PERSPECTIVES

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Special Issue
Continental Philosophy

UCD School of Philosophy

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SPECIAL ISSUE:
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Seferin James, Sheena Hyland

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About *Perspectives*

Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy is a peer-reviewed annual publication, featuring articles, book reviews and interviews encompassing a broad range of current issues in philosophy and its related disciplines. *Perspectives* reflects the diverse interests of the graduate philosophy community at University College Dublin, publishing work from within both the analytic and continental traditions. We welcome submissions addressing philosophical problems from related disciplines, including cognitive science and psychology. Perspectives publishes the highest standard of postgraduate scholarship.

About this Issue

The second issue of *Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy* is a special edition on continental philosophy. The articles in this issue cover a range of themes and concerns in the continental tradition and demonstrate the broad spectrum of the research interests of our contributors from Ireland, Europe, and the United States.

In the interview 'Infinitely Demanding Anarchism', Simon Critchley discusses his book *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, answering questions on his departure from Derrida's thought, the trajectory of his work from the question over Heidegger's fascism to a Levinasian anarchism, how he understands ethics, politics and political action, the relation of his thought to the wider anarchist tradition and whether his ethics has clear normative consequences.

In her article 'Intertwined Identities: Challenges to Bodily Autonomy' Gail Weiss explores the implications of conceiving the 'normal' body as an autonomous body. In particular, she focuses on cases of conjoined twins and critically examines the reasons behind surgical and familial decisions to undergo separation surgery. Considering the enormous risks involved in such surgeries, she challenges the prevailing concept of 'one body, one identity' and looks at its role in these decisions.

In her paper 'Perception and Painting in Merleau-Ponty's Thought' Carolyne Quinn offers an analysis of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception and his writing on painting. Focusing on three of Merleau-Ponty's essays on painting 'Cezanne's Doubt', 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence' and 'Eye Mind', this paper offers a unique analysis of

perception as a creative and expressive experience.

Tsutomu Ben Yagi's paper 'Beyond Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Self and Heidegger's *Dasein*' considers the departure made from classical notions of subjectivity by these thinkers. He argues that their temporalisation and finitisation of subjectivity leads away from a metaphysical understanding of subjectivity and moves towards a more existential understanding that breaks most successfully from the history of metaphysics with Heidegger.

In 'Apodicticity and Transcendental Phenomenology', Bence Marosan investigates the possibilities for apodicticity or unshakable future validity in phenomenology. He argues that apodicticity gains its proper sense from a theoretical framework and calls for a reconciliation of the many divergences within phenomenology itself in order to preserve this framework and the philosophical life of truth.

Jennifer Lemma's article 'Language Acquisition, Motherhood, and the Perpetual Preservation of Ethical Dialogue,' explores the paradigm of motherhood as a vehicle for language acquisition in the work of Julia Kristeva. She focuses on the mother/child relationship at the centre of Kristeva's analysis, and evaluates its implications as a model for ethical discourse.

Tom Sparrow's contribution to this collection 'Bodies in Transit: The Plastic Subject of Alphonso Lingis' explores the work of the living and contemporary philosopher Alphonso Lingis. This paper describes Lingis' phenomenology of sensation and his reflections of travel. It will be seen that the subject of Lingis' writing features a plasticity of the body. Furthermore materiality of affect and the alimentary nature of sensation will be examined.

This issue closes with a selection of book reviews that encompass a broader selection of philosophical themes, including ancient philosophy, Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, and animal ethics.

It is with great pleasure that we publish the second issue of *Perspectives*. Many thanks to our contributors, board of reviewers, designer and all others whose support and encouragement have been invaluable.

Anna Nicholson
Luna Dolezal
Seferin James
Sheena Hyland

Editors
Dublin 2009

Infinitely Demanding Anarchism: An Interview with Simon Critchley

Simon Critchley is Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York. He received his Doctorate from the University of Essex in 1988 for the thesis published as *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (1992). He has published numerous books including: *Very Little, Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (1997), *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary French Thought (*1999), *Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (2001), *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (2007) and *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008). His research interests include continental philosophy, phenomenology, philosophy and literature, psychoanalysis, the ethical and the political.

Seferin James: Your landmark work *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* faced the difficult task of coming to terms with the ethical significance of Jacques Derrida's work. With your more recent book, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, you continue to work with ethical insights derived from Emmanuel Levinas but the only reference to Derrida is a single footnote. In your 2008 paper "Derrida the Reader" you discuss some of your reservations about Derrida's philosophy. Some of your reservations, such as those over the term "post-structuralism" and the popular idea of deconstruction, seem likely to have been shared by Derrida himself but you also claim to set aside *différance* and this is another matter. If you have substantially abandoned Derrida's philosophy could you shed some light on what has motivated this departure?

Simon Critchley: I've had this question before. It's a difficult one to answer because Derrida was for me *the* philosopher. I was educated in England in the 1980s and in France in a very Heideggerian context. When the question of Heideggers politics really came up, which was in 1986, I was just a first year graduate student. It was a revelation. There were things that we didn't really know, things that we hadn't been told. The attack on Heidegger was ferocious but it's difficult to reconstruct that context. The best way of getting at it is in Badiou's *Manifesto for Philosophy*. What he spends the first five

or six chapters of that book attacking is a sort of Heideggerian orthodoxy. I taught that text last year and students don't really see that because it doesn't really exist in at all the same way. It really was that every major thinker was a modulation, modification, of what Heidegger was up to, a different way of hearing it and in particular Derrida. The attack on Heidegger and Heidegger's politics in 1986, around the book by Farías, then raised this issue of ethics in a particularly powerful way. That sort of got me into this topic of ethics at a very early level. There seemed to be no ethical resources in Heideggers thought for resisting national socialism.

SJ: So it was the question over Heidegger's politics that gave you an impetus towards ethics as a primary concern in your philosophy?

SC: I had different Phd projects. One of the first projects was going to be on the idea of memory in Hegel, which at some point I will go back to, another was on Husserl; I was looking into the nature of transcendental argumentation in Derrida and Husserl and I just decided that I couldn't really organise the material. Then this political issue exploded and the figure that everyone who taught me seemed to revere, Heidegger, seemed to have, if not blood on his hands, at least the stains of something unpleasant. I'd read Levinas quite carefully before in another context, I read all that in French because he wasn't really available, and I began to try and formulate a response to that.

Derrida was very much the philosophical avant garde, the highest expression of the philosophical avant garde in that period. The text of his that was really very important to me was *Of Spirit* where he responds to Heidegger. Implicitly responds to the issue of politics and responds to the fact that the attack on Heidegger was implicitly an attack on Derrida, which is how it was: it was an attack on deconstruction. He formulated this idea of the pledge and of responsibility and the rest. I've always seen Derrida's thought as shifting between two poles, a Heideggerian pole and a Levinasian pole, and it shifts much more closely to the Levinasian pole after the political debacle of 1986-1987. So it is a question of trying to work out – as Derrida was *the* philosopher, the philosopher's philosopher, in the sense that he was someone that people interested in philosophy were watching – there was a question of defending him at a certain level and trying to clarify and defend what I saw as the basic gesture of his thinking, which had this ethical orientation. Now that seems entirely banal, it's peculiar the way history works, I mean that there are people who will accept that, well there are people who don't accept it like Martin Hagglund,

there's a sort of vague consensus that there was a shift in Derrida's work in that period, but it wasn't evident at the time. It required an enormous amount of work to excavate that. There was an enormous initial skepticism and then the politics, which was something that had always been on my mind.

The question you ask is why that is sort of absent from *Infinitely Demanding*. The answer is I don't really know. It's peculiar the way Derrida dropped from my attention at a certain point and I don't fully understand why that happened. Partly it has to do with a sort of frustration that I think I felt and a lot of people felt with what was happening with his thought in the 1990s. It seemed to be the wrong discourse. The last time I really taught Derrida at Essex was *Politics of Friendship* and *Spectres of Marx* and it somehow seemed irrelevant to the students I was teaching it to and this really struck me. It was maybe the wrong moment for Derrida's work, that scrupulousness and care and patience and whatever just seemed to be...the time required something different, and there was an enormous impatience with that. I suppose some of that impatience infected me. I wrote something after his death but in the last ten or fifteen years I haven't been engaged with Derrida in the way in which I was.

SJ: Would you like to comment on your general relationship to phenomenology at the moment?

SC: I still think of myself as a phenomenologist. I'm teaching *Being and Time* for fourteen weeks this semester. It is the sort of thing that you can do here that you can't do with the English term system where you are teaching nine week courses and it tends to be very superficial. We're really going through the text very carefully for the next fourteen weeks and it reminds me how committed I am to Heidegger's conception of phenomenology. I try to show in the book that came out last year *On Heidegger's Being and Time* that Heidegger's conception of phenomenology is really derived from a certain reading of Husserl with other things along the way. I try to show how Heidegger's phenomenology is a radicalisation of things that are already there in Husserl. You can say that it is all in Husserl but it is Heidegger that synthesises those things into a new chemistry, blending them also with elements from Dilthey and a certain reading of Aristotle and a certain Christian, radical Christian, orientation: Paul, Augustine, and Luther.

Heidegger's conception of phenomenology, which is this idea of attempting in philosophical discourse to get close to that which shows itself

and that language is that power of articulation, that power of intelligibility, which allows you to attend to that which shows itself. How Heidegger defines the phenomenon is something that I still relish and subscribe to. The issue is then whether that means you have to subscribe to the sort of narrative of Heidegger's work in *Being and Time* as he describes it or not.

Levinas says that the task is leaving the climate of Heidegger's thinking without leaving for a climate that would be pre-Heideggerian. That's very much how I situate what I'm up to. I think that there are problems with the climate or the ethos of Heidegger's work, particularly around the question of authenticity for me, but there is no step back behind Heidegger to some pre-Heideggerian metaphysics or whatever. The step that Heidegger makes is a decisive step, therefore it's a question of how one negotiates philosophically on the ground layed out by Heidegger and use different emphases than the ones that Heidegger himself gave. So I think it's a question of reading *Being and Time* and also much of the later work with Heidegger against Heidegger. That's nothing new, Habermas' first published paper was called "With Heidegger, Against Heidegger," as I recall, which is a reading of the 1935 *Introduction to Metaphysics*. So I still think of myself as a phenomenologist because for me the overwhelming threat or worry is the worry of what Husserl called objectivism; what we call now naturalism or scientism. Phenomenology still has a lot to offer and I subscribe wholeheartedly to that.

SJ: It's very interesting the narrative that you suggest. You begin with the question that Heidegger's politics cast over his philosophy. This leads you to your PhD thesis *The Ethics of Deconstruction* that considers the ethical resources available through Levinas to a Heideggerian tradition of thought. Then in your recent work, *Infinitely Demanding*, you seem to continue this trajectory inspired by the question of fascism towards a kind of pacifist anarchism.

SC: A bit of background here is that my political trajectory has been through a number of changes in the last ten or fifteen years. To a great extent this has been dependent on what has been going on in the outside world and also who I'm talking to. What you find in *Infinitely Demanding* is that I begin with this engagement with Marx that comes out of a whole series of encounters I was having at reading groups in 2000 and 2001 where people wanted to go back to Marx. I've got an implicit trust in what people are interested in. I tend to listen very carefully to what graduate students are talking about and reading. The reading of Marx really came out of a long

term engagement I've had with Marx but also out of a sense of urgency. An urgency to go back to Marx and to address what resources his thinking had and did not have. While the critique of political economy is incredibly germane descriptively and interesting. Everything that has happened over the last six, seven, eight, months has confirmed that Marx's remarks on credit in volume three of *Capital* is tremendously prescient. The issue for me, the problem with Marx, is that the issue of the political agent and the political subject in Marx has always been for me an open question. That began under the influence of someone like Ernesto Laclau who was trying to accept a Marxian analysis of the state of the world but then to rethink the nature of political subjectivity and collective will formation in Marx by using Gramsci. Gramsci has always been a huge influence on me. He always seemed to be the most intelligent and reasonable Marxist.

SJ: You are still working with the concept of hegemony in *Infinitely Demanding*.

SC: Yes, I just think that politics is about hegemony. It's about the formation of a collective will or a common sense, the formation of what Laclau would call a chain of equivalences. You can link up different interest groups with very different conceptions of the good, around a common struggle. That's a kind of value neutral remark. It's as true, in fact it's more true, on the right as on the left. Until the rise of Obama in the US, it was the right that was using that technique in politics particularly well. Hegemony is just the logic of politics for me.

The drift towards anarchism has just been an increasing frustration with certain forms of Marxism. I've always been very persuaded by Bakunin's critique of Marx. In the sense that Marxists are crypto-Bismarckian: they're secret lovers of the state form and they crave new forms of authority. It seems to me that the political sequence that emerges into media visibility with the Seattle protests in November 1999 is best captured with an idea of anarchism. So it's a question of trying, with activist groups and friends and different people, to try and rethink the nature of anarchism. This has led me towards the position you find in *Infinitely Demanding*. A book that is very much a first statement.

Academically it's interesting that Marxism has always been such a success in the academy. It works incredibly well because you've got an elaborate theory which you can discuss the nature of, Marxist theory and its relationships to developments. There's a series of very difficult books to read so it works well in seminars.

SJ: It offers a model of analysis that can be applied endlessly and discussed in these applications with considerable nuance.

SC: Yes, and it's very amenable to theorisation whereas anarchism has always been suspicious of that. That goes back to the Bakunin Marx relation. Bakunin never really gets it together. His writings are interventions: letters and occasional texts. Nothing adds up to the sort of theoretical edifice that Marx produced. There is a reluctance among many anarchist groups to theorise their activity or practice. For them the practice is the thing and the theorisation is to miss it. I think that's why there are less anarchists in the academy. It's a contextual discourse in the sense in which anarchism as a theory of politics based on mutual aid, co-operation, and the rest. The idea of direct democracy is inherently much more plausible in the context I am in now than forms of academified Marxism. There's a certain self-consciousness within American political and religious discourse around ideas of small scale communities, usually religious communities, which are implicitly anarchist. It works. It seems more plausible here. It's also closer to the way in which activist groups actually function in terms of a disparate range of groups with often very different interests, often connected with single issues or often connected with religious commitments. So the heart of anarchism for me is not a set of theoretical commitments, as with Marxism, but a set of ethical concerns with practice.

SJ: I'm interested in discussing your relation to the wider anarchist tradition. Could you consider yourself a kind of mutualist because the ethical demand you are concerned with in *Infinitely Demanding* draws us away from individualism towards a more mutual experience of society?

SC: Yes. I'm happy to be described as a mutualist, though the recent work that I've been doing is on mystical anarchism. This material is a strange new departure for me but my implicit prejudice or assumption is that human beings are not inherently wicked. Human beings in the right circumstances – and they are not in the right circumstances – are capable of behaving mutually, co-operatively, and on the basis of trust if they are allowed to. It's the states law, bureaucracy, and the rest which hinders that. I see human wickedness as a socio-historical outcome rather than a natural fact. This is what takes me back to the importance of original sin and the relationship between original sin and politics. It seems to me that all forms of authoritarianism rely on some idea of original sin. If you believe in some idea of essential human defectiveness then you are going to be led towards

some form of authoritarianism as a way of rectifying that defectiveness through the institutions of the church and the state and all the rest.

So I am implicitly a mutualist, the question is what's possible at the present moment. I have got different views on that. I think we're stuck with the state form, more or less, it's a pity that we're stuck with it but I think that we are stuck with it for the foreseeable future. Anarchism is about federalism. It's about a federalistic politics. There are times when I could imagine the European Union going over to a radical form of federalism if it decided to abandon its commitment to the nation state. You could imagine a radically decentralised European area based on a federation of cities, villages, and all the rest where the economy would be returned to localities in a very dramatic way.

SJ: Irish Politics has traditionally defined itself in relation to the question of land and nationalism because of the colonial history with England and perhaps with the rising influence of the European Union, with the Euro and the constant treaties, it would certainly seem to make questions of nationalism less relevant, but surely there is a serious problem with the constitutionalism of the European Union?

SC: Sure, but what I'm saying is that to get from here to something better that would be one way to move. You could imagine a genuine commitment to the overcoming of the nation state which was the founding principle of the European Union. All the problems of constitutionalism, absolutely, but if people took that seriously then you could imagine a much more developed form of federalism. The nation is a thing that appears at a certain point in European history, in moments of national romanticism which arise as an anti-colonial moment: Ireland, Finland. There's a book by Declan Kiberd on *Inventing Ireland*. Ireland is a very good example of the invention of a national myth. The nation was important at a certain point in political history but I would be interested in bringing about an end to that. That would be one way, a sort of real world actual politics way of thinking about forms of federalism which we could actually get to from where we are even though there would be lots of problems with that. The anarchist tradition has always been this slightly impoverished, invisible, sort of underbelly to political thinking which is always feeling misrepresented. It's a great pity.

SJ: To return a little towards Derrida and a question of theorising what it means to be human. I accept that if we are to consider individuals to be bad then this implies an authoritarian social politics – and Thomas Hobbes is

a case in point – but if on the other hand you can find it in your heart to be a little bit more optimistic about what it is to be a person alive today then you can find yourself much more sympathetic to anarchist politics. Do you take seriously this question of the nature of humanity or would you still be working within a more Derridean framework that would be suspicious of such essentialist questions?

SC: I take seriously the anthropological question. I don't think you can simply separate questions of politics from questions of humanity or, indeed, the nature of religion. These things are part and parcel. I also think that there is obviously an implicit humanistic prejudice in the way in which that question is posed - it's about the question of the human, the nature of the human, and we're still stuck with a humanistic metaphysics. One of the things that Derrida's work has persistently pointed out, or attempted to question, that limit or frontier between the human and the animal or the human and the divine and I take that seriously. In as much as Derrida is problematising the question of the essence of the human, he is still asking that question: what are "The Ends of Man"? It is not simply an issue of setting to one side all issues of human nature. It's a question of rethinking those categories in an essential way. That's one of the things that I take from Derrida's work. You can't simply say – well it's all discursively articulated and questions of nature needn't be considered. This is one sort of academic doxa you find. Another is 'well it's all nature and it's all genetically coded in some way.' These are obviously wrong.

It seems that anarchism has the capaciousness for thinking about forms of mutuality and co-operation that would question the limits of the human which goes back to deep spiritual traditions like the Franciscans and people like that. The idea of the human as the be all and end all of human existence or why this universe was made is a humanist assumption that I think anarchism has always been out to question, in my opinion.

SJ: You've already said that you can be considered sympathetic to mutualism and your discussion of co-operative federalism suggests a sympathy towards anarcha-syndicalism to a certain extent as well. Do you consider trade unions to be important?

SC: Trade unions are great for the most part. I used to be a union organiser in the 80s in England when I was still working there. I think that unions are absolutely essential. I was a labour party activist for many years in the 80s and early 90s. I left before Blair became leader. It still seems to me that

unions are hugely important.

SJ: Perhaps the question is whether you consider activity through trade unions as a possibility for achieving social change? In *Infinitely Demanding* you talk of political action in the interstices of the state – would trade union activity be something that you have in mind or would you be thinking more about the summit protests? Where are these interstices?

SC: The interstices have to be created. I would begin from the idea that at the present moment in history the state saturates more and more areas of society. We live in societies of surveillance and control, to an extent that would have been unimaginable a hundred years ago. It truly is a dystopian vision. To that extent, there is no space in the state. That's how the state works, it is by saturating the visibility of what takes place in the social terrain, controlling it. The political system, the political machine, is what gives the impression of change within that state form. Forms of genuine resistance have to go about creating new spaces of visibility. I take the idea of 'interstice' from Epicurus who says that the gods live in the interstices of space. There was an idea of god, a strange idea of god, that god was almost non-existent but existing in the insterstices and these insterstices are ones which had to be articulated and created, they don't exist, they're not pre-given.

The examples I give in the book of indigenous rights protests is one that works very well. There was no space for indigenous rights in Mexico in the 1980s. The space for indigenous rights had to be articulated around a struggle which was organised around a right that the Mexican government had unwittingly signed up to a labour convention that protected the rights of indigenous peoples. It's around that that the movement can take form and emerge into visibility. What happened with Seattle and after that was the emergence into visibility of a new form of resistance. That then becomes and interstice or a series of interstices. These are not pre-given, they have to be articulated. It becomes a question of how these interstices find a hook onto which they can attach themselves to the existing political system. It's a politics of protest.

SJ: It's interesting to hear that you derive the term interstice from Epicurus because I assumed it was from Hakim Bey's account of *Temporary Autonomous Zones*.

SC: That's something that I re-read about five or six years ago. It's on my mind as well. We tried to make a temporary autonomous zone in the New School in December with some of the students we had an occupation which we declared to be a temporary autonomous zone. It was interesting. It was all about a fight over visibility. We had cameras in there and they were threatening to send the police in and whatever – it would have been bad publicity for the school – but there you go.

Politics is about the creation of these spaces. What you do with these spaces then becomes...there are different options. One tradition would be secession where you move away from the state as far as possible and set up your zone in the countryside or whatever. Another tradition would be to form that group into an organised political force that could exert pressure on the political system and the state, the way the greens did in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. Say in Germany where they became part of the government in 98 was it? There are different strategies you can adopt at that point.

For me there is a question mark about the nature of resistance and protest. I think that the political sequence that emerges into political visibility with Seattle, through to the G7 protests, has come to an end or is coming to an end. Strategically, tactically, there was the element of surprise in Seattle. People didn't know how to deal with these new tactics and now they do. What one does next – I think I mentioned this in Dublin recently – I was talking about an activist group in France...

SJ: Yes, you mentioned them, *The Call* is the name of their text isn't it?

SC: Yes, Yes. They've got this idea of zones of opacity. In many ways, this is just a question for me, that the Seattle sequence was all about the emergence into more and more powerful forms of visibility. The use of spectacular, huge, protests to make a political point. Maybe different tactics are necessary at this point. I don't really know what to suggest but I'm talking to people and listening to people and reading things and I'm just curious.

SJ: Isn't the spectacle to which you have just referred a threatening kind of logic. To conceive of political action within this spectacular sphere risks creating news reports but no change. The problem I'm gesturing towards is the problem of direct action and whether direct action is actually possible or are we trapped within the symbolic creation of identity and of news rather than political change?

SC: I think that there is an absolute risk of that. One risks replicating the spectacle in and through forms of resistance and successful resistance is resistance that gets the right publicity, that creates the right effect. A few students of mine unfurled a free Tibet banner outside one of the olympic areas in Beijing last year. It took months of coordinated action and they had to build the thing there and the thing was only up for thirty seconds before the police tore it down and they were all arrested but they got a picture in the *New York Times* and elsewhere. Now that's effective protest at a certain level but at another level it's just the creation of news.

I think that this is always a difficult thing to think about. The politics of resistance shouldn't exhaust itself by trying to appeal to a news agenda, there's no question about that, but it can't afford to ignore it. It's a really tricky one. What interests me a lot more is the fact that you get a bunch of people in a room who have thought carefully about these issues and you can come to interesting forms of consensus and thoughtfulness about what should be done. I think that direct action is essential but over the means of direct action there is a question mark for me. A certain sequence has come to an end, I think. It's a question mark as to what is going to happen in the immediate future. The issue is what happens on the ground. It's about people organising quasi-institutions for themselves that they have autonomy over, whether that's a food co-op or some sort of medical co-operative or some kind of free school or whatever it might be. Those are the important things. While I think that it's something that has been much more a part of the anarchist movement I feel that it is something that has often remained below the level of visibility. It's great successes have often been less than visible. Anarchism has been rising and forming ways in political history over the last 170 years, well longer than that if you go back to Godwin, and its had a huge about of small successes that it doesn't really celebrate as much as it perhaps should do. The image of anarchism as violent crazy protest, which goes back to the end of the 19th century, is still one that people very much struggle with. That disappoints me. Changing the image of anarchism would be one thing that could be done – go on CNN and say that anarchists are nice people.

SJ: It can be difficult to create these freer spaces of activity in society and maybe this is something about the difficulty of the state.

SC: Yes, I think so.

SJ: One of the key aspects of the Levinasian understanding of anarchy is the overcoming of individual autonomy. Does it make sense to theoretically conceptualise the end of individual autonomy – which is quite convincing on a number of levels – in the context of a political situation in which surveillance is often individual surveillance, where you are individualised by the forces and operations of the state? Does this individualisation simply become part of what is rejected?

SC: It's a good question. The point I'm trying to make in *Infinitely Demanding* and in the work I've done around that topic subsequently is to try and replace an idea of anarchism based around the idea of freedom, a humanist idea of individual freedom, with an anarchism of responsibility. To show the anarchic form of organisation in protests, like the antiwar protests or the antiglobalisation protests, that is not based around a claim for emancipation as much as the identification of a wrong. A grievance in relation to a wrong. It's to try and show that the core of anarchism is not so much an idea of freedom but an idea of responsibility. If you read people like David Graeber, who is a good friend of mine and brilliant on the issue of direct action, he has got an incredibly simple minded idea of freedom and autonomy. The Levinasian dimension is that what anarchism is about is an experience of responsibility, infinite responsibility. What my argument against autonomy, a certain model of autonomy, is about is an idea of conscience. The *dividual*, in my parlance, is a way of thinking about the way that conscience structures and breaks apart what it means to be an individual. So in many ways, and this is a point that maybe could be made in relation to Derrida and Levinas, that I'm not giving up individual autonomy. I'm trying to sort of radicalise it, deepen it, through an experience of heteronomy being called into question. If you like the Levinasian and Derridian subject is more responsible than its individualistic, autonomous, predecessor and autonomy is not a question of giving up...it becomes, as it were, exacerbated, radicalised, in a way. There are elements in thinkers like Levinas that could be very useful to anarchist groups.

SJ: You say that this ethical experience of the infinite demand is about an infinite responsibility requiring infinite commitment and an experience of conscience. Would you be able to expand on the experience of conscience in relation to this idea of the infinite demand. Is the infinite demand to act against something that is wrong, against injustice in society, or could it include acting in a way that isn't terribly ethical. In order to have responsibility for your actions you have to bear the weight of them

regardless of whether they are ethical or unethical.

SC: What do you mean by that? Well yes, absolutely, you have to take responsibility both ways. The infinite demand, the way that the argument is structured, is that there is a motivational deficit in contemporary liberal democracy and this deficit is something that has to be supplemented at the level of subjectivity. I then try to tell a story about how all notions of ethics had to go back to the idea of demand and approval and then I try to construct a particular model of the ethical subject through Badiou, Levinas, Løgstrup, and Lacan. The ethical demand is something that arises in relation to the particular other person that I am faced with. The demand that they exert on me is a demand that I could never meet. That's the basic intuition. That demand splits me so the relationship to the neighbour is anarchic, in the sense in which the relationship to the neighbour is one where I cannot possibly meet the claim that is made upon me. It is that *not being able to meet that claim* that is the condition for, not paralysis, but action in the world. That's the thought. Then there are questions about who makes that demand, what the limits are, what the nature of that coercion is like, but that's the basic thought.

SJ: Is the ethical demand meta-ethical, what makes ethics in general possible, or does it have a normative content?

SC: Both. The claim I make is that, meta-ethically, every conception of ethics has to derive from an idea of ethical experience and ethical subjectivity. Otherwise it's empty and doesn't address itself to the subject for whom it is intended, it becomes some kind of mechanism or procedure and fails to address the problem of motivation – the moral psychological question. Meta-ethically all conceptions of morality have to be linked back to the idea of ethical demand and the approval of that demand. Then normatively, in Chapter 2 of *Infinitely Demanding*, I try to offer a particular picture of ethical subjectivity which I recommend as a normative picture but there might be others. I don't think that moral argumentation has a coercive force.

SJ: Ethical opinions and judgements inform struggles for hegemony over the ethical sphere in society. For example, if you come to an issue like abortion from a certain anarchist perspective then it is a question of whether the state is entitled to exercise its authority over a woman's body. What happens when you approach an issue such as abortion from the point

of view of the ethical demand? Does the ethical demand suggest a different position on abortion?

SC: No, it doesn't. That would be a political question for me. The way in which this works is that the level of ethics is about picking out a structure of ethical subjectivity and trying to show how that works. To fill that with specific judgements or views is more of a political task for me. Perversely, I can imagine both a pro-lifer and a pro-choicer having an overwhelming sense of a demand. There are billboards with anti-abortion adverts all over this part of Florida with 'Life begins at conception' and 'If you're pregnant, you have a choice.' Now that's a certain ethical demand based on a certain set of metaphysical presumptions about the nature of life and its relation to the divine. The infinite ethical demand at its most abstract level is neutral with regard to that. It's a question of building in particular judgements.

SJ: Lets take into account the particular forms that the ethical demand can take in society, or the forms that the ethical demands have taken historically. An example would be the demand to be a good housewife and obey patriarchal institutions. That is clearly a demand for hierarchy, a social pressure placed on people in the form of an "ethical" demand. In *Infinitely Demanding* you claim that there is something intrinsically democratising about the ethical demand, or that it necessarily leads to a radical politics...

SC: Not necessarily. The claim I make is that democratisation is action based on an ethical demand. There's no necessity to that, it's a question of construction at that point. Nothing flows deductively from the fact of the ethical demand right the way down to real world politics.

SJ: That's both good and bad.

SC: Yes, this is the error of a Habermasian position that if you can get the right transcendental picture you can go all the way from that to democratic deliberation. The ethical demand is something that can be repressive and has been repressive. My meta-ethical claim is that all conceptions of morality flow from an idea of the ethical demand. That demand has for the most part been a repressive demand for the most part, there is no question about that, but it's not a question of being liberated from that but an issue of how one can think about restructuring that demand and making it ones own. Then it becomes a question of linking that constructively to forms of political action. There's no deduction there from one thing to another. It's a

constructive task, if you like.

You could say that there is something democratising about the ethical demand in so far as its a commitment to equality. You could say that but how it would actually work in practice would be a political issue.

SJ: Yes, because there is a tension between the general philosophical notion of equality and the specific question of what that would actually mean in a given social situation.

SC: Sure, and the strength of the anarchist tradition for me has always been its commitment to locality. Politics is not a top down business and that, for me, is the problem with Marxism. It's always the other way around. It's a question of looking at forms of local activity, local processes and local defeats and victories. These becomes sites for the emergence of a demand that has a much more general function than that, instead of the other way around.

What interests me in the history of anarchism is that you can go back to the diggers in the English revolution. The action they take is the possession of the land and they engage in planting vegetables and trying to cultivate the land. That's an actual practice that develops and at the heart of that is a demand that is being articulated. They say that things will not go right in England until goods are held in common.

I take the point very seriously. Particularly when you're reading a philosophical text on ethics and politics it can look as if it's the other way around. I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in – and this is a phenomenological commitment – actual forms of life and existence and pull out structures from them.

SJ: A question about terminology. You use the term 'demand' and it suggests a way of getting motivation back into the description of how ethics actually works because the demand draws the individual out of themselves and into social and political action on an ethical basis. Why is it a demand at all and what is the authority that makes this demand possible as a demand? It suggests that the individual makes no gift of themselves to ethics.

SC: There is no demand without the approval of the demand. If a demand does not have approval then it is coercion. So it's a delicate operation and there are forms of demand which are...think of it in terms of christianity. Most people who are christians believe that there is an ethical demand which the fact of christ conveys upon human beings.

SJ: That they are convicted by the bible.

SC: Yes, there are people for whom the demand flows from the commandments of god, there's a higher authority to that demand, the demand is exercised upon the christian by the fact of christ's death and resurrection. People would say that that demand flows from a command which is the whole theology of christianity. Then there are people who would say, like Alasdair MacIntyre, that the command doesn't matter and I'm very sympathetic to MacIntyre on this point. The essential element of christianity is the fact that there is a demand that one imposes on oneself. Whether that demand flows from the fact that there was this god man on a mission or not is neither here nor there. Then you get very close to the idea that the demand is the demand for the person who approves of that demand and freely accepts it. The coercion that is exerted is a kind of self coercion. I put myself under a demand, freely, and that's what conscience would be in that sense.

SJ: It still seems to me that this notion of motivation linked to a demand is operating within a structure of thought that sets up the ability to approve of something, as a kind of individual action, against a demand for someone to act that is necessarily authoritarian. It does not seem very far away from the conceptual structure at work in the legal system where you have a conception of individuals acting freely while simultaneously subject to imposed legal demands. You seem to be operating with some kind of autonomy and some kind of authority in a problematic way in your conception of the *dividual*. Problematic in the sense that you are interested in going beyond the autonomy orthodoxy of the individual and interested in anarchism with the implied move away from authoritarian ways of being together as people.

SC: The demand is self authorising. The demand without an approval is sheer coercion. Autonomy would be the thought that the approval and the demand are equal to each other. Classically in Kant's moral philosophy that's freedom and the moral law are mirrors of each other. All legitimate conceptions of morality have to be self authorising, I begin from that, but the authority that the ethical demand lays upon me is not something that I'm equal to. If I were equal to it, then that would be a classical form of autonomy. The Levinasian thought is that I put myself under a demand that I could never meet. So rather than being a way of contradicting autonomy it's a way of deepening autonomy. Of showing its hetero-affective constitution

of self authorisation. This is very close to Derrida, it's an exacerbation of the experience of responsibility or unconditional hospitality.

SJ: There's this idea of the intentionality of ethics out towards the world, the demand of the world to have ethical attention payed to it by the dividual, and you talk a little in *Infinitely Demanding* about how this doesn't necessarily lead to action and you give the example of someone sitting on a couch when someone calls around collecting for charity.

SC: Yes, Michael Smith's example from *The Moral Problem*.

SJ: So there is an ethical demand there that the individual doesn't rise to. The day to day experience of urbanism in the first world often involves encountering people who are homeless and the infinite demand that these people present us with in a way that is often not recognised as a call for action but merely as a cause for despair.

SC: Or indifference. It could be indifference, you could simply be indifferent to them.

SJ: Sure. This brings us to your discussion of passive and active nihilism and the role you recognise for humour in trying to navigate a path between these two things. Humour is what overcomes the tragedy of the infinite demand and makes it bearable. Laughter can no doubt be a solace to those who can laugh but – to paraphrase Ernesto Laclau's challenge to Richard Rorty on the political sufficiency of irony – humour seems inadequate for those who find themselves confronted with Auschwitz (Laclau, *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, 64).

SC: It makes it worse, it doesn't alleviate it, it makes it worse. As Woody Allen says 'Comedy is tragedy plus time.' For me comedy is much more tragic than tragedy. What comedy gives you is a momentary alleviation of that tragedy but without that tragedy actually going away. There is no catharsis, no purification, no expelling of that affect as you find in classical theories of tragedy – it just goes on. So humour is more tragic than tragedy.

Auschwitz doesn't go away, there is no way of releasing ourselves from that. Humour is a very good way of showing that. The infinite demand of this ethical overload that I try and put at the heart of ethics, the way that that can be maintained and momentarily alleviated is through humour

as a practice. That's what I try and show using Beckett's example of the *risus purus*: the pure laugh, the laugh that laughs at the laugh, the laugh that laughs at that which is unhappy. It doesn't mean that you stop being unhappy, it just means that you can laugh at it. It's a very dark idea of humour. It's not that we can overcome that.

Back to passive nihilism and active nihilism. Morality has to be a freely chosen activity. There is no way over the free rider problem. There's no way over the idea that there are going to be wicked human beings that simply pass by, ignoring the demands that are made upon them, pass by the homeless and feel nothing. There is no way of deductively, a-priori, getting around that. What one has to cultivate is an ethos where that becomes the less likely moral response. There are different traditions that have attempted to do that. There are people who are simply going to feel indifference when they walk by someone in need. One hopes that that doesn't happen and there are ways of preventing that happening but philosophy can't guarantee it at that point.

SJ: You describe yourself as a phenomenologist and your book is concerned with an ethical experience but if we begin phenomenologically from the phenomena of experience then we can't prejudice that experience by stating 'to experience the world in this way is wicked, to experience the world in that way is not to be wicked.' From a christian point of view, with the presupposition of a universal human compassion informed by god, you could condemn walking by a homeless person as wicked but it does not seem so straightforward for a phenomenologist.

SC: I condemn it. I think that, phenomenologically, if you look into the deep structure of that experience of the other passing by indifferently is not our fundamental orientation towards the other as an other. Our orientation towards the other at the level of deep subjective experience is one of something like compassion or something like being affectively moved by their presence. Phenomenology is a way of relearning to see the world and relearning to see other people in that world. It is not just descriptive, it's shot through with normative assumptions. It's not just value free description, it never was.

SJ: So what you're saying is that even when we walk by a homeless person in the street we still have a fundamentally ethical experience of them as an other.

SC: The other person is a person, even in ignoring the other person I'm still ignoring another person.

SJ: So it's always an ethical experience, even if you're not acting in an ethical way.

SC: Yes, even negatively. Levinas describes this in terms of situations of war. Even in situations of war and conflict. When I murder the other, the other human being is the only thing I could murder. Even in murdering the other, putting them to death, there is a recognition of them as a human being. As perverse as that might sound.

Seferin James, University College Dublin, 17th March 2009.

Intertwined Identities: Challenges to Bodily Autonomy*

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the international media has devoted increasing attention to operations that separate conjoined twins. Despite the fairly low odds that a child or adult will survive the operation with all of their vital organs intact, most people fail to question the urgency of being physically separated from one's identical twin. The drive to surgically tear asunder that which was originally joined, I suggest, is motivated in part by a refusal to acknowledge intercorporeality as a basic condition of human existence that doesn't undermine identity but makes it possible in the first place.

Keywords: Conjoined twins, Identity, Intercorporeality, Autonomy, Surgery

Marking Autonomous Bodies

The physical boundaries of the human body have historically served as both a theoretical and practical means of distinguishing one person from another, as well as one group of people from another. "One body, one identity" is a basic legal, ethical, political and social presupposition that we both implicitly and explicitly rely upon in our everyday dealings with others. Conjoined twins and, to a lesser extent, parasitic twins, challenge, or at the very least disturb, this seemingly self-evident truth about human existence. Margrit Shildrick observes that conjoined twins are not only, as Foucault asserts, the "privileged signifier of the monstrous" but also the "limit case of the disabled body." (Shildrick 2005: 30-31) While the rarity of conjoined twins seems to guarantee their exceptional corporeal status, I maintain that the intercorporeal connections that all human beings sustain with one another are dramatically revealed through the complex ties that bind together conjoined twins. By looking at the various "paradoxes" that conjoined twins have embodied for their social peers across time and space,

we can arrive at a better understanding of the challenges intercorporeality poses to traditional, rationalist conceptions of identity.[1]

The very distinction between conjoined twins and parasitic twins and the extraordinary ethical, legal, social, and political dilemmas these people have faced (all centered around the crucial question, "One person or two?"), collectively provide insight into prevalent cultural concepts of personal identity that are so taken for granted, so much a part of the Husserlian "natural attitude," that they rarely get interrogated as such. Both experiences of exteriority as well as interiority are complicated by a conjoined twin's intimate connection to her sibling's body. A productive means of addressing precisely how and why conjoined twins trouble the dominant understanding of autonomy that underlies popular conceptions of personal identity is through the discussion of marking presented by French feminist theorist Collette Guilluamin's in "Race and Nature: the System of Marks."

In her essay, Guillaumin discusses the multiple ways in which bodies are marked as well as the ways in which the race of white bodies and the sex of male bodies are usually unmarked precisely so that the racial and sexual markings of other bodies can be revealed. Marking the bodies of others, she argues, has historically been intended to designate bodily inferiority, which in turn has been used to justify the social subordination of those whose bodies are marked as other to those whose bodies are unmarked and hence, deemed natural, thereby serving as the standard that all bodies should emulate. Guillaumin distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary markings, that is, those markings that people choose for themselves, such as hair styles, clothing styles, piercings, tattoos, etc. and markings made on individuals' bodies without their consent such as the brandings performed by slave-owners on the foreheads of slaves, and the tattooed numbers on prisoners' arms that Nazis used to identify concentration camp inmates. Guillaumin clearly identifies bodily marking as a strategy used to create social and political hierarchies according to which some bodies are experienced as more powerful than others because of their markings (e.g. royal dress, uniforms, etc.) or the alleged absence of markings (e.g. their white skin, or maleness). However, she does not dwell in detail on the significance of her basic distinction between voluntary and involuntary markings themselves and the corresponding body modifications that they entail.

While cases of involuntary markings appear to be fairly clear-cut to the extent that they are performed without the knowledge and/or consent of the person in question, it is less evident whether any markings can truly

be called voluntary if this latter signifies a decision made by an individual agent alone. For, as Guillaumin herself acknowledges, there are always cultural forces at work that help to create the context for specific marking practices; accordingly, individuals' decisions to mark themselves can never be understood outside of the larger habitus (to use Pierre Bourdieu's language) to which they belong and within which their bodily modifications will invariably be interpreted.

All too often, however, contemporary rhetoric concerning "voluntary" body modifications (e.g. cosmetic surgery, surgical implants, prostheses, etc.), justifies the latter via an uncritical appeal to a Kantian framework that emphasizes the rational autonomy of the person making the decision about what she wants to do with her body. Echoing the classic abortion rights perspective of "it's my body so I can do what I want with it," the emphasis then gets placed on making sure that others don't interfere with my right to mark my body as I see fit and/or on creating a safe cultural space in which an individual can express her difference from other bodies without being denigrated or harmed in any way.

Such a model, I would argue, laudable though its goals may be, also buys into a problematic logic of identity in which my individuality can only be achieved by separating my interests, needs, and desires from those of others. Although the focus of this discussion will be on an example of involuntary marking, namely, separation surgeries performed on unconsenting conjoined twin infants, precisely because it is here that the damage done by an uncritical allegiance to an anti-relational conception of identity is most readily apparent, one of my goals is to turn our collective attention to the ways in which unexamined commitments to enlightenment ontologies are actively setting the stage for our understanding of both voluntary as well as involuntary body modifications.

Through a critical examination of the case of the Bijani sisters, adult conjoined twins who requested separation surgery and who died in the process in 2003, I will also question whether any choice to undergo body modification is purely voluntary. Denying that body modification decisions are solely made as a result of individual choice is not intended to undermine a strong sense of bodily agency, but rather, to challenge whether this experience of agency requires that one's own body be viewed as autonomous from the bodies of others. For my bodily choices never take place in a vacuum; they are always responsive to the situation in which I find myself and, more specifically, they both reflect and affect the ongoing intercorporeal connections that constitute what Heidegger called the *Mitsein*, or my being-with-others in the shared world of our concern.

I will now consider a few specific cases of separation surgeries performed on conjoined twins, in order to reveal how these surgeries indelibly mark not only the bodies of the patients, but also mark a refusal to confront the limits of traditional presuppositions about identity, more specifically, a "one body, one identity" logic that the very existence of two individuals in a single body calls into question. Since most separation surgeries are performed on conjoined infants (with the notable exception of the Bijani sisters whom I will be discussing later), most of these surgeries appear to be clear cases of involuntary marking, at least for the patients themselves who are too young to be consulted.[2] However, unlike the involuntary markings described by Guillaumin, markings which are intended to visibly signify the inferiority of one body in relation to others, separation surgeries are intended to *normalize* bodies, that is, to take bodies that are deemed to be naturally inferior to other bodies and to transform them so that they can be unmarked in their conformity to the non-conjoined bodies of other members of society. The success of this process, of course, depends on the ability of the surgeons and the families to make the massive scars and disabilities produced by the surgeries invisible to others. Even though this often turns out not to be possible (indeed, virtually all twins who survive these surgeries need years of follow-up surgeries and rehabilitative therapy), the idea of both twins, or at least one twin, achieving a "normal" existence as an *autonomous* individual remains the ideal that motivates surgical and familial decisions.

While there are many conjoined twins who have survived to adulthood and even quite a few alive across the world today, their testimonies about their experiences have not typically been sought by surgeons and the families of conjoined infants contemplating separation surgery. This refusal to gain valuable information directly from those whose lived situation is similar to the patients is not surprising, however, because, as Simone de Beauvoir argued in *The Second Sex* over half a century ago, when societal myths conflict with reality, it is reality that tends to be rejected and the myth that is retained.[3] Feminist philosopher Nancy Tuana has more recently identified this strategy as a part of what Eve Sedgwick originally called an "epistemology of ignorance," an epistemological framework founded on a refusal of knowledge. Indeed, as Cheryl Chase, Alice Dreger, Ellen Feder and other intersex theorists and activists have poignantly revealed, the same strategy has been at work in the case of "normalization" surgeries performed on intersex infants: parents are routinely denied access to the testimony of other parents who have had intersex infants and who have refused surgery as well as the testimonies of adult intersex individuals

themselves.[4]

My own interest in the recent media attention given to separation surgeries performed on conjoined twins in the U.S. and abroad, arises out of a broader, feminist concern with issues of autonomy, identity, embodiment, and relationality that are invoked and troubled by the existence of conjoined twins. Sandra Harding's exhortation to look to specific examples of how "epistemologies of ignorance" operate in order to come to terms with their systemic influence in our lives is precisely the strategy that I pursue here. (Harding 2004) However, working with the specific sensationalized example of conjoined twins carries with it substantial risks, namely, that of further subjecting these extraordinary bodies to an exoticizing, othering gaze. While I was doing research for this project, poring through books and articles on conjoined twins, I was struck by how often these works unwittingly participate in what Rosemarie Garland Thomson, following David Hevey, terms the "enfreakment" of these individuals by relying so heavily on freak show handbills and disturbing photographs of various types of conjoined twins to elucidate the contexts in which they have been understood and interpreted. (Thomson 17) Even though the aim of these works is primarily to debunk popular understandings of conjoined twins as freaks and to foreground their basic humanity, the photographs themselves serve to re-inscribe the oppressive practices of objectification under which most conjoined twins are condemned to live out their lives. By discussing this danger openly, I am hoping to disrupt what feminist film theorist Gertrud Koch has identified as the "suturing" of the viewer's gaze to the objectifying, exoticizing gaze of the camera. (Koch 1985) Rather than avoid these images altogether (a strategy doomed to failure since they pervade the media on a regular basis), I am arguing that mediating our perception of them through critical analysis allows for new ways of seeing and moving beyond entrenched epistemologies of ignorance.

The Dominant Logic of Identity

The "dominant logic" of "one body, one identity" creates the context in which separation surgeries are presented as miraculous, altruistic attempts to provide conjoined twins with a particular form of bodily integrity (paradoxically achieved through cutting open and irremediably altering these bodies) that is predicated on the physical separation of one body from another. If one ascribes to this taken-for-granted logic of identity, the refusal of conjoined twins (and more frequently of their parents since most of these surgeries are performed on infants) to opt for separation surgery might seem

irrational and perhaps even immoral. It should not be surprising, then, that parents' and doctors' enthusiasm for separation surgery, even when neurological damage and/or damage (or even removal) of other vital organs is an inevitable result for each twin, is typically portrayed in glowing terms. On October 13, 2003, for instance, the Houston News posted the following story on its website, significantly entitled: "Twin Boys Begin New Lives After *Successful* Separation." (my emphasis) The report describes the father's and doctors' reactions to the surgery as follows:

> The boys' father, Ibrahim Mohammed Ibrahim, fainted when he heard the operation was over. "At one point when someone came up and said, 'you have two boys,' the father jumped to my neck and he hugged me and he fainted and I cared for him," said Dr. Nasser Abdel Al, who was with the family for the marathon operation… "He told me that he never dreamt of such a moment," said Abdel Al. He added that Ibrahim's wife, Sabah Abu ed-Wafa, "was crying like everybody else."

A bit later we are told:

> Dr. Kenneth Salyer…said his feelings had ranged "from moments of ecstasy to moments of concern and anxiety." Swift [who we are informed was one of five pediatric neurosurgeons involved in the operation] described an unexpectedly difficult moment separating the left hemisphere of Mohamed's brain from part of Ahmed's. "It was very, very stuck together." He said it was too early to tell what kind of neurological damage the boys might have.

Despite this rather chilling reminder that the ultimate outcome of the surgery cannot yet be ascertained, the report, as its very title bears out, "Twin Boys Begin New Lives After Successful Separation," presents itself as a success story. And yet, the report itself contains the possibility of a counter-reading that enables us to see the surgery as a vehicle to achieve normalization at any price, even if the boys' lives and/or well-being are sacrificed in the process. For instance, at the end of the report we are told that:

> As conjoined twins, Mohamed and Ahmed smiled and giggled, babbled in English and Arabic and tried to move

> around any way they could. But experts had said they were getting behind in their development, compared with other children their age, because they were unable to explore the world. When doctors concluded that a separation surgery was possible, the risks were explained to the parents. The boys' father told the doctors to go ahead. "If they're left this way, they're not going to be normal," Ibrahim said through a translator earlier this year."

In a separate example from NBC Channel 4 posted on its website on September 11,2003 regarding two 9 month old identical twin girls who had undergone separation surgery, we see the dominant logic of "one body, one identity" (and the "pounds of flesh" it quite literally exacts) again at play:

> For the girls, it's the beginning of life with two separate bodies able now to participate in society as two individuals," Stein [one of the surgeons] told a press conference afterward. The large intestine could not be divided and went to one twin. Surgeons also performed a liver separation and did reconstruction on the girls' urinary and reproductive tracts. Stein said there were still many challenges ahead for the girls. "Once you separate the kids, the hardest part is how to get them back together. How do you get them in one piece when you are short of tissue?" The next 24-48 hours are critical, but in the coming months and years the girls will see specialists to be fitted for prosthetics to help them lead normal and independent lives.

Perhaps the most well-known early twenty-first century case highlighting the dilemmas of separation surgeries was that of twenty-nine year old Iranian conjoined twins, Ladan and Laleh Bijani, who died in the summer of 2003 in an operation in Singapore to separate them (they were joined at the head). The two women were warned that they might not survive the surgery, and that they might suffer serious brain-damage as a result of the operation. Both sisters were insistent that they wanted to proceed with the operation despite the serious risks involved. Their physical separation, they argued, was worth the possibility that they would not survive the operation. In the end they died, separate in body but as inextricably conjoined in death as they were throughout their lives.

Based on her own substantial research on conjoined twins, historian of anatomy, Alice Dreger, believes that the Bijani sisters are the only adult

conjoined twins ever to seek surgical separation.[5] Although some adult twins have, in times of anger, expressed a wish to be separated once and for all from the other twin (for instance, such a wish has been documented on the part of the most famous conjoined twins, Cheng and Eng, and is depicted as the primary desire of Eng in a recent novel about them), no other adult conjoined twins who might be candidates for it, aside from the Bijani twins, have so actively and publicly pursued separation surgery. The majority of these overwhelmingly unsuccessful operations are undergone by infants and small children. In these latter cases, it is the parents and doctors who seek separation surgery, unless, as often happens, the parents abandon the conjoined twins or give them up for adoption (the Bijani sisters were themselves adopted as babies by the doctor who initially advocated for their eventual separation surgery).

If the Bijani sisters are the only, or even one of the only, sets of consenting conjoined adult twins to seek this radically experimental surgery, given the fatal consequences of their surgery, we must confront the question of why parents, doctors, and society as a whole deems such surgery to be so urgent and so desirable even when the overwhelming majority of conjoined twins do not express the extreme dissatisfaction with their situation reported by Ladan and Laleh Bijani. Given that the standard for a successful surgery, as Dreger documents, is merely for the separated twins to survive the operation, and that only a small percentage of separated conjoined twins are able to leave the hospital after the separation procedure, we must wonder what has raised the level of cultural anxiety so high that the surgery nonetheless seems like the only viable alternative to an unlivable existence, an existence that many individuals nonetheless live, finding love and happiness along the way.[6] According to Dreger,

> The persistent claim behind much of this separation work is that separations must be attempted for the good of the patients- that a life joined is no life worth living (no mind what conjoined twins themselves say). However, I conclude here instead that attempts to separate twins are driven largely by a deep-seated concern for cultural norms of individuality. Bodies whose congenital conformations defy those norms- the bodies of conjoined twins- are treated with surgeries designed to bring the bodies into conformation with cultural norms. (4)

Many conjoined twins, it should be noted, are not candidates for separation surgery at all. Dicephalic twins, conjoined twins who have

separate heads but a single lower body, cannot be separated without killing one of the two twins and it should be no surprise that these twins, in particular, have seemed to pose the greatest challenge to the dominant logic of "one body, one identity." Even in these cases, however, surgery is sometimes recommended with the ostensible aim of improving the quality of life for the surviving twin by giving her sole use of shared vital organs. These cases of "twin sacrifice" as Dreger refers to them, involve surgically asphyxiating the twin the doctors determine to be medically less viable and harvesting her organs for her sibling. She notes that "in all of the cases the intentionally sacrificed twin died, but notably, *in not a single case* has the twin chosen to survive ever actually survived to go home or even to live free of a ventilator. Angela Lakeberg [the famous conjoined twin who underwent this procedure in 1993], who was dead by her first birthday, seems to have survived the longest by far." (17) Though there is currently a twin who has survived a sacrifice surgery performed in the UK in 1996, Dreger's observation that these surgeries have routinely failed should nonetheless lead us to wonder why bringing about the death of one twin when the chances of securing the life of the other is so uncertain is still perceived as a desirable option.

Despite the fact that 1) it is ordinarily illegal to harvest organs from an unconsenting living donor, 2) that most people find such a concept to be morally reprehensible, and 3) that in many cases where the intentional killing of one twin has been carried out, both twins could have lived an indeterminate amount of time without the surgery, it is astounding that doctors are still so eager to perform this type of surgery. The example of twin sacrifice, a procedure that is totally unacceptable to perform on a singleton in order to save the life of another singleton, succeeds in bringing home Dreger's point that corporeal autonomy is so prized as the very hallmark of identity that medical professionals and many laypeople are willing to accept death itself as the price for even one twin to achieve bodily autonomy from the other. And, it must be noted, the surviving twin's total dependency on machines to live even a short time, belies the idea that autonomy is even being achieved through the operation. In Dreger's words,

> In spite of documented cases of reasonably successful joined lives, many singletons, especially surgeons, find it inconceivable that life is worth living as a conjoined twin, inconceivable that one would not be willing to risk all-mobility, reproductive ability, the life of one or both twins-to try for separation. Why, then, is this? (11)

Bodies on Display

In *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, Rosemarie Garland Thomson takes up this question, not only with reference to conjoined twins but more generally with regard to all disabled individuals who are typically deemed by the able-bodied majority to be leading lives of terrible misfortune. Rather than take the obvious strategy of demonstrating that the lives of conjoined twins and other individuals with "extraordinary bodies" are not so bad as they may seem (the project of Daniel P. Mannix's first hand account of living as a freak on the carnival circuit in the second half of the twentieth century, entitled *Freaks: We Who are Not as Others*), Thomson deftly turns our attention away from these "freaks" themselves and onto the practices of "enfreakment" that serve to consolidate the position of what she terms the "normate." The "normate," Thomson declares, "is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them." (8) By projecting onto the freak those undesirable qualities that the normate finds intolerable in himself such as feelings of bodily insecurity and vulnerability, and by declaring the unnaturalness and unlivability of this abject subject position, the stage is set for submitting these "deficient individuals" to a stringent disciplinary regime that is self-justifying (both literally and figuratively) for the normate even as it delegitimizes the actual bodily experiences of those whose bodies transgress society's corporeal norms.

While in the past many individuals judged to be corporeally deficient have escaped life-threatening attempts to normalize them because they could not afford the costly surgeries deemed necessary to "correct" them, the rising popularity of separation surgeries of conjoined twins in order to "showcase" the brilliance of the doctors and the cutting-edge technologies of a given medical center and even nation, has meant that more and more often these procedures are being performed *pro bono*, so that the patients', their families' or their guardians' economic class need not be an obstacle. However, even the most naïve layperson cannot fail to note through all the media attention paid to the surgeons both before and after the separation procedures, that the surgeries offer incredible career-defining opportunities for the doctors to learn more about the interiority of the body, allowing them to separate that which was indissolubly connected in order to technologically create (like a veritable demi-god) two independently functioning human beings.[7] Thus, unlike most elective and non-elective procedures in the U.S. today (and the U.S. has performed more separation surgeries than any other

nation), the hospital, rather than the patients, usually foot the bills. They thereby enjoy not only the worldwide reputation of being able to perform the most complicated, collaborative surgery possible (there are typically over 25 doctors in the operating room alone and the surgeries commonly run longer than 24 hours), but also they receive extra "brownie points" for providing these life-altering procedures for free to individuals who never could have afforded them on their own.

The material benefits of performing these surgeries then, extend far beyond the interests of the patients themselves, and this cannot be overlooked if we are to understand why they are so frequently performed even when those in the best position to judge if a life conjoined is worth living, are not even consulted to gain their perspective on the issue. As Dreger notes, not only do most adult conjoined twins with the exception of the Bijani sisters view this surgery with horror, but there are also many historically documented cases where, upon the death of one twin, the remaining conjoined twin still refused to be surgically separated from her deceased sibling, even when this procedure had a fairly high likelihood of success and the failure to undergo the procedure signified certain and imminent death. The most famous example of this willingness to die together rather than to live on without one's conjoined twin, is the so-called Biddenden Maids who were born in 1100 and lived for 34 years. "When one died" Dreger tells us, "the survivor refused offers of separation, declaring, 'As we came together we will go together.' This sister then died six hours later." (The Wall Street Journal, 7/9/03)

If we are to take seriously the presence of epistemologies of ignorance hidden in our everyday theories and practices, then it is clear that the unique intercorporeal connections that distinguish the lives of conjoined twins have much to teach us. For not only conjoined twins but, as Merleau-Ponty observes, each of us experiences our interiority through (and not despite) our connections with the bodies of others. If an autonomous body remains the sine qua non without which an individual identity is impossible, then this is only because we fail to listen to those people whose bodies defy conventional understandings of autonomy. "The paradoxical fact," Dreger asserts,

> is that *being conjoined is part of conjoined twins' individuality*. If we singletons cannot understand that- if we cannot comprehend a life of two consciousnesses in one continuum of skin- that says something more about us than about them. For we need only to look to history to see

> that they, too, manage to be human, that they, too, manage to eke out an individualized existence in a very connected world. (26)

The possibility of separating conjoined twins provides a respectable medical medium for resolving concerns about identity and individuation, concerns that are undoubtedly aggravated by the fact that many people in many parts of the world today have a good chance of dying in hospitals hooked up to machines that regulate the very functioning of their internal organs. Political, ethical, and social commitments to bodily autonomy as a mark of identity help to guarantee a view of conjoined twins' existence as irremediably and tragically impoverished. And, if bodily autonomy becomes the very mark of the human, it is surely no surprise that separation surgery appears to be worth any price.

Conjoined twins offer us an opportunity to reassess our own corporeal commitments to specific identity politics. Indeed, they have the potential to reveal especially poignantly a key point of feminist care ethicists, namely, that autonomy is itself a problematic ideal insofar as it forces us to deny the value of the primordial experience we share with conjoined twins, that is, being born connected to another. Adopting a relational approach to individuality, one that emphasizes that this latter can only be achieved through others rather than despite them, is, I would argue, a productive way to combat reductionistic conceptions of "one body, one identity." To do this, as Lorraine Code suggests, we need a revision and expansion of the epistemological imaginary, in this case, regarding our traditional understanding of identity as grounded in bodily autonomy. (Code 2007)

The medical and societal emphasis on the urgency of separation surgeries for conjoined twins to realize their individual identities, presumably for the first time, or in more than *name* only since each conjoined twin is given their own name at birth, may indeed turn out to be a primary case of epistemological ignorance, or what Marilyn Frye identifies as "not knowing what we're doing." (Frye 2004) The risk of this type of ignorance is that it reinforces and legitimizes an impoverished conception of our own relational identities as well as the relational identities of the twins themselves. More specifically, conjoined twins incarnate and generate fears of our intercorporeality, the intimate connections between our own identities and the identities of others as they are embodied (that is lived) from moment to moment in our daily lives.

In performing the "miraculous" technological feat of separating what is depicted as never intended to be joined to begin with, these surgeries

enable us to maintain what Kaja Silverman calls a "dominant fiction," in this case the dominant fiction that we can only be individuated by (forcibly) separating our bodies from the bodies of others. (Silverman 1992) By transforming our epistemological imaginary concerning the possibilities and limits of identity, we can combat the deleterious effects of clinging to the dominant logic of "one body, one identity." As we have seen, this is a logic that conflates autonomy with bodily separation from the other, a form of epistemological ignorance that, in the case of conjoined twins, leads to a willingness to sacrifice, or, at the very least, to compromise severely, one or both bodies in the name of normalization and progress.

The active embodied agency consistently expressed both by infant and adult conjoined twins reveals how important it is to disentangle the "webs of belief" that support the epistemological imaginary associated with the logic of "one body, one identity." (Code 2007) Disentangling the dominant logic of "one body, one identity," paradoxically, may lead us to think more carefully about exactly whose interests are being served in the surgical disentangling of the complex intercorporeal connections between the bodies of conjoined twins. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's famous words that appear toward the end of the *Phenomenology of Perception* take on even more force when applied to the distinctive intercorporeality of conjoined twins for, if we read these words with conjoined twins in mind, we can see even more clearly how the body within can never be separated from the body without:

> True reflection presents me to myself not as idle and inaccessible subjectivity, but as identical with my presence in the world and to others, as I am now realizing it: I am all that I see, I am an intersubjective field, not despite my body and my historical situation, but, on the contrary, by being this body and this situation, and through them, all the rest. (1962: 452)

Although Merleau-Ponty has been criticized by feminist theorists such as Irigaray, Butler, Young, and others for universalizing his own masculinist perspective, presenting us, as in this passage, with an omnivorous vision that incorporates all that it perceives, his recognition that the individual is not "an idle and inaccessible subjectivity" but rather "an intersubjective field" offers a crucial corrective to the image of a discrete autonomous body as the norm or even an ideal that human beings should be striving to achieve. To take our bodies and our situation seriously, as Merleau-Ponty exhorts us to do, requires that we acknowledge the multiple ways in which

our bodies are interconnected with, and dependent upon other bodies, both animate and inanimate in all aspects of our existence. Thus, rather than view the intimate connections between our own bodies and those of others are something that needs to be eliminated or at least minimized in order to "secure" our individuality, we must rethink the very concept of identity in order to see that it only has meaning in and through, and not despite our relations with others. This is a lesson conjoined twins are uniquely suited to teach us since they explicitly materialize the ties that bind us indissolubly to our fellow human beings. Challenging the uncritical assumption that a conjoined existence is not a life worth living, may therefore provide an unexpected means of acknowledging the depth of the intercorporeal relationships that define what it means to be a human being.

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Endnotes

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1 This essay is inspired by my interest in bringing Merleau-Ponty's rich notion of intercorporeality to bear on contemporary discussions about identity and marginalization in feminist theory as well as in the rapidly growing field of disability studies.

2 I will leave aside the role of the twins' families for the moment though it undoubtedly complicates the issue.

3 Beauvoir, of course, was referring to what she calls, "the myth of woman" but I am suggesting that her analysis can be applied to other social myths as well. Here, I am thinking particularly of the myth that identity cannot be achieved without bodily autonomy from others.

4 Thanks to the work of the former Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) in particular, information is increasingly being made available to doctors and to families about the deleterious physical and psychical effects of these surgeries. In fact, some doctors have stopped recommending genital surgery on intersex infants as a result of this information. The ISNA website is an invaluable resource and should be consulted for further details on the surgeries as well as on living life without them: www.isna.org. There are many striking parallels between the case of conjoined twins and the case of intersex infants that must necessarily be taken up in another study. However, many of the claims I am making about the involuntary surgical marking of conjoined infants in the name of a normalization that is never practically achievable for the patient in order to assuage cultural anxieties about identity can also be applied to intersex infants.

5 Indeed, in a 1998 article Dreger claims: "I have yet to find an instance in which conjoined twins have sought out separation." (10) Although there may well be other cases of adult conjoined twins who have desired surgical separation, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of adult conjoined twins have not sought out this surgery.

6 In her 2004 book, *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal*, Dreger claimed that only 5% of conjoined twins are able to leave the hospital, that is survive outside of a hospital setting, after separation surgery. Given how many more separation surgeries have been performed since she published *One of Us*, this percentage has undoubtedly risen but even if it has doubled, tripled or even quadrupled, the odds are still against either twin being able to lead a "normal" life since, even in the most successful cases, numerous follow-up surgeries are necessary for organ repair (and occasionally organ donation) and cosmetic reconstruction, as well as intensive physical and occupational therapy, medications, and continuous medical supervision.

7 Although, as Dreger amply illustrates, this is merely the goal, not the reality.

Perception and Painting in Merleau-Ponty's Thought

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Abstract

Maintaining that "the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence" (1964/1964: 13), Maurice Merleau-Ponty sought to develop a descriptive philosophy of perception, our kinaesthetic, prescientific, lived-bodily experience and cognition of the world—the unification of our affective, motor and sensory capacities. For Merleau-Ponty, 'perception' is an expressive and creative instance intimately linked with artistic practice, and although he wrote about all kinds of art, painting was the art form he considered in most depth. This paper seeks to elaborate upon the links between perception and painting in his thought, examining his three main essays on the topic of painting. We begin with the descriptive phenomenology of "Cézanne's Doubt" under the influence of Edmund Husserl (1945), to structuralism in "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (1952), and finally to his formulation of an original ontology in "Eye and Mind" (1961).

Keywords: Perception; painting; Merleau-Ponty; art; phenomenology

In the lexicon of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'perception' has an idiosyncratic meaning and drawing attention to and describing the role of this notion in human experience may be said to be one of the main aims and contributions of his phenomenology to philosophy today. Arguing perception to be an expressive and creative instance, Merleau-Ponty also maintains that it is intimately linked with artistic practice. For example, in a 1952 essay entitled "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" he wrote that "it is the expressive operation begun in the least perception, which amplifies into painting and art" (Merleau-Ponty 1951/1993: 106-7).[1] In other words, while perception is the origin of both the act of making art and its end-product, 'amplification' denotes the specific, important changes that occur in the 'translation' and 'extension' of perception into the physical process of art-making.

It is the aim of this article to explore the relationship between perception and art in Merleau-Ponty's thought with reference to the practice of painting.

Although the philosopher wrote about music, visual art, film, poetry and literature, the subject of painting constituted the majority of Merleau-Ponty's writings on art at all stages of his philosophical career, believing as he did that particular instances of painting and phenomenological description were intrinsically intertwined.[2] This essay will explore his three essays that consider painting and painters, which provide a guide to the development of his philosophy: from the descriptive phenomenology of "Cézanne's Doubt" under the influence of Husserl (1945), to structuralism in "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (1952), and finally to his formulation of an original ontology in "Eye and Mind" (1961).

Perception

In his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) Merleau-Ponty famously pronounced that "[t]rue philosophy consists of re-learning to look at the world" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: xxiii), a task he proceeded to undertake for the rest of this work. In uttering this, he was foremostly reacting against the prevailing belief in the sciences and mid-century analytic philosophy that the abstract, objective view of the world employed by science represented a complete, self-sufficient view of reality, as well as reacting against the tendency in Western philosophy to accord an exaggerated significance to it. He argued that there was a widespread propensity towards being "held captive" (Wittgenstein's phrase)[3] by an *objectivist* picture of the world as existing entirely independent of ourselves—"high altitude thinking" (*pensée de survol*) or what Thomas Nagel termed the "view from nowhere."[4]

Merleau-Ponty's point is that this scientific viewpoint, removed from any individual perspective, is neither autonomous nor complete since it fundamentally depends on the existence of a prior (and much neglected) human engagement with reality. He explains that its theoretical constructs derive meaning from our ordinary pre-reflexive *bodily* participation in the world, or what he terms 'perception.' In other words, the world is not something external we merely contemplate but something we primarily inhabit, in which our mode of existence may be called, *per* Heidegger, being-in-the-world. Maintaining that "the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence" (1964/1964: 13), Merleau-Ponty seeks to develop a descriptive philosophy of perception, reminding science that its abstract concepts rely upon pre-theoretical acts of lived experience, our "operative intentionality" (1945/2008: xx). For Merleau-Ponty, the word 'perception' refers to our kinaesthetic, prescientific, lived-bodily experience and cognition of the

world—the unification of our affective, motor and sensory capacities. For the world to be comprehended intelligibly and accorded meaning, Merleau-Ponty argues that any individual must have a primordial awareness of their body's positioning and its unity. Although this basic embodied world-structuring is not a conceptless chaos, its cohesion is not of the same order as abstract thought, which struggles to express this unity without distortion. Since the body operates amongst and upon other persons, things, and situations without being explicitly conscious of the fact that it is doing so, this perception is mostly pre-reflexive. Still, it is a *creative* action, in that it filters out certain things and focuses its attention on others. As the body organises and gives structure to the phenomenal field through its positioning, it is also the case that "the places in which I find myself are never completely given to me: the things which I see are things for me only under the condition that they recede beyond their immediately given aspects" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1964: 16). Placing evaluations on certain phenomena and not noticing others is the basis of perception being said to 'stylize' – a creative act of perception and meaning attribution. However, stylizing will never be completed, since it is constantly renewing its process of structuration, although it can become "'sedimented'" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: 149-50).

Influenced by the later writings of Edmund Husserl, Merleau-Ponty characterized phenomenology as a "study of essences" (1945/2008: vii); yet *contra* early Husserl, this return is not brought about through attempting to annihilate our embodied relationship to the world to attain a pure interiority of transcendental consciousness (something Merleau-Ponty deems impossible). Instead, it was through loosening the intentional cords tying us to the world, by approaching it with "wonder," that these non-cognitive relationships with the lived-world would be brought more fully to our notice (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: xv).[5] If this pretheoretical lived experience or our operative intentionality could be understood more clearly, then abstract thought of all kinds, he argued, would have a better chance of becoming more truthful, in that it would be more aware of its own foundations. For Merleau-Ponty, philosophising begins not with the self *or* the world but with their reciprocal confirmation, which constitutes the most fundamental kind of knowledge and which makes all other kinds of abstract knowledge possible.

Merleau-Ponty situated his phenomenological description as a third position between empiricist and intellectualist understandings of the world and accounts of epistemology. Empiricism, a sort of reductive materialism, begins with physical objects in the world as given and subsequently tries

to explicate mental "stuff"—the mind, emotions, perception—in terms of empirical categories.[6] In contrast, intellectualism begins with consciousness as given and subsequently attempts to explain the reality of objects and the world in terms of mental stuff by reference to forms of intuition and categories of the understanding. Each assumes, therefore, the separation between the mental and the physical (whilst proceeding to favour one side of the division), a dualism Merleau-Ponty fundamentally rejects. Instead, he begins with describing an irreducible involvement of individuals and the world, exemplified in his statement that it is the *body* which perceives (Merleau Ponty 1945/2008: 410). However, rather than using the terms *subject* or *body*, he describes humans as *body-subjects* and posits that consciousness is "incarnate" in the world (1945/2008: 225). This unity has led to the observation that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is characterised by ambiguity.[7]

Still, perceptions are never a passive or neutral intuition of sensorial stimulation but are always "subtended by an 'intentional arc' which projects round about us our past, our future, our human setting, our physical, ideological and moral situation" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: 157). This may be termed an "invisible" structure which unites "intelligence, sensibility, and mobility" (ibid.), providing coherence, intelligibility, as well as meaning to our perceptions. Any meaning which becomes 'visible' or 'speaks' to us does so only insofar as it is defined against this 'invisible' or 'silent' background of perceptual, reflective, and historical relationships and further elaboration of the relation between the visible and the invisible will be discussed at the end of this essay with relation to "Eye and Mind." What is important for now is that meaning is not found pre-existent in the world but is called into existence by the body's own activity in the world.

Before moving to the first of his three essays, it is important to draw attention to a point related to the formulation of meanings and expression which will re-surface throughout this paper: Merleau-Ponty's distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' modes of expression in *Phenomenology of Perception*.[8] His use of the term 'expression' extends from everyday use of language, to scientific language, to body gestures, to all kinds of art, be it abstract, figurative or other. A secondary expression is an instance where we articulate the world in terms of perceptions or concepts which are routine and familiar to us. In contrast, a primary expression is an instance where we take up an unorthodox or innovative position in relation to the world, when we express it in a *new way*, as does the poet in his or her transformation of language, or indeed any artist for Merleau-Ponty. It is here also, I think, that he would like to place the philosopher; he writes in *Phenomenology of*

Perception that "[p]hilosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but like art, the act of bringing truth into being" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: xxiii). With these points concerning perception in mind, I will now go on to discuss the first of the three essays, "Cézanne's Doubt."

Cézanne's Doubt

Published in 1945, one of this essay's most important elements is the great philosophical significance of Cézanne's mature paintings (after his impressionist phase) for Merleau-Ponty.[9] Believing himself and the artist to be engaged in the same project, Merleau-Ponty describes how Cézanne could express through colourful brushstrokes what phenomenology could only indirectly attempt to access through philosophical language: pre-reflexive perception. In his "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty wrote about the impossibility of ever achieving a complete phenomenological *epoché*, or bracketing of the natural attitude (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: xiv). Yet he believed that through the medium of paint (instead of philosophical language) Cézanne *had* succeeded in rendering a prescientific perception of the visible.[10] In contrast to the philosopher, whose enunciation of this experience must contend with the risk of distorting it since he or she employs the same objective representations used in scientific description, a painter can bring features of that experience into greater perspicuity.

Further, parallel to his own 'third position' in phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty saw Cézanne engaged in a struggle to express artistically a different stance from either impressionism and academic painting. The ephemerality of impressionism, which seemed to focus solely on the immanent sensuousness of light, air, and patches of colour, neglected to represent any solid reality, while the objective linear intellectualism of academic painting, with rigorous use of perspective, forgot the individual viewpoint. Instead of following either art-historical "ready-made alternatives suggested to him" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 63), Cézanne painted in an original way: pursuing reality without abandoning its sensuous surface, stating that he sought instead to develop an optics—a logical vision—which had "no element of the absurd" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 63).[11] Paying attention to the real object as well as its appearance to our shifting senses, Cézanne portrayed how, for a viewer, the world has already and continues to *come into being* as a configured space of individuated contours. He famously painted sliding distortions of perspective, what the philosopher termed a "lived perspective" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1993: 64) rather than the

objective linear type. In the same vein, Cézanne would in some works repeatedly mark a multiplicity of outlines around a figure (refusing a single clean silhouette), thus subverting any impression we may have that the outlines of objects exist prior to our sense-making creative perception of them (Gilmore 2006: 296). As Merleau-Ponty writes, when Cézanne's pictures are seen in wholeness, their

> perspectival distortions are no longer visible in their own right, but rather contribute, as they do in natural vision, to the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 65).

Cézanne did not limit himself to modifying traditional artistic ways of representing perspective, but also drew attention to the process of subjective meaning-construction so that in his paintings people often appear strange, as if observed by a non-human creature (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 66). In this, Merleau-Ponty believed the artist was attempting to render the process by which perception constructs meanings from objects or other people from experience, in that he suspended "these habits of thought and reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has instilled himself" (ibid.). As Jonathan Gilmore writes:

> Cézanne makes thematic the content of that phenomenological description of what he sees, raising it to a level of perspicuity such that his painting is both the product of vision and *about* vision, both exemplifies the way in which we perceive our environment and pictorially describes or reflects on the way in which we perceive (Gilmore 2006: 293).

Berated throughout his life by art critics, Cézanne obstinately stuck to his aim of depicting a new artistic expression. Still, as evinced in the essay's title, he was plagued by incertitude as to whether what he had expressed would become meaningful for others, and Merleau-Ponty vividly chronicles this nervous state of unknowing: "the artist launches his work just as a man once launched the first word, not knowing whether it will be anything more than a shout" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 69). What Cézanne, and generally speaking, the artist, expresses will not be a clearly articulated thought, "since such clear thoughts are those that have already been said within ourselves or by others" (ibid.). Thus a position such as

(later) Cézanne's, marked with rare originality, cannot be understood by a viewer through equating his works with other, prior artistic modes of representation – rather its meaning is primarily incomprehensible. In the same manner as in which Merleau-Ponty's term 'primary expression' was referred to earlier, an artist's work gains meaning and resonance from the intersubjective world in which the artist is situated and not solely by his or her expressing something:

> The painter can do no more than construct an image; he must wait for this image to come to life for other people. When it does, the work of art will have united these separate lives; it will no longer exist in one of them like a stubborn dream…It will dwell undivided in several minds (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 70).

In this, Cézanne's painting is not an imitation of anything, nor a product for good taste (as art had respectively been deemed in the first case by Plato and in the second by Kant and Hume), but "a process of expression" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 67-8) of what is found in perception: "the painter recaptures and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things" (ibid.). He explains that "[t]he artist is the one who arrests the spectacle in which most men take part without really seeing it and who makes it visible to the most 'human' among them" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 69).

Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence

Merleau-Ponty's second essay under discussion, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," is not a *direct* philosophical investigation of painting but rather an investigation which can be said to unfold *indirectly*.[12] Although its primary point is to critically respond to the aesthetic theories propounded by André Malraux in his four volumes of art history and criticism, *The Voices of Silence* (1951), along with the arguments of Jean-Paul Sartre in "What is Literature?"[13], a phenomenological engagement with painting can nevertheless be discerned in the wide-ranging discussions of art institutions, art's ability to signify, and the concepts of style and imagination with relation to art.[14] Considering that the thesis of painting being an amplification of perception is what is at issue here, I will accordingly focus upon the following topics linked to this (although his essay covers a range of themes): the relation of style to perception and

its fundamental intertwining with painting; Merleau-Ponty's uniting of the imagination and perception; and the ability of art (like perception) to express meaning to a viewer (as compared to language).

First, the question of style. Merleau-Ponty points out that Malraux problematically employs the concept of style in both a highly individualistic sense, in that the latter writes it is a projection of the artist's idiosyncratic imagination—and at the same time in an objective, almost metaphysical sense, in that he connects style with a suprastylistic force, the expression of what he terms "the Spirit of the Age" (Malraux 1949/1949: 99,139). While critiquing this tension, later proceeding to reformulate it, Merleau-Ponty mentions how Malraux's best passages are the ones where he talks of how "perception already *stylizes*" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 91). For both, style begins as soon as any person perceives the world, organising it into meaning.[15] Certainly Merleau-Ponty's usage of the word comes from Husserl, who, in *Ideas II* had written about a personal, unique style particular to any individual's experiencing and acting.[16] For Merleau-Ponty, style starts "as soon as certain elements of the world take on the value of dimensions to which from then on we relate all the rest, and in whose *language* we express them" (ibid.), or as he wrote in an earlier essay: "I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1964a: 50). The thesis that stylizing is contained in every act of perception is equivalent to the point made earlier that all perception is creative; rather than a neutral apprehension of 'what is,' it is anyone's particular way of seeing and making sense of the world by means of an "inner schema" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 90), a "system of equivalences" (1952/1993: 91) that permits the world to reveal itself as intelligible. For Merleau-Ponty, it is engaging with others which makes style apparent: each of our perceptions is involved in a symbolising signification which expresses to others, sometimes very subtly, a particular project of being-in-the-world.

Rejecting either an objective or subjective interpretation, Merleau-Ponty reformulates the concept of style, similarly to his treatment of the concept in *Phenomenology of Perception*, as an intersubjective phenomenon. That is, something which occurs in the experience we share with others in relation to the world, yet something particular to and personified by each individual, which they are neither aware of nor can know but may be able to recognise in retrospect. Taking the example of the artist, Merleau-Ponty writes that an artist's style is just as inaccessible to him or her as any individual's face and everyday gestures: it "is a mode of formulation that is just as recognizable

for others and just as little visible to him as his silhouette" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 90). What is particular about the artist, however, is that he or she can condense and express his or her creative bodily encounter (or perception) with the world into something more permanent than moments of experience, for example, in paper, canvas, stone or clay. Working in a medium enables the artist's body to continue the creative stylizing process begun in the artist's perception itself, in order to concentrate the "scattered meanings" found there (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 92) and make them exist in a unified concrete form.[17] In this, Merleau-Ponty's point is that there is a *unity* to all painting (and indeed visual art), irrespective of the historical, cultural or personal circumstances of its production; or of its genre as abstract, representational or somewhere in between (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/1993: 105).[18]

Still, the fact that the artist is not just anyone who can draw is made clear from a passage in "Cézanne's Doubt" in which Merleau-Ponty distinguishes "the invention of pleasurable objects" by "cultured animals" from "Cézanne's or Balzac's artist" who "takes up culture from its inception and founds it anew" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 69). The latter, not content to be "cultured men," exemplify what Merleau-Ponty really means by the term "artist"—the creators of a "reason which would embrace its own origins" (ibid.). The artist is the person, therefore, who brings primary expressions into being.

However, this expression is not just a transference of mental states, since it is the process of physical re-creation in a medium that takes the creativity of perception to completion. As he wrote in his last essay "Eye and Mind," "we cannot imagine how a mind could paint" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 123).[19] Merleau-Ponty's work on style continues the lines of thought (influenced by Husserl) on the phenomenology of painting in "Cézanne's Doubt" based on the primacy of perception and the living body. I now turn to the issues of imagination and the status of the artwork as a sign in relation to language and truth in this same essay, where we embark on issues of invisibility and lines of thought that will carry Merleau-Ponty toward the new ontology at work in "Eye and Mind."

Imagination, Perception and Meaning

In theorising about the arts, as is exemplified in the modern aesthetic tradition beginning with Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, the realm or faculty of imagination seems impossible to ignore. The imagination and the linked aesthetic ideas were crucial in Kant's understanding of genius, as

well as in Hegel's understanding of genius in his *Lectures on Fine Art*: both philosophers highlighted the importance of the imagination in their accounts of how great masterpieces were created. However, problematically for Merleau-Ponty whose philosophy of painting thus far has been based on the concept of perception, this word seems to refer to a series of acts or ideas separate from the usual meaning of perception. Like Sartre, at least in earlier writings, he seemed to have conceived of perception and imagination as distinct.[20] Yet how would a philosophy of painting rooted in perception account for a creative mental act (assumedly performed in the imagination) or for mental images'seen' in the imagination? A different, combined account of perception and imagination is found in "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," in which the act of imagining and the faculty of imagination are now related to the world and to perception. This change can be seen from Merleau-Ponty's allusive phrase that perception or "a system of systems devoted to the inspection of a world" is capable of leaping "over distances, piercing the perceptual future, and outlining hollows and reliefs, distances and deviations—a meaning—in the inconceivable flatness of being" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 103). Following Galen Johnson, I interpret "hollows" and "reliefs" to include both images and "what is there" (Johnson 1993a: 30), referring to the fact that the imagination is a variant of perception—that our perception of the world encompasses images, which yet do *not* refer to "nothing" (*per* Sartre: Sartre 2004: 11-14). This kind of poetic and allusive language prefigures what will be seen in "Eye and Mind," where Merleau-Ponty writes that imagination "gives to vision that which clothes it within, the imaginary texture of the real" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 126). In this essay, the relationship between the artist and the invisible will be addressed more fully.

Merleau-Ponty's sharpest divergence with Sartre in "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" is found in his discussion of art's ability to signify and express meaning. In conjunction with his separation of perception from imagination, Sartre drew a line between prose on the one hand and "the arts" on the other: poetry, sculpture, music and painting (Sartre 1948/1993: 4). He believed an artwork to be a spontaneous, imaginative projection of the subject, the most free and "magical" of expressions, but also the least capable of engaging the life of one's times and of expressing knowledge or truth about the world. "Does anyone think," he wrote, that Picasso's *Guernica* "won over a single heart to the Spanish cause?" (ibid.). Sartre denounced the painter as "mute" (1948/1993: 3), arguing that the imagination and artworks were both impoverished and inferior in contrast to reflective thought or knowledge – and in this he joined a long line of

like-minded rationalist philosophers.

Instead, for Merleau-Ponty, the artwork *can* signify, since it can 'reveal' the world to a viewer in a new way. This is linked with the aforementioned distinction between primary and secondary modes of expression. In the aesthetic experience, the viewer's usual system of categories of meaning are irrupted and expanded through the artwork's ability to reveal or disclose (*dévoiler*) new significations.[21] This means that in the work of art we find the origins of new non-cognitive (primary) meaning, summoning the viewer away "from the already constituted reason in which 'cultured men' are content to shut themselves" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 69). Only later, through language and discussion, can what is expressed take on forms of meaning and later, become abstracted or objective cognition. The ability of the artist to express or disclose new meaning has already been discussed in "Cézanne's Doubt"; an artwork articulates its particular expression, opening up a horizon of interpretative possibilities for the audience or viewer, the result being that an artwork's meaning is just as much determined by an audience's reaction as by the artist's original creation. Against Sartre, Merleau-Ponty argued that the forms of expression of meaning found in pictorial art and in writing are not reducible one to the other. In contrast to prose and traditional philosophy, he writes "the voices of painting are the voices of silence" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 117). Painting returns its viewer to a pre-linguistic "silent" realm, "the source of silent and solitary experience on which culture and the exchange of ideas have been built in order to take cognizance of it" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 69), more fundamental and more primary than that secondary realm of abstract and reflective thought, with which language is bound up. This characteristic is evidenced in the variety of rich meanings that a painting (or any artwork) evokes, in that something is always 'left over' from any formalism and analysis. For Merleau-Ponty, this means that painting gives expression to the 'silent' domain of pre-reflexive bodily relationships and engagements. Prose and traditional philosophy are deficient in that they can never free themselves from "the precariousness of the silent forms of expression" and can only give "distorted" articulation to "the things themselves" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 115). As he writes in "Eye and Mind":

> Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible – painting scrambles all our categories, spreading out before us its oneiric universe of carnal essences, actualized resemblances, mute meanings. (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 130)

Eye and Mind

"Eye and Mind" appeared in the inaugural issue of the journal *Art de France* in January 1961, the last work Merleau-Ponty published before his death in May that year. Directly addressing the themes of the enigma of vision and painting itself as in "Cézanne's Doubt," he re-iterates that painting is close to the palpable life of things, unlike modern science and philosophy which are deficient in this respect. The latter, both monsters born of Cartesianism (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 138), consider reality as something external to ourselves, rather than something we constantly live in and are in the midst of.[22] Unlike classical science, modern science has "given up living in things" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 121) in favour of manipulation, operationalism, and theoretical models while philosophy is too closely linked with language, advice and opinions in contrast to the "innocence" of painting (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 123). This notion of the innocence of painting echoes Merleau-Ponty's writings in "Cézanne's Doubt" sixteen years earlier, where he wrote how (unlike phenomenology's best efforts to do the same) Cézanne's particular sort of painting successfully bracketed the "natural attitude," representing phenomena as they appear in pre-theoretical experience without the distortions of language. Painting has privileged access the "there is," which is "the site, the soil of the sensible and humanly modified world" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 122).

Yet in "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty burrows to a level beneath that of the other two essays to explore the fundamental roots and primary impulses of painting. By 1961, his philosophy had significantly changed emphasis, as is also evident in other works being composed during the same period (such as the unfinished *The Visible and the Invisible*). Instead of a phenomenological description of our being-in-the-world, he was now in the process of outlining an original post-Cartesian ontology, a non-dualistic study of Being which went beyond (or beneath?) traditional philosophical distinctions and dualisms. Rather than maintaining a dichotomy between consciousness and objects, something he castigates in the *Visible and the Invisible* to have been a distinction which rendered the problems posed in the *Phenomenology of Perception* "insoluble" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 200), instead, he noteswe read:

> …a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we may say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things. (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 123)

Merleau-Ponty propounds the unconscious ground of conscious experience as a unified stuff which he terms 'flesh.' With this notion,, Merleau-Ponty contents that mind and body Upon this realisation, he propounds the unconscious ground of conscious experience as a unified stuff - *flesh*. With this notion of flesh, Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969:247, 259), subject and object, self and world (1964/1969: 123), as well as other related dualisms are fundamentally intertwined as an interdependent chiasm (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 248-51). Flesh is an "anonymous visibility" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 142) that precedes any identification of particular beings or dichotomy between self and other. This all-encompassing unity or element does not refer to a substance, matter, or spirit (1964/1969: 139, 146) but to a "general thing midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of Being wherever there is a fragment of Being" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 139). As Taylor Carman writes, flesh is:

> The *sensibility* of things, the perceptibility both of the perceptual environment and of ourselves as perceivers – the *visibility* of vision, the *tangibility* of touch, the *exposure* of anything to which the world itself can be exposed in experience, including the bodily sense or experience of motor intentionality (Carman 2008: 123)

Flesh is that which the world and the individual *of* it *are* – the ontological ground of the phenomenal manifestation of being in the world. Flesh is our "brute and savage being" (1964/1969: 200), our unconscious bodily immersion in the world – entanglement of Flesh is that which the world and the individual of it are ñ the ontological ground of the phenomenal manifestation of being in the world. Flesh is our ìbrute and savage beingî (1964/1969: 200), our unconscious bodily immersion in the world ñ an underlying entanglement of world and subject.

Now a heightened awareness of flesh leads to an experience of what Merleau-Ponty terms ëreversibility,í a role-swapping between a human and the world, which is something quite often experienced by artists. Merleau-Ponty does argue perception to be characterised by reversibility generally, insofar as the human body ëswitchesí between roles: it can both touch something, and be touched, it can both look at something, and be looked at. Further, while any part of the body can touch or be touched, there is always a gap (or écart) between each action. We cannot be aware of touching and being touched right at the same time, but this impossibility does not amount to, or justify constructing a dualism in that each action is reversible.

However, it seems a particularly strong kind of reversibility is frequently experienced by artists, particularly painters, who generally may be differentiated from non-artists due to their ìgift of the visibleî (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 127), a gift earned by their continued exercise of their incarnated vision or ìfleshy eyesî through the act of painting (ibid). The roles between the painter and the visible may switch, and he cites the example of Paul Klee, who is reputed to have said ìin a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to meî (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 129).

A heightened awareness of flesh leads to an experience of – a human . Now perception is characterised by reversibility generally – in that the human body 'switches' between roles: it can both touch something, and *be* touched: it can both look at something, and *be* looked at. While any part of the body can touch or be touched, there is always a gap (or *écart*) between each action. We cannot be aware of touching and being touched right at the same time, but this impossibility does not amount to, or justify constructing a dualism in that each action is reversible. Yet a particular kind of reversibility particularly painters,, a gift earned by their continued exercise of their incarnated vision or "fleshy eyes" through the act of painting (*ibid*).

This reversibility does not mean that Merleau-Ponty is imputing consciousness and/or vision to inanimate things, in an exaggerated Leibnizian panpsychism (Johnson 1993: 48). Rather, it refers on the one hand to the general ambiguity of the overlapping experienced in a human body to be both perceived (in that it is an object) and perceiver (in that it is also a subject). On the other hand, it refers to how the painter-seer is intensely caught up and *intertwined* in the midst of the visible, through their affiliation with a medium. By result of their heightened exposure of the visible, the painter may interchange the usual roles of watcher and watched so that they both imagine and physically experience the opposite of what is considered normal. On how painting is intimately tied with the *visible*, he writes: "painting celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility" (1961/1993: 127). Yet painting is the *realisation* of the visible: "It gives visible existence to what profane vision thinks is invisible" (ibid.) - "a texture of Being" which we occupy and inhabit. Such "invisible" qualities, which constitute objects to be observable at all in perception, exist at "the threshold" of "profane vision which forgets its premises" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 128).

Caught up in their lives, non-artistic individuals forget or neglect this "scaffolding" of the visible and take it for granted, proceeding (in the case of Cartesianism) to construct "scientific" models upon an exorcising of the visible's "spectres" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 130).[23] In contrast, the painter, through his or her specially attuned perception attained by having a relation to an artistic medium, has an aesthetic insight to this "invisibility," which means on a rough level that he or she can notice usually hidden "things," reaching beyond what is immediately given in vision to that generally unnoticed or invisible scaffolding which sustains it (Crowther 1993a: 52). In this ability to express the invisible, Merleau-Ponty is theorising, at a very fundamental level, a general definition of painting. Quoting the Belgian writer Henri Michaux, he wrote that painting is the production of a thing which breaks the "skin of things" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 141). It calls attention to the means whereby it and things generally become visible: it makes visible first and foremost the conditions of its own visibility (Crowther 1993: 111).

Conclusion

As has been explored, for Merleau-Ponty painting may be described as the amplification of perception, in that it is not just a re-creation of what occurs in acts of perceiving, but rather a transcending and extending of it. Rooted in pre-reflexive experience, the artist expands upon the original thought or inspiration through an embodied art making. This amounts to artists having access to, and art-objects expressing, a more fundamental realm of human experience in a way that is inaccessible for non-artists and language. The "primary expression" which the artist initiates through their "gift of the visible" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 127) provides privileged access to the stylizing inherent in acts of perception which create a structure to the chaos of the world. Originating in bodily cognition and expression, the 'languages' of painting, music and poetry are more primordial, more "silent" (in the sense of the 'silent' domain of pre-reflexive bodily relationships and engagements) than that of the secondary expression of conceptual language used in philosophy, which reaches its most abstract form in science. Still, in later works (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 179) he has admitted that his pre-reflexive or tacit "cogito," the idea that there is a self anterior to thought and language which we can gain access to, is impossible to imagine without language.[24] He admits that it is necessarily a *product* of language, particularly the language of the philosopher. This means, accordingly, that language plays an increasingly important role in

his later works than in his earlier ones.

All forms of art, but in particular painting, were of great philosophical significance for Merleau-Ponty through all stages of his career, a theme I hope has been demonstrated in this article. It is not surprising that, perhaps for this reason, his style of writing changes, as is distinctive in "Eye and Mind" where his expression is notably allusive and poetic, stepping away from more analytic or philosophical methods of argument. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty praised the style of Proust, writing that "no one had gone further in fixing the relations between the visible and the invisible" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 149). Perhaps this is the style he is emulating in this essay. In expressing himself through this poetic language, he is becoming more like the artist whom he so much admires.

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Endnotes

1 This sentence was brought to my attention by Paul Crowther in his chapter "Merleau-Ponty: Perception into Art" in Crowther, P. (1993). *Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism* (pp.40-55). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

2 This is the only kind of art that will be discussed in this essay, mainly due to limitations of space, but also because I want to avoid discussion of Merleau-Ponty's "philosophy of art" (if there indeed is one). A good argument contesting this is found in Jonathan Gilmore's paper "Between Philosophy and Art", which argues that Merleau-Ponty's deep commentaries on the arts illustrate and extend his general philosophical views, but generate no philosophy of art in themselves (Gilmore 2006: 292).

3 In §115 of *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein writes " A *picture* held us captive. And we couldn't get outside it, for it lay in our language, and language only seemed to repeat it to us inexorably." See Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Philosophical Investigations*., G. E. M. Anscombe (Trans.). Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, p. p.53e. While Merleau-Ponty does not use this phrase, it suffices to illustrate dominant, blinkered thinking (in this case the objective world as being independent of subjective experience).

4 See Nagel, T. (1986). *The View From Nowhere*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. Merleau-Ponty often used the phrase "high-altitude thinking" (*pensée de survol*) – see, for example *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 73). In "Eye and Mind" he refers to scientific thinking as a "thinking which looks on from above" (Merleau-Ponty 1961/1993: 122).

5 A. D. Smith argues very well in "The Flesh of Perception" that the Merleau-Ponty of *Phenomenology of Perception* and the late Husserl, apart from terminology, hardly differ at all. See Smith, A. D. (2007). The Flesh of Perception. In T. Baldwin (Ed.). *Reading Merleau-Ponty: On Phenomenology of Perception* (pp.1-22). New York and London: Routledge.

6 This term, mental "stuff," refers to its use by both Bertrand Russell and William James. See for example, Russell, B. (2002). *Theory of Knowledge: The 1913 Manuscript*, . London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p.15, or James, W. (1988). *Manuscript Essays and Notes*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Presss, 1988, p.31.

7 This is what Alphonse de Waelhens, in the foreword to the second French edition of *The Structure of Behaviour*, took to embody the core of what was distinctive about Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. In De Waelhens, A. A Philosophy of the Ambiguous in Merleau-Ponty, M. (1965) *The Structure of Behaviour*. (pp. Xviii-xxvii). A. L. Fisher (Trans.). London: Methuen. (Original work published 1942).

8 This distinction is made by Merleau-Ponty in the *Phenomenology of Perception*: "[t]here is, of course, every reason to distinguish between an authentic speech, which formulates for the first time, and second-order expression, speech about speech, which makes up the general run of empirical language" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: 207, footnote 4). This distinction between *primary* and *secondary*

modes of expression may be paralleled with a passage in "Science and the Experience of Expression" in *The Prose of the World*. Here, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between *la langage parlé* (sedimented language) and *le langage parlant* (speech) (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 10). Sedimented language is "the language the reader brings with him, the stock of accepted relations between signs and familiar significations without which he could never have begun to read" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 13). Speech is "the operation through which a certain arrangement of already available signs and significations alters and there transfigures each one of them, so that in the end a new signification is secreted" (ibid.). The former is similar to 'secondary' expression, while the latter is akin to 'primary' expression.

9 This essay expands upon Merleau-Ponty's various comments on Cézanne in the chapter "The Thing and the Natural World" in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

10 For example: "Cézanne's painting suspends these habits of thought and reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 66).

11 Émile Bernard called this tentative carving out of a new mode of expression "Cézanne's suicide: aiming for reality while denying himself the means to attain it" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 63).

12 This work was published in a two-part instalment in successive numbers of *Les Temps Modernes* (June, July 1952). It was originally intended to be the third chapter of *The Prose of the World*, but Merleau-Ponty extracted it and edited it from the book manuscript. The original is different from the edition published in his lifetime (the former being posthumously published by Claude Lefort).

13 This was finished in 1950, originally published as a three-volume edition titled *Psychologie de l'art*, subsequently collected in a one-volume edition in 1951 entitled *The Voices of Silence*. See Sartre's paper "Qu'est-ce que la littérature?" was originally published in *Les Temps Modernes*, Feb.-July 1947, 17-22.

14 Unlike "Cézanne's Doubt" which discussed only Cézanne and (briefly) Leonardo da Vinci, in this work numerous other painters appear, Matisse, Renoir and Van Gogh being given special attention.

15 In "The Primacy of Perception", Merleau-Ponty writes how a perceived object is "a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1964: 16).

16 As Husserl writes, "Every man [human being] has his character, we can say, his style of life in affection and action, with regard to the way he has of being motivated by such and such circumstances." See Husserl, E. (1993) *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenological Constitution*. R. Rojcewisz & A. Schuwer (Trans.). London: Kluwer, p.283.

17 Merleau-Ponty writes: "[w]e must see it developing in the hollows of the painter's perception as a painter; style is an exigency that has issued from that perception" (Merleau-Ponty 1952/1993: 91).

18 It is on these grounds that he rejects Malraux's separation between "objective" classical painting and "subjective" modern painting. What will become clear from "Eye and Mind" is that Merleau-Ponty's writings on art are derived from the basic orientation of the human body in the world, claiming that in its motivation, all art is the same. Criticisms levelled against him of his theories of art only being applicable to certain artists, in this case, cannot (I think) do much harm, since his examination of art is much deeper. He is not theorising about art in a way that detaches it from human experience, but rather shows how the two are equivalent in their involvement in the world.

19 This quote from "Cézanne's Doubt" also makes clear this point: "Before expression, there is nothing but a vague fever, and only the work itself, completed and understood, will prove that there was *something* there rather than *nothing* to be found there" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/1993: 69).

20 Undoubtedly such issues are key to any artistic act and a philosophy concerned with them. Until now, in accordance with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty had held perception and imagination to be separate. Sartre had written that imagining was the only type of conscious act wholly spontaneous, free and unmotivated by objects external to consciousness. Sartre wrote two works on the imagination, *Imagination* (1936) and *L'imaginaire* (1940). Images were distinguishable from perceptions or sensations by their distinctive *nihilation*, in that an image is an awareness of an object as nonexistent, absent, elsewhere, or a possibility. These views had been accepted by Merleau-Ponty in his early thought, and thus in both men's writings, imagination had been accorded an impoverished and reduced importance in relation to perception. His writings on imagination in *Phenomenology of Perception*, mostly which concerned the brain-damaged patient Schneider's illusions and anomalies, accorded a separation between perception and imagination, real and unreal. Merleau-Ponty also wrote, citing Sartre's *L'Imaginaire*, that in contrast to perception, "the imagination has no depth, and does not respond to our efforts to vary our points of view: it does not lend itself to observation. We never have a hold upon it" (Merleau-Ponty 1945/2008: 323-4). Further, his 1936 review of Sartre's book in *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique* is very receptive to Sartre's theses on imagination.

21 This is comparable to Heidegger's characterisation of art as "world-disclosing" in "The Origin of the Work of Art." See Heidegger, M. 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in Krell, D. (Ed.). (1978). *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (p.143-188). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

22 Much of this essay addresses Descartes' essay *La Dioptrique* (Optics), one of the three "specimen essays" attached to the end of the first edition of the *Discourse on Method*, illustrating Descartes' method. A small amount of Descartes' work comments on engravings, writing that art is capable only of disclosing those features of a world already available to human vision, something Merleau-Ponty fundamentally disagrees with. See Descartes, R. (1988). Optics. In J Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & D. Murdoch (Trans. and Eds.). *Descartes, Selected*

Philosophical Essays (pp.57-72). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

23 As he writes: "To see the object, it was necessary *not* to see the play of shadows and light around it. The visible in the profane sense forgets its premises; it rests on a total visibility that is to be recreated and that liberates the phantoms captive in it" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1993: 128).

24 "What I call the tacit cogito is impossible. To have the idea of thinking (in the sense of thought of seeing and thought of feeling), to make the phenomenological reduction to the things themselves, to return to immanence and to consciousness, it is necessary to have words. It is by the combination of words that I form the transcendental attitude" (Merleau-Ponty 1964/1969: 171).

Beyond Subjectivity: Kierkegaard's Self and Heidegger's *Dasein*

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Abstract

In the following paper, I analyse and contrast the thoughts of Kierkegaard and Heidegger concerning the problem of existence. I undertake the analysis by first examining how these two thinkers distinguish themselves from the metaphysical tradition. As finite and temporal entities, Kierkegaard's self and Heidegger's *Dasein* mark a radicalisation over the notion of subjectivity in the metaphysical tradition. This gives philosophy a new way to acknowledge the limits of our finite existence instead of merely engaging in a purely conceptual and theoretical analysis. However, I conclude that Kierkegaard is still partly confined to the metaphysical conception when he fails to distinguish the *existentiell* aspect of the self from the *existential* aspect. I contend that Heidegger's *Dasein* is a further radicalisation over Kierkegaard's self in that the former is uniquely characterised by the openness of its way of Being.

Keywords: existence; finitude; temporality; *Dasein*; self

Introduction: Against the Tradition

Kierkegaard and Heidegger both call into question the traditional idea in philosophy that we can more or less adequately understand ourselves theoretically. Instead of treating philosophy merely as a conceptual analysis, they bring to light the concrete situation in which we find ourselves and from which we always carry out a finite task. In this paper, I begin by discussing how Kierkegaard and Heidegger break away from the previous philosophical tradition through the notion of 'existence' (or 'spirit' in Kierkegaard). I thus elucidate their formulation of existence, which marks the fundamental characteristic of the self and *Dasein*. In explicating the way in which the self and *Dasein* mark the radicalised conception of finitude and temporality, I also show where the self as expounded by Kierkegaard becomes problematic. There is an unavoidable inconsistency in the way Kierkegaard conceives of the self. Hence, the thesis of my comparative analysis is to demonstrate that Heidegger radicalises beyond Kierkegaard's self with his notion of *Dasein*, whose mode of Being is profoundly open

and rightly undetermined as that which makes its own Being an issue for itself.

Excessive adherence to the theoretical approach often leads to formalism because such an adherence entails objectivity, abstraction, and infinite validity (as long as all the conditions remain the same). Formalism in this sense is an attitude of, or approach to, theorising something more concrete and particular. In other words, it is strictly about formulating a general concept or theory out of the particular entities in question. Until the end of the Enlightenment, this sort of formalism dominated the philosophical scene. We can, for instance, see such formalism in Descartes who famously argued that our essence lies in our state of being conscious (Descartes 1985: 127; Descartes 1986: 18, 54). According to Descartes, we are distinguished from other extended objects such as plants and animals by our having a mind. He thus tells us that each of us is essentially a thinking being (*res cogitans*) compared to, for example, a book which is just an extended thing (*res extensa*). The method by which Descartes demarcates us from other extended things is the same method he employs when he discerns other extended things (Descartes 1986: 30). As a finite substance, whether we possess one property or the other determines and defines *what* we are. His method of discernment virtually remains the same for both *res cogitans* and *res extensa* despite having made such a distinction. Descartes therefore failed to delineate into and explicate that which is fundamentally characteristic of *res cogitans*. This is why Heidegger comments:

> With the '*cogito sum*' Descartes had claimed that he was putting philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined when he began in this 'radical' way, was the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or—more precisely—the *meaning of the Being of the* '*sum*'. (Heidegger 1962: 46)

Descartes' formalism stipulated that mind is merely a category or property which distinguishes human beings from other entities. Mind is simply a formal criterion for Descartes.

Kant also indulges in this formalism as he deduced the faculties of the mind by analysing the way the mind constitutes experience (Kant 1968: 59). Based on the presupposition that we have experience of objects, he sought to elucidate how the mind makes such an experience possible. If an experience of objects is unified under the singular subject, as Kant thought, then it is a precondition that the experiencing subject is self-conscious. Without this unity of consciousness, one can neither become aware of one's own

experience nor be said to be self-conscious. For Kant, being self-conscious implies having experience and recognising that as one's own (ibid.: 152-153). Based on his analysis, Kant thus arrived at the transcendental unity of apperception as the highest function of the mind which unites one's experience under one subsisting subject. Though Kant's exposition is quite different from that of Descartes', he still maintains the idea that formal deduction provides legitimate knowledge for us (ibid.: 13-14, 25-26). Kant's project was simply epistemological rather than ontological. What is common to both of them and many other philosophers is the *mode of investigation* by which they expound themselves. They all engage in the same formal mode of inquiry, which is abstract and theoretical, for they impose the same categorical schema on us as they do to all other objects and treat us just like any other object of their inquiry.

According to the formulations of Descartes and Kant, it does not matter *who I am as an individual* but only *what I am* (a human being), which is indicated by the properties and conditions theoretically constructed by them. The latter question neglects existence. This is why Heidegger comments, "In taking over Descartes' ontological position Kant made an essential omission: he failed to provide an ontology of *Dasein*" (Heidegger 1962: 46). While Descartes and Kant occupied themselves with the notion of *cogito* or self-consciousness, existence escaped from their vision. This is precisely because formalism cannot account for the conditions related to existence because they are contingent, finite, and temporal, as oppose to formal conditions which are necessary, infinite, and universal. Thus to suppose that Reason can grasp the whole of our Being is to assume ourselves as a mere entity, for in that case, "The whole existence of the human race rounds itself off as a perfect, self-contained sphere" (Kierkegaard 1983: 68). But as the Enlightenment drew to a close, philosophy began to steer away from such formalism and to include other aspects of our Being.

Both Kierkegaard and Heidegger subvert the idea that Reason dictates the whole of reality including ourselves.[1] In response to this obsessively formalistic tradition, Kierkegaard and Heidegger deny the idea that our self-understanding consists in a pure concept that abstracts from our finite conditions. We are often inclined to accept and assert ourselves as if we are just another entity; for instance, when we define ourselves biologically as bipeds or things with two legs (as if we are no different from quadrupeds except for the number of legs). But such a difference is not what is crucial about our existence and this is the sense in which Kierkegaard and Heidegger react against the term 'metaphysics.' The latter indeed remarks about 'the forgetfulness of Being' of the metaphysical (or onto-theological)

tradition, since such an assumption:

> [B]locks our access to those primordial 'sources' from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand. (Heidegger 1962: 43)

We must therefore re-examine existence and subjectivity. Instead of separating concepts from thinking activity, thereby fabricating the irreconcilable rift between Reason and existence, Kierkegaard and Heidegger ground our knowledge on the very finite and temporal conditions which we ourselves are. Kierkegaard's self and Heidegger's *Dasein* therefore mark the reversal of the ontological priority in that it is not the foundation of our knowledge (validity of knowledge) to which we must look, but the manner in which we as unique individuals engage in and delve into an activity such as a quest for knowledge. Hence they incorporate in their pursuit of knowledge the preoccupation of understanding ourselves, our way of Being. In turning away from the strictly theoretical approach to philosophy, Kierkegaard and Heidegger converge in a number of defining moments which bring to light a radicalised conception of existence. It is in this context that I wish to analyse and tackle the following questions: (i) How is *Dasein*, as designated by Heidegger, similar to and different from the self of Kierkegaard?; and (ii) Does *Dasein* really describe and capture our Being-in-the-world better than Kierkegaard's self, as Heidegger stipulates in the endnote to *Being and Time* (ibid.: 494)? As Kierkegaard bears the notion of 'self' while Heidegger distinctively defines the characterising individual as '*Dasein*,' my aim in this paper is to bring to the fore the crucial disparity and radicalisation made by Heidegger which distinguishes *Dasein* from Kierkegaard's self in spite of their similarities.

I. Self and *Dasein*

Existence marks the departure from the philosophical tradition which was predominantly occupied with the construction of the foundation of knowledge. In pursuing the purity and validity of knowledge, the tradition in fact misses the point; as Kierkegaard puts it, "For all this positive knowledge fails to express the *situation* of the knowing subject *in existence*" (Kierkegaard 1968: 75; emphasis added). By shifting the focus away from

Reason and knowledge towards reason and existence, Kierkegaard, whom Heidegger follows, attends to our situation which is finite and temporal.

In *The Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard defines 'self' (*Selv*) as "a relation which relates to itself" (Kierkegaard 2004: 43). Since this formulation is rather obscure, it would be helpful to see how Kierkegaard distinguishes 'self' from 'human being.' According to Kierkegaard, 'human being' is a synthesis which is "a relation between two [factors]"[2] (ibid.), or alternatively it is defined as the relation of two factors which he calls 'synthesis.' One can here recognise the difference in the way Kierkegaard understands the human being and the self. *A relation between two factors* (human being) is not yet *a relation which relates to itself* (self); Kierkegaard thus suggests from this that "a human being is not yet a self" (ibid.). This may sound quite counter-intuitive as most of us who are human beings also consider ourselves a self, but his point is that a human being qualifies as a self in varying degrees. Human being as a synthesis is constituted by psyche and body (Kierkegaard 1980: 85), but self is marked by the third factor which Kierkegaard calls 'spirit.' In this way, a positive relation which relates to itself is united by the third factor, spirit; on the other hand, a negative relation which "the two relate to the relation, and in the relation to that relation" (Kierkegaard 2004: 43) either lacks or has very little contribution made by this spirit.

Kierkegaard describes negative unity in *The Concept of Anxiety* as: "In innocence, man [i.e. human being] is not qualified as spirit but is psychically qualified in immediate unity with his natural condition. The spirit in man is dreaming" (Kierkegaard 1980: 41). We can thus see that Kierkegaard does not qualify a human being whose spirit unites negatively in innocence as a self. Spirit for Kierkegaard denotes existence which empowers the synthesis to relate to itself and it therefore marks the degree to which a human being is a self by its 'degree of reflection,' as Kierkegaard writes:

> There being here some degree of reflection, there is also some degree of heed paid to one's self. With this certain degree of reflection begins that act of separation in which the self becomes aware of itself as essentially different from the environment and the external world and their effect upon it. (Kierkegaard 2004: 85)

In this manner, Kierkegaard is providing a definition and criteria for those *existential* characters which determine the extent to which a human being qualifies as a self. To be a fully existing individual is to make our own existence as the object of our thinking and this forms a positive unity. Let

us at this point turn to Heidegger and his conception of self and existence.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger intends to raise the question of the meaning of Being (*Sein*) which the onto-theological tradition has always failed to recognise. Instead of engaging in a theoretical inquiry, ontology has always devolved into the ontic analysis of beings (*Seinden*) and was never investigated far enough to carry out the fundamental ontology, that is, the ontological analysis of Being. On the one hand, our understanding of Being is *self-evident* because we must always already have understood Being pre-conceptually; on the other hand, our understanding of Being is *obscure* because we take it for granted or fail to penetrate it ontologically. According to Heidegger, 'Being' is "that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood […] The Being of entities 'is' not itself an entity" (Heidegger 1962: 25-26). He writes elsewhere that "We are able to grasp beings [(i.e. entities)] as such, as beings, only if we understand something like [*Being*]" (Heidegger 1982: 10).

It is Heidegger's ingenuity even in asking this question regarding the meaning of Being, what it means to *be*, because as he denies in the first section, Being is not a concept which we can take for granted by assuming that it is universal and indefinable. Heidegger recognises that in this very question, what is implied and presupposed is the entity that can raise such a question. That is to say, the very question reveals something more than the question itself, namely the inquirer. He therefore makes the following claim:

> Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must make an entity—the inquirer—transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about—namely, Being. (Heidegger 1962: 27)

This unique entity which raises the question of Being is not a chair, a fork, or a tree; it is rather the sort of entity that can make Being as its concern and Heidegger calls this entity '*Dasein*.' *Dasein* is distinctive in that it is "an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it" (ibid.: 32). The Being of a chair is not and cannot be an issue for the chair. *Dasein* is defined as the entity whose mode of Being is precisely to raise its Being as an issue for itself; its Being can be and is an issue for itself.[3] This self-referentiality of the self, which Kierkegaard

designated as spirit, is guided by '*existence*' (*Existenz*) for Heidegger, as Pöggeler comments: "To have a relationship to Being means (according to Kierkegaard) to have existence, to be determined by existence. Heidegger calls the Being or 'essence' of *Dasein* 'existence'" (Pöggeler 1987: 35). As "*The 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence*" (Heidegger 1962: 67), what allows for and makes possible that unique feature which *Dasein* has, the self-relating character, is existence. As such, Heidegger states that "That kind of Being towards which *Dasein* can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow, we call '*existence*'" (ibid.: 32). This means that *Dasein* comports itself in its existence, and in doing so "*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence" (ibid.: 33). As the above quotes have stipulated, Being is presupposed in any dealings with entities. But since we do make ourselves an issue and deal with entities in the world, what is therefore implied is that in *Dasein*'s mode of existence, Being is already in some way understood by *Dasein*. For otherwise *Dasein* would not be able to distinguish that which *is* from that which *is not*.[4] To bring to light our finite condition of Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*), Heidegger carries out an ontological investigation of *Dasein* which he calls '*existential* analytic.'

II. Finitude and Temporality

What distinguishes these two thinkers is their penetration into our finite and temporal conditions, as Kierkegaard writes, "Temporality, finitude – that is what it is all about" (Kierkegaard 1983: 49). While the formal tradition, exemplified by thinkers like Descartes and Kant, made numerous efforts to grasp our essences, it maintained the same attitude and approach of seeking common qualities amongst all human beings. Despite having categorised us as a *finite* substance, Descartes did not understand finitude in the primordial sense. Since his approach remained infinite, his judgement that we are *finite* as a substance essentially implied that we are *infinitely* a finite substance. Likewise, while Kant attempted to display the boundaries of reason, which are in a certain sense 'finite,' his perspective still remained infinite when he lays out the faculties of cognition. Such accounts fail to grasp and express our basic state of finitude because seeking a common ontic character is a task of the infinite and does not account for our situational character. For these traditional accounts which are based on substance ontology, either there is nothing essential in each of us as an individual, or even if there is something unique to each of us, such uniqueness does not matter when it comes to understanding our essences. We must precisely for this

reason look to individuals whose finite characteristic is designated by spirit and existence. This is why Heidegger's analysis of our everydayness is distinctive in that it is a realm which most philosophers had not been investigating, because everydayness is our situational way of Being-in-the-world. Heidegger looks at the ways in which we relate to the world in our ordinary mode of existence. Formalism misses the fundamental manner in which we relate to the world and to ourselves since such an attitude and a practice only make sense to us *in existence*. Determining our essence without accounting for our existence is to transgress our finite boundary. Our essence lies first and foremost in existence and thus is undetermined. It is an essence that is to be determined in existence, not the other way around. We must therefore reconsider the denouncement of our subjective perspective expressed by previous thinkers.

By redefining spirit, Kierkegaard can and does distinguish himself from those others who "transpose the whole content of faith into conceptual form" (ibid.: 7). Hence Kierkegaard is reacting to and criticising those who subsume the individual into the universal. As our understanding is dependent on the spirit which we ourselves are, everything is fundamentally subjective. Spirit is always involved in any given situation because "Every subject is an existing subject, which should receive an essential expression in all his knowledge" (Kierkegaard 1968: 75). Hence this self is always involved whether it is concerned with geometrical proofs, religious statements, or what to have for breakfast. However, in emphasising the subject or subjectivity, Kierkegaard is in no way committing himself to a form of transcendental idealism, according to which view a transcendental subjectivity constitutes the reality (as ideality) of the world (Husserl 1970: 95-100; Kant 1968: 72, 77-78, 130, 153). On the contrary, what is important for Kierkegaard is to acknowledge our finite condition of the self for whom each and every moment is a unique situation. To subsume this aspect of subjective engagement into a rational systematic thought as the tradition has done is problematic, for it would exclude any non-objective ground from the self. This is precisely why Kierkegaard mentions the paradox that "the single individual as the single individual is higher than the universal" (Kierkegaard 1983: 62).

Along the same line of thought, existence does not simply mean that we are a finite substance which subsists through time with a certain set of qualities as the tradition has assumed. As philosophers like Descartes and Kant neglected spirit, they occupied themselves with a synthesis that unites negatively. We can now say that such a negative unity here denotes actuality, identity, and substantiality. Caputo's analysis of Kierkegaard

is very helpful here. Kierkegaard is criticising the notion of metaphysics which "is an exercise in disinterested *nous* looking on at the spectacle of *eidos*" (Caputo 1987: 32). Where these philosophers get it wrong is the idea that actuality (presence) is all there is. Just like no one can define and measure who I am without first acknowledging the self that is always partaking in a given situation, existence also means that I am not simply made up of things like *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. We who are existing beings cannot be entirely explained by and reduced to something else as if we were rocks, walls, or chairs. We are essentially *involved* in our very existence; that is to say, even the fundamental questions which concern ontological characteristics like 'who am I' and 'what does it mean to exist' must be understood in relation to a particular self or *Dasein*. In other words, to be a self means one is fully becoming aware of oneself. That is why we are characterised by the self-referential structure of existence and the degree of reflection it designates. Emphasising the significance of personal and subjective aspects, Kierkegaard writes:

> [A]lthough there have lived countless millions of such 'selves,' no science can say what the self is without again stating it quite generally. And this is the wonder of life, that each man who is mindful of himself knows what no science knows, since he knows who himself is […] (Kierkegaard 1980: 78-79)

It is therefore due to our own awareness that we are able to make ourselves an object of our concern. Each individual as a self-conscious individual sets and defines for oneself who one is. This connection between existence and the subjective attitude is made explicit by Kierkegaard elsewhere: "In all his thinking he therefore has to think the fact that he is an existing individual" (Kierkegaard 1968: 314). Spirit and existence mark our finite condition as well as the self-referential function. In the finitude of existence, we relate to ourselves. Finitude and the subjective here become a focal point. Since we do not and cannot fully attain the infinite perspective through which we can obtain complete knowledge, our finite perspective is bound to be subjective and temporal. Instead of rejecting our subjective aspect, we must for this reason come to acknowledge and admit its role in our finite condition.

Insofar as existence is that which characterises the self and *Dasein*, any mode of investigation is always an accomplishment of the individual. Furthermore, a self-referential character marks the relation we have towards the world. We relate to ourselves in and through the relation we

establish with the world. Existence therefore has a sense of projection or passion which propels us to reach beyond ourselves, as Heidegger states, "Existence, instead, always already means to step beyond or, better, having stepped beyond" (Heidegger 1982: 300). Self or *Dasein* as a self-relating entity relates to that which is not itself. While the Being of *Dasein* is to relate to itself through itself, it transcends itself in its own Being. Thus Heidegger gives a following description of *Dasein*: "Only a being with the mode of [Being] of the *Dasein* transcends, in such a way in fact that transcendence is precisely what essentially characterises its [Being]" (ibid.: 299). As a transcendent entity, however, there remains the question of how we are to understand our openness to Being. Heidegger writes: "It could be that the 'who' of everyday *Dasein* just is *not* the 'I myself'" (Heidegger 1962: 150). By extending out of itself towards that which is not itself, *Dasein* finds itself influenced and shaped by the objects and other *Dasein* it encounters in the world. In doing so, *Dasein* is constantly undergoing change for which the tradition failed to account. As Caputo puts it "In philosophy, becoming is always getting subverted by being" (Caputo 1987: 13).

Philosophers have tried to enclose and to reduce us to a formal concept, when our basic mode of existence contains an irreducible movement of becoming. In this sense, our mode of existence lies in a movement not between actuality and possibility as philosophers have assumed, but between necessity and possibility. In other words, we are not at first present and then inhabiting the future, rather we are both necessary and possible at once in actuality. Kierkegaard therefore contends that "the self is just as much possible as necessary; although it is indeed itself, it has to become itself. To the extent that it is itself, it is necessary; and to the extent that it must become itself, it is a possibility." (Kierkegaard 1989: 65-66). To relate to ourselves is to reach outside of ourselves to that which transcends us; thus our mode of Being must contain that which is necessarily inexhaustible and indeterminate. As an entity whose essence is existence, *Dasein* is 'ahead-of-itself' (*Sichvorweg*) as something which cannot be determined in totality (Heidegger 1962: 279-280). Something always remains indeterminate in *Dasein* as 'not yet.' For Kierkegaard and Heidegger, our mode of Being is therefore fundamentally characterised by its temporal displacement of possibility as much as the temporal determination of necessity. Accordingly, we must re-conceptualise time and discover authentic temporality.[5]

Kierkegaard rightly speaks of 'repetition' as a forward movement in contrast to the Greeks who believed in recollection, which is a backward movement.[6] Kierkegaard designates spirit as that which leads us forward. Indeed our self-referential character of spirit and existence marks our way

of projecting ourselves towards a possibility. In Heidegger's words, each *Dasein* is a '*Being towards a possibility*' (*Sein zu einer Möglichkeit*) (ibid.: 305). Caputo asserts that "The actuality is transcendent to the possibility, not determined, enclosed, precontained by it" (Caputo 1987: 20). The question still remains: how can we better understand ourselves if we are profoundly opened to and shaped by that which is not ourselves? Is our self-understanding unattainable because we are wholly exposed to the other?

As a Being-towards-a-possibility, *Dasein exists* with its possibilities to project itself in one way or another. Indeed *Dasein* does constantly relate to itself by means of projection whether willingly or not. At the same time, it is only because *Dasein* does exist that its non-existence can ever arise as an issue for it. What then becomes important is the point at which *Dasein* encounters the impossibility of projecting itself. Heidegger recognises that it is possible for *Dasein* to foresee and anticipate not existing. The state in which we can no longer project ourselves towards a possibility is what Heidegger calls 'death' (*Tod*). Just as Kierkegaard and Heidegger have postulated that only self and *Dasein* exist while other entities simply are, only the former have any possibility of anticipating and facing their own death. Only those that exist can die. Hence the projection of *Dasein* contains within itself "the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all" (Heidegger 1962: 307). Thus according to Heidegger, death should not be treated as something which comes after the termination of physiological functions, but rather as *Dasein*'s absolute inability to project its possibility. *Dasein*'s mode of Being is such that the impossibility to project its possibility is a possibility for *Dasein*. As such, death does not simply await or impend *Dasein* as that which is yet to be. On the contrary, death actually stands before *Dasein* as its concrete possibility, as indicated by the expression '*Being-towards-death*' (*Sein zum Tode*) (ibid.: 294).[7] It is by anticipating its own death as the absolute deprivation of all possibilities that *Dasein* encounters itself authentically. Since each *Dasein* must encounter itself through itself, such an encounter must be a personal one. In place of all the abstract ideas which the philosophers of the tradition occupied themselves with, Kierkegaard and Heidegger have rectified the focus in these ways that we now have a clearer understanding of who we are and our way of Being-in-the-world.

Conclusion: *Dasein* over Self

While Kierkegaard and Heidegger share many points of agreement, there is also the point of their departure. This brings us to one of the only three references to Kierkegaard which Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*: "Kierkegaard explicitly seized upon the problem of existence as an *existentiell* problem […] But the *existential* problematic was so alien to him" (ibid.: 494; emphasis added). According to Heidegger, though Kierkegaard rightly deals with the problem of existence, his understanding is confined to the *existentiell* aspect. An '*existentiell*' refers to a kind of characteristics which pertains to an individual *Dasein* (ontical), whereas an '*existentiale*' is a kind which pertains to and concerns the very Being of *Dasein* (ontological). In recognising the *existential* aspect and making such a distinction, Heidegger contends that Kierkegaard falls short because his account is limited and confined to the preceding tradition.

What this implies is that Kierkegaard fails to identify the sort of Being of an entity to which the problem of existence itself pertains. In other words, he fails to fully grasp our way of Being as opened up to the world with possibilities, for he ultimately gives primacy away to that power "which has established the whole relation [of the self]" (Kierkegaard 2004: 43). If anxiety for Kierkegaard really meant "freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility," (Kierkegaard 1980: 42) as he claims, then he cannot speak of the power which has established the self without undermining his own account because that would close off the possibility of having a possibility. The degree of reflection of which Kierkegaard speaks will therefore lose its ground because we would ultimately be related not to ourselves but to that power which has established our own self-referential character (God).[8] For Kierkegaard, the self is fundamentally the 'theological self' (Kierkegaard 2004: 111). He therefore states that "the self cannot by itself arrive at or remain in equilibrium and rest, but only, in relating to itself, by relating to that which has established the whole relation" (ibid.: 44). To be fair, Kierkegaard certainly does try to direct himself towards the *existential* analysis of self when he distinguishes anxiety from fear (Kierkegaard 1980: 42), as Heidegger similarly does (Heidegger 1962: 391-394)[9], but his account is not coherent as a whole. The power which has established the self should not affect the way in which the self or *Dasein* is Being-in-the-world because "As something thrown, *Dasein* has been thrown *into existence*. It exists as an entity which has to be as it is and as it can be" (ibid.: 321). Regardless of who threw us into existence, we are primordially who we necessarily are (facticity) and who we project to be (possibility). This is why Heidegger distinguishes himself from Kierkegaard when he

utters: "man's 'substance' is not *spirit as a synthesis of soul and body*; it is rather *existence*" (ibid.: 153; emphasis added).[10] Heidegger consciously draws here the distinction between spirit and existence. What appeared to function in the same manner as Heidegger's notion of existence turns out that it no longer does so. This neglect is further shown by the way Kierkegaard poses and argues for what would be the superior way of life.

Unlike Heidegger, Kierkegaard reifies the sort of life that is ideal. He clearly interprets and argues that there is a qualitative unity of the self which is designated by the power which has established it. On the one hand, Kierkegaard argues that the more appropriately the self relates to itself, the greater the self is. Indeed this degree of self-referentiality determines his famous 'spheres of existence' by which he distinguishes the self into three categories of existence: aesthetic, ethical, and religious. However, in distinguishing the 'theological self' (infinite) from the 'human self' (finite), the religious sphere is defined precisely as the relation in which the self ultimately relates itself to the power which has established it. Hence, as Kierkegaard depicts in *Fear and Trembling*, it is about wholly giving up ourselves to that power which has established us. Thus the degree of reflection breaks down when the self no longer establishes a finite relation to oneself through oneself, but instead the self is 'before God' and establishes an infinite relation to God as the absolute (Kierkegaard 2004: 109; Kierkegaard 1983: 70). In such a manner, Kierkegaard concretely posits the sort of life that would be the best one in general. As Dreyfus puts it, Kierkegaard only gives "one coherent way to fit the factors together" (Dreyfus 1991: 300).

Inconsistency thus arises when the question is 'what is the best life to live in general' to which the answer may be 'it is to do X, Y, and Z,' because the former is an *existential* question whereas the the latter is an *existentiell* solution.[11] Thus even if X, Y, and Z do help me attain the best possible life (*existentiell*), that doesn't translate into 'everyone will have the best possible life with X, Y, and Z' (*existential*). Yet this universalisation is precisely the way Kierkegaard argues because he does not recognise the *existential* aspect to the problematic of existence and that "he remained completely dominated by Hegel and by ancient philosophy as Hegel saw it" (Heidegger 1962: 494). Pöggeler gives the following remark on this point:

> Kierkegaard [offers] more an 'ontical' than an 'ontological' instruction; [he] saw decisive matters in an 'ontical' manner, but [he] would not have been able to arrive at an adequate

> 'ontological' conceptualization. [He] therefore '[edifies] all the more compellingly,' where [he speaks] with the 'least degree of conceptualization.' (Pöggeler 1987: 31)

In arguing in the *ontical-existentiell* sense that each self is fully responsible for his or her own life and that each self must choose itself, Kierkegaard contradicts his own position when he argues for the power that established the self. By establishing an objectively valid solution, Kierkegaard therefore ends up rejecting our way of Being as projection of ourselves towards possibilities in the world since he already assumes that the problem of existence adheres to our relation to the external power. In this way, it is not so much the matter of elucidating the conditions for the possibility of projection for Kierkegaard; it is simply a matter of the self to confront and act in the face the synthesis (world) and before God. This is precisely the reason why Kierkegaard emphasises absolute passion and unconditional commitment, because the self is related to and judged by the absolute and the eternal.

Accordingly, this means that Kierkegaard understands spirit only as the characteristic by which the self relates to itself and not as that which makes such a relation possible. Kierkegaard therefore does not make the distinction between *Dasein*'s mere possibility of making decisions (*existentiell*) versus the conditions for *Dasein*'s possibility of making decisions (*existentiale*).[12] As such, Kierkegaard does not recognise the *existential* analysis of the self which concerns the Being of the self in existence. He instead carries out an *existentiell* analysis through which the self is explicated as an entity whose essence as spirit is already presupposed. Kierkegaard therefore analyses what matters to the self as an individual. This is why his account becomes evaluative and ethical, because he deals with the way in which a self decides and acts in face of the world.[13] In other words, his concern lies in the actual choice, decision, and action of a particular self.

The reason why ontology cannot be evaluative and ethical for Heidegger is clear. For one thing, such an ontology seems to posit an infinite perspective and absolute judgement, which then entails a return to the metaphysical tradition. More importantly, however, we are not always our own self because *Dasein* is involved and absorbed in Being-with other *Dasein* and Being-in amongst entities. Indeed Heidegger avoids Kierkegaard's error by making the distinction between *existentiell* and *existential*, thereby grasping existence in a more genuine way. Heidegger states as follows:

> *Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself.

> *Dasein* has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them, or grown up in them already. Only the particular *Dasein* decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. (Heidegger 1962: 33)

This is why for Heidegger, self-ownedness is crucial because *Dasein* is in every instant choosing to be, whether that action is that of engagement or renunciation. Heidegger employs the terms 'care' (*Sorge*) and 'mineness' (*Jemeinigkeit*). These neologisms capture our personal and caring affinity we have towards ourselves. Because *Dasein* is always about *mineness*, it can be authentic or inauthentic, as Heidegger remarks: "As modes of Being, *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* […] are both grounded in the fact that any *Dasein* whatsoever is characterised by mineness" (ibid.: 68). The mode of *Dasein*'s Being cannot be determined and established generally prior to its existence, because it is precisely in its existence that *Dasein*'s Being becomes an issue for *Dasein*.

When Heidegger speaks of *Dasein*'s ability to make decisions towards its own possibility, he does not just mean that we simply choose out of all the possibilities available but rather that our very ontological structure lies in the possibility of such a possibility to choose for itself. Thus it is the condition for the possibility of existence that concerns Heidegger. Furthermore, it is from this open possibility that *Dasein* relates to the world and can choose its own way *to be*. Heidegger therefore states that "This entity carries in its ownmost Being the character of not being closed off" (ibid.: 171). What is implied then is a sort of clearing (*Lichtung*) or disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*) which characterises indeterminacy and openness of *Dasein* in its existence (ibid.). Just as Kierkegaard went beyond the metaphysically-confined notion of subjectivity and arrived at his spiritual self, Heidegger overcomes even Kierkegaard's spiritual self by being faithful to the openness of *Dasein* cleared by our finite way of Being-in-the-world.

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Endnotes

1 Dorothea Frede also indicates this point in her commentary essay when she writes, "the mistake lies in the *theoretical* approach as such" (Guignon 1993: 58).

2 Just as Alastair Hannay employs 'factor' instead of 'term' in his *Introduction* to *The Sickness unto Death*, I alter his translation by substituting them.

3 Unlike Kierkegaard, Heidegger is less concerned with the class of species called 'human being.' The latter is instead examining the *existential* characteristics which do actually correspond to what we human beings uniquely have, but any entity that has these characteristics technically qualifies for and fits what he calls '*Dasein*.' I do not mean to imply here that Kierkegaard employed the expression 'human being' in the biological sense, but my point is simply that the approach taken by Kierkegaard and Heidegger are quite distinct. It is clear from Kierkegaard's writings that he is only talking about human beings. He thus leaves no room for allowing non-human beings to be qualified for what he calls 'human being' regardless of whether they satisfy the conditions or not. This is not the case for Heidegger.

4 Heidegger is here making a transcendental or Kantian turn as he provides the conditions for the possibility of relating or comporting to any entity, but not as an epistemological one but as an ontological one. The distinction between 'beings' and 'Being' Heidegger calls the 'ontological difference' (*die ontologische Differenz*) (Heidegger 1982: 17, 319). This ontological difference is crucial because Being is *that which makes beings possible*. This is why Being is not itself an entity because it is that which constitutes beings. Frede also suggests this when she writes that "The [Heidegger's] analysis is transcendental in the Kantian sense that it unearths the conditions that make it possible for us to encounter whatever we do encounter in the way we make 'sense' of the phenomena" (Guignon 1993: 56). But for Heidegger, the 'transcendental' "does not pertain to subjective consciousness; instead, it is determined by the *existential*-ecstatic temporality of Being-here" (Heidegger 2000: 20).

5 Concerning the analysis into temporality, Merold Westphal rightly states both Kierkegaard and Heidegger as deploying temporality as the transcendental horizon of existence. He thus writes in the endnote to his book *Becoming a Self*, "One could argue that Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Derrida are radical Kantians for whom inescapable temporality is transcendental, the encompassing horizon for the finitude of all human experience" (Westphal 1996: 18).

6 Kierkegaard may here accuse Heidegger of engaging in a movement of recollection in seeking the meaning of Being. Heidegger suggests us to go back to the original phenomenon from which the traditions of the past have derived and constructed philosophical concepts. He proposes to carry out such a task by means of a phenomenological destruction (*Destruktion*) (Heidegger 1982: 23). I believe this is problematic for Heidegger because he is positing something which lies underneath the concepts we have inherited, when in fact, there might

not be any original phenomenon. He thinks, for example, that the Greeks came closest to understanding Being (Heidegger 2000: 120-122) and thus suggests us to unconceal and retrieve the original experience that was available to the Greeks. As much as Heidegger, in this sense, can be seen as making a backward movement of recollection, he also ignores the hermeneutic situation of *Dasein* in positing the phenomenon that is 'original.'

7 It is worth noting that Heidegger's recognition of death was influenced by Kierkegaard, as Moran writes, "Influenced by Kierkegaard, Heidegger recognises the centrality of Being-towards-death (*Sein-zum-Tode*) in humans" (Moran 2000: 240).

8 I am quite aware that for Kierkegaard, the self relates to the power which has established itself in its own relation to itself (Kierkegaard 2004: 44, 114, 165). But insofar as he gives primacy to the establishing power, as he does most notably in *The Sickness unto Death*, such a double relation of the self does not solve the issue at hand. Furthermore, the superiority of the religious power over the human self is also evident in *Fear and Trembling* in which Kierkegaard explores the religious sphere of existence through the life of Abraham.

9 This also is an influence Kierkegaard has had on Heidegger, as Moran indicates: "In this sense, following Kierkegaard, Heidegger sharply distinguishes fear (*Furcht*) from anxiety (*Angst*)" (Moran 2000: 241).

10 Contrary to my interpretation, Hubert Dreyfus seems to interpret this passage as suggesting that Heidegger is actually supporting Kierkegaard's notion of the spiritual self (Dreyfus 1991: 299). From the context, however, I believe it is clear that Heidegger is here not expressing his agreement with Kierkegaard but a disagreement. This is shown by his earlier passages, particularly where he indicates: "But if the Self is conceived 'only' as a way of Being of this entity, this seems tantamount to volatilizing the real 'core' of *Dasein*" (Heidegger 1962: 153).

11 Indeed it is not completely clear if the *existentiale* should claim its primacy over the existentiell. This raises the issue of whether it is individual's relation to his or her own life that is most primordial, or the very possibility or way of Being which allows for such a relation to be presented to itself. In the former case, Kierkegaard's account will claim its primacy. In case of the latter, Heidegger's *existential* analytic has its primacy. For the current context, I have taken for granted that the transcendentality of *existential* analytic is ontologically prior to an individual life and I therefore subscribe to the view that it claims the primacy.

12 In speaking of such a distinction, Kierkegaard may perhaps accuse Heidegger of turning *Dasein* into a God, though I do not believe such a criticism stands.

13 John W. Elrod makes the following remark regarding this point: "Ethics and ontology are inextricably linked in Kierkegaard's thought, and we can therefore speak of his ethico-ontological outlook on the problem of human existence" (Elrod 1973: 223).

Apodicticity and Transcendental Phenomenology

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Abstract

This paper deals with the concept and meaning of apodicticity or apodictic self-evidence from a phenomenological point of view. The foremost aim of phenomenology is to return to original intuitions, that is, to bring everything to original intuitive givenness and to provide an intuitive basis for philosophical theories. Phenomenology gives a broad interpretation of the concept of intuition. The notion of apodicticity for Husserl is closely related to this conception of self-givenness of objects in intuition. This paper deals partly with the Husserlian concept of apodicticity and also tries to discover the opportunities and possibilities of apodictic self-evidence in phenomenological philosophy, in it's own right, as a phenomenological analysis of the concept. Furthermore, this paper will also set out to address how and to what extent phenomenology can transgress, in an apodictic manner, the immediate sphere of the present and hence gain insights through subjective consciousness about the fields of other minds, historicity, worldhood and psychology.

Keywords: apodicticity, phenomenology; Husserl; reflexion; intersubjectivity

I. Introduction

This paper investigates the nature of apodicticity and the apodictic possibilities of phenomenological philosophy. The problem of apodicticity or self-evidence was central for phenomenology since its first "break through" with Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (Husserl 1970: 165; 1976a: 168). The phenomenological reflexion must possess the character of apodictic self-evidence. If the phenomenological position-taking is performed correctly then the insights gained by it in a way must be incorrigible. Incorrigibility is an essential feature of apodicticity: we call apodictic those insights whose future validity is supposed to be unshakable. According to Husserl, there must be recognition of this sort in order to make cognition as such possible.

On the other hand, if we look over the history of the phenomenological movement then it will be seen that all the most prominent phenomenologists formulated their own particular phenomenologies, in some fundamental points at odds with Husserl as well as with other phenomenologists. This situation was described by Paul Ricoeur, who held that the history of phenomenology was the history of its own heresies (Ricoeur 1987: 9). This is in accordance with Husserl's claim that phenomenology could never become a *tekhnē* without the distortion of its essence (cf. Husserl, 1970: 198-199; 1976a: 202). Notwithstanding, it is also evident that this is not what Husserl had in mind when he spoke about the infinitely open horizon of phenomenological philosophy.[1] He explicitly enounced that by this he meant a co-operation and co-working of philosophers as an endless process (cf. eg. Husserl 1976a: 439). Phenomenology for Husserl is a system, but a living, historical system in constant formation. Ultimately, this system relates to ultimate truths, but in the historical life of phenomenology these truths are constantly being illuminated anew. To say that every philosopher has her or his own truth is just the same as to say that there is no truth at all.

What can be said about truth and apodicticity after the heretical divergencies of the phenomenological movement? Phenomenology is about truth and reason (Sokolowski 2000: 4). Every philosopher claims that they are right and that they speak the truth. However, if philosophers don't presuppose a sort of truth, there is no reason at all for argument or criticism. Philosophers have claimed to occupy a favourable position for reflexion, from which they can gain some necessarily true insights (necessary even if those insights concern contingency). Philosophers, such as Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, in many cases (mainly concerning the factual nature of human existence) are right to argue with Husserl. Indeed, many of his statements about the transcendental substructure of subjectivity (to which he claimed apodicticity) are far from being apodictically self-evident. In most cases, however, they simply misunderstand or misread Husserl because each has their own vision of phenomenology.

In the present article I will examine Husserl's mature notion of apodicticity. I will try to give some indication about how this notion comes to the fore at some crucial points in phenomenology, such as the structures of consciousness and the problem of intersubjectivity. In much of his research, Husserl does not want to claim an apodictic validity to his statements but rather tries to indicate a sphere of apodicticity, and tries to find or explore some ways to approach this sphere of apodictic truth. I will argue for the view that there are some fundamental, apodictical truths,

such truths that, regarding the core of their meaning or sense, cannot be modalized. These truths on the one hand concern our own nature as human beings: they are about intersubjectivity, historicity or facticity. On the other hand, these truths do not exist over and beyond time and history: they have a special temporal embedment. They gain new meaning through the activity of phenomenal generation, without losing the essential core of their original meaning.

II. Apodicticity

Apodicticity concerns the character of our insights; it is the highest level of self-evidence. Apodicticity means that there is a group of insights that mutually belong together which will not be corrupted or overwritten by future scientific discoveries. Apodictic insights are "necessary, indubitable and infallible" (Palermo 1978:70). According to Husserl, the contrary or the non-being of an apodictic truth cannot even be imagined (Husserl 1999: 15-16; 1973b: 56). Obviously the core of this problem is the problem of truth itself, namely the problem of whether we are able to reach non-relative or absolute truths.

Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* delineated his concept of self-evidence in the context of his anti-psychologist polemic.[2] Psychologistic interpretations of self-evidence, such as those of Ziegler, Mill, Sigwart, Wundt,[3] treated this phenomenon as a peculiar feeling of certainty, as a subjective state of mind. On the contrary, Husserl defined self-evidence as the experience of truth (Husserl 1968/I: 190). For Husserl, self-evidence is not merely a feeling, it is an intimate connection with truth. Heffernan emphasizes four principle definitions that Husserl gave in the Sixth Logical Investigation concerning the notion of evidence in conjunction with truth (Heffernan 1999: 84-85).

First, "truth" is "*the complete correspondence of the meant and given as such*" (Husserl 1968/II/2: 122-123), and "evidence" is the "*experience*" of this "*truth.*" Second, "truth" is "the idea that belongs to the *form* of the *act*, *the idea of absolute adequation as such*" and "evidence" is the "unity of coincidence" between "*the epistemic essences*" of the real "acts of evidence" involved. Third, "truth" is the "given object in the manner of the meant one, as *verifying*," and "evidence" is the corresponding "experience of verification." Fourth, "truth" is the "*correctness of the intention*..., eg., *correctness of the judgment*... as being adequate to the true object," and "evidence" is the "relationship" between the empty intention and the given states of affairs (Husserl 1968/II/2: 123).

It is easy to see that Husserl brought to the concept of evidence an intimate relation with the concept of truth. Evidence, either being a specific character of consciousness or that of judgment, is our relationship with truth itself, that is, with an objective state of affairs. In Husserl's *Logical Investigations* evidence is principally a mode of consciousness with which we access with reality. Husserl tried to conceptualize this particular event (our accessing reality) by claiming that with and through evidence we live through truth or objectivity itself.

The psychologists' (such as, Siegwart, Höfler, Wundt, Elsenhans and Ziehen) counter-attack chiefly focuses on the term "experience" (*Erlebnis*) in Husserl's definitions (cf. Heffernan 1999: 99-120). These critics assert that Husserl can't escape from the psychologism he attacks: he can't avoid defining evidence in terms of a psychic state. After the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl changes his emphasis and maintains that self-evidence is the transition from empty intentions to fulfilled ones. This is a process in the sense of a fulfillment. It is the (absolute) 'self-givenness' of the object (itself), so that it is the mode of the givenness of an object, that is, something that belongs to the form of our acts.

When one speaks about apodicticity, one tends to think of mathematics and logic. Surprisingly enough, when speaking about apodictic self-evidence Husserl rarely takes his examples from the above-mentioned two spheres: most of his examples are from the field of perception. 'I am seeing an apple'—this is apodictic evidence. Perhaps I might be mistaken that there is an apple in reality, independent from my perception, but I cannot be wrong in maintaining that 'I am seeing an apple.' The seeing (perceiving) is a *cogitatio*, the apple (the perceived) is its *cogitatum*. The apple can only be given as an identity in manifolds. It can only be given through several sides, aspects and profiles; perceptually it cannot be given otherwise. According to Sokolowski, "These statements are apodictic" (Sokolowski 2000: 17-21, 57).

Husserl was a realist throughout his whole career. Consciousness is conscious of the thing itself, the perception brings us to the perceived. In *Logical Investigations,* Husserl harshly criticizes representationalist theories of consciousness (Husserl 1968/II/1: 421-425). That is to say, how can I know that I'm seeing a real apple and not just a hallucination of an apple? That is, how can I know whether my perception is a veridic one? According to Husserl, one knows this from the context of the experience. The fabric of experience articulates the norms of harmonization and disharmonization or frustration. The harmony of our experience indicates that we face reality itself and not just our own phantasmagoria. (See also

Sokolowski 2000: 14-15).

How are these norms of harmonization and disharmonization revealed? We could reflect on the life of experience and the act of reflexion shows us these norms. Husserl's so-called 'transcendental turn' tries to carry out a more reflexive phenomenological approach. This is in no way a turn away from things themselves, as many of his followers thought. On the contrary, it is a turning from the things themselves *towards* their several possible modes of givenness. We can intuit the ways in which the things themselves are given to us. The real question in this context is how one can tell whether the result of the reflexion is apodictic?

In the natural attitude (that is to say, in our life before and outside philosophy) we do not perceive only individual things. Fibres of generality run through the fabric of experience. Alongside the things we also perceive entire states of affairs. Husserl called this categorial intuition. Our experience is articulated by formal categories. According to Marion's reading, for Husserl perception as such is fundamentally categorial (Marion 1998: 12-14). First and principally we perceive everything under certain general and formal categories. Before I can see *this* concrete house, I see *a* house (Heidegger 1979: 90-91). But here we must separate two different matters: Husserl spoke about categorial intuition and the seeing of essences (*Wesensschau*). Both of these capabilities belong to the fundamental structure of experience.

The essences appear as the general form of the things. In # *Logical Investigations* they appear as ideal kinds or species (cf. Husserl 1968/II/1: *Investigation 2*). We can see the colour red as such. These entities belong to the sphere of a material ontology, whereas the entities of the categorial intuition belong to a formal ontology. According to *Ideas*, the formal ontology is more fundamental than the material ones (Husserl 1976b: 26). The entities of formal ontology constitute no region at all, but have all the material regions under them. Necessary features characterize these forms of essences, both the material and categorial ("empty") ones. The way of grasping the essences is also called eidetic intuition. The judgments that are passed upon eidetic intuition could be characterized by their "universality, necessity, apodicticity" (Husserl 1976b: 19).

A special procedure is required to arrive at such pure ideal essences (or *eide*). We should imagine a certain thing and try to change some of its properties. The features that cannot be altered in this way belong to the essential structure of the same thing. Husserl calls this method free imaginative or eidetic variations *(*Husserl 1973a §87: 340-348; 1939: 410-420). As categorial and eidetic intuition belong to the ground-structure of

experience, eidetic or imaginative variations do not indicate a specifically phenomenological method either, but are parts of our natural life and belong to the natural attitude itself (cf. Sokolowski 2000: 179-181). We imagine ourselves in different situations and consider what might happen under certain conditions; in our everyday life we make imaginative variations all the time.

Apodicticity in Phenomenological Reflexion

The so-called transcendental turn of phenomenology redirected the philosophical gaze from the things to their modes of givenness. In the phenomenological attitude we make attempts to seize the structures of pure (or transcendental) consciousness. These structures are nothing other than the ways that things can be given at all. The insights concerning these structures set forth the specific manner in which the things must necessarily appear to any conscious being. The phenomenology of these structures is the eidetics of the pure consciousness (or the eidetical science, the science of the *eide* of pure consciousness).

The method of imaginative variations does not seem very difficult. The situation is much more complicated if we wish to perform eidetic operations (the philosophical operations, such as free imaginative variations, that aim to grasp the *eidos* or essential form) in the very abstract regions of pure consciousness. What could assure the success of eidetic apprehension (the philosophical seizing of essence) that is directed toward the ground-structures of transcendental subjectivity? Sokolowski advises two protective measures in order to avoid the possible mistakes of eidetic apprehension. We should discuss the results of eidetic grasping with other phenomenologists, which functions as an intersubjective control against the excess of imagination. We ought also to orient ourselves to see "the impossibility of the thing's being without the feature" in question (Sokolowski 2000: 183-184).

The so-called objects of phenomenological reflexions are objects of a particular sort: they are the structures of subjectivity in general as well as our own subjectivity. Husserl operates with a wider sense of perception (wider than mere sensuous perception) when he speaks about the perceiving of these objects. This kind of perception is analogous, but by no means identical, with the way mathematicians 'see' their objects. They could be given in a straightforward way too, like mathematical objects: 'straightforward' in the sense that we just see them, and they are present to us in the flesh, in person. Their apodicticity consists in this manner of straightforwardness.

We can be mistaken in taking an insight to be apodictic when it actually is not apodictic at all. The late Husserl stresses the necessity of philosophizing in community. Other phenomenologists can then correct their failures. This way of communal philosophizing indicates a to-and-fro movement between the phenomenologist's primordial sphere of subjectivity and the sphere of alien subjectivity that belongs to his or her fellow phenomenologist. But these corrections presuppose from beginning to end the original ground of apodicticity. In some of his research manuscripts, Husserl tends to allow the possibility of modalizing apodicticity.[4] But he insists that some fundamental, apodictical truths have an essential core of meaning or sense that cannot be altered. Moreover, apodictical truths in phenomenology are not merely formal statements, rather they make up a complex web and have a layered meaning. They are embedded into the context of other apodictical truths and, in correlation with the historical context, the meaning of these truths get a new elucidation without the essential modification of their original sense.

In the second half of the twentieth century, relativist and scepticist streams of philosophy were revitalized partly inside phenomenology and by phenomenology. One major objection against the cognitive capability of reflexion (that is to say, our cognitive capability to come to know a thing through reflexion), raised by these philosophies, was that reflexion always alters the reflected. As such, we cannot have strict knowledge about the object of reflexion and therefore cannot have any form of strict (philosophical) knowledge at all. This objection must be refuted as being abstract and having no contact with the things themselves. We make reflexions in everyday life: we consider things; we meditate on things; we recall the events of the past. These are all reflexions in the naivety of the natural attitude. The norms of rightness and falsity of these reflexions are articulated by the context of experience. The same holds for philosophical reflexion; it is the proper life of experience that grants the norms of accordance and discordance of reflexion.

Jean-Luc Marion (1998) made the objection that the Husserlian way of phenomenological reflexion cannot objectify such non-objective phenomena such as friendship and love without the radical alteration of their very essence. But we have a pre-given meaning of these phenomena in the natural attitude already. We live through (*erleben*) them in the way of being-in (*In-sein*). We can reflect on this being-in. In this reflexion, those non-objective phenomena give themselves in the double movement of self-giving and self-withdrawal. We can reflect on the manner in which reflexion alters these phenomena. The norms of the correctness and falsity for these

iterated reflexions, like above, are given by the context of experience in the phenomenological attitude.

The apodicticity of self-giving is indicated by the straightforward manner of appearing. According to Husserl, this straightforwardness is not merely tautological. The purely formal way of straightforward self-giving could be called formal *a priori*. Husserl claims that we are able to read off from a phenomenon certain necessary structural features that are not involved in the narrow concept of the thing in question. He says that this material *a priori* is the essential core of phenomenology. In *Logical Investigation* he writes that those statements like "There is no overlord without vassals" must be distinguished with regard to their *a priori* status from statements of the type: "There is no colour without extended surface" (cf. Husserl 1968/II/1: 253). He even had in mind a systematical ontology of the material *a priori* (cf. op.cit, 256).

Concerning the structures of subjectivity, we can point to the phenomenological analysis of phantasy as an example of this material *a priori*. Husserl asserts that phantasy is a quasi-intuition that involves an entire quasi-world with quasi-contents with their particular quasi-temporality (Husserl 1973a/1939: §39). This "quasi-" prefix means that as well as in the case of perception we can also speak in an analogous manner about temporality, spatiality, worldhood, sensuous content] etc., in the case of phantasy or imagination too. But in its own way this spatiality, this temporality, etc. of the imagination is radically different than that of the perception. These quasi-modes are not involved in the narrow sense of phantasy, but could be read off from the imaginative operations. In the same manner, in a cautious step-by-step advancing movement, we could build out a systematical ontology of material *a priori* of pure or transcendental consciousness.

In this section I have tried to demonstrate that phenomenological reflexion and imaginative variations as a fundamental phenomenological operation can successfully overcome the difficulties concerning reflexion that are raised by traditional and more contemporary scepticism. These sceptical considerations turn out to be groundless, as we do not have grounds or reason to be doubtful about the result of reflexion, as the norms of success or failure of reflexion are granted by the wider context itself. We have good reason at least to allow for the possibility of a system of material (that is, not merely tautological) *a priori* through the method of phenomenological philosophy.

The Region of Primordiality

Perhaps the most misunderstood and misinterpreted parts of Husserl's work were his considerations about the notions of the transcendental ego and the transcendental subjectivity. The most common objection to these concepts was that they amount to a lapsing back into the old marsh of Cartesian ego-metaphysics. Almost all of his more important students shared this misunderstanding, even the most talented ones, such as Heidegger. The 64§ of *Being and Time*, "Care and Selfhood," directly attacks Kant's notion of pure ego, but the real target of that section is Husserl and his concept of the transcendental ego. In this subsection I will try to show that there is a fundamental difference between Husserl's idea of transcendental subjectivity and the traditional conceptions of ego (mind, soul, consciousness, etc), including its contemporary treatments in the Neo-Kantian schools during Husserl's own time. I will attempt to make it clear that the transcendental ego is nothing other than the philosopher's own self, but regarded from the viewpoint of transcendental reduction.

The aim of the phenomenological reduction is to lead our philosophical gaze back to the realm of natural attitude to the reign of transcendental phenomena, that is, to the primordial region ["Urregion"] of transcendental subjectivity (Husserl, 1976b: pp.158-159). Husserl operates with several different terms in order to characterize this procedure, terms which are partly synonymous and partly strongly interrelated. He speaks about bracketing or suspension of the general thesis of the natural attitude (that there is a constantly existing world), the *epokhē* concerning the being-valid of the beings and the world as such. This bracketing by no means involves a denial of the being of the world, neither is it a doubt about the being of the world (cf. Sokolowski 2000: 54-55). It places us in a neutral position from which we are able to focus our attention on the mode of appearing of things, that is to say the phenomenality of the phenomena.

Merleau-Ponty asserts that this bracketing of the world cannot be carried through completely. We are always involved in the world, even in the phenomenological attitude. But this objection fails to see the sense of the reduction, which consists only in changing the direction of attention. In this attitude we face phenomena that can present us their phenomenality in a more determinate and clearer way. We call the region that belongs to this attitude *transcendental*, because it is the transcendental precondition for the world of the natural attitude. Hence the subjectivity that operates in this sphere is called *transcendental subjectivity*. In a way, this subjectivity is separated from the world, but this does not mean that it is a metaphysical or otherwordly subjectivity. We don't deny the being of things, but try to

understand how it is possible, from a subjective point of view, to experience the being of things and the world. Transcendental phenomenology attempts to clarify the subjective genesis of the being-valid of the world.

According to Marion, the Husserlian concept of consciousness can be brought back to the Cartesian notion of substance. Husserl conceives the being of consciousness in terms of substantiality (Marion 1998: 55, 82). Indeed, Husserl's own wording is sometimes very misleading. He speaks about the "annihilation of the world" (Husserl 1976b: §49). He claims that the transcendental ego could survive even the destruction of the world as such (Husserl 1973b: 45). These and other similar ennouncements could readily suggest the concept of a substantial, metaphysical ego, in the very sense of traditional metaphysics. Nonetheless, if we have a closer look at Husserl's account of transcendental consciousness, even the most superficial glance will show us that this notion has nothing in common with the Cartesian tradition of ego-metaphysics.

Despite competing interpretations, Husserl's conception of consciousness is not a metaphysically-committed one, that is to say, it does make any special metaphysical claim concerning the being of the ego. It is fundamentally an epistemological concept; this philosophy of consciousness could only be called an ontology in a radically new sense: as an ontology of experience. In the transcendental attitude we say nothing about the metaphysical status of this subjectivity. Husserl calls it 'absolute consciousness' also, but this absoluteness means nothing more than that it is the original sphere of philosophical reflexion. This sphere has none of the attributes of the Cartesian substance and it is in no way something like a metaphysical region.

The sphere of transcendental subjectivity is an open space, a field in which the phenomena can show their phenomenality. It is not entirely transparent, as it is the region of both passivity as well as of activity. In the region of transcendental subjectivity the phenomenologist finds herself or himself from the very beginning in play, specifically in the play of self-giving and withdrawal. The ego of the philosopher also takes part in this play: according to Husserl, the ego to some degree slips aside from the reflexion. For this reason he distinguishes between the reflecting latent self and the reflected patent self (cf. Husserl 1959: 86-92, especially p. 90).

Those who criticize the concept of transcendental ego as being some substantial, worldless metaphysical entity miss the meaning of phenomenological reduction, not to speak of by-passing Husserl's own restraints. In the second book of *Ideas,* he emphasized that this ego has a body and has a world. With phenomenological reduction we reduce the

ego of the philosopher as well. Phenomenological reduction is nothing more than philosophical reflexion, performed in accordance with the methodological prescriptions of phenomenology. The reduced ego finds itself in the play of subjectivity and objectivity. She is the constituting agent and she is constituted at the same time. She is the self-objectification of transcendental subjectivity as a bodily, worldly self and she is the source of every meaning and objectification therein.

There is a fundamental ambiguity in the way in which Husserl speaks about the transcendental ego. The transcendental ego is on the one hand an infinite, open realm of forms, which is itself an essential form too (Husserl 1973b: 108). On the other hand she is the constant flow of her experiences: she is the functioning of transcendental subjectivity ("she lives, but she has no subsistence," "es lebt, aber es hat kein Dasein" [Husserl 1973c: 83]). The transcendental ego is wholly fluid, there is nothing substantial in it. The eidetic structures of the ego grant the laws and rules of the playing fields of transcendental subjectivity. How does it happens that the transcendental ego finds itself in a world as an embodied, mundane empirical subject? This question refers to the problem of self-objectivation: how can we find a way from the transcendental ego to the wordly, empirical person? The problem of self-objectivation gives rise to a special field of transcendental problematics: how is the being-validity of the empirical, mundane person generated in the terrain of transcendental subjectivity?

These questions imply the most difficult problems of phenomenology: the problems of generativity and intersubjectivity. As we have seen, the ultimate source of apodictictical evidence is the original intuitive givenness of a thing. In Husserl's opinion the immediate sphere of apodicticity is the living present and its own sphere of primordiality. How can we exceed this narrow sphere in an apodictic manner towards the sphere of other egos? In the following sections I will address these problems.

III. Transcendental Intersubjectivity

Husserl separates the philosophical apodicticity of higher dignity (that is, theoretical self-evidence of a more fundamental kind; self-evidence with the character of ultimate founding) from the non-philosophical forms of apodicticity, such as mathematical insights. He remarks that the two sorts of apodicticity should by no means be confused with each other (Husserl 1976a: 72). It is philosophical apodicticity that makes any other non-philosophical apodicticity possible. The original region of this apodicticity is the proper sphere of the philosophizing ego, the sphere of transcendental subjectivity

with regard to the living present. There are some fundamental apodictic features that characterize this sphere of primordiality, for example there is no stream of experience without an experiencing ego; consciousness is always somebody's consciousness. There are no memories, pains, fancies, thoughts and so on, without somebody to whom they belong.

This experiencing, philosophizing ego, accidentally my ego, can very well slip into the background (so it could be athematic or unnoticed). The background is the favoured dwelling-place of this ego: most of the time it is unnoticed or unseen. But to overlook this ego in favour of a so-called non-subjective, non-egological phenomenology is to fail to see a fundamental givenness; that is, in the phenomenological attitude I am the one who performs phenomenological reflexions. We can let our ego fade into the background of the phenomenological horizon and concentrate only on the phenomena that appear on this horizon. However, if we deny its existence then we make an elementary misconception in the phenomenological respect, in that, we overlook the fact that there is no horizon without the perspective of a viewer. *Ego sum*, *ego cogito*: these are apodictic insights. To say that the other is known with a greater certainty than my own self is a fundamental error in the region of transcendental subjectivity. It is the most difficult task of transcendental phenomenology to access the subjectivity of the other in an apodictic manner. This task means that we must go beyond our own sphere of primordiality and reach into an alien one.

The key to transcendental intersubjectivity is the phenomenological analysis of the way in which the transcendental ego constitutes itself as an intersubjective being. Others are in my sphere of primordiality just as I am in others'. We are "closed into" the others – as Husserl put it (Husserl 1976a: 258). From the beginning there is an interwovenness between myself and the others. From an epistemological view-point the transcendental subjectivity constitutes intersubjectivity. From the ontological point of view the transcendental subjectivity springs from intersubjectivity. But at the beginning, as a transcendental ego, we find ourselves in the so-called epistemological view-point. In my opinion, in order to get through to the ontology of intersubjectivity there remains three major phenomenological issues to analyse: the problems of meaning, empathy and drive-intentionality.

The Intersubjective Constitution of Meaning

Communication is involved in the structure of meaning as such. The possibility of communication indicates an intersubjective community of

others. In and via meaning we claim a universal validity of meaningfulness, a universal understandability. Meaning, at the same time, refers to the meant object and to the other person, who is the recipient or listener of the speech-act. The essential structure of meaning involves the being of the other. Sartre rightly realized that meaning for Husserl has an intersubjective character:

When Husserl in his *Cartesian Meditations* and *Formal and Transcendental Logic* attempts to refute solipsism, he believes that he can succeed by showing that a referral to the Other is the indispensable condition for the constitution of the world. Without going into the details of this theory, we shall limit ourselves to indicating his general position. For Husserl the world as it is revealed to consciousness is inter-monadic. The Other is present in it not only as a particular concrete and empirical appearance but as a permanent condition of its unity and its richness. Whether I consider this table or this tree or this bare wall in solitude or with companions, the Other is always there as a layer of consitutive meanings which belong to the very object which I consider; in short, he is the veritable guarantee of the object's objectivity (Sartre 1969: 233)

The things we are speaking about are things in the common world, are the things of a public, social life. But Sartre mistakenly claimed that this relationship for Husserl was merely a relation via cognition. The language which expresses meaning is not only theoretical, scientific language, but also the language of everyday speech.

According to Sokolowski meaning is also out there in the world. Meaning consists in a special way of referring to the world (cf. Sokolowski 2000: 92-102). Meanings are on the 'surface' of the world. Husserl held meanings to be ideal entities. How does the ideality of meanings relate to their being in the world? To say that meanings belong or relate to the ideal form of the world is in no way to naturalise them, a claim against which Husserl struggled. It is true to say that Husserl's account of meaning remained Platonic, in a manner, until the end of his life, but it is also important to recognise that this Platonic character was by no means a metaphysical one. He rejected metaphysical Platonism several times (see e.g., Husserl 1968/II/1: 123). The Platonic character of meaning consists in its universal identity through the manifolds of appearances. But this universal identity does not imply that meaning exists separately and independently from the web of other meanings, from the body of language and, ultimately, from the life-world out of which it emerged.

According to *Experience and Judgement* pre-predicative experience, that is to say our experience before explicit logical-judgmental articulation,

is already filled with meanings. Experience as experience is made possible only through these meanings. They have their roots in the life-world. The meanings of pre-predicative experience are from the beginning the result of an intersubjective constitution. The analysis of meaning leads back necessarily to the life-world and to an intersubjective co-constitution with others. This intersubjective background is already present in *Logical Investigations* as the problem of communication and everyday speech (Husserl 1968/II/1: *Investigation 1*). The ideality of meanings involves the problem of our one, common world, to which they belong in their ideal form and also the problem of reason, the capacity to articulate universality. From a phenomenological stand-point the norms of understanding and misunderstanding (reason and non-reason) are constituted by the life of experience itself (in a similar manner to the norms of being-validity).

Communication takes place in a community, that is, it involves an intersubjective horizon. Communication expresses the ideal form of the world. We, members of an intermonadic totality, constitute together the pathway to this ideal form of the world. It is right to say that there is a Platonic manner in the way Husserl spoke about meanings (inasmuch he constantly speaks about their ideal, universal and timeless character). To be sure, there is a Platonic aspect about meaning that cannot be eliminated entirely. Meanings cannot be fully expressed in terms of behaviours and dispositions. That is to say, meanings cannot be entirely reduced to (even dynamic) structures of sensibility. Merely seeing (which is only something abstract) is completely different from understanding something *as* something. Even animals have this capacity to understand something as something, when they suddenly recognise a situation as dangerous or offering food for example. This *as*-structure in essence transcends every form of sensibility.

The roots of communication lead beyond active constitution. Even our bodily motions, gestures and facial expressions are filled with meanings. They mean something to the other. The deep layer of intersubjective constitution can be found on the level of passive synthesis. We cannot master entirely the genesis of meaning and communicative structures. The two main ways of this passive constitution of intersubjectivity are empathy and drive-intentionality.

The Constitution of Intermonadic Totality through Empathy

The sphere of my own subjective life is also called monadic subjectivity by Husserl. With this term he refers to Leibniz's concept of the soul, to the Leibnizian monadology. According to Husserl each conscious life can be modeled as a monad. But these monads "have windows," so there is a real communication and connection between the monads. They make up a universal community, that which Husserl also calls "intermonadic totality" (Husserl 1973c: 193, 609). The communalization of monads is fundamentally performed via empathy.

The Husserlian account of empathy was harshly criticized by Heidegger in *Being and Time* (cf. mainly Heidegger 1967: §26). Heidegger is unhappy even with the term 'empathy' itself. He rejects the claim that the "first ontological bridge" between the "I" and the "other subjects" would be provided by the so-called phenomenon of empathy (op. cit., 124) According to him, empathy as such is only made possible by the existential structure of being-with. The other is involved by my existential structure, therefore the achievement of empathy is made possible. The relationship between the experience of the other and empathy is just the opposite, Heidegger suggests, to what Husserl thought (op. cit., 125). I am able to experience an other as other because I am, as being-here, already a being-with-the-other. Heidegger accuses the Husserlian account of treating the other subjects merely as presence-at-hand on the horizon of the transcendental ego (ibid.).[5] That is to say, Husserl's account reifies the other.

In Heidegger's interpretation, my being-here is to be understood essentially as a being-with. The other is disclosed on and through the tools and things of care (op. cit., 117-118). This book or this chair involves in its readiness-to-hand another being-here, an also-being-here. My being as care discloses itself as a being toward the other, as solicitude. The world of being-in-the-world is a world that is shared with the others; it is a world-with. The existential structures of being-in-the-world, being-with and care are strongly interrelated. These structures are to be articulated with existential and not categorial concepts. That is to say, they characterize the being-here, which is essentially different from any presence-at-hand. The "unhappy" concept of "empathy" does not designate an original existential phenomenon, and what is more, it even leads astray the existential analysis of being-here as a being-with (op. cit, 163). If I were not a being-with from the beginning, empathy would not have been possible at all.

We can entirely agree with the essentials of this account, however we must also add that it is in complete accordance with Husserl's own conception of intersubjectivity. If one wants to contrapose this account of experience of the other with Husserl's then one fails to see the very sense of the Husserlian notion of empathy. In transcendental phenomenology 'empathy' does not refer to an additional, voluntary activity of consciousness, as in the case of sympathy, that would be necessary in order to 'furnish' person-like objects with consciousness. The word empathy, in the Husserlian sense, has nothing to do with such cases as when at a funeral we say to the mourner: 'I can understand your sorrow. I sympathize.' Empathy, in the context of transcendental phenomenology, is rooted at the level of passive synthesis. It is the functioning of the being-with.

Empathy is not an active performance as if it were necessary to project our inner mental states onto a spatio-temporal object in order to perceive this thing as another person. Empathy is anything but a projection. Through and in empathy the other speaks to me. Empathy is being-with from a transcendental point of view. Husserl analyzes the micro-structure of empathy as a form of passive synthesis, in order to give a first-person reconstruction of the passive construction of intersubjectivity by the consciousness.

Empathy has its roots in the structure of pairing, in a primordial structure of association. (*Paaring* and *Paarung*, for Husserl, refer to a synthetic activity of consciousness when I link present elements of experience to past elements). As Husserl uses the word "association," it has nothing in common with its empirical-psychological usage. "Association" is the *a priori* "principle of passive genesis," without which the ego could not be conceived of at all (Husserl 1973b: §39). It makes possible experience as such and also grounds the activities of sense-bestowing. We can associate a thing with another, therefore we can identify a peculiar thing *as* this peculiar thing. Our experience is articulated by the essential laws of phenomenological association. In the passive operation of associative pairing, I pair my bodily being with another bodily being and by virtue of this structural principle I am able to recognize another embodied subjectivity.

The other is analogically appresented in as much as I do not have original access to the other ego's own sphere of primordiality. Otherwise that sphere would be simply a part of me. The analogical appresentation does not abolish the otherness of the other, quite the contrary: it confirms the other's otherness in its utmost radicality. Empathy unfolds itself as a fundamental structure of subjectivity. Through empathy, I can know in

the phenomenological attitude that I am an intersubjective being. The constant working of empathy discloses myself as a member of a monadic community, as a part of an intermonadic totality. That is to say, I have self-consciousness in as much as I understand myself to be always in a community with other people.

Drive-intentionality as Instinctive Intersubjectivity

In and through empathy the monadic ego relates to other monadic egos. The higher the levels of intersubjectivity, the more complex the layers of intermonadic totality (such as social institutions, etc.) are constituted through empathy. The transcendental ego, which is a subject in an intermonadic community, is far from being a pure, empty pole of the active and passive ego-acts (as some critics of Husserl have suggested, e.g. Scheler and Heidegger). There are several layers to the subjectivity of the ego. The most basic layer of this subjectivity is the level of the pre-ego, the level of the instinctive I. The level of drive intentionality can be found deep below the passive performances of empathy. The intersubjective nature of transcendental subjectivity is grounded in the instinctive layer of the ego. Drive intentionality, according to Husserl, is a special form of intentionality: it refers to the object-directedness of our instincts and drives (See Lee 1993).

I could have an apodictic insight that I am an intersubjective being, that is, a member of a community which exists independently of me. I could not, however, have an apodictic insight into whether a concrete meeting or a concrete appearance of an other is real or not. The insights concerning particular meetings can never be apodictic, for the same reason as in the case of perception. The constitution of a concrete other person can be put into question as a dream or hallucination. As in the case of perception in general, the norms of falsification or verification are articulated by the life of experience itself. But the frustration of intention toward another person is only possible via our intersubjective nature.

The late Husserl posits that deep below our conscious, intentional life there is a complex and subtle ground of instincts, serving as basis for the former (cf. Smith 2003: 150-151). In his research manuscripts he gives a detailed and extensive account of drives and instincts, chiefly in the C-manuscripts (Husserl 2005). Even our instincts and drives have a sort of directedness, even they could be characterized as intentional. Husserl therefore occasionally speaks about drive-intentionality. This sort of intentionality forms the foundation of the intentional performances of fully

conscious activity. In order to announce this foundational relationship between those two layers (between the fully conscious level and the level of instincts), he refers to this directedness of drives and instincts as "primal" or "proto-intentionality", "that precedes and makes possible the familiar intentional directedness to objects in the world" (Smith 2003:.151). Husserl claims that there are several sorts of instinctive tendencies as sub-structures for the conscious structure-wholes. He even speaks of "transcendental instinct" and "instinctive reason" (Husserl 2005: 260; 1989: 127., cf. Smith 2003: 149-156).

With the level of instincts we are not yet on the level of Being. We are before the constitution of objects; we are on the level, as Husserl puts it, of pre-Being. Nonetheless, even instincts involve an intersubjective relation, a sub-conscious directedness toward the other, a preconstitution of the other. In our instinctive life, we are already linked together in a community of others. The instinctive proto-intentionality toward an other, as it were, provides the bed for the higher-level constitutive achievements of intersubjectivity. According to Husserl, in a life-history there is a concrete, primordial form of the other: it is the mother (Husserl 1973c: 511, 582, 604-605). The child is instinctively directed toward his or her mother. In Husserl's account the mother-child relationship is the most fundamental of all relationships (cf. Zahavi 2003:113).

Toward a Generative and Constructive Phenomenology

In Eugen Fink's *Sixth Cartesian Meditations*, he tries to systematize Husserl's insights concerning the phenomenological method (Fink 1988). Husserl wanted to collaborate with his young assistant, and Fink's work was to be published in a single volume with Husserl's own *Cartesian Meditations*. In the end this common project was not accomplished, but Husserl acknowledged the merits of his pupil's efforts (see Kern 1973: LXIII). However, Husserl voiced his doubts: he thought that Fink exaggerated the difference between the constituting and phenomenologizing ego, and he believed that his student overemphasized the difficulties of transcendental predication.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the importance of Fink's work is outstanding. He treated in close detail some of the most difficult phenomenological problems, such as the construction of history and intersubjectivity. The problem is as follows: How am I able to gain an original access to my own preterite subjective development in the living present of my normal, 'matured' conscious life? How can I acquire the idea

of structural development at all? The generativity and the inner life of the other seems to be far beyond the apodictic range of the standing-flowing living present.

From the standpoint of the living present we can reach the idea of generativity in an apodictic way. In the actual course of experiencing there are not only intentional acts and complexities of acts, but in a way there could also be found sedimented forms of earlier structure-geneses which exist as habitualities (that is, as pre-given patterns for acting, behaving and thinking). The phenomenological analysis of habitualizations could yield the idea of generativity concerning personal life. We could gain apodictic insights into our condensed, generated experience-structures. But we must immediately face the difficult problems of constructing the inner life of others and the generativity of historical life in an apodictic manner.

Through interpreting the behavioural structure of others as expressions of the subjective, we are able to construct their inner lives. By investigating the processes of complexification of these structures of expressions and examining our own sedimented structures of experiential genesis, we have the means in the phenomenological attitude to construct the *a priori* rules of subjective and intersubjective genesis, without slipping into the exaggerations of a speculative metaphysics. We cannot say anything about the factual process of a historical-social genesis in an *a priori* manner, nor about the factical how of the other person's upbringing. But we are capable of speaking about the *a priori* structures that govern such processes of development, and we are also able to construct in an *a priori* manner the possibly subjective meaning of an objective expression. Here I am merely adumbrating the lines of a possible direction for a pure, eidetic phenomenology of social life, following Eugen Fink and Edmund Husserl.

Transcendentalizing Psychology

Husserl, in the 1930s, realized even more radically the limits of the range of personal reflexion. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of phenomenologizing in a community. There is *a priori* knowledge, there are apodictic insights in reality, but I could be wrong in believing that I obtained truly *a priori* knowledge, that my insights really are of an apodictic nature. Other phenomenologists can correct my errors and also can reveal the reasons for my errors. In the case of the late Husserl, the charge of 'armchair philosophy' is wholly mistaken.[6] We are finite, fallible beings; in the phenomenological attitude we are certainly not able to uncover the

whole *a priori* structure-system of transcendental subjectivity on our own. We are in need of the contribution of other phenomenologists. Moreover, we cannot limit ourselves only to reflexion on our everyday experiences and common knowledge. In a certain way we should also make use of the results of psychology as a positive science.

This is perhaps the most precarious part of the entire process of phenomenologizing. The psychologist questions the human psyche with his empirically evolved methods and techniques. Phenomenology should treat these results as indications of *a priori* structures, but in integrating them into transcendental phenomenology we must also avoid lapsing back into mere psychologism and naturalism. For this reason one could regard these operations of integration to be the most difficult tasks in phenomenology that should be performed with the greatest possible circumspection. The difficulty of this task of phenomenological transformation of psychological investigations is clearly shown by the mistakes and ambiguities of the greatest talents of phenomenological tradition, such as Merleau-Ponty for example.[7] By "mistakes" and "ambiguities" I am referring here to such analyses of the bodily, human life that are intended to be purely phenomenological descriptions, and nevertheless they comprise such statements which cannot claim to be apodictically valid, purely eidetic truth, as later debates about them showed clearly.

The concrete method of phenomenological transformation is determined by the particular psychological matter itself. But the basic formal techniques of phenomenology, such as imaginative variations, provide a firm ground for the transformations in question. To decide whether a psychic structure is of a merely factual nature or is an indication to some *a priori*, the very question is whether we are able to imagine subjectivity without the aforesaid structure. Performing the phenomenological reduction on psychological objects we must dig down deep to the purely formal skeleton of these things in order to unfold the indications of the *a priori*. If they are performed carefully enough to avoid mere naturalism, this procedure would be in complete accordance with the original aims of phenomenology, and in this way we could gain insights concerning the *a priori* structures of concrete subjectivity.

IV. Conclusion

The phenomenological project is by no means a mere collection or gathering of apodictic insights. In a way, apodicticity gains its proper sense in a theoretical framework. We have the right to speak about certain alternative

styles of apodicticity in the post-Husserlian phenomenologies. Those phenomenologists (such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas, Sartre, etc.) had their own fundamental insights concerning the nature of Being and experience. In their own way they advanced the project of phenomenology. Even when they exceeded the horizon of phenomenology (as Levinas did in his phenomenology of the Other, as ethics), this transgression was grounded in the proper movement of phenomenology itself.

These phenomenologists described the horizon of experience and in one way or another they dealt with the phenomena and performed phenomenological descriptions. Even in their critiques of Husserl they claimed that they worked in the same field of philosophy. But there remains a lot to say about apodicticity in the original context of the phenomenology of Husserl. His life-work still remains as the original source of phenomenology. His development of a phenomenological metaphysics of intersubjectivity still calls for continuation. But the divergent strands of the phenomenological movement (and also its hermeneutical embranchments) need to build bridges between the different phenomenologies, in order to sustain the life of philosophical apodicticity (that is, the life of truth) through a real co-operation of phenomenologists.

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Endnotes

1 For the theme of phenomenology as an infinitely open horizon see Husserl 1952: 161-162.

2 See Heffernan's study on Husserl's notion of evidence for a detailed analyses of how Husserl's radically anti-psychologist concept of evidence emerged from his contemporary philosophical context (and how Heidegger's view on truth and evidence related to Husserl's conception). Heffernan, 1999.

3 Ziegler, 1893; Mill, 1878; Sigwart, 1911; Wundt, 1880/1883, 1893.

4 As regards to community of phenomenologists, Husserl speaks even more and more about the idea of a systematically organized co-operation between philosophers. See Husserl, 1976a; 1993; 2002: 315. As for modalizing apodicticity, Husserl in some places considers the possibility that self-evidence, which appeared earlier to be apodictically certain, later turns out to be doubtful. See Husserl 2008: 207-258, especially. 208-211. What is truly interesting in this context for us is the possibility of modalizing apodicticity through another phenomenologist, through the phenomenological discourse. However hitherto we have only some vague hint by Husserl about this topic.

5 In *Being and Time* Husserl's name wasn't directly mentioned in a negative, critical context, but according to Heidegger the main target of the critical aspect of the book was Husserl. In a letter to Karl Jaspers from the year 1926, he wrote, "If this treatise was written 'against' somebody, then it was Husserl, who saw that at once, but he kept himself to the positive from the very beginning". (Heidegger, letter to Jaspers, 1992: 71).

6 According to this criticism Husserl believed that the phenomenologist is able to unfold the complete *a priori* structure-system of subjectivity and of being itself, purely by means of reflexion and without the help of others. This would be the very meaning of Heidegger's accusation that Husserl one-sidedly preferred the theoretical attitude over against the practical one. See Heidegger 1994: 60, 70-72, 81-83, 93.

7 Here I am concretely referring to Iris Young's criticism of Merleau-Ponty (Iris Young 2005).

Language Acquisition, Motherhood, and the Perpetual Preservation of Ethical Dialogue: a Model for Ethical Discourse focusing on Julia Kristeva

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Abstract

This article proposes that Julia Kristeva's semiotic view of language supports the mother/child paradigm as a model for ethical discourse. Her defense of motherhood, particularly her discussion of the sacredness of maternal love and the mother tongue, strengthens the argument that motherhood is a primary means of preserving language acquisition and ethical development. It focuses on motherhood's ability to ensure, protect and preserve the possibility of productive ethical discourse through verbal and non-verbal means of communication. This article discusses the constraints of language, and its effects on the actualization of self.

Keywords: semiotics; language acquisition; ethics, motherhood

But when she was being taken to her execution, the godmother appeared in full sight of everyone, carrying the newest baby in her arms and followed by the other two children. She approached the princess lovingly and placed the baby in her arms, saying, "My dear daughter, here are your children. You must love and care for them now. I am the Queen of Heaven and I have taken your children from you so that you might feel suffering, such suffering as I endured when you lost the star and the moon and the sun. Now you understand suffering. Now you may speak.

(Retold by Josephine Evetts-Secker, *Mother and Daughter Tales* [1])

This article will address Julia Kristeva's defense of motherhood as it pertains to language acquisition and ethical development. Her assessment of language, using a semiotic analysis, insists upon recognizing the complexity in real language acquisition and rejecting a purely theoretical process of the labeling of objects in the self's environment. This assessment reveals the effects of restricted expression of the self and the ethical consequences when language fails to accommodate autonomy and individuality of the self. Kristeva's discussion of motherhood, specifically her reference to the "mother tongue," (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137) precipitates an investigation into the necessary properties of ethical discourse. In identifying these properties, a response to Kristeva's call for a "herethics" is proposed, using the mother/child paradigm as an ethical model.

Julia Kristeva liberates the definition of language acquisition from a rote, dry process to a lively, energetic, ever-changing dynamic. It is Kristeva's discussion of motherhood as both a figurative and literal means of language division that forms the argument for this article. Language acquisition, like motherhood, is a continual process, an unending experience. Kristeva states, "[a] mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language—and it has always been so" (1977b: 178). The mother/child paradigm of language acquisition rejects a sterile understanding of language by recognising the intrinsic connectedness at work in language, its reciprocity and its innate responsibility for the other. Kristeva explains, "Outside motherhood, no situations exist in the human experience that so radically and so simply bring us face to face with that emergence of the other" (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 57). The emergence of the other offers the possibility of ethical engagement. This "possibility - but not the certainty – of reaching out to the other, the ethical" (Kristeva 1977b: 182) is what preserves the potential of ethical dialogue.

Kristeva continues to connect language acquisition to the ethical development of the self when she calls for the demystification of the concept of a "community of language as a universal and unifying tool, one which totalizes and equalizes." (Kristeva 1979: 210) Kristeva asserts that women respond to their exclusion from the socio-symbolic contract by attempting to "shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract" (1979: 200). Of course, she argues that a reformulation of a contemporary ethics "demands the contribution of women" (1977b: 185). She specifically suggests that a reformulation must include the contribution of mothers. (1977b: 185)

Semiotic analysis of language acquisition and ethical development

Kristeva's discussion of motherhood is inextricably connected to her discussion of language and semiotics.[2] She articulates the shortcomings and difficulties in the field of linguistics when she states semiotics discovered "the fact that there is a general social law, that this law is the symbolic dimension which is given in language and that every social practice offers a specific expression of that law" (Kristeva 1973: 25). A semiotic analysis must be a continual self-critique of its own discussion about linguistics. She explains that semiotics is a "mode of thought where science sees itself as (is conscious of itself) as a theory" (Kristeva 1969: 77). A semiotic analysis, in other words, must scientifically approach a discussion of language recognizing that it is restricted by the constraints of the very language being used for the analysis. This does not mean, however, that a discussion is impossible, but an acceptance and understanding of its complexity is imperative. Kristeva argues:

> [E]xact science itself is already tackling he problems of the unpresentable and unmeasureable, as it tries to think of them not as 'deviations' from the observable world, but as a structure with special laws. . . Quantum mechanics is aware that our discourse ('intelligence') needs to be 'fractured', and must change objects and structures in order to be able to tackle a problematics that can no longer be contained within the framework of classical reason. (1969: 84-85)

Kristeva's work at investigating the intrinsic and often unidentified limits of language reveals the disconnect between the desire to express the self and the ability (or means) to express the self. She states that, historically speaking, some feminists have tried "to give a language to the intrasubjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past" (1979: 194). A productive ethical discourse cannot fail to give voice to all of those who should be invited to the conversation. If particular groups of potential participants are denied authentic engagement, the integrity (productivity and genuineness) of the dialogue is obviously compromised. Limiting language is limiting knowledge and power. For example, while discussing the symbolic order of monotheism, Kristeva explains:

> [T]he economy of this system requires that women be excluded from the single true and legislating principle,

> namely the Word, as well from (always paternal) element that gives procreation a social value: they are excluded from knowledge and power. (1974: 143)

The symbolic order, according to Kristeva, is "the order of verbal communication, the paternal order of genealogy" in which society operates, in which, one is told, particularly as a woman, it must continue to operate to prevent anarchy and to maintain stability (1974: 152). This verbal communication is the glue that cements women to their relationship with the symbolic order, an order that requires women to repress "the underlying causality that shapes" the fixed governed word (1974: 153). She proposes that this symbolic order is a temporal order, supporting "symbol and time" but suggests it is imperative to "recognize the unspoken in all discourse" (1974: 156). Kristeva challenges the belief that language is simply a conduit for exchanging information when she argues:

> [W]hat semiotics has discovered in studying 'ideologies" (myths, rituals, moral codes, arts, etc.) as sign-systems is that the law governing, or, if one prefers, the major constraint affecting any social practice lies in the fact that it signifies; i.e., that it is articulated like a language. (1979: 200)

She contradicts the premise that language somehow manifests itself independently, that it uses logic in an a priori vacuum. Acquiring a language means learning the laws of its society, its practices, culture and moral codes. Spoken discourse is not a simple transfer of information but a rich reflection of the sociological, religious, moral, and economic, among other components, making up the environment in which the self acquires his or her language. Her application of semiotics to language analysis shows how the self and the other communicate on a variety of different levels and at parallel points. She reorganizes and re-classifies language acquisition by recognizing that verbal communication is the end-result of an already learned protocol.

Kristeva shows that our learned, acquired language helps to form our perception of our environment and our perception of self. Language simultaneously develops and determines the self's ability to express, to communicate with the other, and limits the self's ability to express and to communicate with the other. Language introduces and indoctrinates the self into society and culture. The acquisition of language is the process by which the self identifies or disassociates with community and by which

the self expresses individuality, or the lack thereof, within that community. Kristeva argues, "in order to bring out – along with the singularity of each person and, even more, along with the multiplicity of every person's possible identifications . . . the relativity of his/her symbolic as well as biological existence, according to the variation in his/her symbolic capacities" a demystification of the "identity of the symbolic bond itself" must occur (1979: 211). This requires re-defining what constitutes ethical discourse. If, within every exchange between interlocutors there exists the possibility of ethical engagement, on a variety of different levels, spoken/unspoken, direct and indirect, then the definition of language and ethical discourse must accommodate this multifaceted nature and reflect its complexity.[3] The mother/child paradigm, representing the first interaction between self and other at its most primal level, illustrates motherhood's role in the preservation of the potential of new discourse, the potential of ethical reciprocity and the potential of the demystification of the identity of the symbolic bond itself.

In defense of motherhood: maternal love

Motherhood is a primary example of preserving the possibility of ethical engagement between the self and the other. The mother/child paradigm offers physical, literal and figurative examples of language acquisition and ethical discourse. For example, Kristeva argues that pregnancy "seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and of the other, of nature and of an other, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech" (1979: 206). Motherhood, beginning with pregnancy, requires a recognition of the other, initiating a division of language that separates the self in a particular manner that "leads the mother into the labyrinths of an experience that, without the child, she would only rarely encounter: love for an other" (1979: 206). This love for another, Kristeva asserts, is a love "not for herself, nor for an identical being, and still less for another person with whom 'I' fuse (love for sexual passion). But the slow, difficult and delightful apprenticeship in attentiveness, gentleness, forgetting oneself" (1979: 206).

Kristeva's discussion of maternal love affects the dynamic between the self as mother and society insofar as it creates connections and opportunities for engagement where none existed. No longer is a mother exclusively concerned with her own self, nor is she exclusively concerned about her own other (her child); she sees the world differently because her child is

inextricably connected to it and therefore, so is she. She has experienced a metamorphosis from the potential of exclusive existentialism to that of inevitable connection: the lived relationship. A mother sees relation, communication, dialogue and language potential between her and her child, individuals in her child's environment and her child's environment itself. It is in its unique relationship with the society of others that motherhood creates a second dimension (another plane or a different tier) of possible ethical dialogue that exponentially offers possibilities of ethical discourse. Kristeva argues that in maternal love, "love tenderness takes the place of erotic love: the 'object' of satisfaction is transformed into an 'other' – to care for, to nourish. Care, culture, civilization" (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 57). In the mother/child paradigm there is a need to communicate, to become involved, to protect, to nurture, to offer, to assist. The relationship between the mother and her child leads to a relation between the care of that child and the care of the greater community, the culture, the civilization. She contends, 'if pregnancy is a threshold between nature and culture, maternity is a bridge between singularity and ethics" (1977a: 297).

There exists a need for language. Not a language that reinforces the symbolic order, the cultural norms, or continues to restrict the creation of words, but rather, a language that can connect. This ability to connect, to recognize the intrinsic ethical dimension present in language acquisition is what Kristeva calls the sacred. She states:

The sacred is what, beginning from the experience of the incompatible, makes a connection. Between souls, if you like. I almost want to get back on my hobbyhorse concerning the sacredness of maternal love, but I'm afraid I'll be brushed off. I owe you a confession, however: I truly believe in it, and that the sacred seems to me both essential to women and very threatened in a world that knows how to do everything except "unite souls." (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137)

Uniting souls and making a connection after experiencing incompatibility is where ethical discourse perseveres. Motherhood necessitates connection and protects ethical discourse by these connections. The connections, the uniting of souls, happen singularly and globally during the motherhood experience. What once existed as the singular body now "doubles up, suffers, bleeds, catches cold, puts its teeth in, slobbers, coughs, is covered with pimples, and it laughs" (Kristeva 1977b: 167). This body that has doubled, has done so uniquely, but as it does so, it participates in an ancient, sacred and shared process of creating connections. These connections are not restricted to the temporal, paternal symbolic order. Rather, they recognize and participate in components of temporality (gestation,

biological rhythms, verbal communication) while simultaneously occupying "monumental temporality", a concept that usurps the idea of a linear space-time continuum (1979: 191). These connections require a conscious recognition of the "unspoken in all discourse" (1974: 156). These connections authenticate the severity of the consequences resulting from the denial of the sacred and, at the same time, illustrate the importance of listening within dialectic exchange (1974: 156).

The connections in the mother/child paradigm reject the exclusivity of the division of the sexes (because the mother/child paradigm includes both the male and female child) while recognizing the singularity of the mother and child. The mother/child paradigm unites souls on pragmatic, spiritual, literal and figurative level. A mother defies temporality by becoming part of the ancient conversation within the mother/child paradigm that took place before her, will take place after her, and is taking place currently. She participates in the universal process of self-birthing-other while simultaneously creating the singularity of becoming the mother of one. This process overlaps the symbolic order, recognizing that it must acknowledge it to have a voice in the chapter of politics and history without prostrating itself to symbol and time (1974: 156).

The mother/child paradigm challenges the symbolic order but does so in an inclusive, instead of exclusive, way. It does this by listening, by recognizing "that which remains extra-phenomenal, outside the sign, beyond time" in order to avoid extremism or alienation that can so frequently happen when the symbolic order is challenged (1974: 156). This does not compromise the strength of the paradigm or bastardize it into a watered down support of the symbolic order. Instead, it transforms it into something that is neither representative of the symbolic order, nor in direct conflict with it. Its transformation, its metamorphosis and its adaptability strengthen it and give it autonomy. This allows it to blend the seemingly incompatible.

In defense of motherhood: the mother tongue

Motherhood may begin as a narcissistic preservation of the self, a defiant act against death, but it develops into the sacred connections of maternal love. They become manifest in what Kristeva terms the mother tongue. She explains

> [A] violent push, biological perhaps, surely narcissistic, propels us toward our children, it sweeps away everything in its path, yes, I say everything, and can abolish the other

> as well as ourselves, make us mad, possessed; but curiously, the connection prevails, an appeasement comes along to defer the violence, Eros and Thanatos are transformed into tenderness. Here we are at the source of words, where love becomes a so-called mother tongue. (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137)

The mother tongue is not simply describing the language we hear and acquire during our childhood. It can certainly define the first language spoken to a child from a theoretical and practical perspective, but it also defines the communication that precedes, transcends and surpasses verbal or written exchange. It is the sacred communication that protects the other, elevates the self and creates connectedness. It is not limited to the parameters that contain other languages, for it helps to form those very languages. The state of motherhood preserves the potential for language development by constantly requiring new words and by introducing new connections. The mother tongue, the source of words, depends upon the transformation of the self (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137). What began as an egotistical preservation of the self develops into a preservation of the other. The mother/child paradigm claims responsibility and recognizes reciprocity not only for the singular individuals involved in the specific relationship of one mother and one child, but also for the connection that ensues: the mother's connection to her environment is now related to the child's connection to his or her environment.

Existential anonymity is not enough. The mother is now required to unite with others, motivated by the maternal love for her own child: she is inextricably connected to a community of self and others upon whom her child is dependent (care givers, doctors, health providers), others by whom her child will be affected (environmentalists, economists, farmers, politicians) and others with whom her child will identify (friends, family, teachers, spiritual advisors). The mother is now part of the community of others who participate in the experience of motherhood; this community is vast and it is diverse. The mother tongue speaks through language barriers, through socio-economic differences, education levels and geographical constraints.

The mother tongue demands responsibility and insists upon recognition of reciprocity. The mother tongue refuses the quarantine of ethical discourse from everyday dialogue, it recognizes language acquisition as an integral development of ethical discourse and it does not amputate the sacred from relation. The mother/child paradigm illustrates that language acquisition and ethical development have a reciprocal relationship and

that this relationship can dwell in and on the space-time continuum but is not defined by it. It embodies monumental temporality (1979: 191). The mother tongue understands and recognizes the unspoken in discourse. (1974: 156) Instead of accessing knowledge and gaining power by speaking or by paternal identification, the mother tongue is characterized by listening and respecting the other. These are qualities, of course, present in the mother/child paradigm, but they are not exclusive to women or to only mothers. Again, this is where its inclusiveness fortifies its ability to add new dimensions to ethical discourse. The mother tongue does not require maternal identification or the rejection of paternal identification; instead, it offers an accommodating platform to both. In fact, it accommodates the complete continuum, because the mother tongue is where words are "folding in unimaginable spaces" (1977b: 162) before sex, gender, sexual orientation, and maternal or paternal identification are determined and is at the same time "the source of words" (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137). The mother tongue is the primordial soup of language development and it holds the potential for the evolution of ethical possibility. It is the womb of sacred discourse and it has the power to transform narcissism into redemptive love and sacrifice. It recognizes temporality and yet it exists and celebrates that which is "outside the sign and beyond time" (Kristeva 1974: 156). It is in remembering and listening that the self gains access to maternal love's perpetual conversation, re-visits the potential of its warm understanding and poignant pain, and recognizes that it was, at one time, part of its universal tenderness.[4]

To give words, to encourage and to nurture a voice, to respect the other, one must learn to listen. Kristeva's transformative love offers the negative space necessary to hear dissident words (1974: 156). In the negative space, the spoken word is coupled with respectful silence and the unspoken is validated. The mother tongue's relevancy and applicability is evident: for a productive ethical discourse, the socio-political dynamic of a contemporary society needs to be able to accommodate dissident voices, respectful contemplation, the spoken word, and that which remains beyond symbol and sign.

An ethical model based on the mother/child paradigm: responding to the call for a herethics

Kristeva suggests that if a contemporary ethic is no longer equated with morality but is given flesh, language and jouissance than it "demands the contribution of women", particularly that of mothers (1977b: 185). This

herethics, she warns, might be "no more than that which in life makes bonds, thoughts, and therefore the thought of death, bearable" (1977b: 185). This article proposes that the mother/child paradigm is an ethical model capable of reflecting the inextricable relationship between language development and ethical discourse. Motherhood may begin as a narcissistic act to defy death, but it develops, as Kristeva puts it, into a labyrinth of tenderness and a series of sacred connections (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137). The mother/child paradigm encourages engagement in a productive ethical dialogue that has applications to the real world that makes bonds and thoughts. Kristeva's argument for the sacredness of maternal love and the concept of the mother tongue, support the claim that motherhood and the mother/child paradigm represent and harbor language acquisition (the source of words) and ethical development (the emergence of the other offering the possibility of ethical engagement) (1977b: 182). The mother/child paradigm reverberates with authenticity and embraces language acquisition as a dynamic, continual process. In order to understand this ethical model, it is important, of course, to try to continue the investigation into what defines and constitutes motherhood. Kristeva argues in order to do this:

> [O]ne needs to listen, more carefully than ever, to what mothers are saying today, through their economic difficulties and, beyond the guilt that a too existentialist feminism handed down, through their discomforts, insomnias, joys, angers desires, pains and pleasures . . . (1977b: 179)

To listen to the mothers is to recognize the complexity of the state of motherhood. Listening to mothers means accepting, as quantum mechanics does, "that our discourse ('intelligence') needs to be 'fractured', and must change objects and structures in order to be able to tackle a problematics that can no longer be contained within the framework of classical reason" (1969: 84-85). The mother/child paradigm of language acquisition and ethical development reflects motherhood's fractured intelligence. Motherhood remembers productively (not just with linear historicity) and remembers in a way that shapes the future. The paradigm recognizes the seemingly contradictory qualities of motherhood, particularly its characteristic singularity and its signature universality. In recognizing this, the paradigm accommodates autonomy, champions tolerance and celebrates individuality by its intrinsic ability to connect the incompatible. The mother/child paradigm stretches across culture and gender. It is encompasses verbal and non-verbal communication, art, music, poetry, and so forth, while dwelling

in the symbolic order and simultaneously challenging that very same order. The motherhood condition is one of contradiction and connection: pain/joy, self/other, separation/unity, life/death. Kristeva asserts:

> One does not give birth in pain, one gives birth to pain: the child represents it and henceforth it settles in, it is continuous. Obviously you may close your eyes, cover up your ears, teach courses, run errands, tidy up the house, think about objects, subjects. But a mother is always branded by pain, she yields to it. (1977b: 167)

The mother's pain, once again, exemplifies the many different aspects of motherhood; it illustrates the awareness of different dimensions in which the mother must operate and shows the complexity of the connections in which she participates. Motherhood is rooted in responsibility, reciprocity and otherness, regardless of the activity in which the mother is engaged: running errands, feeding a child, philosophical inquiry, language acquisition or ethical dialogue. The mother/child paradigm necessitates listening. It creates a negative space for listening to the unspoken in all discourse, making room for dissident voices, giving credence to "that which disturbs the mutual understanding of the established powers" (1974: 156). To encourage and to welcome ideas, individuals and thoughts that disturb the power and knowledge of the symbolic order, and attempts to do so without violence, but instead with a transformative power of love using the mother tongue, is to engage in productive ethical dialogue. It is a remarkable engagement that offers a discourse through connections (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137), while challenging the established order by "a constant alternation between time and its 'truth', identity and its loss, history and that which produces it: that which remains extra-phenomenal, outside the sign, beyond time (Kristeva 1974: 156).

It is important to focus upon this aspect of the mother/child paradigm that is critical to its effectiveness as a model for ethical dialogue, its ability to constantly alternate, its ability to adapt. The mother/child paradigm is in a constant state of flux, redefining its relationship with the prevailing social symbolic order. It must constantly redefine its relationship between self and other (the changing and evolving relationship between the mother and child). It is able to do this by embracing the semiotic analysis.

For an ethical model to encourage productive discourse, it must accommodate an inclusive paradigm and a willingness to engage in a self-critique, particularly in consideration of keeping faithful to a semiotic analysis. It must recognize the inseparable relationship between language

acquisition and ethical development and the manner in which that relationship forms of the perception of self and the world in which the self lives. The mother/child paradigm meets the necessary criterion for a working ethical model.

Conclusion

As language separates and defines us from one another, it also fuses us together. Engaging in dialogue means to engage in an on-going assessment and reassessment of the self, an assessment and reassessment of the other. It means creating connections where before, none existed. Engaging in ethical discourse expands the context in which to put subsequent discussion: ethical dialogue has a cumulative effect. Motherhood exponentially expands the points of intersection between united souls, geometrically increasing the ability to find connections and increase understanding, allowing for a productive ethical discourse. Language acquisition requires a broad definition reflective of this complicity, legitimizing that it is more than a process of labeling objects in our environment. This article defended the proposal that motherhood harbors primal language acquisition and ethical development and that the mother/child paradigm is an effective and productive model for ethical discourse.

Kristeva's defense of motherhood presents itself through a semiotic analysis of language acquisition. It allows for a fluid, inclusive and multifaceted discussion of ethical development. She argues that a semiotic analysis illustrates the need to replace "the concept of linear historicity with the necessity of establishing a typology of signifying practices from the particular models of the production of meaning which actually found them" (1969: 85). She reiterates the importance of demystifying the symbolic order when she introduces the concepts of maternal love as the sacred and the mother tongue as being at the source of words (Clément and Kristeva 2001: 137). These references ensure the preservation of ethical development and language acquisition via the mother/child paradigm. Motherhood does not accept the recidivism of language; instead, it creates connections and harbors the source of words.

The mother/child paradigm of ethical discourse has monumental temporality according to Kristeva (1979: 191). By focusing on the importance of listening in dialogue, this paradigm calls the location of ethical discourse on the space-time continuum into question. It recognizes the importance of the unspoken in discourse (1974: 156). If credence is given to the unspoken in discourse, the spoken becomes more clearly part

of the symbolic order, part of the paternal order of genealogy (1974: 152). Kristeva illustrated that exclusion from language results in a repression of the self, particularly for women, when they are separated and restricted by the symbol and sign (1974: 152). The monumental temporality of the mother tongue communicates to the future and to the past, but also to the unspoken, particularly through its willingness to validate necessary moments of silence to allow for listening. Through its innate ability to make connections, maternal love remembers without necessarily employing temporal, linear memory. It does not need to refer to a timeline, but it recollects by unifying souls and with mindfulness of the effects of our actions.

Kristeva continues to refute the idea that verbal communication is nothing more than an exchange of information, by showing that the spoken word is the part of the temporal order that provides the reference point, the possibility of measurement, "distinguishing between a before, a now and an after" (1974: 152-3). The mother/child paradigm, on the other hand, through female subjectivity essentially "retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations" (1979: 191). It is not limited to that definition, however, because it is monumental temporality, too. The mother/child paradigm is neither a paternal identification, nor an exclusively maternal identification, enabling it to function within the symbolic order and to challenge that same order. This division, this ability to grow, adapt and change is what strengthens the paradigm. The mother/child paradigm recognizes that "a mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language – and it has always been so" (1977b: 178). Instead of lamenting this, the mother/child paradigm embraces and even celebrates it, ensuring that it preserves and perpetuates language acquisition and ethical development, arguably and definitively illustrating that it is a capable working model for ethical discourse.

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(Endnotes)

1 Evetts-Secker, Josephine. "The Girl and her Godmother." Mother and Daughter Tales. Great Britain: Barefoot Books Ltd., 1996. 68-73.

2 In many of Kristeva's writings about love, she discusses maternal relationships, maternity and the feminine self as they apply to her work as a psychoanalyst. I am focusing on the application of her work in semiotics to philosophy and linguistics only.

3 Martin Buber's concept of universal reciprocity helped me to articulate this connection.

4 It is worth mentioning that while not all mothers are capable of nurturing (or choose to do so), the mother/child paradigm accommodates for the absence of maternal love from a biological mother in two ways. First, the paradigm allows adoptive parents (including homosexual parents) to experience the transformative love that becomes the mother tongue. Secondly, it emphasizes the importance of the responsibility for the other. This includes, but is not limited to, the manner in which those embracing the communication of the mother tongue feel a responsibility to care for the other regardless if they are biological mothers and regardless if the other is their biological or adoptive child. "Care, culture, civilization" (Clement and Kristeva 2001: 57).

Bodies in Transit: The Plastic Subject of Alphonso Lingis*

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Abstract

Alphonso Lingis is the author of many books and renowned for his translations of Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Klossowski. By combining a rich philosophical training with an extensive travel itinerary, Lingis has developed a distinctive brand of phenomenology that is only now beginning to gain critical attention. Lingis inhabits a ready-made language and conceptuality, but cultivates a style of thinking which disrupts and transforms the work of his predecessors, setting him apart from the rest of his field. This essay sketches Lingis' phenomenology of sensation in order to give expression to some dimensions of Lingisian travel. As we see, Lingis deploys a theory of the subject which features the plasticity of the body, the materiality of affect, and the alimentary nature of sensation.

Keywords: body; sensation; plasticity; Lingis; phenomenology

One is born with forces that one did not contrive. One lives by giving form to these forces. The forms one gets from the others.

(Alphonso Lingis, *We Mortals*)

A Synthetic Phenomenologist

Alphonso Lingis is well-known in the Anglophone world for his translations. We continental philosophers have all read his renderings of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* and Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*. He has also gained an admirable following with his philosophical travelogues, books like *Excesses*, *Abuses*, and *Trust*. In a way, even these texts offer us translations: of unfamiliar customs and peoples, of technical concepts and slippery philosophical jargon. In the travelogues, readers witness phenomenological descriptions of individuals and cultures which are laced with the thinking of alterity familiar to Levinas' readers, and the phenomenology of the lived body that Merleau-Ponty has handed down to the continental

tradition. Set either between or beyond these two notions—alterity and the lived body—is Lingis himself, a philosopher who not only builds a bridge between American and continental thought, but who is the literal embodiment of a synthetic brand of American continental philosophy. As if William James and Emmanuel Levinas were co-opted to author *all* of the guide books in the *Lonely Planet* series,[1] many of Lingis' hybrid books read like reports from the field. His missives from Latin and North America, the Far East, Antarctica, Africa, and Europe set Lingis apart from the rest of the American philosophers working in Husserl's wake. His (inter)continental approach spans the globe and reaches beyond the technical skirmishes of academic philosophy. Diane Ackerman gives us a splendid caricature of Lingis' *modus operandi*:

> Alphonso Lingis—whose unusual books, *Excesses* and *Libido*, consider the realms of human sensuality and kinkiness—travels the world sampling its exotic erotica. Often he primes the pump by writing letters to friends. I possess some extraordinary letters, half poetry, half anthropology, he sent me from a Thai jail (where he took time out from picking vermin to write), a convent in Ecuador, Africa (where he was scuba-diving along the coast with filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl), and Bali (where he was taking part in fertility rituals).[2]

The time is ripe for Lingisian studies to be extended and considered more closely.[3]

By examining the subjectivity of Alphonso Lingis as it is accounted for in his phenomenological writings, we can catch a glimpse of his philosophical perspective on embodied subjectivity and its relation to the sensible world. On the move, Lingis sets philosophy in motion—his travel is phenomenology at work. This essay is an attempt to articulate a few important dimensions of Lingisian travel.

Lingis is a wanderer and a cosmopolitan philosopher par excellence, perpetually in search of sensations and constantly giving expression, or the closest thing to it, to the sensualities he encounters. This sensuality is not only sought out in each of Lingis' travels, it operates as a condition of possibility in his philosophy. Speaking boldly, we might call him a transcendental phenomenologist of sensuality. A permanent itinerant, perhaps Lingis is one of the nomads that Deleuze and Guattari speak so fondly about. It is rumored that Deleuze was a secret admirer of Lingis, and it is not difficult to see why, whether true or not.[4] He is a phenomenologist of

the sensitive body, the materiality of subjectivity, and the disarming effects of travel. Focusing on a few of Lingis' properly philosophical texts, we will here examine the constitutive roles of sensation, affect, and sensuality[5] in the Lingisian conception of embodiment.

Lingis has always operated from within the phenomenological movement, tarrying with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas especially. Kant, Nietzsche, Freud, Bataille, and Deleuze are likewise familiar company. He is very close to each one of these thinkers and his writing often moves into a region of indiscernibility when he is explicating their thought. But he is no mere commentator. Woven into his strictly philosophical fabric are the faces, desires, lusts, fetishes, drives, and emotions of the innumerable others in which he has immersed himself. Photographs of these others inaugurate his chapters, capturing in a glance what takes pages to describe. His original work flows from his affective immersions, and in this way we might also call him a radical empiricist, if we mean by this that his philosophy takes seriously the plurality constitutive of sensibility and refuses to sacrifice the infinity of sensuous relations embedded in the world of experience. If Lingis breaks with his phenomenological predecessors through a re-assertion of the indelible impact of sensation on our subjectivity, it is at the same time that he is energized by a labyrinth of unknown bodies and intelligences, and the claims they have made on his body's own intelligibility. His philosophy is invested with a kind of non-philosophy, and these two modes of thought circulate through one another, creating a feedback loop of theoretical and sensuous exploitation. In short, Lingis' travel testifies to the irreducibility and immanence of the sensuous, and its role in constituting and reconstituting ourselves. A system of sensation, sensuality, and sensibility abounds in his texts and mobilizes to contest the dominance of our rationality, the fluency of our affects, and our mastery over the carnal world.

Sensation and Perception: Some Phenomenological Explanations

What is a sensation? Some might classify sensation as a legend, a fabulous non-event or a dissimulation. Sensation is nothing more than a deficient mode of knowing, and thus encountered only negatively, as in Descartes. Sensation is said to be always already worked up through the perceptual or cognitive apparatus, as in Kant. Before we know it, the idealist revolution tells us, the data of sensation have already been commandeered by our unifying faculties. We have perceptions, but can lay no real claim to

sensations: they are the noumenal and the unthinkable, merely inferred. The philosophy which begins with perception or, more precisely, which champions perception's primacy, seems to have already forsaken the reality of sensation. Must phenomenology abandon sensation? Lingis believes that this is precisely what is missing from phenomenology, and thus what aligns it with idealism. In *Sensation*, Lingis declares: "Phenomenology argues that our sensations themselves are intentional; they are givens of sense, or give sense—orientation and meaning."[6] But a sensation can also be an interruption, a shift, an instigation and a disorientation. Sensations can announce the absence of sense or the onset of senselessness. A sensation can function as a kind of short-circuit of our habitual affects, our perceptual routines, our calculated taming of the environment.

For Lingis, neither sensibility nor sensuality can flaunt the confident directedness of intentionality. These ambiguous passivities are basic modes of human being and enable a flexibility within the subject. Our bodies are displaced by sensations. Lingis theorizes the interruptive mode of sensation, sensation as immanently *directive*, yet without apparent meaning. By drawing a division between the representational and the affective dimensions of sensation, he allows us to distinguish between sensation as sense and sensation as affect.[7] His phenomenology of sensation unfolds into an ontology of the sensible. This is accomplished through a subtle analysis of our sensibility, one that creates a tension within the phenomenological tradition and which we will have to define.

Sensation intervenes in our practice and lets slip our hold on things and on ourselves. To deny its interruptive power is to deny the subordination of consciousness to the world of corporeal experience, to assert the primacy of human access to the sensuous world which we live from. It is to pretend that the phenomenal world has never once collapsed its appearance and asserted its fantastic weight upon our bodies. Lingis' phenomenology of sensation disrupts the flattening of the world which is achieved in Husserl's eidetic reduction, the reduction of real objects to their phenomenal facades. It is true that the senses can be deceptive…but only to an epistemology bent on certainty. Sensation is not first and foremost an epistemological theme. From a phenomenological standpoint which has bracketed knowledge claims, can sensation as such really be doubted or reduced? Can we *live* without sensation?

Against the grain of the phenomenological tradition, Lingis maintains that we cannot fully recognize our being-in-the-world in descriptions of subjectivity that place nothingness or a hollowed-out ego at the center of our consciousness; or when the lived body is considered the vessel of an

intentional consciousness that opens onto the world and moves about it with an undisturbed practical savvy (S ix). The lived body is not merely a diagrammatic entity; embodied perception is not reducible to a unified grip on the world, as though embodiment could guarantee that the world will always be encountered as an intelligible whole as long as it maintains its familiar spatiotemporal coordinates. For Lingis, the notion of embodiment describes first and foremost a sensual event replete with amorous and deadly—in a word, impractical—drives. We are born with forces that strive to exceed our being, and we die when we are finally overcome by such forces. These are what Lingis calls the *excesses* of life. As we will see, these excesses can get caught up into circuits, or take on forms that keep them in check.

Lingis is constantly in dialogue with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, diverging ever-so-slightly from it to make room for sensation. Merleau-Ponty goes to great lengths to exclude raw sensation from his account of perceptual experience. Perception, as intentional, is always perception-of, always the apprehension of a transcendent figure against a meaningful background. Phenomenologically, this feature of perception is, in a technical sense, *given*. This background is projected by some human perceiver and ensures that the unity of things always precedes the multiplicity of their qualities. Perception structures sense-experience and wards off the immediacy of sensation with *Gestalten*. The "prejudice of sensation" gives way, in Merleau-Ponty's description, to the immediacy of the meaningful whole: "henceforth the immediate is no longer the impression, the object which is one with the subject, but the meaning, the structure, the spontaneous arrangement of parts."[8] The *Phenomenology of Perception* is a work that traces the minutiae of perception, and above all champions the object/horizon structure of our intentional experience. In it, an always intelligible form stages our interaction with the world.

The critique of what William James would call atomistic sensationalism is carried out by Merleau-Ponty in his defense of a desubstantialized subject, a subject fundamentally "conceived as an intentionality, a self-transcending movement of *ex*-istence, and no longer as the place of inscription of impressions."[9] Our most elementary experiences are always already meaning-laden, figural, given to us as a thing that we can get our hands around. Merleau-Ponty insists on the continuous, ordered, and horizonal structure of the stream of consciousness. What Merleau-Ponty calls the "horizon" of consciousness, James refers to as "fringe." The fringe is comprised of the sets of physical and phenomenal relations that surround any particular act of consciousness, any specific conscious state.[10] It accompanies, but does

not constitute, the form of sensory experience. For James, these relations are derived from the physiology of the body-brain schema; they constitute, in addition to the objects they involve, what Lingis would call one "level" of the world. Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, has to consider relations from the standpoint of the non-physical and non-ideal structures of consciousness. Objects and relations are seen as real only insofar as they make sense, or appear within a subjective horizon. Thus, for him, relations remain at the phenomenal object/horizon level instead of opening up their own discrete sensuous dimension. Relations, for Merleau-Ponty and most other phenomenologists, are substantialized in the act of perception, but at the expense of their real substantiality. It is not the physiology of the body that apprehends objects and their relations, but the intentional structure of a desubstantialized sensory-motor schema. Here we glimpse Merleau-Ponty's idealism, but we also begin to see where Lingis situates himself, working out a middle way between the physiology of fringes and the phenomenology of perception. This will eventually bring him into proximity with Deleuze.

Is it possible to reconcile the phenomenological account of subjectivity, along with the critique of sensationalism carried out by James and Merleau-Ponty, with the reality of sensation? What if sensation could be shown to be the hinge upon which reality swings, but somehow outside, while at the same time essential to, experience? Kant made sensory input a transcendental condition of human experience by noting the emptiness of the categories in themselves, but at the end of the day he cognized sensation right out of the experiential world. At best, sensation, insofar as it is said to derive from the thing-in-itself, is put into a precarious position, and it behoves us to remain agnostic about its reality. Lingis, by contrast, reminds us that "to sense something is to be sensitive to something, to feel a contact with it, to be affected by it" (PE 59). He proceeds to provide *evidence* for sensation by highlighting our passivity vis-à-vis sensory input. Sensation is not simply a stimulus given to and understood by our sensory-nervous system. It is also an exterior force that reminds us that we are situated against our will in a sensible field that leaves us susceptible to the system of elements that make up that field. As subjects, we are not only cognizant beings, but incarnated in a sensuous, preformed, and sometimes hostile world. Vulnerable and exposed, the "level of sensation *would be* the original locus of openness upon things, or contact with them" (PE 59, italics added). Before it is contoured, before it is ordered and subjected to human cognition, the phenomenological field is a sensible material set to charge the sensuality of the subject via the body's sensitivity (PE passim).

Lingis credits Merleau-Ponty's later work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, for having evaded the idealist trappings of Kantianism and modern epistemology. Actually, Lingis tells us, already in *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty sought to extricate himself from idealism through the complementary notions of lived body, motility, and the corporeal schema (PE 62). Against the classical accounts, the subject is re-substantialized, re-sensitized[11] and given back to the sensuous medium by Merleau-Ponty's practical-corporeal concepts. With Merleau-Ponty, the synthesis of experience is enacted not by the incorporeal medium of pure reason, but by the mobile perceptual schema that is incarnate consciousness. Against the twin pillars of modern epistemology, intellectualism and empiricism, he writes in *The Primacy of Perception* that embodied perception carries out a "practical synthesis" and "reveals another modality which is neither the ideal and necessary being of geometry nor the simple sensory event."[12] He continues: "This subject, which takes a point of view, is my body as the field of perception and action [*pratique*]—in so far as my gestures have a certain reach and circumscribe as my domain the whole group of objects familiar to me."[13] Supplementing Merleau-Ponty slightly, Lingis identifies this medium and its population of things as a material nexus of sensuality and sensuous objects. It is the very materiality of beings—ourselves included—that enables sensuous interactions and allows Merleau-Ponty to move toward the notion of flesh and speak of it as the folding back on itself of being (PE 62-63).[14]

The folding of the subject into the sensuality of being is what Lingis, following Levinas, calls "involution." The substance of subjectivity is produced from out of the field of desires, pleasures, and affections accumulated within the sensual matrix. "Sensuality is a movement of involution in a medium."[15] The ontogenesis of the subject is carried out by this non-intentional, non-objective, non-attributive movement. First-person talk of "my domain" and "familiar objects" (Merleau-Ponty) loses its stability when subjectivity is conceived in this way. The subject must now be thought in terms of its original affectivity, and sensation has to be seen as an immanent modification of being, an impression that moves or orders the flesh—mine, yours, ours together. Lingis shifts attention away from the invisibility attributed to the flesh by Merleau-Ponty and toward the more tangible flesh of the elemental. This has the effect of placing both the visible and the invisible on an equal plane, ontologically speaking.

Lingis writes:

> The sensible flesh can be a locus where all schemes and movements of things can be captured, not because it is a blank slate or hollow of nothingness and thus a pure receptivity, but because it already contains all that the visible, the tangible, the audible is capable of, being visible, tangible, and audible itself. Itself a field where the sensible radiates and schematizes itself, it captures the patterns the exterior things emit on the variations or frequency modulations of its own body schema. (PE 63)

The subject in Merleau-Ponty finds itself caught up in the sensible world, the subject-object dialogue,[16] and a kind of corporeal grammar that organizes the lived body and inscribes its corporeity with sense. This still leaves the subject in control of itself and with a certain degree of unimpeachable practical knowledge, what Lingis identifies as *praktognosis*. Despite the carnal metaphor and its connotation of the immanence of subject and world, Lingis feels that Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh tames sensation by mediating it with the intentional structure of perception. But perception, Lingis contends, is derivative of the sensible: "The continuity of the visible field of the world and the visible flesh itself is not itself something perceived or effected through perception, if it is what makes perception possible" (PE 69). It seems that sensation must remain subordinate to perception in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. Just as with Kant, the phenomenology of perception relegates sensation to the imperceptible outside, thus setting it at a distance that remains irrecoverable. This is not to say that Lingis affirms our knowledge of raw sensation, but his phenomenology is willing to demonstrate our intimacy with the sensible.

What Lingis seeks to reintroduce into phenomenological description is the surplus of sensation that acts as the transcendental condition of perceptual life. This surplus is what he will sometimes identify as sensuality, and at other times, the voluptuous or affectivity. In turn, he asserts the disruptive, or what he calls the *imperative* force, of sensuous/sensual being. Here we catch sight of Lingis' debt to Levinasian metaphysics. The sensual, for Lingis, is not something about which we must remain silent, an underlying "I know not what." Our sensibility reveals the sensual to us through its affective character: the often unbearable weight of being, or the unsurpassed pleasure of existence is hoisted upon us as a condition of our remaining alive in the world. To live is to be affected by the material imposition of existence, to feel ourselves engulfed in the plenitude of the

flesh of the world, which is nothing other than our own fleshy substance. As Lingis writes in *Phenomenological Explanations*, "to sense is to sense the substantial" (PE 67). Our subjection to sensuality is the original modality of our subjectivity (PE 69).

Material Subjects, Sensitive Bodies

Modern conceptions of the subject hover around the idea that subjectivity is that element of human being which gathers and unifies, masters and orders the continuous series of sensations, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, decisions, and actions that each one of us undergoes. This is the *cogito* of Descartes as well as its many variations, most of which tarry with a variation of idealism that puts a premium on human access to the world. (This does not seem to be the case with the Spinozan subject; Spinoza is a stark exception to this rule.)[17] In Kant, the "I think" that denotes the purest form of the rational subject is both the transcendental and transcendent condition of any possible human experience. The multiplicity that is the sensuous world, which stands at an irreducible distance from the Kantian ego, is brought to its only manifestation by the synthesis effected by the apperceptual self. For Kant, the world as I know it is my world because it is synthesized by me; the power of this synthesis is the work of the understanding and of judgment. The manifold of sensation is always already understood by the self. If it were not so, experience would crumble and the self would lose its hold on the world. Indeed, the world would fall into oblivion.[18]

The embodied consciousness that we find in Lingis resists Kantian unity by remaining in contact with the multiplicity of sensuous material. Although Lingis never mentions it, his phenomenology follows in the footsteps of a fellow American, William James. It is instructive to read them together, as has already been suggested. James is rightly considered a forerunner of Husserl and a phenomenologist in his own right. He, like Lingis, fiercely resists the reduction of the sensuous and preserves its vivacity in a luscious prose that is rare in academic writing. James is a philosopher of immanent (which is not to say immediate) sensations, a radical empiricist whose work is very much in the Bergsonian vein. (James was more than a decade older than Bergson, but their work was mutually inspiring.) Lingis shares James' flare for colorful prose, the plurality of experience, and the abundance of empirical life. Both of them could be considered "vitalists," albeit of different species. Above all, both James and Lingis insist on the unfathomable *levels*—the edges, lines, angles, hues, and planes that partition the world into unexplored and perhaps impregnable enclaves and passages—of sensible

experience.[19] Together they form the seeds of an American philosophical tradition which has yet to be classified.

Lingis and James share a common critique of the Kantian subject. James distinguishes between two selves, one corporeal (the "me") and the other immaterial (the "I").[20] These two selves correspond roughly to the empirical and transcendental subjects in Kant, respectively. In his *Psychology*, James gives a shorthand account of the pure Kantian ego and calls it simply the "combining medium." To apperceive and synthesize is the "chief function" of the immaterial I, says James. The function of the I is to organize into a neat totality the multiplicity that is sense-experience. James writes: "Without this feature of a medium or vehicle, the notion of combination has no sense."[21] For James, it is the fluid stream of consciousness that gives unity to the successive states of consciousness. Rationally organized states of consciousness are produced as convergences at the end of the stream with the help of physiological and unconscious processes, but the stream remains primary. This is why James cannot be said to follow in the wake of Kant, who must subordinate the influx of sensory data to the categories of the understanding.

Where James breaks with Kant is also where Lingis departs from the idealist strain in Merleau-Ponty. What allows James' empiricism to evade the Kantian critique of ordinary empiricism (Hume's empiricism) is precisely what Deleuze will find, ironically, so valuable about Hume—his attribution of an *immanent* transcendental ("radical") character to objective sensation. For James, this amounts to the rejection of a psychologized associationism, and a positing of the objective reality of relations between material things, the pure plurality of sensuous experience, and an uncompromising resistance to the holistic tendencies of rationalism.[22] Similarly in Lingis, the immanence of sensation is shown to condition the practical, competent organization of the world, which is mistakenly believed to be the product of the transcendent structure of perception (Merleau-Ponty) or cognition (Kant). Whatever empiricism is alive in Kant and Merleau-Ponty, it is not radical enough for James and Lingis.

It is not just the substantive states that build up consciousness, according to James. The transitive states are equally constitutive of subjective experience.[23] What's more, he says that the conjunctive relations entered into by the conscious subject are affective in character, grounded in "a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we says a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*."[24] These feelings, for the most part, are harbored in the "material me," or the body and its corporeal relations.[25] James advances a theory of corporeal grammar, or

embodied significance, that is not without its analogues in the diacritical systems of twentieth-century structuralism. But his is not a theory of the subject as sociocultural function, but as materially modified or produced by bodily relations. Lingis, following James, will call the ungraspable, sensuous elements in which we move "free-floating adjectives," (I 14) so as to express the "grammatical" nature of our embodiment. None of this reduces human subjects to articulations within a discursive chain. It testifies to the fact that our bodies are sensitive to other bodies, that the conjunction and disjunction of bodies is *felt*, as well as perceived and enunciated.

As Lingis sees it, the combinatory function is not the basic function of the ego. At least, he sees the combinatory function as conditioned, not as spontaneous. James' stream seems to be equally contingent and unruly. This is partly because both thinkers are so close to the phenomenology of perception, and the specifically corporeal form given to it by Merleau-Ponty. As Renaud Barbaras has argued recently, any philosophy of perception worth its salt is going to have to begin its analysis of subjectivity with perception, and resist the temptation to subsume this capacity under the categories of rational thought. What we call a sensible intuition—which is nothing less than a perceptual encounter with the world—is the first revelation of an ego or self. This means, for the philosophy of perception, that apperception must conform to perception, not the other way around.[26]

The ego is not first and foremost an imprisoned and untouchable abstraction under which all experience is indexed. Nor is it merely a discursive construct, a placeholder "in the grammar of kinship, economic, and political codes." It is a naked, exposed sensuality. It is a material body invested with energy and pleasure and lust and bliss. Vulnerably exposed, it is true; but writhing with joy beneath its bare flesh (I 18). Immersed in the elements, the ego is fundamentally a sensuous element itself, wrapped in sensuality, "a movement of involution that intensifies and releases its energies into the elements in which the sensual body is immersed." The elements comprise the vague, ungraspable sensuous medium of nascent life—sonority, luminosity, terrestriality. As Lingis exclaims: "How calm the dawn is! How fresh it feels! How pungent it smells!—the zest and the savor vitalizing one's spiraling sensuality are cast forth again indefinitely into the depths of the dawn" (I 19). The subject stripped down is a bare enjoyment of the depths, of the countless levels of unfounded sensations.

Like James and Deleuze, Lingis advocates a form of transcendental empiricism that gives ontological priority to the role of pre-personal sensibility and corporeality in the constitution of our experience, thus making bodily sensation a condition of possibility of rationality, rational discourse,

and epistemology generally. This follows Erwin Straus' *The Primary World of Senses*, in which he writes:

> Sensing is not ruled by the 'I think' which, according to Kant, must accompany all apperception. In sensing, nothing is apperceived. The sensing being, the animal, does not confront its world as a thinking being, but is, rather, related to it simply in uniting and separating.[27]

There is a type of intelligibility nascent in sensibility, an intelligibility that is affective before it is intelligible and vital before it is rational. We might call this, following Straus, an alingual animal intelligibility. It is a pre-rational intelligence that we humans share with the other fleshy beings. We, as human-animal subjects, are already subjected to a sensuous medium that preempts the judgments and rational discourses we have either invented or acquired in order to master this medium and attempt to break off from the animal kingdom.

The circuit of rational discourse which is developed and deployed, the technological and sociocultural manufacture that we toil over to wrest ourselves free from the demands of our biological composition, and the community of modern individuals that each one of us is born into—all of this is preempted by our encounter with other bodies, intruder or seducer bodies, and the appeals they make on our own. This singular community of sustenance and separation is a community which is marked by the exposure of oneself to another in the sensuous medium. My flesh is nothing other than your flesh. But my body is at the same time *exposed* to your body, the body of some animal, and the totality of objects which are folded into the levels of the world. These levels allow Lingis' phenomenology of sensation to avoid the kind of holism that would eliminate separation and freeze every entity in an undifferentiated plenum. Phenomenologically, we know this is not our state of affairs. Our discrete, sensitive bodies commune through a labyrinthine carnality that holds us apart at the same time that we impress ourselves upon one another, modifying the totality of the sensuous substance. Lingis writes:

> The exposed surfaces of the other do not position themselves before one as so much data for one's interpretation or as so much amorphous matter for one to give form and significance to. The carnal breaks through, collapsing the distances across which its presence can be represented. Carnal surfaces expose themselves without offering

> possibilities to one's powers. […] In the immediacy of their presence, they are irremediably exterior: the surface of a sensibility, a susceptibility, a pleasure, and a torment that is irremediably alien to one and exposes a vulnerability and an alien mortality that summons one.[28]

The difference between you and I is not negligible because it is immanent, because our carnality unites us. Something of *you* always exceeds my representation of you. Alterity, however, must operate within the immanence of the sensuous element; a pure immanence traverses the *perceived* gap between I and other (S 80). Lingis has replaced Levinas' radical otherness with a radical immanence, but without giving up the exigencies of responsibility. The problem of the ethical meaning of immanent alterity emerges in Lingis' reconfiguration of the imperative.

My Body As Material Other: Sustenance and Fatigue

The always antecedent presence of the material other, along with the desire or disgust that it inspires in the constitution of my subjectivity, structures the ethical content of Levinas' philosophy. Lingis takes up Levinas' project, the phenomenology of the face/other, under the banner of a Kantian notion: the *imperative*. The imperative is a responsibility laid upon us by our very existence, our simple being-in-the-world. Not because we are situated among other rational beings which demand our respect, but because we could not coordinate ourselves without the stimulation of others (rational and non-rational), we are bound to an imperative. For Lingis, the imperative denotes our inability to fend off sensations, our defenselessness in the face of things, other persons and animals, and the assault their earnest reality aims at us. The imperative lays claim to us as responsible agents because we are composed of the substance—the elements—of the material world. No naturalistic fallacy is committed here. Lingis shows how the *is* of existence is derived from its *ought*; that is, we exist because our bodies must respond to a barrage of directives which offer to sustain and/or diminish our vitality. Either way, we must respond to these directives which we call sensations. Straus puts it in the following terms: "Although sensations do not resemble the things which touch us, although they are only signs of the existence of external objects, they can, nevertheless, be directional signs—that is, signs by which the other, the world, discloses itself."[29]

As world-disclosing sensations, pain and pleasure indicate the presence of danger or the absence of need. What we call our freedom, our independence, our autonomy is not a brute fact or a given. It is gained.

It is a significant mode of being, a course prescribed to us by our senses and by the sensations upon which we feed. The singularity of our lives is delineated, says Levinas, by the nourishment we enjoy in living from the offerings of life. "Enjoyment," he says, "is a withdrawal into oneself, an involution. What is termed an affective state does not have the dull monotony of a state, but is a vibrant exaltation in which dawns the self."[30] The alterity that we find ourselves thrown into, energized by, worn out by, is what gives us life and sustains us in our striving. It individuates us from the rest of our corporeal community, makes us the subjects we are. Before we can become weak, tired, or wounded we must thrive or suffer at the hands of being-alive in the light, the earth, the air.

For both Levinas and Lingis, the elemental world provides a transcendental condition for our sustenance, and thus for our selfhood. The elements are our freedom (I 22). "Life lives on sensation; the elements are a nourishing medium" (I 17). The phenomenology of sensuous existence becomes here an ontology[31] of corporeal, elemental, sensual subjectivity. Lingis writes:

> Levinas's phenomenological exposition shows that prior to the anxious taking hold on things which for Heidegger makes our sensibility practical from the first, there is the contact with the sensuous medium, there is sensuality. We find things, we find ourselves, in the light, in air, on terra firma, in color, in a resonant zone. Through sensuality we find ourselves steeped in a depth before we confront surfaces and envision the profiles of objects. Sensibility opens us not upon empty space, but upon an extension without determinate frontiers, a plenum of free-floating qualities without substrates and enclosures, upon luminosity, elasticity, vibrancy, savor. (S 80)

Against Merleau-Ponty, Lingis asserts that the perception of objects always occurs from out of a sensual state. Sensuality becomes the fertile ground of being-in-the-world. If Lingis breaks with Levinas, it is over the issue of the reality of objects. Although he affirms the primacy of sensuality, and, in a sense, considers contours and edges to be derivative, Lingis is not willing to efface the reality of defined and determinate objects. This would land him in a modified Kantianism that he wants to avoid. Graham Harman has shown recently, in his *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, that Lingis toes the line between himself and the whole phenomenological tradition by affirming the autonomy of objects. Where for Levinas the reality of

things is overshadowed by the "human hypostatization" of them, Lingis wields a realism that treats objects—and, by consequence, their sensible emissions—as the individual substances that they are. Harman writes: "The autonomy of stars and coral reefs is *real* for Lingis, no less than the independence of electric eels, cinemas, sunflower fields, snowflakes, and molten ores buried deep in the moon."[32] The countless objects and levels of the world are not dependent on us for their sensual energy, they offer themselves as so many avenues of pleasure that go about their business even when humanity is nowhere in sight.

The elements that give life to each one of us by offering themselves as the very stuff of our existence are sensuous material—luminosity, tactility, and sonority bathe our sensitive bodies. As the real source of our nourishment, they *lend us* sensibility and illuminate our world. Through the elements, the affective quality of sensuality—the unbearable or ethereal modes of bare life—is able to condition our "spontaneity." No one can spontaneously wrest their psyche from a depressive state or truly induce a rapturous joy within themselves without the influence of some external power. Sensibility is not formal in its pure state, as Kant thinks. It does not come from inside and project itself outward; it does not derive from some transcendent location, over and beyond the sensuous manifold. The perceived sensuous manifold is always immersed within a sensuality which generates a creature whose sensibility emerges with its ripening.

Lingis sees sensibility as consubstantial with death. "In savoring the materiality of things sensibility has the taste of its own mortality" (S 81). Here, sensibility is not just a nutritive faculty, but is also a conduit for degeneration, precisely because it is contingent. In old age, sensibility yields to impairment and senility. "It is the clay of our own body, dust that shall return to dust, that knows the earth and knows itself as terrestrial. It is the liquid crystals of our eyes that are turned to the stars as to eyes of the night" (I 63). It is the liquidity of our eyes that becomes murky and prevents us from fixing upon the stars, even when they continue to shimmer. We are mortal subjects, not inviolable egos. We move our bodies throughout the world, initiating movement and automatically expending the energy we accumulate from the substance of existence. This is our burden; the source of our fatigue is living as such. Corporeity weighs upon us as the obligation to continue living.[33]

Over time, we catch sight of our own degeneration. The substance that we are begins to give way, to return to the elements that gave it movement. Heidegger says that we exist ecstatically, always bursting forth in our temporality. Lingis reminds us that it is this same temporality, and our

inability to master our own passing, that both rejuvenates and enervates our material substance. This failure is no merely ontic contingency, as Heidegger would say. In *Deathbound Subjectivity*, Lingis clarifies the ontological value of our mortal substance: "The inability to put oneself back at one's beginning, to find oneself once again at the commencement of one's initiatives, to recuperate and re-present again what one had begun, which is the inner diagram of the fatigue in effort, is, across time, the condition of a subject that forms by aging."[34] That my body deteriorates against my will; that play can only be sustained for so long; because I imagine my dead body and it is as such unrecognizable as my body: my self is an other, a foreign body, for me. This other is disclosed in the world of sensation. As I grow tired and old, the possibility of my death is simultaneously the actual deterioration of my subjectivity, the dissolution of what I have managed to bring into order or to undergo. In pain or exhaustion, the world infiltrates my systems and *overwhelms* me.[35] All sensitive bodies undergo a process of disorientation and desensitization as death unravels their competences.

Plasticity: Affective Circuits, Automatism, and Travel

The roots of identity can be found in the affective circuits and sensitive habits that constitute the substratum of our everyday lives. These are the generic or routine practices that we induce in ourselves by force of habit or catch on to, through a kind of behavioral citation, via popular culture, tradition, and ritual. Affective circuits are survival equipment. As children, we are especially susceptible to the influence of societal forms. The *plasticity* of our physiological systems makes us pliable, malleable in the face of external forces.[36] Even perception, says Merleau-Ponty, is physiognomic[37] and, therefore, plastic. To be composed of a plastic substance is to be susceptible to influence from the outside, but resistant enough that the integrity of subjectivity cannot be consumed by the affective excesses of existence. Of course, we are threatened with destruction by forces we cannot control. But for the most part, our bodies subsist in a fluctuating material existence whose various forms prevent the total collapse of subjectivity into brute matter. This is what is means to be a plastic subject.

Affective circuits economize our actions, as well as relieve a good portion of the weight of our existence and the pain of our immanence to the material world. Following James, we can locate the basis of our behavioral habits in our sensations. An affective circuit, or what James calls a habitual chain, is a series of muscular contractions that are correlated point by point with a series of sensations. The series is set off by some sensuous stimulus

or other, a muscular contraction results and gives rise to a second sensation (and contraction), a third sensation (and contraction), and so on.[38] Affective circuits aid us in walking, eating, getting dressed, socializing, communicating, etc.—all the behaviors that are ritualized into the mundane and effortless. These rituals and routines find themselves recorded in the musculature of the body and propelled along by the banal sensations that organize our typical days. These circuits coalesce into a system that subtracts from the abundance of incoming sensations and outgoing efforts required by life. They make up the constitution of our "body's attitude"[39] and, by extension, the attitudes of culture. The body is laced with an implicit knowledge that enables our escape from brute being. In Lingis' terms:

> Feelings contracted from others, passed on to others, perceptions equivalent to and interchangeable with those of any other, thoughts which conceive but the general format of the layout about one, sentences formulated such that they can be passed on to anyone—make up the rigorous and consistent enterprise of evasiveness in the face of the being that is one's own to be. (S 82)

Our bodies are adapted to the excessive content of our corporeal existence and streamline themselves with an habitual form that relieves them of the overwhelming scenery of life. Our prefabricated and stylized life forms prevent us from imploding in the life of our senses or becoming slaves to our libidos. For economic purposes, our sensory-motor schema adopts shortcuts that allow it to run on autopilot. As Bergson has aptly shown, habits link us into the mechanisms of nature as responses to the directives laid out by those mechanisms.[40] There is no ghostly ego orchestrating the machinery of the body, but rather a gamut of rites, rituals, ceremonies, secret passwords and slang, a whole social circuitry which invests the body with an identity and regulates its sensitivity. This gives the *appearance of automation* and total integration into nature or culture.

Our automatic movements, our affective regularities, our corporeal identity—these forms are imparted to our bodies, so many of which await us at birth. We are sculpted, pre-sensitized creatures. The corporeal grammar of our culture seizes us and inscribes our bodies as soon as we emerge from the bodies of our mothers. A natal trauma invests the child's subjectivity with a communal form, a form—a structure, a language—that initiates the body into the stratified world and removes for good the possibility of raw sensation. This is the price paid for becoming master of one's own field of forces, for giving form to the surplus of sensation that inundates us

upon entry into the world. These are our birth rites. Our bodies grow more competent as we mature. We achieve an advanced level of *praktognosis* as we become more familiar with the world, its offerings, and our capacity to get along within it. (Eventually this competence begins to unravel.) In a parallel formulation, Deleuze and Guattari will say of social "strata" that "they consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy…."[41]

Our cultures impart a form to our bodies that minimizes the dangers of our plasticity. Culture lends to us its affective circuits so as to keep us from straying too far toward the extremes of our sensuality or our sensitivity—these are malleable traits, debilitating at the same time that they are protective. Our plasticity composes a significant portion of our vulnerability. It is because our bodies are made up of an organic material whose substantiality yields to external forces that we are sensitive, and thus susceptible beings. Because we yield, we can encounter. If it were not so, our flesh would sense nothing. We are vulnerable not only to hostile forces, but to the mundane, habitual forms imposed on us by our everyday environment. As Lingis says, "one instinctually arranges one's life so that the tasks and the tools and the problems and the encounters will recur the same each day, one avoids the limits" (S 3). Can we, should we, ward off the excesses? Is this even our decision to make? Is the excess—*pure* sensuous material—not the necessary condition of our formal constitution?

Deleuze and Guattari will exhort us to destratify, to make of ourselves a "body without organs"—to oppose our own organized existence and open ourselves to experimentation, to whatever desires may come, to a nomadic movement that cuts across the circuits of our society.[42] The body without organs is a body that is free to approach the limits, to seek out what Lingis calls those "situations and adventures in which one might be swept away with a total and totally new joy" and realize "that one could never know such joy again" (S 3). The body without organs sloughs off its economizing forms and perceptual clichés. It travels outward and into the sensuous world, forsaking its affective circuits and the efficiency of its practical competence. "A cliché," Deleuze tells us, "is a sensory-motor image of a thing."[43] Clichés keep us at an ideal distance from the thing itself, always mediating and reducing our sensuous experience to the familiar, the comfortable, the safe and sound. Clichés inhibit our fantasy space. Affective circuits, corporeal forms, habits, and clichés-each of these devices perform a subtraction from sensuality and give us the impression that we are masters of our sensitive bodies. But our bodies are fundamentally enticed, engulfed, invested, and commanded by sensations that come from outside. Our sensations are not

properly our own, even if they singularize us and make specific appeals to our senses. This is the meaning of Lingis' imperative. This is what it means to live from sensation, to *be* a sensitive body traversing the earth. Travel is the means by which sensation is co-opted to contest the affective circuits that form our identity; travel unleashes our bodies' capacity to affect and be affected (Spinoza).

The concept of *travel*, taken in an extended sense, can be considered central to Lingis' phenomenology. Lingis intends travel as a destratifying practice, a practice which bursts our world wide-open. Lingis' major theoretical book, *The Imperative*, is a text which develops the thesis that our sensuality, by its very nature, commands our bodies to travel, to open themselves up to foreign sensations and respond to the enticement of affects we are not equipped to assimilate into our typical circuits. Lingis' primary claim in *The Imperative* is that we are not automatons, precisely because our perceptual and sensual schemata are not hardwired into our physiology or transcendental subjectivity, but nourish themselves on the sensuous elementality that we live from. Indeed, the excesses of desire are the body's own vital form of destratification, the force which combats affective and perceptual automatism. To be caught in an affective circuit is to take on a contingent corporeal form that can be resisted with the kind of exposure that comes through travel and encounters with alien forms of life. It is the kind of contingency that an affect can reconfigure in an instant, as with the death of a friend or some other unbearable trauma. What is not contingent—but also not formal—is the excessiveness of affectivity itself: it is precisely our affectivity *as genesis*, the desire for/of travel, which exceeds our formal corporeal constitution.[44] The psychogenesis of the subject is nothing other than the sensitive body in transit. This process is no less necessary for lacking formality. Weakness, discomfort, delight, and decay are necessary constituents of our material incarnation, but constitutive features which are generated as we are nurtured by the elements and enjoy our sensual/sensuous existence. This is the meaning of Lingisian travel.

The Imperative "shows sensibility, sensuality, and perception to be not reactions to physical causality nor adjustments to physical pressures, nor free and spontaneous impositions of order on amorphous data, but responses to directives" (I 3). These directives come from sensation itself, indeed they are sensation in all of its material manifestations—the humidity of the air, the scent of an other's perfume, a tap on the shoulder, the hungry glance of a dog under our care. All of these phenomena make material claims on my body and my material self, even if the messages they communicate to me bear no literal resemblance to the physico-physiological basis of sensa-

tion itself, or if my cognitive machinery fails to comprehend their plea. My embodied consciousness, insofar as it is plastic perception, remains sensitive to innumerable demands and signals.

If there is anything that Lingis asks us to take from his travels, it is a recognition of the reality of sensations and the contingent constitution of sensibility. At bottom, the sensuous is a perpetual invitation and disruption of our practical movements and sensorial mastery, with all of their habitual investments. Sensations we have, but they are never purely our own. They belong to a transcendental flesh—a coded, affective elementality—which unites and separates us while inducing us to movement with appeals to our sensitivity. The sensory world performs our identities for us. One day the surplus of sensation rushes in and drenches us with its strange reality. When we are seized by a debilitating pain, "we feel the world attacking and invading us," says Straus.[45] Our own bodies give out and fail us where they once carried us along effortlessly. Other bodies collide with our own and penetrate through our automatism, intruding on our intentions and short-circuiting our body-systems. These are the perils and promises of travel. "The traveler feels anxiety about his personal safety," writes Lingis. "He has little confidence in a personal or institutional ethics to hold back the impulses of mass desperation. The trip there has something of the feel of an act of recklessness and bravado."[46] We are met with affects, emotions, and sensations that we are unequipped to accommodate—because we are of the same substance, the same flesh, the same carnal community. For Lingis, this is a community of trust, but a trust which is built between those we trust without knowing or choosing.

In the end, Lingis tells us, we are a community that ultimately "has nothing in common:" the sustenance which circulates between bodies does not come from heaven, but from nowhere, from the nothing that sustains the earth, the elements, and the other. Unlike Levinas, who triangulates the face to face relation with God, Lingis locates the source of the imperative and the alimentary within the substantial economy. "In the substance of our competence other bodies emerge, ethereal and phantasmal—bodies that materialize forces and powers that are other than those of praktognostic competence."[47] The singular matrix of forces and passions that organize our bodies comes from elsewhere, from beyond the world of equipment that we manipulate together. It is simply anarchic, but it seizes us and sends us reeling nonetheless. When these forces materialize, it is already too late for us to have prepared for their coming. When these forces dissipate, our bodies return to the anonymity of the elements—our common community. To say that we have nothing in common is not to say that we cannot

respond to the unexpected sensation, but rather it is to say that we cannot hope to assimilate it before it makes claims upon our being. It is not ours to assimilate, for it is what nurtures assimilation in the first place. Sensation is the alimentary.

(Endnotes)

* This paper was originally published in 2007, *Janus Head*, 10(1): 99-122.

1 A popular, budget-friendly travel guide series geared towards backpackers and hostellers.

2 Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage, 1990)

3 Lingis' original writings have recently prompted the publication of a book of essays and interviews, *Encounters with Alphonso Lingis*, eds. Alexander E. Hooke and Walter W. Fuchs (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003). A few other articles on Lingis are in print in various journals, including: Simone Fullager, "Encountering Otherness: Embodied Affect in Alphonso Lingis' Travel Writing," *Tourist Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001): 171-183; Alexander E. Hooke, "Alphonso Lingis's We—A Collage, Not a Collective," *diacritics* 31, no. 4 (2001): 11-21.

4 This unconfirmed, yet delicious bit of academic folklore was related to me by one of Lingis' former students at Penn State, Graham Harman, via e-mail on July 20, 2006. I must thank Graham for his generous correspondence.

5 Because sensation is for Lingis always charged with an affective and/or erotic component, whether pleasurable or painful, I will often employ the term "sensuality" in places where "sensuousness," "sensitivity," or "sensibility" could work just as well.

6 Alphonso Lingis, *Sensation: Intelligibility in Sensibility* (New York: Humanities Press, 1996), ix. (Hereafter cited parenthetically as S.)

7 In one of his earliest essays, "Sensation and Sentiment: On the Meaning of Immanence," Lingis begins to excavate the "equivocality" of the notion of sensation. This paper acknowledges the intentional side of sensation, which he links to the transcendence of the object sensed, before unpacking the immanence of sensation, which is correlated with the affective capacity of the body. Lingis here aligns himself with a form of radical empiricism which is derived from the Levinasian conception of existence as enjoyment and Michel Henry's understanding of immanence. It is this empiricism that allows us to bring Lingis together with Bergson and James. For Lingis' paper, see *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 41 (1967): 69-75.

8 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 58.

9 Alphonso Lingis, *Phenomenological Explanations*, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), 60. (Hereafter cited as PE.)

10 William James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001),

Chapter 2.

11 Consider the following passage from *Phenomenology of Perception*, 236: "In short, my body is not only an object among all other objects, a nexus of sensible qualities among others, but an object which is *sensitive* to all the rest, which reverberates to all sounds, vibrates to all colours, and provides words with their primordial significance through the way in which it receives them."

12 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 14.

13 Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, 16.

14 There is a whole series of points of contact that obtain between Lingis and Merleau-Ponty which, of course, cannot be treated here. I am presently attempting to work out their convergences and divergences in another project. What I have tried to do here is give some sense of the tension introduced by Lingis into Merleau-Ponty's theory of corporeity, even though I feel that the similarities between these two thinkers far outstrip the differences.

15 Alphonso Lingis, *The Imperative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 15. (Hereafter cited as I.)

16 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 132. "The subject-object dialogue, this drawing together, by the subject, of the meaning diffused through the object, and, by the object, of the subject's intentions—a process which is physiognomic perception—arranges round the subject a world which speaks to him of himself, and gives his own thoughts their place in the world."

17 The question of the unifying rational subject is difficult to locate in Spinoza because his conception of the mind (in Book II of the *Ethics*) understands the mind as the idea of the body. This problematizes our understanding of the mind as a unifying faculty. I am reluctant to make any definitive judgments about Spinoza's relation to the sensuous world. What does seem to be the case is that, in many ways, Lingis' (and Levinas') treatment of affectivity is derived from Spinoza. Lingis might be seen as reaching back beyond Kant, and pulling Spinoza to the forefront of the continental discussion. I am tempted to say that Lingis is *extremely* close to Spinoza, and it is precisely on the problem of affection that they converge.

18 Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), §16, especially note 202, B134.

19 The "levels" are what Lingis calls, in *The Imperative*, the plurality of dimensions of the world. In addition to the natural objects, manufactured things, humans and other creatures typically recognized by phenomenologists, Lingis recognizes the elements, lusts, and habitats that impress upon and shelter us. The night itself is as fundamental as the figure and the horizon in Lingis' phenomenology; the night is one level upon which the world rests, a dimension that beckons us into its depths.

20 Cf. James, *Psychology*, Chapter 3.

21 James, *Psychology*, 67.

22 William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska

Press, 1996), 41-44. To draw this point out, it is useful to compare James' position with the remarks that Deleuze makes about Hume and "transcendental empiricism" in *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone, 2001).

23 James, *Psychology*, 27.

24 James, *Psychology*, 29.

25 James, *Psychology*, 44.

26 For a concise statement of this basically ontological problem, see the first chapter of Renaud Barbaras, *Desire and Distance: Introduction to a Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Paul B. Milan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

27 Erwin Straus, *The Primary World of Senses: A Vindication of Sensory Experience*, trans. Jacob Needleman (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 197.

28 Alphonso Lingis, *The Community Of Those Who Have Nothing In Common* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 177.

29 Straus, *The Primary World of Senses*, 208.

30 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 118.

31 Graham Harman has written recently that, "The imperative actually has an ontological character even more than an ethical one. Its target is the dreary tendency to split the world into two mutually incompatible zones, one of them a mechanistic causal chain of objects blindly assaulting one another, and the other an arbitrary space of human freedom that imposes subjective values on a mindless grid of neutral materials." *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), 62.

32 Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, 60.

33 Alphonso Lingis, *Deathbound Subjectivity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 154.

34 Lingis, *Deathbound Subjectivity*, 154.

35 Straus, *The Primary World of Senses*, 208.

36 Cf. James' discussion of habit and plasticity in *Psychology*, 2. We might consider the recent attempt to synthesize neuroscience and phenomenology in the work of Bernard Andrieu as an updated version of James' notion of plasticity. Brought into contact with Lingis, Andrieu's neurophenomenology accentuates the realist/materialist line of research at play in much of Lingis' texts. See, for instance, the program outlined in Bernard Andrieu, "Brains in the Flesh: Prospects for a Neurophenomenology," *Janus Head* 9 (1), 2006: 135-155.

37 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 132.

38 James, *Psychology*, 7-8.

39 James, *Psychology*, 9.

40 Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Citadel, 1974), 231.

41 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian

Massumi(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 40.

42 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 159.

43 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 20. Our clichéd perception precisely cuts out the surplus of sensation which is harbored in every perceptual experience. This is for practical purposes, of course. "As Bergson says, we do not perceive the thing or the image in its entirety, we always perceive less of it, we perceive only what we are interested in perceiving, or rather what it is in our interest to perceive, by virtue of our economic interests, ideological beliefs and psychological demands."

44 To understand more fully the import of this ontology of affect, which is fundamental to both Levinas and Lingis, it is helpful to contrast it with the potency/act ontology of Aristotle. Edith Wyschogrod carries out this contrast in a discussion of Levinas' notions of "enjoyment" and "living from…" in her *Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 55. Affect is shown here to break with the *telos* of (human) action, which for Aristotle is basic to the very being of activity. The affect of enjoyment, by contrast, is without purpose; it is simultaneously its own potentiality and accomplishment, an active passivity which nourishes itself and produces an excess of itself. What Aristotle lacks is the lived quality of the act itself, the excess that is not comprehended by the potency/act model. "It is precisely 'life'," says Wyschogrod, "which is absent from this picture."

45 Straus, *The Primary World of Senses*, 208.

46 Alphonso Lingis, *Trust* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 60.

47 Alphonso Lingis, *Foreign Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 24-25.

BOOK REVIEWS

Derrida's Legacies: Literature and Philosophy
Edited by Simon Glendinning and Robert Eaglestone.
Routledge, 2008. Pp. xxvi + 155. ISBN 978-0-415-45428-5. Pbk £19.99 ($39.95).

To say that Jacques Derrida is a controversial figure is not only an understatement but one that is repeated so frequently that it begins to detract from his work. Nevertheless, thinking about this controversy is a useful way of framing an approach to the legacy of the man and his work, the goal of this new volume from Routledge. The contributors to this project are an impressive group of commentators on Derrida's work, amongst them Geoffrey Bennington and Nicholas Royle reflecting on "the event", David Cooper covering the philosophy of language, Alex Callinicos tackling the New International, and Rachel Bowlby offering a short and charmingly personal account of what Derrida meant to her. The three essays I have selected to focus on in this review are those dealing with subject areas in which Derrida's legacy has caused controversy, or in which it has proven controversial that Derrida has an important legacy. These areas are: ethics, technology, and the Holocaust.

Ethics

In his recent study, *Trouble with Strangers* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Terry Eagleton informed the reader that Derrida's work on ethics ought not to detain the moral philosopher for any significant amount of time. Derek Attridge's contribution to the present volume, entitled "Derrida's singularity: literature and ethics" (12-25), if it is to persuade the moral philosopher to look a little closer, ought really to act as a corrective to this negative reading. Attridge is aware that Derrida's is not a name to be found in most Anglophone companions to ethics; when it is, it is usually only there to have scorn heaped upon—or at least a glib remark or two in the vein of Eagleton's. His work on literature is, as is well known, received with greater enthusiasm and Attridge directs the reader to the intimate connection between this and his work on ethics. We see that, for Derrida, when reading the text the reader is to alight upon that which is unique, singular within it. The reader is then to communicate to others this singular, context dependent meaning. This concern with the singular carries over to his work on ethics.

How can we justify feeding a pet cat at the expense of all other cats in the world? As Attridge shows, this slightly odd ethical quandary illuminates the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. Far from signifying the virtue of submission to God (as for believers) or the authoritarianism of religion (as for the nonbelievers), this story about the demand made of a father to sacrifice his son serves to illuminate the paradox of responsibility for the other. It shows how entering into an ethical relationship with an other always involves the sacrifice of such a relationship with another other. Attridge clearly shows the difference between Derrida's thought here, in *The Gift of Death* (The University of Chicago Press, 1995), and that of Søren Kierkegaard, who approached the same story in his *Fear and Trembling* (Penguin Books, 2003). Both saw in this Biblical story the renunciation of (prescriptive) ethics in the call to the absolute and singular other. For Kierkegaard this call comes only from God, whilst for Derrida it comes also from Isaac. We see that this makes the paradox far more binding for Derrida than it does for Kierkegaard, since whatever Abraham does he fails in his responsibility to the other. If he spares Isaac then he defies God; if he obeys God then he fails Isaac. We come back to the cats: looking after one's own cat runs against the demands of other cats and cannot be justified. And in the real world of cats and people there is no divine voice that offers a way out, as with the Biblical story – there is only silence. When we consider that we have an infinite responsibility to an infinite number of others (and not just cats) – ethics becomes impossible.

Impossible? Some legacy, we might say. Yet this depends on what is meant by "impossible", and here lies the value, clear and concise exposition aside, of Attridge's essay. He asks whether ethics is impossible in the familiar Derridean sense - that things happen because they are impossible, because the possible depends on the impossible, on that which it excludes - or whether it is an entirely different order of impossibility altogether. Or rather, he asks, if it is impossible to answer all the demands, how do we choose? For Derrida, it can never be a matter of weighing one demand against another, as in a calculable ethics; there can be no rule or device to decide. Rather, Attridge, drawing on the work of Jean-François Lyotard, shows that for Derrida the most authentic demand is recognised when we are confronted with the powerless, and not the all-powerful as with Abraham. If this were the case then existing power relations would be repeated: man over woman, white over black, rich over poor, and so on -the same over the other. Instead, for Derrida, we have to seek out the other - the destitute, the hungry, the downtrodden - and obligate ourselves to them. Crucially, the impossibility of ethics does not prevent action; it is no different from the

other impossibilities we encounter in Derrida.

We see that far from a shrug of the shoulders and a retreat into the comfort of (unjustifiable) special relationships, we find in Derrida a call to action, a conception of responsibility that is active and not passive. With Attridge championing his cause it appears that Derrida's legacy ought to be held with the same high regard as that of Emmanuel Levinas, and not regarded merely as "an extended footnote to Levinas's own meditations" – again, one of Eagleton's glib and hasty remarks in *Trouble With Strangers* (2009: 247*)*. Derrida departs from Levinas by eschewing the hierarchy of self transcended by other, insisting instead that there is only a web of otherness. Attridge might have made this departure more explicit, but the perceptive reader will pick it up all the same.

Technology

Derrida's legacy in the area of technology is perhaps no less contested than that of ethics. In their recent work, *New Media: The Key Concepts* (Berg, 2008), Nicholas Gane and David Beer question the claim made of Derrida's *Archive Fever* (University of Chicago Press, 1996)—on the cover of the book no less—that it offers an important statement on the impact of new media technologies. Their suggestion is that it simply fails to deliver. There is some talk of e-mail in Derrida's text, but this concern with that particular technology at the cost of others only reflects his bias towards writing and leads to a restricted account of the archive. This is the same flaw that Friedrich Kittler observed of Michel Foucault in his afterword to *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford University Press, 1990). Drawing on a familiar complaint of Kittler's we might say that, judging from his work, Derrida does not know a great amount about technology itself. It falls, then, to Christopher Johnson and his essay "Derrida and Technology" (54-65) to demonstrate the legacy Derrida bequeaths to students in this field.

Unfortunately, Johnson fails to deliver. We get an interesting account of Derrida's use of the work of André Leroi-Gourhan, ethnologist and prehistorian. Leroi-Gourhan studied the role of technology in the development of human intelligence, particularly the role bipedalism played in liberating the hands and face to perform more complicated tasks than were previously possible. He showed that there is a direct link between the higher cognitive faculties and the hand; that is, that the new-found freedom of the hand allowed the human to engage in tasks such as tool making which required the development of intelligence for co-ordination. Leroi-Gourhan's legacy was to show the co-evolution of the biological with

the technological. This is quite a legacy, one evident in the various works of posthumanists today. Johnson's problem is that he never manages to show that Derrida's legacy comes anywhere close to matching the one he attributes to Leroi-Gourhan.

He gives an interesting account of Martin Heidegger's work on the hand, conveying his argument that the human can have a hand whilst the animal cannot, the latter merely possessing an organ capable of seizing and grabbing. After outlining Derrida's criticism of this approach—that it distorts the co-evolution of thought, language and hand and places Heidegger's work firmly in the tradition of metaphysical humanism that he purports to oppose—Johnson returns to thinking about Heidegger. The essay finishes with Johnson's musings on why he was troubled by technology but not by tools. This is an odd move given that it is meant to be about the legacy of Derrida. Throughout the essay is a weak suggestion that what we owe to Derrida is a certain way of thinking about technology, certain questions that we now feel compelled to ask, questions such as: "What is technology?"; "Where does technology end and the human begin?"; and "How does technology affect thinking?". These are the sort of questions that Marshall McLuhan taught a generation of media theorists to ask through influential and popular works such as *Understanding Media* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1964) and (with Quentin Fiore) *The Medium is the Massage* (Penguin, 1989).

The essay itself is interesting and well written, but it simply does not fit with the mission statement of the book. Having felt the same disappointment expressed by Gane and Beer about *Archive Fever*, I was looking to Johnson to demonstrate Derrida's legacy to thinking about technology. However, he does nothing to correct the assumption that Derrida knew little about technology itself; he does little to show the originality or ingenuity of Derrida's work on technology, nor does he show how Derrida's work has been influential on the subject area and other writers within it. This is not to suggest that Derrida has no meaningful legacy here, only that Johnson does not adequately articulate it. There is certainly no indication that Derrida is as important an authority on technology as Heidegger, McLuhan, Kittler, or Leroi-Gourhan.

The Holocaust

Whilst Derrida's legacies to ethics and technology have been (rightly or wrongly) dismissed as insubstantial, his legacy to Holocaust studies has been of a different order. It is not controversial that Derrida has a legacy

here, but rather it is the legacy itself that has proved time and again to be controversial. The best known expression of this, one that Robert Eaglestone notes in his contribution "Derrida and the legacies of the Holocaust" (66-75), is found in Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust* (The Free Press, 1993). Here she criticises something she calls "deconstructionism" —and it is no mere pedantry to point out that deconstruction is not an '-ism', but rather an indication of Lipstadt's level of familiarity with Derrida—for playing directly into the hands of the Holocaust deniers.

In response, Eaglestone sets out to show how Derrida's legacy and that of the Holocaust are intertwined. After relating the ways in which the Holocaust lives on in the modern consciousness, he demonstrates how it is present in Derrida's work both as a specific event and as an example of human suffering. It is present in his work on hospitality and in his work on the trace, the motif of cinders and incineration running through Derrida's work. Crucially, Eaglestone is not concerned with charting the development of this thought but with its legacies, which he sees as being of two sorts. First, there is the application of his work: the many texts that attempt to deconstruct the Holocaust, particularly those of Saul Friedländer (even though he himself would reject the association); the influence of deconstructive thought on Daniel Libeskind and his Jewish Museum in Berlin; and the various attacks on Derrida such as Lipstadt's or those in the wake of the de Man affair - these are part of his legacy too.

Second, and perhaps more interestingly, there is Derrida's work itself and how he engages with the Holocaust through it. In particular, Eaglestone focuses on Derrida's *Of Spirit* (Chicago University Press, 1991) and the idea that we must interrogate the vast trees of indifference that grew in the same soil as Nazism: the institutions of the modern state. This method is shown to offer no prescription to prevent future genocide and avoids engaging in 'never again' rhetoric; what it does offer is three valuable contributions to thinking about the Holocaust. First, we see that the racist pseudo-science that informed the Nazi *weltanschaaung* drew on a wider metaphysics of race that is still prominent today in ideas of national, religious or cultural identity and values. Second, we are forced think about the complicity of the discourses we use today – of ethics, of rights, of identity. Finally, we see that it is only through general concepts that we can bear witness to the singularity of the Holocaust. The importance of this latter point should not be understated; in a climate of hostile debates about the uniqueness of the Holocaust, Derrida showed how it was both a singular *and* a universal injustice.

Eaglestone has done a fine job of illuminating the different ways in which Derrida's legacies have touched the subject. In stark contrast to Johnson, he shows Derrida's influence on others and the importance of Derrida's work itself. Suggestions that the deniers find here an intellectual tool for their despicable pseudo-history are shown to be wide of the mark; instead, Eaglestone demonstrates that Derrida's work can be "a source for new ways of responding to the problems that are involved in coming to understand the Holocaust" (73).

Concluding Remarks

The three selections from this volume show different ways of approaching the subject of Derrida's legacies. Attridge gives an impressive account of Derrida's ethics, one which on reflection shows a greater legacy than is often suggested, whilst Eaglestone really tackles the idea of what it is to have a legacy and shows in impressive detail just what Derrida's legacy is to the field of Holocaust studies. Johnson's approach is less successful but his is nonetheless an interesting essay on a very specific area of thought about technology. The other contributions are also of a high standard and fit more or less into the model of one of these three ways of writing about legacy. The book as a whole is a valuable contribution to the secondary literature on Derrida and will appeal to theorists in a wide range of subjects. Most impressively, many of the essays gathered here suggest that Derrida's legacies will live on for some time to come.

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Between Naturalism and Religion
By Jürgen Habermas
Polity Press, 2008. Pp. vi + 361. ISBN-10: 0745638252. £18.99 (pbk).

As we approach the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859)—accompanied this year by an unprecedented deluge of Darwinalia—we might pause to consider the condition of secular modernity in its unsteady progress towards establishing a post-religious normativity out of its own theoretical and scientific resources. In the English-speaking world at least, critical reflection appears to have largely given way to polemical bombardment by the likes of Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, whose books tend to portray religious faith as a pestilent irrationalism manifesting itself in reactionary legislation and acts of terrorism. It is therefore timely that a translation of recent essays by Jürgen Habermas on the subject of religion and its place in the public sphere should make its appearance—even if it remains unlikely that *Between Naturalism and Religion* will manage to find an audience outside the academy.

As a political theorist, Habermas remains committed to a Rousseauian-Kantian ideal of autonomy that presupposes an internal relationship between freedom and rational self-determination that can be recast at the societal level within processes of social integration and political legitimation. According to this view, the legal institutions of ideologically neutral liberal democracies must ultimately rely upon a respect for law that goes beyond mere obedience, and a civic cohesion that exceeds mere tolerance—neither of which can be produced by the state itself (p. 3). Habermas is therefore alarmed by the tendency within populous, multicultural communities to circumvent genuine political deliberation and critical engagement in favour of temporary strategic partnerships. Contentment with a mere *modus vivendi* precludes the possibility of a collective historical learning process that might reinvigorate an apathetic electorate, leaving politics vulnerable to its replacement by the directives of free-market liberalism and ideological extremism.

Between Naturalism and Religion stands out from previous collections by virtue of its inclusion of a rare piece of autobiography. It would be presumptuous to make too much of this, since "Public Space and the Political Public Sphere—The Biographical Roots of Two Motifs in my Thought" was written at the behest of the awards committee for the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy on the occasion of Habermas' nomination in 2004. But in order to avoid the impression that Habermas' engagement with

religion represents little more than a retreat into philosophical senectitude, we should try to appreciate the deeply personal nature of the concerns that motivate Habermas' nuanced interpretation of pragmatism and defence of egalitarian principles of argumentation.

As a schoolboy, Habermas' exit from the protective surroundings of family life brought him face to face for the first time with the isolation and humiliation that results whenever our unobtrusive intermediary world of shared symbols breaks down. The "harmless acts of discrimination" and "anonymity" Habermas suffered on account of his speech impediment shares an affinity with the sense of difference that is now a common feature of our globalised world and its concomitant features of mass tourism and large-scale migration (p. 16). Increased individuation has resulted in a progressively layered and ever more fragile network of relationships that derives its strength solely from social recognition. Habermas' description of rational discourse associates enhanced reflexivity with the precision of the written word; only written communication can ameliorate the ever-present risk of rejection inherent to social interaction by virtue of its access to an infinitely larger audience (p. 16). Perceiving the world in its plurivocity, we become aware of our need for a post-metaphysical morality capable of fostering solidarity among strangers.

Habermas speculates that his sensitivity to the intersubjective structure of personal identity may have its origins in a traumatic series of surgeries he underwent as a child in an attempt to correct a cleft palate. This experience of profound vulnerability and dependency revealed to him the deeply social dimensions of human self-understanding: through the lens of communicative rationality, the activity of consciousness, including the exercise of free choice, resembles a "glove turned inside out": our sense of selfhood is an expression of the intricate weaving together of experience through deliberation and dialogue with others (p. 14). With this in mind, Benjamin Libet's influential study on human consciousness (which identifies a 'neural readiness potential' preceding all subjective decisions to act) is called into question for its misconstrual of conscious 'willing' as a mere triggering mechanism for action (p. 154). For Habermas, free will only emerges *within* the process of evaluating and justifying reasons—it is neither an epiphenomenal residue of genetic imperatives nor the operation of a Cartesian entity divorced from material nature (p. 155). Decisions that come about as a result of deliberation are self-consciously inserted into the chain of causes in a way that is qualitatively distinct from those actions compelled by habit, chance, or neurotic-compulsion (p. 156). If we ignore the intuitive self-evidence of freedom accompanying all intentional

acts—if we abstract from the perspective of the participant—the resulting explanation of the act will always remain impoverished.

Taking his cue from Adorno, Habermas argues that the "objectivating perspective" of natural science, especially in the area of prenatal genetic screening, represents a manifestation of instrumental reason that wrongfully subsumes external nature to a technologically manipulable set of resources (p. 199). This myopic, self-empowering subject achieves mastery over external nature only by eliminating or repressing the expression of its own inner nature. Trivialising the uniqueness and spontaneity accorded to participants in communication is not an achievement of scientific neutrality, but a metaphysically compromising assertion of will. Similarly, the secularist rejection of the cognitive content of religion fails to acknowledge the ethical burden of postmetaphysical philosophy, which remains 'post-Christian' without completely evacuating its Christian heritage (p. 210). Kant's critique of the limitations of religious faith was also an attempt at a "saving appropriation" of categorically binding moral law (p. 211). By emphasising reason's epistemic dependence on the detranscendentalised content of religious faith (including ideas of emancipation, alienation, and forgiveness), Habermas counters Whiggish narratives of unencumbered progress with the suggestion that the liberating promise of modernity still remains unfulfilled (p. 226). For Habermas, religion not only serves as a repository for those modes of human experience that lack any functional market equivalent, it also restores our sense of humility: the lesson learned from the dialectic of Enlightenment is that the irrationality we might ascribe to a religious or cultural Other is in fact the historical birthright of liberal-capitalist culture itself.

Habermas is one of a generation of Germans "lucky to be born late" (p. 18). An accidental witness to history, he was too young to be absorbed into the murderous *ressentiment* of the Reich, yet old enough to be affected by the sense of collective responsibility that followed upon the demise of a criminal but immensely popular regime. This evaporation of familial certainties brought with it a feeling of anger at those elements of German society unable or unwilling to acknowledge their own culpability. The arid apolitical elitism still prevalent in German universities after the war forced Habermas to keep his left-leaning political concerns separate from his philosophical interests.

This artificial separation came to an abrupt end in the summer of 1953, when Habermas' friend, Karl-Otto Apel, presented him with a copy of Heidegger's recently republished *An Introduction to Metaphysics*—still unrevised, still evincing the same unabashed evocation of originary values

of the *Volk* (p. 20). For a once devoted disciple of Heidegger, this denial of moral and political responsibility revealed the limitations of a philosophy burdened with Platonist essentialism, a tolerance of "creative violence", and an anti-Western scepticism towards Enlightenment egalitarianism (p. 20). Such Romantic pretensions were thoroughly alien to the generation of students who had just experienced the postmetaphysical unravelling of an ideologically tainted value system. Habermas and Apel would later work together to devise a theory of discourse ethics that sought to rescue the residual normativity located in rational argumentation itself. Discourse theory preserved the cognitive value of normative statements by locating its 'truth' within the fallible consensus compelled by the 'unforced force' of better reasons. However, Habermas' later attempts to differentiate a morally neutral function of positive law from the pragmatic presuppositions of argumentation were criticised by Apel, who continues to claim that the normative intuitions guiding discourse are by themselves sufficiently deontologically binding—assuming that democratic societies are allowed the opportunity to cultivate an appropriate "ethics of responsibility" (p. 94).

For Habermas, the regulative idealisations that help to determine the rational acceptability of contested statements cannot themselves be deemed infallible (p. 97). To assert the priority of morality over law subverts the performative meaningfulness of democratic self-determination and underestimates the historical blindness of any situated rationality (p. 79). It is precisely because the regulative ideals of equal treatment and reciprocity continue to highlight the distortions and limitations of contemporary political practice that they must not be absorbed into the actual functioning of political power—otherwise we lose our means of recovering from a criminal historical past as well as our ability to envisage a cosmopolitan future (p. 321).

Habermas also wishes to avoid the instrumentalist excesses of utilitarianism and legal positivism. He therefore denies that the moral duty to take seriously the needs of anonymous fellow-citizens can be secured through legal sanctions alone. Liberal democratic states do not enhance their legitimacy by attempting to administer the expression of individual preferences, but neither can they simply enforce the tolerance of religious or cultural minorities (p. 120). Article 16 of the 1776 Virginia Bill of Rights was the first-ever constitutional guarantee of religious freedom based on *mutual respect* for the religious freedom of others. Habermas distinguishes the respect accorded to citizens by one another from the paternalist protectionism implied by the concept of *laïcité*, which by the

time of France's Third Republic was understood primarily as barring the potentially malignant influence of cults in civil society (p. 118). The voluntarism acclaimed by the American model provides the theme for Habermas' critique of John Rawls' 'public use of reason'. For Rawls, the practice of deliberation is facilitated by a moral "duty of civility" which entails a readiness to listen to others—but only as long as others express their concerns using "generally accessible reasons", i.e. reasons that are justified without invoking comprehensive doctrines or a particular faith (p. 122). For Habermas, it is unfair to expect religious citizens of liberal democracies to shoulder the psychological burden of maintaining two mutually exclusive personal and public identities, especially since such a stark choice only encourages the devout to withdraw from the public sphere altogether (p. 138). At the same time, Habermas rejects Nicholas Wolterstorff's unreserved endorsement of religious belief exerting influence over democratic lawmaking. According to Wolterstorff, compromises across ideological divides are best settled through majoritarian decisions. But this overlooks the real problem of legitimation in constitutional states: the very respect participants are expected to have for democratic procedures cannot be maintained if existing arrangements are seen to express the particular interests of dominant majorities. The disaffection and fragmentation already evident in many modern democracies will only be further exacerbated by encouraging members of the political community to encounter one another solely as representatives of irreconcilable religious and ideological divides.

Habermas' agnostic refusal to pass final judgment on the cognitive content of religious belief is empowering insofar as participants in informal public debates are actively encouraged (contra Rawls) to express convictions that have shaped their identities and established a sense of fellowship among their community of believers (p. 140). It is only at the institutional threshold of public office that the devout are entreated (contra Wolterstorff) to abstract from their religious convictions in order to carry out their duties as lawmakers within a pluralist society. However, it is difficult to see how giving secularists and devout believers 'separate but equal' cognitive burdens will facilitate the Kantian goal of securing law upon principles of rational insight. On the one hand, the 'institutional threshold' of public office defines the standard of general accessibility in exclusively secular terms, so that the normative content of religious tradition must first be divested of all metaphysical trappings before it can provide the basis of a proposed law. On the other hand, within the informal sphere of civil society, secularists are entreated to abstain from an *assessment* of the truth-value of religious

claims, in favour of a respectful, critical *engagement* (p. 113).

Two problems present themselves: first of all, if religious citizens attach little or no value to the cognitive content of legislative decisions, their obedience to the law becomes merely functional or strategic. In the U.S., both the constitutional protection of a woman's right to an abortion as well as the legal recognition of gay marriage (in an increasingly limited number of states) have been described by cultural conservatives as impositions brought about by a liberal elite, and these sentiments have in the past been translated into outrageous acts of vigilantism against innocent people seen to represent contentious laws. Secondly, Habermas' call for 'critical engagement' appears to refer to something beyond mere tolerance, since 'tolerance' only signifies the respectful absence of rational agreement between mutually opposed positions (p. 258). But how then are 'modest' post-secular humanists to be allowed to differentiate between religious claims that still have semantic value (desire for emancipation, fellowship, and the alleviation of poverty) and those religious beliefs that ought to be condemned as repugnant (the condemnation of homosexuality as an abomination, the subservience of women to men, or the description of the Holocaust as divine judgment)?

Habermas says that postmetaphysical philosophy must be "willing to learn" from religion, that in acknowledging the *limits* of its own scientific and historical understanding, philosophy will avoid replacing devotion to God with an equally unqualified faith in human omnipotence. But does this mean that moral obligations will always ultimately transcend philosophical language? Such an admission would be anathema to Hitchens or Dawkins, who look no further than biology or neuroscience to answer the fundamental questions of human existence. To his credit, Habermas' writing is still imbued with the sense of outrage first voiced by the college radical disillusioned by the achingly slow process of collective learning that followed Germany's occupation and reconstruction. The idea of a public sphere where political pugilism is replaced by critical dialogue is no mere intellectual exercise but a description of a vital outlet we sorely need. While it remains unclear whether Habermas expects the two universes represented by religion and postmetaphysical philosophy to remain in dissensus or be transformed through dialogue, *Between Naturalism and Religion* is effective in its demonstration of a public intellectual's duty to move beyond rhetorical victories and accept the challenge of actually improving the discursive level of public debates.

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Dumb Beasts & Dead Philosophers: Humanity & the Humane in Ancient Philosophy & Literature
By Catherine Osborne
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 262. ISBN 978-0-19-928206-7. Price Hbk £44.00.

Catherine Osborne offers an insight into the place of animals in ancient writing and literature in her work *Dumb Beasts and Dead Philosophers: Humanity and the Humane in Ancient Philosophy and Literature.* Her three-part exploration draws upon a selection of historical ancient writing in order to contend that a contemporary humane attitude is not developed through critical reasoning, arid argument, or language alone. Instead she argues argues that moral truths may be learnt from listening, through poetry and story.

Part one of the book looks at how human attitudes to animals are constructed. Starting with literature in chapter one, a selection from William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence and Songs of Experience* is explored. Blake deals here with human perceptions of nature and the consequences of our moral choices. Osborne notes that moral consequences are not merely utilitarian for Blake, but that our moral sensibilities are dependent on strongly developed empathic responses, which she terms "*emotional responses with cognitive content*"(6). These are acquired through a process of moral learning. Osborne subsequently contends that consequentialist arguments alone are unlikely to bring us to an attitude of deep empathy with animals. Without this process of moral learning we may fail to attach significance to things that may enhance our lives—for Blake, these are what are "*worth understanding*" (13). Blake does not merely exhort us to develop our moral sensibilities; much of Blake's work is driven by deeply pantheistic undertones, implying a unity of nature. Osborne emphasises that Blake's appeals do not rest upon philosophical argument, but upon developing our moral sensibilities. She warns us against pure sentimentality, whilst advocating a position of compassion, and goes on to discuss our place in nature by questioning attitudes that may lead us into "*anthropocentric pride*" (23).

Nature and ancient conceptions of providence are the themes of chapter two. Dealing with our moral place within nature, Osborne presents us with a view of the environment as not *naturally* divided, but which reflects our perception of nature and our "*culture's ethical take on it*" (26) through the work of Herodotus, Protagoras and Democritus. For Protagoras, the providence of nature is for mankind's well-being, but is also bountiful and

impartial. In this vein, Protagoras sees humankind as the "*forgotten child*" (31) of nature—godlike and distinct from other animals. Arising from this hierarchical view, our god-given morality legitimises our political actions and ultimately "*war against the beasts"* (33). Early thinkers used analogies with animals and nature to think about their place in nature and about questions concerning superiority and inferiority of species. This form of enquiry recurs in contemporary debates on the moral status of animals.

In her treatment of Democritus, Osborne draws out a straightforward choice: either we can "*come to think of ourselves as just one kind among equals. Or we can come to think of ourselves as something marked out as favoured*" (35). Osborne concludes part one with the observation that it much depends on how we *read* the natural world and this ancient choice likely remains as pertinent today as then. InHerein, the author steers us clear of naturalistic fallacy, arguing that our moral divisions are perpetuated through our outlook and are not *written into* nature for us to read off, whilst at the same time acknowledging that moral vision does indeed *not* have to correspond with empirical biological fact.

While Part one of the book emphasises outlook, that is, how we come to view our place in nature, and the meaning and value we give to nature depending upon our attitudes to it. P, part two looks at how we perceive difference and begins by questioning what difference may mean for us, and the "*value we place on rational consistency*" (44). In considering three ancient thinkers, the author explores the reincarnation myths of Pythagoras, Empedocles and Plato in turn. Direct comparisons with contemporary ideas on animal welfare and rights are deliberately scant here, in this exploration of humanity and the humane in ancient philosophy. However, in discussing similarities in perception between the human and animal, Osborne makes an important distinction between the classical emphasis on possession of a soul as the primary source of human/animal similarity and contemporary comparisons based essentially on the body (biological, physiological and psychological traits). This distancing from biological consideration and the clear delimitation of body and soul is further explored through the ideas of Empedocles and his interpretation of reincarnation which, Osborne argues, are fundamentally kinship based. Reincarnation is again the theme in discussion of the dialogue of Plato's *Timaeus*. The living things of the world are classified according to habitat; perhaps importantly for wider debate, Osborne identifies that for Plato there is "*no special class for human beings*" (55). For many contemporary thinkers this would likely seem a radical proposition. Indeed, as the author notes, Plato does not conclude that humans are animals, but rather that all animals *are* human,

at least to the degree that every soul at first incarnation is born as a human male. This androcentric view is again likely to prove controversial for the modern mindset. At this point the author reminds us that "*it is our moral outlook that grounds our perception of similarities*" (62), not biological similarities that ground our moral stance towards other animals.

In chapter four, Osborne takes a "*sideways glance*" (63) at the contemporary emphasis on language use in debate over animal/human differences through the prism of Aristotle's notion of *phantasia* and Cartesian *automata*. In protracted discussion, the author draws out some interesting (and challenging) observations for a contemporary understanding of human/animal relationships through her thorough analysis of the pertinent Aristotelian concepts. Her theme is one of continuity and she finds within the selected text much emphasis on continuity between human and animal behaviour, challenging divisions between our understanding of what constitutes rational and irrational souls. In presenting us with analysis of this ancient argument, the reader will recognize the import for modern debate on our understanding of animal capacities and behaviours.

Chapter five continues the theme of continuity between human and animal behaviour. Osborne goes on to confidently refute the presumed *scala naturae* often attributed to Aristotelian thought. From the outset Osborne argues that for Aristotle an order of increasing complexity of function does not naturalistically conflate with increasing inherent superiority. Echoing contemporary themes, the author recognises that "*the cumulative structure of plant and animal souls, which Aristotle describes in De Anima, does not in itself have any ethical implications*" (103). In assessing the various meanings of complexity for Aristotle, Osborne reveals that the commonplace hierarchical picture of the *scala naturae* entrenched in much modern scientific thought—that sees humans enshrined atop the ladder and other beings assigned sundry lower rungs—is not of Aristotelian provenance. The author rightly takes care to qualify that this is not to refute the argument for a hierarchy of understanding and reason in Aristotle's work, but rather a hierarchy of value. This challenge to traditional assumptions on Aristotelian thought is bold and rigorously argued. If Osborne's arguments hold, her conclusions are far reaching and may challenge many longstanding interpretations of early thought on our place in nature and the human "*special claim to greatness*" (126).

Part three of the book begins with the legend of Androcles and the Lion and some later thoughts on the early Christian asceticism of the Desert Fathers are offered. In this part of the work Osborne asks us to acknowledge that the 'beast' of ancient literature has "*always been included in the moral*

sphere of human life from the start" (150). Osborne raises wider questions of moral response and enquires if the virtues of loyalty, generosity and hospitality exist solely as uniquely human attributes. Through story, Osborne brings into focus her recurrent theme: that imagination, empathy, compassion, love and sympathy are hallmarks of the humane individual. These are the attributes that help us "*respond to the needs of others despite superficial barriers of race, class, or (in this case) species" (139).* The strength of her analysis here is that a clear distinction is made between what is presented as the faculty of imagination and mere anthropomorphic sentimentality. Through insightful and pragmatic scrutiny the "*spectre of sentimentality*" (141) a recurrent contemporary preoccupation in philosophical discourse concerning the moral status of animals— is, in this context at least, vanquished. In its place the author asks us to relinquish sentimentalised false dogma that inhibits much moral theory.

Osborne begins chapter seven with a familiar question: do animals have rights? The ideas of natural rights, property rights and conflict of rights are explored through scenes from plays by Sophocles, including Philoctetes, Ajax and Antigone. Osborne moves on to discuss the language of rights in contemporary context and asks the reader to distinguish between legalistic language of rights and the notion of rights within authentic moral debate. She concludes that it is not the possession of rights that is ultimately significant but the "*declaration of them by others*" (182).

Chapter eight is devoted to an exploration of Democritus and Hermarchus and ideas of self-defence. Osborne grounds her argument in a pragmatic view of what contributes to human well-being and broadly argues against seeking reasons to justify decent treatment towards animals. Osborne and sees Democritus as drawing no significant line between mankind and the beasts, likewise, in her (lengthy) treatment of the consequentialist arguments of Hermarchus, her take on these utilitarian arguments seems to be in agreement with Socrates' observation that *"it is not because it is to my benefit that I ought to do something. I ought to do it because it is right*" (221).

Chapter nine focuses on the work of Porphyry and his four books on vegetarianism, in which he argues that meat eating is bad for humans. arguments ,often thecaused Although Porphyry clearly determines that the vegetarian diet is not for everyone, a fact that many modern vegetarians would concede, Osborne's own take on vegetarianism is troubling. Throughout, Osborne encourages the reader to develop empathy and kinship with nonhumans and at minimum to view animals with compassion – indeed to be advocates for the voiceless. Here the author's final message

seems oddly out of kilter with her early admonitions and it is hard to determine a firm moral foundation for her encouragement to slaughter animals that are *"honourably raised by compassionate farmers*" (238) in light of her earlier observations on value and moral outlook.

Despite these criticisms, Osborne's book offers a refreshing perspective on animals and the humane. If the reader accepts the author's fundamental assertion that we assimilate moral truths primarily from listening by means of poetry and story, then Osborne's work will likely be seen as a rich and thought-provoking resource in enlivening debate on contemporary animal rights issues. However, this assertion will strike some as controversial in its apparent dismissal of rational arguments as the most effective way to understand moral truths. Osborne has nchosen her ancient texts carefully, but it may be that there are many 'dead philosophers' who would emphasise a rich interplay of *both* poetic and rational process as means of discovering moral truths.

Osborne's thesis that a humane attitude is not necessarily developed through reason, language, and arid text, and that moral truths may be learnt from listening via poetry and story, is well maintained throughout the work. Osborne argues that moral truth is essentially experiential and dynamic in nature and not merely intellectual assent to critical reasoning. While her analysis is interesting and thought-provoking, the reader is left with questions on the relevance of some of the themes to contemporary normative ethical application on issues of animal welfare and rights. This is not in any respect a failure on the part of the author. Indeed, the underlying strength of the work is that in illuminating ancient ideas, it affords the reader the opportunity to shed fresh light on current ways of looking at the complex interrelationships between human and nonhuman animals. In this respect, this timely work can only add value to the ongoing animal rights debate, not least in enlivening old perspectives for a new audience.

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Presocratics
By James Warren
Acumen, 2007. Pp. v + 224. ISBN: 978-1-84465-092-7. Pbk £14.99.

James Warren's *Presocratics* is the latest instalment in Acumen's introductory series on Ancient Philosophies. The aim of this series is to provide students of both the classics and philosophy with foundational books on various aspects of ancient thought. The previous instalment, *Stoicism* by John Sellars (Acumen 2006), certainly managed to fulfil this aim and Warren has not strayed far from the objective of the series. The book fulfils all the functional requirements as an introductory text, including a chronology and a guide to further reading. There is very little in this work that could be considered controversial and it includes no major reinterpretations of Presocratic thought. This, however, works entirely in Warren's favour. Warren's method is to put forward, in the simplest terms possible, the central claims of a number of Presocratic thinkers.

The opening line of the book introduces the book's theme of Presocratic views on "the nature and origin of the world, our knowledge of it and how we should act in it" (1). Nonetheless Warren is keen to note, at various points in the book, that this remains a limited picture. Although the point is not forcibly pushed it is indicative of Warren's conservative approach.

Warren's cautiousness can be best observed when he is delineating the arguments of the Presocratics. As a rule Warren is indifferent to the conclusions of these arguments knowing that undergraduate students are likely to dismiss the Presocratics as archaic.

Warren is more interested in revealing the process of argumentation involved, and how this process places the Presocratic thinkers at the origins of the philosophical tradition. Warren carefully guides his readers through the arguments drawing out their potential interpretations without settling on any particular one. As an introductory text there is no doubt that this may frustrate readers seeking an easy answer, but as philosophical training it is an effective method.

The point is that it is his argumentative *style* which makes Thales worthy of our attention. Making this point is the traditional stumbling block for introductory texts on the Presocratics, but Warren manages to navigate it well. Other than this focus on the process of argumentation, Warren sticks to familiar terrain. He adopts the classical account of the Presocratics as most suitable for his audience and therefore he also employs the standard Diels and Kranz translations from *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Weidmann, 1985).

Warren notes that there is sufficient reason for expanding the definition of a Presocratic thinker to include poets, doctors, politicians, and rhetoricians, but wisely leaves this "daunting task" for others to tackle (2). Warren does not emphasise biographic details of the Presocratic philosophers in order to avoid turning these thinkers into caricatures. Anecdotes are only included where relevant or necessary to illustrate a point. For example, the claim that Thales predicted an eclipse is confined to the final paragraph in his section and put forward only to supplement the thesis that Thales took more than a passing interest in natural phenomena. Warren is also careful to avoid restricting Thales to Aristotle's "framework for the history and development of this species of metaphysical investigation" (26). That is, Warren is avoiding designating Thales as a metaphysical thinker and instead opens up the possibility that Thales was more likely a physicist or naturalist attempting to explain that from which all things are composed. The point is that this type of investigation opened up the possibility for subsequent metaphysical inquiry, but was not in itself metaphysical.

Here we have touched upon two strengths of this work. The first is the sparse employment of unnecessary anecdotal evidence and secondly we have Warren's open approach to the possible ways in which to understand a Presocratic thinker. By being plunged directly into the content of Thales' thought and argumentation the reader will grasp the main thesis that with "…Thales, at least, we have some clear indication of interest in what Aristotle is happy to call 'philosophical' matters" (24)

Warren abandons caution in his treatment of Anaximander; in his overall crisp and clear overview, we find the claim that the *apeiron* ('the boundless') represents something akin to an *a priori* argument "about what is necessary to provide a reason for any anything whatsoever…" (33) Warren's critique regarding Aristotle's interpretation of Thales as a metaphysical thinker could be applied to Warren's own treatment of Anaximander. However, it is easier to accept Warren's general conclusion that Anaximander represents our first properly systematic thinker. Warren also makes a decent attempt to resituate Anaximenes into the 'canon' where he is considered as a disciple of Anaximander rather than a striking philosopher in his own right. The case put forward here is that Anaximenes, although clearly an inheritor of Anaximander's worldview, strengthens the ideas that he inherits and deserves attention for opening up the question of dynamism with his own *arkhē* known as aēr.

Pythagoras is given far less attention than could be expected given the work that has been done to rehabilitate the great mathematician into the Presocratic narrative. Warren follows Kirk and Raven, who are also

disappointing on Pythagoras in their definitive *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge University Press, 1957). What makes this oversight noticeable is that having skimmed over Pythagoras, Warren proceeds to devote a considerable section of the book to a treatment of the relatively unknown Xenophanes. Warren does however manage to justify this treatment by setting up Xenophanes, by way of his deeply context-bound cosmology and epistemology, as the first thinker of sceptical inquiry, thereby showing us that there are "distinct echoes" of the issues raised by Heraclitus (56). Xenophanes is considered the first sceptical philosopher because he argues for the circumstantial nature of our beliefs. We find the same scepticism regarding human access to knowledge in Heraclitus.

The treatment of Heraclitus is less satisfactory than the other Presocratics although this can be attributed to the overabundance of material related to Heraclitus. As a result Warren outlines the numerous possible interpretations on offer and manages to provide us with a remarkably clear discussion of the *logos*. There is a small problem to be found in Warren's treatment of the river fragments. Warren introduces the possibility that Heraclitus "raised the question" of personal identity (74). Warren also states that Heraclitus "shows no sign of offering us an answer here" (74). The introduction of contemporary problems is at times more confusing than helpful. We find another example in the summation of Parmenides's *Way of Truth*:

> The "Way of Truth" rules out coming to be and change in a challenging way, not on empirical grounds (since it contends that the senses are terrible guides to reality, as can be seen once we check his conclusions against how the world seems to us) but on *a priori*, non-empirical grounds (79).

Warren guides his audience through the infamously tricky world of Parmenides' poem highlighting Parmenides' contribution to ontology – an area all too easily overlooked by students unfamiliar with the Presocratics. It is clear that Warren intends to place Parmenides at a critical juncture for philosophy as such. To this end, he includes an entire section devoted to the reactions to Parmenides. Included under this rubric are Zeno and Melissus, and this section leads nicely into what Kirk and Raven name the post-Parmenidean systems encompassing Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Archelaus, The Atomists, and Diogenes. Warren does not follow Kirk and Raven's schema slavishly. He devotes chapters to Empedocles and Anaxagoras but allows Archelaus to disappear entirely from view, but this is understandable in an introductory text. Anaxagoras is explained as

the thinker who introduces *nous* "as some kind of casual principle" (119). Diogenes emerges for a short appearance in the epilogue alongside the Pythagorean Philolaus. Philolaus earns his place for his influence upon Aristotle's understanding of Pythagorean philosophy, but for little else besides.

The strongest individual section in this book is the treatment of Empedocles. Warren is at his best drawing together all that is problematic in Presocratic criticism. What makes this possible is the relatively new discovery of the Strasbourg papyrus fragments of Empedocles, discovered in 1990. Here, in all its muddy glory, students can comprehend the gritty problem of Presocratic interpretation in its proper contemporary context. The multiplicity of viewpoints regarding these fragments serves as a nice way to draw the book toward its conclusion, and perhaps explains why Empedocles comes before Anaxagoras chronologically. Diels and Kranz controversially divided the fragments into two books known as *On Nature* and *Katharmoi* (or *Purifications*). Conscious of the immense influence that Diels' arrangement has had on the study of Empedocles and the Presocratics in general, the discovery of the new fragments acts as a wonderful example of the cautiousness required in Presocratic interpretation that Warren hopes to convey.

The fragments allow Warren to give an explicit voice to the subtle critique which emerged in the opening pages regarding the extraneous aspects of a thinker which the classical tradition ignores. In Warren's own words:

> Empedocles is therefore an excellent case in which we have to think carefully about what we assume to be the nature of early Greek philosophy; it is certainly not possible to ignore what we might initially take to be "un-philosophical" or "religious" aspects of his work and concentrate on the cosmological sections without the risk that we might thereby seriously misconceive the overall tenor of his thought (137).

Empedocles is more than just another cog in the development of the philosophical tradition. We should not allow ourselves to dismiss the influence of the un-philosophical on his philosophical thought.

The final chapter dealing with the Atomists Democritus and Leucippus contains a general analysis of their cosmology. Heeding his own advice regarding what gets left to one side Warren is wise enough to include a discussion on Democritus' ethical and political views. The short epilogue

ends by discussing Philolaus and Diogenes as thinkers who come to display "a sophisticated and self-conscious approach to philosophy," but also retain fundamental links which run backwards to the "very beginnings of Ionian enquiry" (179). Warren's cautiousness is exhibited until the end:

> In short, therefore, the temptation to consider the Presocratics as a single group separate from Socrates and his classical legacy and despite the temptation to agree with Aristotle's account of Presocratic cosmological speculation in terms of a simple narrative of progress, there are good reasons to be wary of both lines of thought (180).

In other words the Presocratics exceed our neat accounts of them.

Warren's contribution, it has to be said, is one of the better introductions to the Presocratics in a number of years. It includes just enough critical distance on the part of the author that the Presocratics are allowed to speak for themselves. It is clearly not intended for students already well-grounded in the tradition, but is meant as a springboard for undergraduates or lay readers. To this end it should also satisfy the needs of educators seeking a text which avoids spoon-feeding students, and manages to convey the spirit of Presocratic thought. This is no easy feat, and Warren should be commended for making these archaic debates lively. The critical voice that Warren, for the most part, chooses to subdue throughout this introductory text is bound to come alive elsewhere.

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animal welfare remains imbued with a form of 'human chauvinism' that unavoidably limits our full moral obligations to individual nonhumans.

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