly Chap. 4, "The Fundaments of Dialogue: Scheler's Theory of Intersubjectivity."

22 Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, trans. Edward Casey, Albert A. Anderson, Willis Domingo, and Leon Jacobson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 380.

23 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, Foreword by Etienne Gilson (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), xix.

particular kind. The content of the expression consists of our willingness to assist our friends in whatever ways possible and *only that*. Thus we express an appropriate absence from their lives. This discretion is also a necessary condition of friendship, and consists in the expression of our integrity, that in intervening in our friends' lives, we do not take up residence in them or in any other fashion attempt to colonize them.

The expression of friendship in and through intervening in our friends' lives respectfully also has the effect of aestheticizing the environment. In Dufrenne's phrasing, "There is a nimbus of joy around the joyous man. We say of another that he exudes boredom. The effect is such that ordinary objects can change their appearance through the mere presence of someone."[24] Just so, there is a nimbus of friendliness around friends, a concrete sign of the mutual investment of trust and help that instantiates Tony O'Connor's principle of mutual assistance."

In relationships of friendship, this activity that I have been sketching is indissoluble from the *receptivity* through which I open myself to the other to be taught by him or her, just as the spectator opens himself or herself to an artwork. Correlatively, artworks as well as friends, as just described, manifest themselves as worthy of respect. They present themselves as having a certain dignity or integrity such that they impress on us a claim to adapt to them rather than vice-versa. Thus, what Dufrenne's description of the artwork applies equally to the friend: "I submit myself to the work instead of submitting it to my jurisdiction, and I allow the work to deposit the meaning within me."[25] It follows also that when I ignore this instructive receptivity and instead enforce my own ideological filters on an artwork or a friend, I misperceive and distort the referent by making it or him or her submit to the logic of "the same." By making it, or him or her, "another me" *tout court*, I find only myself and can never learn from it or him or her.

There is no better illustration of such an imposition of "the same" than Jean-Paul Sartre's elegantly sarcastic portrait of Monsieur Achille and his friends in *La Nausée*. In their café wisdom, "they baptized their little obstinacies and some proverbs in the name of experience, and they turned themselves into automatic vending machines: two sous in the slot to the left and *voilà* anecdotes wrapped in silver paper; two sous in the slot to the right and one gets invaluable pieces of advice that stick to your teeth like soft caramels."[26]

By contrast with this type of oppressive experience, aesthetic objects, just as true friends, present the opportunity of a depth of experience. That depth is measured in light of what we discern in, rather than enforce on, the aesthetic object or the friend. However, because the receptivity involved in such cases is only the inverse of a corresponding activity, it is just as true that we will not reach this depth unless we acquire the requisite sensitivity that flows from making the effort to commit ourselves to the aesthetic object or friend. Therefore, for the friend as for the artwork, "The more I lay myself open to the work, the more sensitive will I be

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[24]Dufrenne, p. 177.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 393.

[26]Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 100.

to its effects…. Aesthetic feeling has depth not only because it unifies us but also because it opens us up."[27]

For example, "A man knows tenderness in a Mozart andante—that singular nuance of tenderness smiling through tears, that delicate joy which has undergone untold tribulations without becoming lost in them—because his depths have been offered substantial nourishment."[28] The same "substantial nourishment" and required effort to reach it also obtain in the narrow circle of very good friends, as opposed to the much wider sense of Aristotelian *philia* or, say, George Herbert Mead's notion of "the generalized other."[29]

Finally, it is worth observing of the necessary effort involved that such friendships are not easy to establish and maintain. This is because, among other things, there are powerful cultural influences that reduce and deform the depth of feelings required into superficial, transient gratifications. For example, we are mobile and often change residences. We live at a frenzied pace, and it is not only food that must be fast. We believe in and demand instant solutions (just add water). We have an insatiable craving for non-stop talking, from talk radio to blogs, but little time or patience for thinking. Web sites such as Facebook offer the possibility of being "friends" with a page owner. Marcel was not wrong when he wrote that the joy of existence has been degraded to satisfactions,[30] and this was written long before ubiquitous personal computers and mobile phones thoroughly mediated intercorporeal relationships with e-mail, chat groups, and text messaging.

But now I can sense the ghost of Derrida smiling (or scowling) over my shoulder. For, the question of fraternity returns in the form of asking, Who is this "we"? The answer is, the object of an empirical generalization from my own culture. Tony O'Connor is certainly correct to stress the necessity of taking historical and cultural conditions into account in an empirical investigation of the reality of friendships, and from small French villages to those of indigenous peoples in Guatemala, I have witnessed flourishing friendships in substantially different conditions. O'Connor has invited us to follow his "more empirical approach to friendship," to which I have attempted to respond here, and I wish to conclude by issuing a reverse invitation. I hope that, reflecting on his own culture and historical conditions and beyond, he pursues that empirical approach in the light of the aspects of an aesthetic humanism briefly sketched here. He thinks clearly and deeply about important philosophical questions, from the published results of which we have all benefited over the years, and of which I look forward to a happy continuation throughout his well earned retirement. To him, I dare say, "O friend, thank you for being a friend."

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[27] Dufrenne, p. 405.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] The "generalized other" represents "the attitude of the whole community. George Herbert Mead, *Mind*, *Self*, *and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 154. This "other" is not necessarily a specific person. As Alfred Schutz notes, "the generalized other" "may take the structure of an individual, a type, a collectivity, [or] an anonymous audience or public." *Collected Papers*, *Vol. I*, *The Problem of Social Reality*, Edited with an Introduction Maurice Natanson, with a Preface by H. L. Van Breda (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 189.

[30] Marcel, "Reply to Otto Friedrich Bollnow," in Schillp and Hahn, p. 202.

Tony O'Connor Biography

This collection of essays was commissioned to honour the philosopher Tony O'Connor on the occasion of his 65th birthday and ensuing retirement from Unversity College Cork, Ireland.

Dr. Tony O'Connor received his Ph.D. from the National University of Ireland in 1975 and taught at the Philosophy Department, University College Cork for almost 30 years where, at the end, he was also Head of Department. Throughout his career he was tireless in generating and being involved in philosophical discussion and debate.

He was President of the British Society for Phenomenology until 2004 and is now Vice President. He also was Chairman (1996–1999) and Secretary (1992–1995) of the National Committee for Philosophy, Royal Irish Academy. Other memberships include the Society for European Philosophy, where he is on the Executive Committee, the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, the Irish Philosophical Society, the Irish Phenomenological Circle, and the Philadelphia Association, London, of which he is an Associate Member. He is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the book series *Continental Philosophy*, Routledge, New York and London. He has published on art, friendship, politics and on hermeneutics and continental philosophy more generally.

The contributions gathered in this volume are united in their attempt to respond appropriately and with care according to the expertise of their authors to Tony O'Connor as a philosopher, educator and person in different ways: by interpreting O'Connor's work, by thinking through issues which he has addressed in his work, by offering their own work for discussion and by addressing Tony O'Connor personally.

Email Addresses (In Alphabetical Order)

Graham Allen: g.allen@ucc.ie
Gary Banham: garybanham@me.com
Robert Bernasconi: rlb43@psu.edu

Douglas Burnham: H.D.Burnham@staffs.ac.uk
Edward S. Casey: escasey3@aol.com
Nicholas Davey: j.r.n.davey@dundee.ac.uk
Duane H. Davis: ddavis@unca.edu
Francis Halsall: halsallf@ncad.ie
William S. Hamrick: whamrick@sbcglobal.net
Joanna Hodge: J.Hodge@mmu.ac.uk
Julia Jansen: j.jansen@ucc.ie
David Farrell Krell: davidfkrell@gmail.com
Alphonso Lingis: allingis@hotmail.com
John Mullarkey: J.Mullarkey@kingston.ac.uk
Felix Ó Murchadha: felix.omurchadha@nuigalway.ie
Sinéad Murphy: sinead.murphy@ncl.ac.uk
Hugh J. Silverman: hugh.silverman@stonybrook.edu
Talia Welsh: Talia-Welsh@utc.edu
James Williams: j.r.williams@dundee.ac.uk

Index