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The current volume once again bears witness to the wealth and variety of contemporary research in the general area of phenomenology. Whilst there is a slight preponderance of Merleau-Ponty – pieces on whose work bookend this volume – and of Heidegger – in two essays on spatiality and on technology – there is also a refreshing breadth of topics, approaches, and concerns to be found in the pieces that make up this volume. Equally encouraging is the contributors international range, which also attests to the vitality of current phenomenological studies.

Jessica Wiskus mobilizes Merleau-Ponty to pose an intriguing question: if, as Merleau-Ponty writes, philosophy “must make [the world] say, finally, what in its silence it means to say”, how might the articulation of thought retain the source of silence itself? And she proposes, following Merleau-Ponty, that there would have to be an operative language that turns back to silence for the movement of its sense. In order to play through these themes, she first turns to Merleau-Ponty’s engagement with Mallarmé, who, in the “Crisis of Verse”, describes the dynamic language of poetry as arising “musically”, and she aims to appreciate this musicality through rhythm, as that through which past and present articulations cohere. Specifically, she finds that in rhythm, silence is operative. This takes her to a detailed analysis of Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune. Through this analysis, she discloses the unfolding of musical form not according to a pre-conceived model but according to rhythm, “retrograde movement in futuro”. According to Wiskus’ reading, music shows that time is not a substance, but a “membrane” that makes possible the resonance of expression. This principle of resonance leads one to hear silence in Debussy as much more than absence of sound. Silence – “Στῇ θάλασσῃ the abyss”, as Merleau-Ponty says – lies at the heart of an upsurge of movement. Using music (“rhythmicized time”) as an exemplar, she reads “L’ontologie cartésienne et l’ontologie d’aujourd’hui” and The Visible and the Invisible to elucidate Merleau-Ponty’s account of the temporal structure of expression. In this way, she aims to understand philosophy “as the expression of what is before expression and sustains it from behind”.

In his article, Helgard Mahrdt shows how the human being’s uniqueness and its sharing-the-world with-others are interwoven in Hannah Arendt’s concept of plurality. Starting from Arendt’s understanding of the world as a space of appearance that provides human beings with a kind of stage where they can appear to others, he then asks how human beings express their unique
distinctness. He finds that, according to Arendt, humans reveal their distinct identities by deed and by word, by their acting in that world with others and speaking their own minds, communicating their distinct opinions about that commonly shared world. But acting in concert and speaking out in public presuppose a world of human togetherness that allows individuals to meet as equals. He states that this world is, ideally, one that is politically constructed, in which each individual is granted citizenship, and thereby invested with the equal rights that come with this legal persona. Again, following Arendt, he carries out an analysis of what it means to act and to speak in public, where she finds that it requires the legal personality, the persona, although equality does not preclude unique distinction, and the person is not identical with the ‘natural man’. Instead, there is a part that remains hidden from the person, which Arendt calls the person’s daimon, and which, although it becomes visible to others, does not mean that they can once and for all define ‘who’ a person is. As Arendt sees it, the world provides human beings with a space of appearance, a space they can never leave. According to her, although thinking withdraws from the world of appearance, it is through language, more precisely, through metaphor, that the thinking ego remains linked to the world. When it returns to the world to communicate its thoughts it has gone through a process of thinking that takes into account the opinions of others, called by Arendt, after Kant, the ‘enlarged mentality’, but without sacrificing its own opinion which is confirmed by a sense of compatibility of its publicly announced opinion with its own feelings and taste. In fact, by giving one’s opinion about the world one actively enacts what is human in one’s existence, i.e., one’s being-in-the-world-with-others.

Focusing on the work of Ricoeur and Derrida, Eddo Evink, in his essay “Polysemy and Dissemination”, carries out a comparison between hermeneutics and deconstruction by means of a comparative investigation into the two titular concepts. In contrast to the usual casting of hermeneutics and deconstruction in terms of an opposition between identity and difference – where hermeneuticians like Gadamer and Ricoeur are supposed to be striving for unity, understanding and truth, whereas Derrida and other so-called ‘deconstructivists’ draw attention to difference, otherness, and aporias that escape the hermeneutical circle – he finds a number of agreements between them. For instance, interpretation is seen by both as starting with a preliminary projection, from out of which the possibilities of a text develop; all projections of a text are contextually determined, historical and finite; author and addressee are both absent in the text; the text develops its own history through its interpretations, etc. Derrida himself has often described the distinction between hermeneutics and deconstruction as one between polysemy and dissemination, polysemy being the effort to maintain the many meanings of one word within the extensive framework of the hermeneutic circle and the hermeneutic horizon, while dissemination is the force that inevitably breaks through this circle. Polysemy
and dissemination are thus presented as two different strategies to deal with the plurality of meanings in language. Since in Derrida’s comments on polysemy and dissemination the notion of horizon plays an important role, Evink also discusses this concept. The essay focuses on two questions: what do Ricœur and Derrida actually mean by the terms polysemy, dissemination and horizon; and are their approaches really as incompatible as they are supposed to be?

Dimitri Ginev, in his enquiry into existential spatiality in Being and Time, discusses some of the key ideas associated with this area, such as de-severance (Ent-fernung); the phenomenological meaning of directionality; and the relationship between spatiality and temporality, etc. The aim of the paper is to re-awaken the interest in Heidegger’s hermeneutic-phenomenological understanding of spatiality; interest, which, according to Ginev, has declined in the last decade (although he does acknowledge the contributions by Dreyfus, Olafson, Arisaka, Casey, Neumann, and Malpas to this area, to which could be added those by Alejandro Vallega and Stuart Elden). In particular, he is concerned with defending the status of spatiality (in Heidegger’s sense of it) as a primary existentiale, thereby rehabilitating its equiprimordiality with temporality, and in fact seeing the two as interdependent.

Ginev starts by addressing the status of spatiality in the existential analytic of Being and Time, followed by a reconstruction of what he sees as Heidegger’s two scenarios, in Being and Time, of the genealogical relationship between existential spatiality and the formalized concepts of space. He contends that the scenarios are conflicting since they suggest alternative doctrines of how spatiality is temporalized. The issue of whether spatiality is independent of temporality is at stake in both scenarios devoted, respectively, to the existential genesis of science’s theoretical attitude that operates with mathematically homogeneous space, and to the transition from that primary intuition of space which is concomitant with existential spatiality to the formal construction of the morphology of space.

Gavin Rae’s paper on “Being and Technology” discusses Heidegger’s analysis of the interconnection between modern technology, metaphysics, and anthropocentrism, before going on to discuss Heidegger’s attempted overcoming of metaphysics. Rae points out that, while Heidegger’s notion of the trace recognises that any attempt to go beyond metaphysics necessarily remains tied to metaphysics, his critique of anthropocentrism appears to insist that all vestiges of anthropocentrism be removed from thought. Several commentators on Heidegger have argued that to do so causes problems for his attempted overcoming of the enframing of modern technology, insofar as it is not clear where the impetus for the alteration in technology will come from and it appears to be in tension with his notion of the trace, which insists that an aspect of metaphysical anthropocentrism will remain in that which overcomes metaphysical anthropocentrism. By contrast, Rae shows that Heidegger came
to distinguish between different forms of willing, one of which allows him to point towards a path that incorporates a form of willing into the overcoming of metaphysics that remains consistent with his notion of the metaphysical trace and the critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism.

Jane Duran’s examination compares Camus’s writings for *Combat* and the wartime diaries of Simone de Beauvoir to advance a general thesis about their wartime thoughts, and that of the French Resistance more generally, on obligation, justice and human rights. In the course of her discussion, Duran poses questions which, sadly, are still relevant today, such as, what is constitutive of a notion of justice in wartime situations; and how might the concept of justice play out in an individual’s everyday life? She finds that Camus’s stance towards collaborators softened over time, even while the war was still continuing, but that he was consistently highly politicised in his writings. De Beauvoir, by comparison, became more expressly politicised during the war, whilst retaining her initial orientation towards the personal.

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The definition of philosophy would involve an elucidation of philosophical expression itself (therefore a becoming conscious of the procedure used in what precedes ‘naïvely,’ as though philosophy confined itself to reflecting what is) as the science of pre-science, as the expression of what is before expression and sustains it from behind.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

In reading the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, one must navigate both the opacity of his language and the incompleteness of his work. His penchant for exploring the relations between oppositional pairs – visible and invisible, presence and absence, sensible and ideal – as well as his development of a unique vocabulary nevertheless replete with religious terms – “chiasm,” “advent,” “flesh,” “Word” – has led to more than one qualification of his work as something close to that of the mystic’s vision. Indeed, anyone who reads the final completed chapter (“The Intertwining: The Chiasm”) of The Visible and the Invisible cannot help but note the changed tone of Merleau-Ponty’s discourse. His writing seems charged with philosophical revelation, and the unexpected tragedy of his death following so closely upon an exploration of “ultimate truth” leads one to troubling questions (VI, 201/155). Why should fate have wrested away this philosophical voice so immediately after it was set free? And what has been left for us, now, to gather from his travail? For we have only this: some books, some essays; the greater portion of his work was never brought to complete expression, but rather lies within pages upon pages of fragmentary notes.

Yet it is perhaps appropriate that much of Merleau-Ponty’s late work comes down to us not in the form of narrative but in rough outline. For rather than offering us the sedimentation of a philosophy spoken from the end of thinking, his work promises an opening – an initiation to a philosophical discourse that by its very nature could be nothing other than ongoing and incomplete. In this sense, the course notes and working notes contribute to our understanding of his philosophy precisely through the degree to which they illustrate that philosophy in practice. The difficulties that one encounters when engaging with these notes invite us to develop a sensitivity to his writing that would take into account not only the fixed meaning of each word or phrase but also the process through which the word or phrase arrives at an original sense. Indeed, what the philosopher is called upon to attend, according to Merleau-Ponty, is the viscous link between words. Only then might we see that “language in forming itself,” as Merleau-Ponty writes, “expresses, at least laterally, an ontogenesis of which
it is a part” (VI, 137/102). That is to say, the notes make clear a particular quality of his work that one might be tempted to overlook in the completed narratives; they solicit our appreciation of his work as creative. “[… T]he words most charged with philosophy are not necessarily those that contain what they say, but rather those that most energetically open upon Being, because they more closely convey the life of the whole and make our habitual evidences vibrate until they disjoin” (VI, 137/102). Thus we begin to understand Merleau-Ponty’s propensity towards a language of oppositional pairs; the tension inherent to these oppositions generates a sort of creative vibration not unlike the green grass of Manet’s Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe that calls for a red. And the theological history of terms like “chiasm,” “advent,” “flesh,” and “Word” works not to obscure a vocabulary that would otherwise appear as transparent before our minds, but asks us to recognize that there is a dimensional meaning already present within the depths of every expressive gesture.

In this sense, Merleau-Ponty’s writing is poetic – poetic in the etymological sense; for his writing consistently works to disclose the creative generation of philosophical thinking as within the depth between (or beneath, behind or before) articulated words. In this way, it might seem that the thinking that remains for us, through Merleau-Ponty’s late sketches of notes, stands close to the poetic tradition. For the sketches that we have inherited from Merleau-Ponty are notable as well with respect to the way that they expose lacunae upon the printed page. It is as if the later Merleau-Ponty deliberately employs words in such a way that they work not so much to convey an explicit meaning but to articulate empty space upon the page: as space – as an opening – for a continuous re-initiation to philosophical thought. His writing resists language that assumes an absolute coincidence between sign and signification. There is always a generative gap or lacuna. For philosophical thought does not complete itself within the mind, fully-formed and even clothed in an accessible style, only to spring forth, Athena-like, into the world through language. Rather, it is through the process of expression, and only through that process, that thought comes to be known. Merleau-Ponty writes that, “[…] speaking and writing is not a codification of an available piece of evidence. Speaking and writing make it exist.” And herein lies the crux of our difficulty. As philosophy seeks a thought that can work from the inside of the lacuna, so must it also seek a language that would operate from a pre-articulate opening of non-coincidence. If, as Merleau-Ponty claims, philosophy “must question the world […] and make it say, finally, what in its silence it means to say” (VI, 60/39), how can it bring silence to expression without destroying the silence itself?

There would need to be an operative language – a language capable of setting itself up within the gap between sign and signification – a language that would turn back towards this non-coincidence for the movement of its meaning. Merleau-Ponty writes,
It would be a language of which he would not be the organizer, words he would not assemble, that would combine through him by virtue of a natural intertwining of their meaning, through the occult trading of the metaphor – where what counts is no longer the manifest meaning of each word and of each image, but the lateral relations, the kinships that are implicated in their transfers and their exchanges (VI, 164/125).

This operative language, it would seem, would be the language of poetry. For poetry works precisely according to the principle of non-coincidence; it aims at “making silence speak, at saying what is not-said, at exploring language beyond its usual destination which lies (Mallarmé) in saying what is obvious, the familiar” (HP, 13/12-13). Rather than employ language as a direct formulation of thought, poetry makes use of the clear space between sign and signification in order to allow meaning to be born in a fresh way, taking into account what is latent between the relations that words form through their interaction. Merleau-Ponty differentiates between poetic language (that which constantly returns to the pre-articulate for the generation of new meaning) and empirical language (that which is used in everyday speech) in the following way,

The empirical use of already established language should be distinguished from its creative use. Empirical language can only be the result of creative language. Speech in the sense of empirical language – that is, the opportune recollection of a preestablished sign – is not speech in respect to an authentic language. It is, as Mallarmé said, the worn coin placed silently in my hand. True speech, on the contrary – speech which signifies, which finally renders ‘l’absente de tous bouquets’ present and frees the meaning captive in the thing – is only silence in respect to empirical usage, for it does not go so far as to become a common noun.

Again, Merleau-Ponty points to the poet Mallarmé for the sense of this operative or creative language; it is to Mallarmé’s essay, “Crisis of Verse,” that Merleau-Ponty refers. Mallarmé writes,

I say: a flower! And, out of the oblivion where my voice casts every contour, insofar as it is something other than the known bloom, there arises, musically, the very idea in its mellowness; in other words, what is absent from every bouquet.

As opposed to a denominative and representative function, as the crowd first treats it, speech, which is primarily dream and song, recovers, in the Poet’s hands, of necessity in an art devoted to fictions, its virtuality.

The “virtuality” of which Mallarmé speaks – “what is absent from every bouquet” – emerges as the very transcendence between the non-coincidence of sign and signification. Thus, language never simply represents the world through a kind of onomatopoetic transference of essence into sound. Mallarmé notes that, if it were the case that language worked solely through representative means, we would not have so many diverse languages upon the earth – one, “absolute” language would suffice for human expression. But this lack of correspondence between the sound and the meaning of language points to its creative origin, for always in language there is more than a mapping of thought to expression: there is something latent – something unaccounted for – that springs to life. Language must always turn back to itself, interrogate itself, in
order to disclose a new sense from the transcendence that lies at the heart of the expressive process.

What therefore must also be underlined, as a theme consistent throughout his work, is Mallarmé’s description of the operative speech as arising “musically.” What is musical about this speech – this speech that Mallarmé claims to be “primarily dream and song”? For it is true that speech, even ordinary speech, routinely flirts with music through the use of vocal inflection. Yet it is especially through the repetition of speech or the establishment of a rhythm in the articulation of words that a phrase bears the capacity to lift itself out of ordinary discourse and establish the sense of a “tune.” Indeed, we need not insert ourselves within a dream of ancient Greek life to realize that the poetic text beginning, *Sing, goddess*, serves as the implicit opening of every poem – of every creative use of language. Not without reason does Mallarmé emphasize the sonorous aspect of his language (“I say: a flower!”); by means of actual vocal performance is the idea brought forth in all of its “musicality.” One could therefore say that operative, poetic language distinguishes itself from empirical, everyday language (language “as the crowd first treats it”) through not only its musicality, but, more specifically, its rhythmicality. (Indeed, Mallarmé describes poetry as “human language brought back to its essential rhythm.”).  

For rhythm is a notion that meets up with Merleau-Ponty’s investigation of non-coincidence because rhythm consists precisely in *what is not heard* between notes. Despite our common notion of rhythm as a series of definite, articulated sounds, the musician knows rhythm in quite a different way: as the silent interval that binds articulated sounds together. A single sound – a single note – does not generate a rhythm. It is the relation of a second note to the initial note that creates a rhythm. This is why a conductor who leads an orchestra never begins a piece of music from the first note; *before* the first note there must be a gesture (sometimes only a breath) that, when placed in relation to the first note, will initiate a rhythm or a pulse for the entirety of the musical movement. Rhythmically, the first gesture is never the beginning; it is the second gesture that discloses the fact that there was a beginning. For a rhythm can be instituted only retroactively; it turns back from the second note to the first in order to recover the interval of silence between the two, even as it then lays forth a new structure that would support the anticipated articulation of an unfurling melody. Rhythm promises an ongoing, dynamic process that works by looking both forward and in retrospect, arising through the non-coincidence of each sound. It is thus that poetry, too, utilizes a rhythmic – that is to say, an essentially musical – process, with words turning back upon words to disclose what had remained silent between them. In speech, it is arguably the rhythmic quality of language, more than the tonal range of vocal inflection, that best offers the possibility for leaping into song.
Certainly much of the history of poetry has maintained this close connection to music through the devising of poetic meters, but this surface manifestation of rhythm belies its structural significance. What lies at the root of the work of rhythm within a poem is the process of continually returning to the “unheard” interval or “unsaid” lacuna of non-coincidence. This is the method, in general, of all creative language. Merleau-Ponty writes,

As far as language is concerned, it is the lateral relation of one sign to another which makes each of them significant, so that meaning appears only at the intersection of and as it were in the interval between words (IL 68/79).

As a poet, Mallarmé notably makes this lacuna-principle clear upon the printed page as well. Here, his careful arrangement of space through typesetting serves as another emblem of rhythmicality. Literally, the “interval between words” – the silent space of operative language – is presented upon the page. His employment of space serves as an opening for expression. The inspiration, as with Mallarmé’s fastening upon the notion of rhythm, seems to come from music. In “Un Coup de dés,” Mallarmé’s approach to the language and the appearance of the words upon the page results in what he describes in the Preface as “a musical score.” Mallarmé explains,

The “blanks,” in effect, assume importance and are what is immediately most striking; versification always demanded them as a surrounding silence, so that a lyric poem, or one with a few feet, generally occupies about a third of the leaf on which it is centered: I don’t transgress against this order of things, I merely disperse its elements.11

Mallarmé’s radical extension of space as silence holds particular significance for Merleau-Ponty’s own work. For, according to Merleau-Ponty, when it is clear that language consists of far more than an empirical formulation of pre-existing thoughts – when it is clear that there is no absolute conflation of speech and meaning – then we understand that “the idea of complete expression is nonsensical, and that all language is indirect or allusive – that it is, if you wish, silence” (IL 70/80). This silence, whether marked out upon the page for our eyes to acknowledge or suspended as a rhythm between spoken words, stands as an entire field of being to which the poet turns his or her work. Merleau-Ponty writes,

To speak of the world poetically is almost to remain silent, if speech is understood in everyday terms, and Mallarmé wrote notoriously little. Yet in the little he left us, we at least find the most acute sense of a poetry which is carried entirely by language and which refers neither directly to the world as such, nor to prosaic truth, nor to reason. This is consequently poetry as a creation of language, one which cannot be fully translated into ideas.12

If we wish, then, to explore this “creation of language” with respect to its significance for philosophy, we must first interrogate the silence at the heart of poetic expression. And we might, following Mallarmé and Merleau-Ponty, turn to “Music as the model of meaning – of this silence from which language is made.”13

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For Debussy, music in its essence consists of “rhythmicized time.”¹⁴ This sense of “rhythmicized time” cannot simply apply to the use of musical meter; meter in Debussy’s compositions is flowing and unobtrusive – the sense of his rhythmic pulse is less that of a metronome than a shifting stream of light. When seeking to understand the particular kind of rhythm at work here, one must not consider “rhythm” as a durational measurement of notes or harmonies. This “rhythmicized time” operates across multiple layers: between the notes of a melody – yes – between the shifting of harmonies – yes – but also behind the total unfolding of the piece, as what we call musical form.

As a composition that opens from silence and returns to silence, Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune proceeds not linearly but as if it were forming a shell from the sea: the music coils around itself in successive variations of melody and harmony, articulated according to changing parameters of meter, orchestration, register, and dynamics.¹⁵ Does this shell – hollow and habitable – subscribe to an idea of musical form? The precise divisions of the form in the Prélude remain subject to debate among contemporary music theorists. Most agree that, overall, the piece creates an arch shape (ABA), initiated through a melodic arabesque in the solo flute (figure 1) as the A section, rising to the glorious woodwind theme in measure 55 (figure 2) as a part of the B section, and returning, at the end, to the initial motif (figure 3) as a recollection of the A section.

However, the themes of the piece are so richly integrated that one could also say that the Prélude exhibits the character of a theme and variations: it is as if only one idea informs the development of each melodic phrase. But if it is the case that Debussy uses the structure of theme and variations to shape his piece, this would be a theme and variations that does not unfold in an ordinary way. In the “Classical” model of the form (that is to say, the model used throughout the 18th and 19th centuries), a clearly delineated theme dictates the separate variations – variations that, being derived from the theme through resemblance, act as imitations. Quite different, however, is Debussy’s approach. If analysis reveals that the “theme” or “idea” is not the initial flute melody (which would offer the most obvious – and mistaken – reading of the piece), but, rather, an operative set of intervals (C♯ – G and E – A♯) never directly presented as a “theme,” then the ordinary relationship between a theme and its variations is here subverted. And so what the Prélude seems to offer cannot be described

![Figure 1: Flute, measures 1 – 4](image-url)
simply as a form of ABA or theme and variations. The form seems to emerge not from a pre-instituted model but from a world that belongs entirely to the piece itself. In this sense, the musical form is auto-generative – it is “the form that has arrived at itself, that is itself, that poses itself by its own means” (VI, 258/208). As Merleau-Ponty writes about music in general, it “creates its own Boden” (NC, 65).

Let us, then, enter into this form, asking, first, where does the piece begin? Surely it does not begin with a C-sharp. The flute melody – a monophonic line

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**Figure 2:** B section, measures 55 – 62

**Figure 3:** Return of the flute arabesque, measures 79 – 82
– opens on that note, yet to identify that note as the beginning would be inadequate. On the one hand, it would be inadequate because that note is of the flute – that note, one must say, is of the breath. Before the sounding of the pitch, then, there is the breath, as the silent establishment of a rhythm that will underlie the entire piece. This rhythm – the relationship between inhalation and exhalation – bears no resemblance, yet, to the meter or bar lines marked out upon the score. What one hears in the opening – in the silence from which the movement of the melody emerges – is that life of the external world transformed, through breath, into the deep silver notes of the flute; what one hears is the summoning – the shaping – of wind into columns of resonance, alignment, and amplification. It is as if the air itself has coalesced into a voice. Is not, then, this breath the beginning as much as the sounding of the C-sharp?

On the other hand, to identify the C-sharp as the beginning of the piece would be inadequate because that note does not move anywhere in the musical phrase but only arrives, unsteadily, at itself. This melody is an arabesque. One could hardly hear the C-sharp as a beginning until there had already been reiteration – in this case, a chromatic descent to G-natural and return to C-sharp in measure 2. The subtle difference between measure 1 and measure 2 lies in the temporal gap between their sounding, such that their non-coincidence generates a new musical gesture: the melodic line in measure 3 expands via G-sharp in the direction (however faint the implication) of E Major – the overall tonality of the piece. (One hears the B-natural at the end of measure 3 as the dominant of E Major, a sense quickly subverted, however, by the melodic arrival, in measure 4, on A-sharp.) Is not, then, the C-sharp in measure 2 the beginning as much as the C-sharp in measure 1?

So it is that the initial C-sharp in the flute looks too much backward and forward to constitute a positive beginning. There is, rather, a beginning as the work of rhythm: “retrograde movement in futuro,” as Merleau-Ponty writes. Sound is never the absolute negation of silence. There is intertwining of the external and internal world thanks to the silvery swirl of the breath through the flute, and this intertwining is that of the flesh. The present is never the absolute negation of the past. There is encroachment of the past and the present thanks to the repetition of whole melodies, and this encroachment is that of rhythm. The vitality – the movement – of music is rooted in the excess that springs from this intertwining and encroachment.

And we hear this across many layers, not simply in the flute arabesque. In measure 4, we hear the first harmonic sonority of the piece, as the woodwinds and harp enter on the second beat (figure 4). As nebulous in function (an A-sharp half-diminished 7th chord) as the flute line and focused still upon the upper register of the orchestra, the entrance of the woodwinds and harp neither resolves the tension of the opening melody nor pushes to a new development. It is the first horn (an instrument that, like the flute, resonates by means of the
human breath, but this time offering a rich timbre of gold) that lends pulse to the measure, with a soft, syncopated entrance, leading to an expansive call in measure 5, echoed by the syncopated dyad in the lower third horn. It is as if the idea of the flute melody – so concentrated in its half and whole steps – could close into itself and disintegrate if not for the wide gesture in the horn at measure 5. Measure 5, too, expands in register through the B-flat 7th chord in the basses and muted lower strings (cellos and violas). This B-flat is connected to the final A-sharp of the flute melody but strikes the ear immediately as a new sound. It is an extraordinarily rich moment of color – this sonorous world of basses; it is a moment of B-flats and A-flats that rise out of the A-sharps and G-sharps of the previous measure (as enharmonic respellings that move from the sharp side to the flat side of the circle-of-fifths). And then, in measure 6, there is silence – an entire measure of silence, written into the score.

At this moment, the music has shifted so much (as if, through the enharmonic accidentals, the piece had been rotated like a kaleidoscope) that it reveals a lacuna – a break in the movement of the arabesque. The motion must go back – it must return to itself – coil under itself – in order to continue. The silent measure 6, therefore, stands at the center of a rhythm. It signals a resumption, in measure 7, of material from measure 4, but now with the muted violins and not the woodwinds sustaining the harmony. Again the first horn, a syncopated pulse, issues its expansive call, and the third horn echoes above the rich bass

Figure 4: Orchestra, measures 4 – downbeat of 11
sonority of the B-flat 7th chord. The horns repeat their gesture through measure 9, sustaining a suspension and resolving, quietly, into the D Major triad at measure 11 (returning to the sharp side of the circle-of-fifths), where the flute melody returns.

It is this silent measure 6, following the rupture of timbre, register, and harmony in measure 5, that demonstrates Debussy’s expression through non-coincidence. In a letter to a friend, Debussy comments upon this aspect of his compositional style, “I made use, quite spontaneously, moreover, of a means that seems to me fairly rare, I mean silence (don’t laugh) as an agent of expression and perhaps the only way of making the emotion of a phrase gain its true weight.”17 This weight can be thought as a kind of orientation of the musical material – a gravitational pull, if you will, according to which the piece forms itself (though an institution never determined in advance). Measure 6, therefore, is not merely an “empty” measure: it is an evocation of the very silence from which expression emerges. Through these opening measures – and especially the silence of measure 6 – the whole of the piece radiates.

We hear all of this, naturally, only in retrospect, and, locally, only after the flute has re-entered in measure 11 with another statement of the original arabesque. For the arabesque returns in various guises throughout the piece. This is the variation form at work in the Prélude – we attend to transformations of the arabesque all the way through. These “variations” work back to circumscribe the silence – the hollow space – of the original arabesque. They show what unarticulated “idea” there is behind the melody.

Indeed, it is not through the sounding notes of the melody but through the difference – the non-coincidence – between each iteration of the arabesque that

![Figure 5: Orchestra, measures 21 – 25](image-url)
new musical material springs forth (figure 5): harmonies of D Major (measure 11), C-sharp minor (measure 21), B 7th (measure 23), and E 7th (measure 26). Likewise, extensions of the arabesque (measures 22, 24, and 27) open the possibility for contrapuntal material; chromatic turns in the violas and cellos (measure 22 and again in measure 27), introduced as accompaniment, blossom into the descending triplet turns in the melody of measure 28, leading to the cadence of measure 30 (figure 6).

![Figure 6: Orchestra, measures 26 – 30](image)

Measure 31 (figure 7) features what might be described as a “new,” contrasting melody in the clarinet, set above harmony derived from tritone relationships (in this case, a French augmented-sixth chord and whole-tone pitch collection). Yet this, too, coils back in reference to the arabesque. Here, the clarinet emphasizes the note G by sustaining it for three beats, G being, of course, the very pitch that set forth the initial tritone relationship in the arabesque (that of C-sharp to G). The clarinet’s descent at the end of the measure from a sustained G to a D-sharp compresses the tritone interval of the opening flute melody (that is to say, a diminished 4th compared to an augmented 4th), but the rise to an E-sharp in measure 32 evokes a similar expansion of register (as in the flute in measure 3). How clearly, then, despite its immediate auditory impression being one of contrast (as change of orchestration, harmony, and rhythm), does the clarinet unfold yet another layer of the “idea” beneath the unfolding of the piece.

Even the fact that there is a sequence (in measures 34 – 36, this time emphasizing the note B-flat, i.e., that other signal pitch of the thematic tritone relationship) evokes the work of the “double” (what Merleau-Ponty would
describe as a coupling or a coiling up) that characterizes the internal repetition
of the flute melody (measures 1 and 2) and, likewise, the restatement of the B-flat 7th chord in measure 7. And so, despite the formal delineation that occurs with the cadence of measure 30, nevertheless the musical material of measures 1 – 30 and 31 – 36 springs forth as one, organic gesture. Indeed, extending this notion, we see that the following oboe melody of measure 37 (figure 8) recalls the arabesque thanks, once again, to its expressive descent (this time not compressed, as the clarinet, to the interval of a diminished 4th, but expanded to the perfect 5th).

Figure 7: Orchestra, measures 31 – 36

Figure 8: Oboe, measures 37 – 39

The oboe’s rising motif, in measure 39, outlines a tritone (G-sharp to D), further confirming a relationship with the opening flute arabesque by acting, at this moment, as a sort of mirror (insofar as the initial flute melody outlines a tritone and then, in measure 3, emphasizes a perfect fifth between C-sharp and G-sharp, while the oboe in measure 37 outlines a perfect fifth but then, in measure 39, emphasizes a tritone). This oboe melody – the mirror of the flute arabesque – leads, through a transformation of the rising motif from measure 39, to the gorgeous melody in D-flat of measure 55 that, like the motion of measure 37, descends by a perfect 5th. So closely do these two melodies relate that one might even consider them a part of the same formal section.
Here, however, at the centre of the piece (see figure 2) – that which is ordinarily described as the B section – the play between perfect fifths and tritones, which had always unfolded as a melodic relationship throughout the statements of the variations, is heard as a simultaneity: the melodic motion descending by a 5th in the woodwinds (from A-flat in measure 55 to D-flat in measure 56) meets up with a harmonic motion based on tritones in the basses (as D-flat to G in measure 56, evoking the whole-tone pitch collection). What was horizontal, here, meets up with the vertical. And yet this conflict between fifths and tritones soars in its beauty. Soft, sustained, and expressive, the A-flat in the woodwinds – the very pitch that serves (enharmonically, as G-sharp) as a resolution to the opening C-sharp to G tritone – is magical. Reaching to the upper register, the woodwinds – now flute, oboe, English horn and clarinet in unison – describe a sequence of sweeping descents that build dynamically to a triumphant declaration of the triplet turns (i.e., the melodic turns that we heard first in measure 28). This material again spawns its own double, re-orchestrated with the melody in the strings and enriched with more active accompaniment, and extends across measures 63 – 73, giving passionate release to the rising motif (of measure 39) and triplet turns, reaching a climax at measure 70 (the only fortissimo in a piece predominantly marked piano or pianissimo), and finally swirling round to a slow eddy of melodic fragments through measures 74 – 78.

Measure 79 (see figure 3), then, marks the return of the A section, as the flute arabesque, unstated since measure 26, re-enters (in E Major). Interrupted by a lively oboe melody in measure 83, which, like the clarinet melody of measure 31, features compressed descending motion (this time, a minor 3rd), the arabesque returns in measure 86 (in E-flat Major), succumbs, at measure 90, to another iteration of the lively material (this time, in the English horn), and makes a true recapitulation in measure 94. Here, above an E 7th chord (the very key area that will serve as the resolution of the piece), the arabesque is presented in its original guise, featuring the tritone interval of C-sharp to G. As the energy of the piece dissipates, however, the triplet turns that had shaped measure 28 and led to the cadence in measure 30 are augmented, rhythmically, in measures 96 – 99. The effect is a sudden elongation of the woodwinds’ descent. Their languid melody over a texture of shimmering, tremolo strings (performed pianissimo and on the fingerboard) prolongs anticipation for the final flute statement of the arabesque, at measure 100 (figure 9), that resolves the tritone interval to that of a perfect 4th (C-sharp to G-sharp).

Figure 9: Flute and Oboe, measures 100 – 106
That perfect fourth coils around itself through a rising chromatic scale three times in measure 102, before the melody shifts to the oboe, in measure 103. Here, the oboe rises (like the motif of measure 3) through a perfect 5th (from C up to G, thus offering contrast to the G-sharp of the flute) but then slowly, sequentially, descends to the note of resolution, E, in measure 106. The initial tritone from which the piece as a whole was generated, therefore, is resolved in two ways: as a perfect 4th in the flute (measure 102) and as a perfect 5th in the oboe (measure 103). From here, only echoes – muted horns and low violins – repeat the murmur of the arabesque, as the piece slows, quiets and comes to rest.

Where, then, might analysis ever leave us? One could caution – and should caution – that analysis leaves us not with the music itself but, as Proust has written of Vinteuil’s Sonata, merely with “certain equivalents, substituted (for his mind’s convenience) for the mysterious entity.” Yet the endeavour is not entirely without merit, for it offers us a way, through language, of circling around the centre of musical expression. We can only think this centre as a hollow, and perhaps the inadequacy of language thus serves well by requiring that we continually point to that hollow. The music can never – should never – be captured. But an interesting structure emerges – a formal structure characterized as much by its silence and space as its eloquence. If it is neither sufficient to describe the Prélude as an arch form (ABA) nor as a theme and variations, then it would be best to describe the form as generated according to the non-coincidence between the two. For the form of the Prélude is to be understood not as any single model would propose: what the analysis discloses – through the harmonies, the melodies, the timbres – is a sense of form that gathers itself or that, conversely, proliferates through “a sort of folding back” (VI, 197/152). The series of arabesque statements in the A section, for example, wrap through to the gorgeous woodwind melody – also descending by a 5th – at measure 55 of the B section. The two sections unfold according to a connection – a “membrane” – that is traced between them through melodic variation, coiling about each other tightly, and yet they also participate in the more broadly floating resonance between the arabesque statements of the opening and return of measure 79, since the motif of the descending tritone of the arabesque can be said to generate the descending 5th in measures 37 and 55 of the B section. And so even when the arabesque is not heard – even when it is not present – its absence is active. As the sense of the arabesque gathers itself across the variations, internally, it moves out as well, proliferating through differentiation in the B section. It is this interaction between the similarity of the variations and
the contrast that the arch form provides that makes possible the free and flowing expression of the music. Thus, what we hear as the form is not linear; it moves too deeply to be described as a line, for it is dimensional. There is always a gentle kind of divergence or dissonance at work in the form of the Prélude; there is a layering of sense and the institution of depth. From this depth springs the idea of the form itself.

Merleau-Ponty writes that with the musical idea, there is, “not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed…” (VI, 196/151). It is not a “positive thought,” he continues, but “negativity or absence circumscribed” (VI, 196/151). We can never know it or grasp it directly, yet it is there, generating the expressive gestures of the piece. The Prélude never presents an idea all at once, complete, set apart. Rather, it is only thanks to the succession of musical motifs that there arises an idea at all. Variations do not, in this sense, come from the theme; as Merleau-Ponty likewise says of the developmental process of a philosophical idea, these variations rather serve “to make it say what at first it had not quite said” (VI, 153/116). They are productive, not imitative. Always they turn back to perform an idea that had never been completely present.

Therefore we have, in the Prélude, gestures both of extension and gathering. On the one hand, extension generates the difference through which the piece unfolds. On the other hand, even the sense of gathering or re-collection (exemplified by the arch form) does not institute a literal return. The flute arabesque of measure 94 does not merely echo what had already been expressed; there is difference. It cannot merely repeat, because the movement of expression comes to be instituted only retrospectively. Already the idea – “the tie that secretly connects an experience to its variants” (VI, 153/116) – shifts the effect of repetition; repetition is transformed into resonance.

And this is the sense in which rhythm is significant, for it is through rhythm that the idea arises. Merleau-Ponty writes, “There has to be an ideality which has need of time” (HP, 20/19). Rhythm, as that which itself is unheard and unseen – that which holds together all sensation through prospective and retrospective resonance – expresses the idea; it expresses the idea not merely in time nor through time but as the flesh of time itself.²⁰ In describing the institution of an idea, therefore, Merleau-Ponty writes that there is a “double movement: the past recuperated by the present and contracted in it, but also the present anticipated by the past which remains operative in the present” (HP, 37/31). Like the musical phrase (on a local level) that flows according to a pattern of notes held in relation, or the musical form (on a broader level) that evokes repetition, variation, and development, this double movement is the work of rhythm.

While the notes taken separately have an equivocal signification, being capable of entering into an infinity of possible ensembles, in the melody each one is demanded by the context and
contributes its part in expressing something which is not contained in any one of them and
which binds them together internally,
writes Merleau-Ponty. The double movement – rhythm as a binding force –
characterizes the essence of the unfolding of musical form. Thus, music offers
most directly an opening through which the idea emerges; it offers the rhythm
of thought.

This rhythmic structure operates not only horizontally (that is to say, as a
line between past, present, and future), but on multiple levels, vertically. What
this means is that “each present is dimensional,” as Merleau-Ponty writes (HP,
54/45). There is a “‘deep’ present” – a “‘vertical’ thought” (HP, 15/15). Merleau-Ponty speaks of this thickness of the present as,

the transgression of Ineinander <“in one another”>. That is not a mixture of immanence and
causality. It is the discovery of the third dimension, that of … <philosophy>, that of Being—
the living present as the connection of the present and past of an invisible, therefore as
nonenveloping unity … vertical (HP, 16/16).

Thus, we should not imagine the “transgression of Ineinander” as a two-
dimensional mixture or vicious circle of past, present, and future; rather, there
is “the discovery of the third dimension” – a transformational discovery, that of
depth. The dimensional present always “designates a presence that is richer
than what is visible of it” (HP, 31/27). Indeed, through rhythm, what is
“invisible” coheres with the present: the invisibility of the past and the
invisibility of the future. This “unity,” however, is never a possession,
constituted and determined in advance. I can no more see the whole of the past
displayed than I can predict the future, yet, in moments of their realization, they
come down as if they had been “there,” in the present, all along. This is
because time is not a substance in which we are enveloped and through which
we travel across our lives; it is a membrane. It makes possible a sort of
resonance through which certain events dissipate and others are brought into
accord, amplified. (Debussy, we recall, describes music as “rhythmicized
time.”) Time is a “flesh as expression” (VI, 188/145). In the Prélude, we feel
the “vertical” depth of the form at moments when the variations and the ABA
structure are aligned (such as the extraordinarily beautiful passage that begins
at measure 55); we feel it when the non-coincidence between them coheres,
when the past and future resonate within the realm of the present. And it is this
principle of resonance, finally, that leads one to hear silence through the Prélude
as much more than mere absence of sound. Invisibility is operative. Silence –
as “Σύγγη the abyss” (VI, 231/179) – is not absence; it is the heart of an upsurge
of movement. It is the generative source of form.

Perhaps it is with this sense – this musical sense – after all, that Merleau-
Ponty draws the form of his ontology, as the only way to express his ideas. For
in sketching the notes for his final philosophical project, Merleau-Ponty seeks
a means of writing from this source of silence. Yet to possess the silence – to
force it into an explicit speech – would be to betray that silence. “Can this
rendering characteristic of reflection (which, wishing to return to itself, leaves itself) come to an end? There would be needed a silence that envelops the speech anew” (VI, 230/179), he writes in a working note of The Visible and the Invisible. “What will this silence be?” And this is where Merleau-Ponty concludes,

I will finally be able to take a position in ontology, as the introduction demands, and specify its theses exactly, only after the series of reductions the book develops and which are all in the first one, but also are really accomplished only in the last one. This reversal itself — *circulus vitiosus deus* — is not hesitation, bad faith and bad dialectic, but return to the abyss. One cannot make a direct ontology. My “indirect” method (being in the beings) is alone conformed with being— — (VI, 230 – 231/179)²³

Is his “‘indirect’ method” not akin to the musical form of the Prélude? As a “series of reductions” — a series of variations — “which are all in the first one, but also are really accomplished only in the last one”? There would need to be a philosophy that could perform this silence — that could resonate with this silence through the movement of time. That is what Merleau-Ponty is proposing as “alone conformed with being.” Through the “reversal” there is resonance and concordance. In the *Notes de cours* Merleau-Ponty writes, “Music [is] an archaic axis” (NC, 65) — archaic, we may read, in the sense of a dynamic arche, for music’s movement discloses the existence of the originary un-presentable, the fact of which comes to presence retroactively.

How can we, therefore, be surprised at the sudden and ecstatic tone of the final pages of “The Intertwining – The Chiasm”? For it is here that the philosopher of divergence — the philosopher of “a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact” (VI, 191/147) — writes, “At the moment one says ‘light,’ at the moment that the musicians reach the ‘petite phrase,’ there is no lacuna in me; what I live is as ‘substantial,’ as ‘explicit,’ as a positive thought could be” (VI, 196/151). How could there be no lacuna? For one cannot say that the lacuna is no longer there. The lacuna is the *il y a*, the necessary “openness upon the thing itself [and] to the past itself” (VI, 163/124). We would have no world without the lacuna. Silence, indeed, stands at the heart of Debussy’s Prélude. The musical idea, springing from a dynamic arche “beyond the contradiction, without resistance and without ‘grasps of position’” (NC, 64), emerges from within the divergence itself. Inhabiting this dimension, we do not feel it to be a divergence; we do not approach it from the exterior, but live it through the flesh — “from the interior.” From here arises expression. In a section of the *Notes de cours* entitled “Music,” Merleau-Ponty writes, “Truth: there is an access to the exterior from the interior, there is a relationship to being and beings which is absolute, beneath the ambivalence and the thesis—” (NC, 64).

In music, interior and exterior intertwine, and the expression of music is to be found in this cohesion: as rhythm — as musical form — as the membrane of time — as flesh. For here there is “access” to the opening unto the world from
within the very “interior” or divergence itself – there is relationship to Being and the world that would be neither relative nor thetic – there is expression from the very source of expression. Music, he writes, “reveals articulation before the articulation” (NC, 65). We must, then, take seriously this chiastic expression – this rhythm of thought – that Merleau-Ponty portrays in the Notes de cours.24 For it is with these words that he very precisely describes the aim of his new ontology, “as the expression of what is before expression and sustains it from behind” (VI, 219/167).

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References


4. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty explicitly connects the problem of reflective thought (as the conflation of brute perception with conscious reflection) with the task that is the poetic task: to recover the non-coincidence and bring it to expression. He writes, “To criticize the ‘little man inside the man’ – perception as cognition of an object – to rediscover man finally face to face with the world itself, to rediscover the pre-intentional present – is to rediscover that vision of the origins, which sees itself within us, as poetry rediscovers what articulates itself within us, unbeknown to us (Max Ernst in Charbonnier’s book)” (VI, 258/208). The reference, by way of Charbonnier’s work, Le Monologue du peintre I, is to the poet Rimbaud. An excerpt from Rimbaud’s “Letter to Paul Dumeny” is as follows, “For I is someone else. If the brass awakes as horn, it can’t be to blame. This much is clear: I’m around for the hatching of my thought: I watch it, I listen to it: I release a strike from the bow: the symphony makes its rumbles in the depths, or leaps fully-formed onto the stage.” Arthur Rimbaud, Rimbaud Complete, trans. Wyatt Mason. New York: The Modern Library, 2003, 366. Merleau-Ponty mentions the connection again in the final course that he was presenting at the time of his death, “L’ontologie cartésienne et l’ontologie d’aujourd’hui” (NC, 186).

5. It should be noted that here Merleau-Ponty is speaking of Husserl’s work. Merleau-Ponty’s treatment of Husserl can be taken as a paradigm for the way in which we, ourselves, must think through the work of Merleau-Ponty.


10. Stéphane Mallarmé, Collected Poems, trans. Henry Weinfield. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 122. Later in the Preface, he writes as well that his poetry admits of “a strange influence, that of Music, as it is heard at a concert; several of its methods, which seemed to me to apply to Literature, are to be found here.” Collected Poems, 123.
15. It should be noted that, at the time of the composition of the Prélude, Debussy frequented the circle of poets and artists known as Les Mardis who convened regularly in Mallarmé’s own home. Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune (1894) was inspired, of course, by Mallarmé’s poem, L’après-midi d’un faune (1876). Yet one might say that Debussy’s Prélude serves less as an imitation and more as a non-coincident companion to the poem; from the depth between the poem and the Prélude springs the full expression of the dreams and desires of the faun.
17. Debussy and His World, 265.
19. Merleau-Ponty uses this term to describe the musical idea of Proust. See NC, 194.
20. In The Visible and the Invisible, Merleau-Ponty writes,
   Every ideation, because it is an ideation, is formed in a space of existence, under the guarantee of my duration, which must turn back into itself in order to find there again the same idea I thought an instant ago and must pass into the others in order to rejoin it also in them. Every ideation is borne by this tree of my duration and other durations, this unknown sap nourishes the transparency of the idea; behind the idea, there is the unity, the simultaneity of all the real and possible durations, the cohesion of one sole Being from one end to the other. Under the solidity of the essence and of the idea there is the fabric of experience, this flesh of time… (VI, 148/111).
22. We are reminded here of Merleau-Ponty’s description,
   While listening to beautiful music: the impression that this movement that starts up is already at its endpoint, which it is going to have been, or [that it is] sinking into the future that we have a hold of as well as the past – although we cannot say exactly what it will be. Anticipated retrospection – Retrograde movement in futuro: it comes down towards me entirely done (“Deux Notes Inédites sur la Musique” 18).
23. The editor of The Visible and the Invisible points, with respect to Merleau-Ponty’s use of “Sigè,” to a passage from Claudel’s Poetic Art. Indeed, in Poetic Art, Claudel writes what one could again take as a description of the Prélude itself,
   May this discourse emerge in silence and on a blank page! Where only this last question remains unanswered: but, after all, the sense and direction, this sense and direction of life we call time, what is it? All movement, we have stated, is from and not toward a point.
There starts the trace. This is the point to which clings all life unfolded by time: it is the string on which the bow starts and ends its play. Time is the means offered to all that which will be to be, in order to be no more. It is the Invitation to Death extended to each sentence, to decay in the explanatory and total harmony, to consummate the word of adoration, whispered in the ear of Sigè, the Abyss, (Paul Claudel, Poetic Art, trans. Renee Spodheim, New York: Philosophical Library, 1948, 35)

The essay from which this passage is drawn, “Knowledge of Time,” plays a significant role (along with that of another work of Claudel, The Eye Listens) in The Visible and the Invisible, as well as Merleau-Ponty’s course notes, “L’ontologie cartésienne et l’ontologie d’aujourd’hui.” See NC, 198-204. Specifically, Merleau-Ponty explores the notion of “simultaneity” in the work of Paul Claudel as “cohesion which is not indistinction, which is [cohesion] of incompossibles, which is encroachment, absence” (NC, 199).

The world: a space of appearance

For Arendt the world is, first and foremost, a space of appearance, space that provides human beings with a kind of stage where they can appear to others. A passage from *The Life of the Mind* (1978) clearly illustrates this,

In contrast to the inorganic thereness of lifeless matter, living beings are not mere appearances: To be alive means to be possessed by an urge towards self-display which answers the fact of one’s own appearing-ness. Living things make their appearance like actors on a stage set for them. The stage is common to all who are alive, but it seems different to each species, different also to each individual specimen. Seeming – the it-seems-to-me, dokei moi – is the mode, perhaps the only possible one, in which an appearing world is acknowledged and perceived. To appear always means to seem to others, and this seeming varies according to the standpoint and the perspective of the spectators. (Arendt 1981, 21).

Arendt understands human life as appearance, as “‘being among men’ (*inter homines esse*)” (Arendt 1998, 51), and distinguishes it from death by referring to the Romans who used “‘to die’ and ‘to cease to be among men (*inter homines esse desinere*) as synonyms” (Arendt 1998, 8f.). We enter the world from nowhere and we disappear from it into a nowhere. Arendt underlines the fact that living creatures appear by saying that “Being and Appearance coincide” (Arendt 1981, 19). She relates this phenomenon of appearance to the term public and writes,

It [public] means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody, and has the widest possible publicity. For us appearance – something that is seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality. [...] The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of reality of the world and ourselves. (Arendt 1998, 50).

A second sense of the term “public” means “the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it” (Arendt 1998, 52). It is this public realm in the sense of the common world that gathers human beings together and provides them with a stage where they can experience each other as equal and as unique. In Arendt’s own words,

Human plurality, [...] has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood. [...] Human distinctness is not the same as otherness. [...] In man, otherness, which he shares with everything that is, and distinctness, which he shares with everything alive, become uniqueness, and human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings. (Arendt 1998, 176).
So, if we want to understand human beings’ uniqueness we have to be aware that human beings are interwoven into worldliness and plurality.

*The intertwining of action, person, and community*

Human beings live their life in different spheres; they exist in the realm of the household or private sphere, in the social realm or society, and in the political realm. In the modern world the “social and the political realms [...] constantly flow into each other” (Arendt 1998, 33).

When we “insert ourselves into the human world” (Arendt 1998, 176), we try to control the public image that we present to others. We insert ourselves not just by mutely conveying “something – thirst or hunger, affection or hostility or fear” (Arendt 1998, 176), but by overtly and freely *expressing* our unique distinctness and distinguishing ourselves from being merely something. Our “insertion is like a second birth, in which we *take upon ourselves* the naked fact of our original physical experience” (Arendt 1998, 177).

Human beings possess certain “qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings” (Arendt 1998, 179), and they maintain certain positions and play certain roles in society. Over these characteristics and roles they may have some degree of control: they may cultivate or waste them, display or hide them, as they choose. Together with their physical attributes, these characteristics constitute what they are. But who they are, i.e., their unique identities as persons, is only revealed – yet not fully – in acting and speaking. Arendt writes,

> With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative. (Arendt 1998, 177).

Closely related to and inseparable from action is speech. The human actor, the doer of deeds, reveals himself only when at the same time he is the speaker of words. It is through speech that “men identify themselves as actors, announcing what they do, have done, and intend to do” (Fuss 1979, 159).

Since most of the actions are performed in the mode of speech, speech has an even closer affinity to revelation than does action. However, its revelatory quality only comes to the fore “where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness” (Arendt 1998, 180). Whenever human togetherness is lost,

> as for instance in modern warfare, where men go into action and use means of violence in order to achieve certain objectives for their own side against the enemy […], speech becomes indeed ‘mere talk,’ … [and here] words reveal nothing. (Arendt 1998, 180).

It is not a man’s pattern of behaviour that singles him out as a unique individual, but his capacity to act and to speak. Action, however, if it is not to
lose its power of disclosing “who” the agent is, needs an agent who is “willing to risk the disclosure” (Arendt 1998, 180), as well as stepping onto a stage of appearance, into a world where human beings live as equals. Equality is essential since acting performed under hierarchical structures splits “into two altogether different functions: the function of giving commands […], and the function of executing them.” (Arendt 1998, 189).

Speech, action, and the limits of disclosure

The disclosure of the “who” is implicit in everything somebody says and does. However, it is not at the disposal of the actor or speaker “as though he possesses this ‘who’ in the same manner he has and can dispose of his qualities” (Arendt 1998, 179); rather, it is more likely that the unique ‘who’ remains hidden from the actor/speaker. For this hidden dimension of personal identity, Arendt invokes the Greek figure of the daimon, “The daimon ... accompanies each man throughout life, [it] is his distinct identity, but appears and is visible only to others” (Arendt 1998, 193). And as an identity that is always in motion, it can only be definitively grasped by others when this life has ended with death.

It is impossible to determine “who” somebody is. In Arendt’s own words,

The manifestation of the who [that] the speaker and doer unexchangably is, though it is plainly visible, retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression. The moment we want to say who somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying what he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type or a ‘character, in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us. (Arendt 1998, 181).

It seems that our inability to fix in words “who” a person is, is closely related to the fact that we cannot approach the realm of human affairs in the same way that we approach things. The realm of human affairs consists of an innumerable plurality of events, where “the disclosure of the ‘who’ through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web” (Arendt 1998, 184) in which they initiate new things. These new processes are immediately affected by, as they affect, the innumerable conflicting intentions of other actors and speakers. Therefore, the full meaning of what we initiate can be known, if at all – only in retrospect. “Who somebody is or was”, Arendt writes, “we can know only by knowing the story of which he is the hero – his biography, in other words; everything else we know of him, including the work he may have produced and left behind, tells us only what he is or was.” (Arendt 1998, 186; Young-Bruehl 2006, 86).

Most actions and speech have an ‘objective’ content or reference, they are “about some worldly objective reality” (Arendt 1998, 182), – but “no matter what one’s action and speech is about, its significance is still a matter of direct address to other men” (Fuss, 162). Since the disclosure of the subject is an integral part of all ... intercourse, the physical “worldly in-between along with
its interests is overlaid and […] overgrown” (Arendt 1998, 182) with a “second subjective in-between”, the process of acting and speaking. Arendt calls this reality “the ‘web’ of human relationships” (Arendt 1998, 183), insisting that the “disclosure of the ‘who’ through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt.” (Arendt 1998, 184).

*The expression of thoughts and feelings*

I have mentioned the daimon as a hidden part of one’s identity visible only to others. To this we find a closed part of our identity as a kind of inner equivalent which Arendt circumscribes by way of a metaphor, the “darkness of the human heart” (Arendt 1998, 244). Is there, then, a way to disclose the heart? It seems as if there exists a power of self-revelation, although this unique power is “one of the rarest occurrences in human lives” (Arendt 1998, 242).

Love […] indeed possesses an unequalled power of self-revelation and an unequalled clarity of vision for the disclosure of who, precisely because it is unconcerned to the point of total unworldliness with what the loved person may be, with his qualities and shortcomings no less than with his achievements, failings, and transgressions. (Arendt 1998, 242).

However,

when we say that nobody but God can see (and perhaps, can bear to see) the nakedness of a human heart, ‘nobody’ includes one’s own self – if only because our sense of unequivocal reality is so bound up with the presence of others that we can never be sure of anything that only we ourselves know and no one else. (Arendt 1990, 96).

Man is not only a creature fitted for and dependent on appearances, but has moreover “‘the urge to self-display’ (*Selbstdarstellung*)” (Arendt 1981, 29). He needs a stage, fellow-actors, and spectators. But this does not mean life is “the appearance of an inside as an outside’” (Arendt 1981, 29), since,

the inside, the functional apparatus of the life process, is covered up by an outside which, as far as the life process is concerned, has only one function, namely, to hide and protect it, to prevent its exposure to the light of an appearing world. If this inside were to appear, we would all look alike. (Arendt 1981, 29).

When we turn to feelings, passions and emotions, they, can no more “become part and parcel of the world of appearances than can our inner organs” (Arendt 1981, 31). Arendt explains, “What appears in the outside world in addition to physical signs is only what we make of them through the operation of thought. Every show of anger”, she goes on, “as distinct from the anger I feel, already contains a reflection on it, and it is this reflection that gives the emotion the highly individualized form which is meaningful for all surface phenomena.” (Arendt 1981, 31). In other words, without the manifestation and expression of our feelings and emotions, it would not be possible to know anything about them. The passions and emotions need to be expressed – and this is precisely the work of the mind.
Thinking and communicating

According to Arendt, the life of the human mind is not the life of one faculty, but of three basic mental activities, of “thinking, willing, and judging” (Arendt 1981, 69). The three mental activities “cannot be derived from each other” (Arendt 1981, 69), which means that they are autonomous, and this implies that they are unconditioned or free. If each faculty is autonomous, how then are thinking and judging related? What do we do when we think? What do we do when we judge? How does the activity of judging reveal our uniqueness?

The first chapter of Arendt’s book The Life of the Mind is about thinking, it is entitled “Appearance” and is prefaced by a quotation of the poet W. H. Auden, “Does God ever judge us by appearances? I suspect that he does” (Arendt 1981, 17). This quotation provides the reader with a kind of direction, indicating that thinking and appearance are related. Indeed, the first two pages clearly indicate Arendt’s critique of one of the oldest claims of philosophy, namely, that thinking has to leave the world of appearances and that the thinker has to cut himself off from all other beings. She opens the first chapter as follows,

The world men are born into contains many things, natural and artificial, living and dead, transient and sempiternal, all of which have in common that they appear and hence are meant to be seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled, to be perceived by sentient creatures endowed with the appropriate sense organs. Nothing could appear, the word ‘appearance’ would make no sense, if recipients of appearances did not exist – living creatures able to acknowledge, recognize, and react to – in flight or desire, approval or disapproval, blame or praise – what is not merely there but appears to them and is meant for perception. (Arendt 1981, 19).

But where does this leave the thinking person? Thinking is a “soundless dialogue [...] between me and myself” (Arendt 1981, 185). Thinking is “‘out of order’ [...]. It interrupts any doing, any ordinary activities, no matter what they happen to be. All thinking demands a stop-and-think.” (Arendt 1981, 78). It is true, the thinking ego withdraws from the world, however, “it is withdrawal not so much from the world [...] as from the world’s being present to the senses.” (Arendt 1981, 75). Arendt insists that thinking remains related to the world, since “whatever prevents thinking belongs to the world of appearances and to those common-sense experiences I have in company with my fellows [...] my sense of the realness of my own being” (Arendt 1981, 78f) is automatically guaranteed. Furthermore, thinking is “linked to the world through language, and particularly by metaphor in which thought is manifest and by which thinking is reminded [...] of the world it has left behind.” (Young-Bruehl 1982, 281). Metaphors achieve “the ‘carrying over’ – metapherein – of a genuine and seemingly impossible metabasis eis allo genos, the transition from one existential state, that of thinking, to another, that of being an appearance among appearances, and this can be done only by analogies.” (Arendt 1981, 103). Arendt refers to Kant, for whom “this speaking in analogies, in metaphorical language [...], is the only way through which [...] thinking can manifest itself.” (Arendt 1981, 103). “The metaphor,” she explains,
provides the ‘abstract’, imageless thought with an intuition drawn from the world of appearances whose function it is ‘to establish the reality of our concepts’ and thus undo, as it were, the withdrawal from the world of appearances that is the precondition of mental activities. (Arendt 1981, 103).

In Arendt’s view the metaphor was the “greatest gift language could bestow on thinking and hence on philosophy” (Arendt 1981, 105). And since “the metaphor itself is poetic rather than philosophical in origin” (Arendt 1981, 105), it is not surprising that poets and storytellers have a special talent to make the invisible visible. To illustrate her point Arendt turns to the work of Homer. In the “great dialogue between Odysseus and Penelope” she finds a “more complex kind of extended metaphor […] which, rugh moving among visibles, points to a hidden story.” (Arendt 1981, 107). Odysseus, “disguised as a beggar” and unrecognized by Penelope, tells her that he saw her husband alive. The readers are told, “how ’her tears ran’ as she listened and her body was melted, as the snow melts along the high places of the mountains when the West wind has piled it there, but the South Wind melts it, and as it melts the river run full flood.” (Arendt 1981, 107). At first sight “the metaphor seems to combine only visibles”, since “the tears on her check are no less visible than the melting snow” (Arendt 1981, 107). However, in Homer we find a more complex kind of extended metaphor, which, as Arendt is suggesting, “though moving among visibles, points to a hidden story”, “The invisible made visible in the metaphor is the long winter of Odysseus’ absence, the lifeless frigidity and unyielding hardness of those years, which now, at the first signs of hope for a renewal of life, begin to melt away.” (Arendt 1981, 107).

The metaphor communicates something that we cannot see; it bridges “the gulf between the realm of the invisible and the world of appearances” (Arendt 1981, 108). How then can language succeed to make “the land of thought” manifest “not just to our minds but to our bodily ears” (Arendt 1981, 109) what is absent to our eyes? Arendt, referring to Aristotle, says that, “if speaking and thinking spring from the same source, then the very gift of language could be taken as a kind of proof, or perhaps, rather, as a token, of men’s being naturally endowed with an instrument capable of transforming the ‘invisible’ into an ‘appearance’.” (Arendt 1981, 109). Following Aristotle, she suggests that “thinking is the mental activity that actualizes those products of the mind that are inherent in speech and for which language […] has already found an appropriate though provisional home in the audible world.” (Arendt 1981, 109).

The memorable point Arendt makes is that there are not two worlds since metaphor unites them, “Language, by lending itself to metaphorical usage, enables us to think, that is, to have traffic with non-sensory matters, because it permits a carrying over, metapherein, of our sense experiences” (Arendt 1981, 110). “The thinking ego” never leaves the world of appearances (Arendt 1981,
110). However, “I know of my mind’s faculties only so long as the activity lasts, which means that thinking itself can never be solidly established as one [...] property of the human species” (Arendt 1981, 88). In other words, these activities though manifest to the thinking ego, lack the ability to appear.

As we have seen, language is the medium for the manifestation of thinking, and thinking draws for this on metaphors. The same goes for judgement, which “draws [...] its metaphorical language from the sense of taste [...], the most intimate, private, and idiosyncratic of the senses” (Arendt 1981, 111). I will come back to this. But first I have to note that the process of thinking is dialogical, i.e., thinking becomes truly an activity where I am ‘two-in-one’. In Arendt’s own words, “To be by myself and to have intercourse with myself is the outstanding characteristic of the life of the mind” (Arendt 1981, 74). Here, in the mind’s life of its own, “plurality is reduced to the duality already implied in the fact and the word ‘consciousness’, [...] to know with myself” (Arendt 1981, 74). So, in thinking I keep myself company; however, my thinking is “‘invisible’, ‘inaudible’ to others unless I speak my thought” (Deutscher 2007, 23). To tell my thoughts to others requires the existence of a world to which I can return. The moment I communicate my thought results they immediately turn into opinion among innumerable other opinions since “plurality is specifically the condition – not only the condition sine qua non, but the condition per quam – of all political life” (Arendt 1998, 7).

It will be shown that the political sphere consists not only of the doers of deeds but also of a plurality of spectators, some of whom assume the role of the story-teller (journalists) and even the historian of the political life.

The public realm, the spectator, and story-telling

Arendt insists on the worldliness of living beings and on the “almost infinite diversity of [the world’s] appearance, the sheer entertainment value of its views, sounds, and smells.” (Arendt 1981, 20). This diversity of the world is matched by the fact that “every appearance, its identity notwithstanding, is perceived by a plurality of spectators” (Arendt 1981, 21). Arendt distinguishes the doer of deeds, i.e., the man who is absorbed in particular things, involved in the appearances, from the spectator who is distanced from the actions. Not to the doer of the deeds but only to the spectator, the “storyteller, that is, to the backward glance of the historian”, does “action reveal itself fully.” (Arendt 1998, 192). Speech and action have a revelatory quality. However, this specific quality is “indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking” (Arendt 1998, 187). Therefore the manifestation has to be completed by a narrative.

Such a narrative depends on the existence of the political in-between, since in this world of appearances, nothing that appears manifests itself to a single viewer but to a plurality of spectators. Everything that appears to them is “perceived in the mode of it-seems-to-me, hence open to error and illusion”
Nevertheless, “appearance as such […] carries with it a prior indication of realness.” (Arendt 1981, 49), and this realness or sensation of reality is guaranteed, “by its worldly context which includes others who perceive as I do on the one hand, and by the working together of my five senses on the other.” (Arendt 1981, 50).

Arendt stresses over and over that, “the world is something held in common by plural subjects, it provides a common point of orientation.” (Biskowski 1993, 879). This world as a public stage and space in which human beings make their appearance, provides the condition for political action and opinions, since “opinions are formed in a process of open discussion and public debate” (Arendt 1990, 268). When the world that human beings have in common disappears or is destroyed, as in totalitarianism, where plurality is destroyed, the unique perspective of human beings, each person’s ability to judge, is likewise destroyed.

Let us recall that the diversity of the world is perceived by a plurality of spectators. As spectators they deliberately withdraw from participating in deeds, but not “to any ‘higher’ region such as Parmenides and Plato later envisioned” (Arendt 1981, 93); they remain in the world and occupy “a position that enables them”, but never the actor, to “know and understand whatever offers itself as a spectacle.” (Arendt 1981, 92). While we as actors always are involved in a particular part of the event, it is the spectator who can see the whole and therefore judge the event properly. He disengages, although this disengagement is not solitary, since he remains “always involved with fellow spectators” (Arendt 1989, 63). How does he obtain his impartiality? For this Arendt turns to Kant and his concept of ‘enlarged mentality’, which plays a crucial role in the Critique of Judgment.

Kant specified three “maxims of common human understanding,” which are: (1) Think for oneself; (2) Think from the standpoint of everyone else; and (3) Always think consistently. To think, according to his understanding, not only means to think for oneself (Selbstdenken), but to think critically, i.e., to liberate oneself from prejudices. This we “cannot learn without publicity, without testing that arises from contact with other people’s thinking.” (Arendt 1989, 42). Kant called this way of thinking “enlarged mentality”. Arendt, on her part, states, that “our thinking is truly discursive, running, as it were, from place to place, from one part of the world to another, through all kinds of conflicting views, until it finally ascends from these particularities to some impartial generality.” (Arendt 1993, 242).

It is in the first part of Kant's Critique of Judgment that she finds men not as autonomous ends in themselves, but as “earthbound creatures, living in communities, endowed with common sense, sensus communis, a community sense; […] needing each other’s company even for thinking.” (Arendt 1989, 27). It is here that Kant sets out to demonstrate that it is possible to judge
without having the categorical imperative provide the yardstick for judging. He calls this way of judging reflective judgments. For the question of appearance of the self in its relatedness to the world the next step will be to sketch Kant’s judgment of taste. Judgments of taste, this is my underlying thought, do provide a way of judging whereby individuals reveal their uniqueness, make visible ‘who’ they are and at the same time contribute to worldliness.

**Communicating taste**

Arendt claims that it is Kant’s third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*, which offers the greatest insight into the process of judgment. The topic of the *Critique of Judgment* is the particular, and the faculty of judgment is the faculty of men’s mind to deal with it. If we want to communicate particulars we do not need to practice determinative but reflective judgment. While the former subsume particulars under general rules, the latter “judge particulars without subsuming them under [...] general rules” (Beiner 1989, 110).

The *Critique of Judgment* was originally conceived as a “Critique of Taste”. The sense of taste is “the most intimate, private, and idiosyncratic of the senses” (Arendt 1981, 111). Taste [and smell] “are entirely private and incommunicable; what I taste and what I smell cannot be expressed in words at all” (Arendt 1989, 64). “These senses,” Arendt clearly remarks, are subjective because the very objectivity of the seen or heard or touched thing is annihilated in them or at least not present; they are inner senses because the food we taste is inside ourselves, and so, in a way, is the smell of the rose. And the it-pleases-or-displeases-me is almost identical with an it-agrees-or-disagrees-with-me. (Arendt 1989, 66)

She adds, “no argument can persuade me to like oysters if I do not like them. In other words, the disturbing thing about matters of taste is that they are not communicable” (Arendt 1989, 66). How then can inner senses become the vehicle for judgment? Or put in other words, how can taste, which always is my personal taste, be made public? The answer is by transforming taste into judgment.

But how do we get from taste, which is an inner feeling, to judgment? By help from another faculty, the faculty of imagination. “Imagination […] transforms an object into something I do not have to be directly confronted with but that I have in some sense internalized, so that I now can be affected by it as though it were given to me by a non-objective sense” (Arendt 1989, 66f.). This “operation of reflection” distances us from the object so that we are not touched by its immediate presence but imaginatively in our representation of it. It is now that we can first speak of a judgment and no longer simply of taste. “Kant says: ‘That is beautiful which pleases in the mere act of judging it’” (Arendt 1989, 66f.). In other words, “it is not important whether or not it pleases merely in perception; what pleases merely in perception is gratifying but not beautiful. It pleases in representation, for now the imagination has prepared it so that I can
reflect on it” (Arendt 1989, 67). Judgment, “though it still affects one like a matter of taste, […] now has by means of representation, established the proper distance, the remoteness or uninvolvedness or disinterestness that is requisite for […] evaluating something at its proper worth” (Arendt 1989, 67).

Judgments or opinions, *doxa*, express the people’s views about the world, the way in which they, from their particular point of view, see the common world. And they make the particular speaker identifiable since the singularity of each individual implies that the world is revealed differently to each of them. In the realm of human affairs there is no “objective truth”; instead, communication is needed. It is “the criterion of communicability or publicness” that sets the standard for deciding on what is appropriate to communicate. As Arendt writes,

One is not overeager to express joy at the death of a father or feelings of hatred and envy; one will, on the other hand, have no compunctions about announcing that one enjoys doing scientific work, and one will not hide grief at the death of an excellent husband (Arendt 1989, 69).

However, we are still left with the question how the judgment which is grounded in taste as an inner feeling can be understood by others. We would think that taste is a private feeling. Instead, taste is “the very opposite of ‘private feelings’” (Arendt 1993, 222), insofar as it, “like any other judgment, appeals to common sense” (Arendt 1993, 222). Common sense ensures communicability, both for Kant and for Arendt. However, Kant changed the term common sense, and used the Latin term *sensus communis*. In Arendt’s interpretation, *sensus communis* is “strictly that sense which fits us into a community with others, makes us members of it and enables us to communicate things given by our five […] senses.” (Kohn 2003, 139). She makes this a strong point,

This *sensus communis* is what judgment appeals to in everyone, and it is this possible appeal that gives judgments their special validity. The it-pleases-or-displeases-me, which as a feeling seems so utterly private and non-communicative, is actually rooted in this community sense and is therefore open to communication once it has been transformed by reflection, which takes all others and their feelings into account. (Arendt 1989, 72)

Without this *sensus communis* we would not be able to share our judgments or overcome our individual idiosyncrasies. In Arendt’s own words, “when one judges, one judges as a member of a community” (Arendt 1989, 72).

Earlier I said that we are singled out as a unique individual by our capacity to act and to speak. Now I would add that the same goes for our mental capacities, thinking and judging. Thinking and judging are closely related. But they differ in the way they proceed. The thinking process in judging,

is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. (Arendt 1993, 220).

Let us, then, turn once again to the public realm, more precisely, to the public political realm.
Identity and a public persona

Following Arendt, we have to distinguish the social realm or society from the realm of politics. In her view “society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of action” (Arendt 1998, 40). In this sphere the “laws of statistics are valid” (Arendt 1998, 42), and together with them goes uniform behaviour. Here, in the social sphere, “whatever we do, we are supposed to do for the sake of ‘making a living’” (Arendt 1998, 126f). “Society”, Arendt claims, “equalizes under all circumstances […] and […] distinction and difference have become private matters of the individual” (Arendt 1998, 41). Against “the sameness prevailing in a society resting on labour and consumption and expressed in its conformity” (Arendt 1998, 214), she defends the public realm as the realm of politics. In this public realm we find political equality which differs decisively from society’s equalizing process. “The equality attending the public realm”, Arendt states, “is necessarily an equality of unequals who stand in need of being ‘equalized’ in certain respects and for specific purposes” (Arendt 1998, 215). “Political equality”, she adds, “is the very opposite of our equality before death” (Arendt 1998, 215). In fact, political equality means to have the same rights so that when one moves in the public political realm, one moves among peers.

When we now turn to the realm of politics, we are no longer confronted with the human being as individual but with him in his role of citizen. In her book, The Human Condition (1958), Arendt stresses that “each human activity points to its proper location in the world” (Arendt 1998, 73). It changes its character depending on where it takes place, i.e., whether it takes place in the private, the social, or the public realm. This is of particular relevance for the revelation of the “who”. As Julia Kristeva rightly noticed, “the ‘who’ is a hidden self, but it is hidden more from the person than from the memory of other people” (Kristeva, 173).

However, human beings “never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow” (Arendt 1998, 244). Does this impossibility exclude identity? In fact, Arendt believed that one cannot intimately know oneself separate from others. Human beings need the “multitude of other people – the given reality of diverse individuals […] who receive and interpret the acts of each newcomer by implicitly asking him the question, ‘who are you?’” (Kristeva, 173)

Human beings enter the public scene not as an “individual without rights and duties”, but as citizen, as a “legal personality” (Arendt 1990, 107). They are expected to play a role on the public scene as persons or *personae*. The Latin word *persona* refers back to the Greeks and their understanding of the ancient actors who wear masks when they were performing a play. The mask, Arendt writes, “had to hide, or rather to replace, the actor’s own face and countenance […] through which a voice sounds” (Arendt, 1990, 106).

Arendt recovers this original meaning of the mask and contrasts it with the experience of the French Revolution. The Revolution “offered the opportunity
of tearing the mask of hypocrisy off the face of French society, of exposing its rottenness, and finally of tearing the façade of corruption down and of exposing behind it the unspoiled, honest face of the people” (Arendt 1990, 106).

However, what the men of the Revolution failed to understand was “the importance of the politically constructed persona, the mask that was necessary to provide the artificial built spaces in which each actor’s voice is ‘able to sound through’” (Owens 2007, 102; Arendt 1990, 106).

The mask matters to Arendt because it enables the audience not to focus on what the inner motives of a political actor might be, but on the words he says and the actions he undertakes (Owens, 100). Jerome Kohn rightly points to a slightly different use that Arendt makes of the Latin noun “persona”, using it, not as the Romans had, metaphorically referring to the political person as distinguished from ‘a member of the human species,’ but in her own metaphorical sense of a somebody who is ‘identifiable’ without being ‘definable,’ a unique thisness that perdures within the exchangeable masks the actor dons for his role in ‘the great play of the world,’ one of which she was wearing as she spoke. (Kohn, xxxii)

The word persona, originally the language of the theatre, after having been turned into a metaphor and turned into a legal term, now indicates the legal status of a human being. The individual without his persona would be nothing but the “natural Ego, the individual without rights and duties, perhaps a ‘natural man’ – that is a human being or homo in the original meaning of the word, indicating someone outside the range of the law and the body politic of the citizens” (Arendt 1990, 107).³

As ‘natural man’ the individual lacks legal personality, being a persona, i.e., the status of citizenship. Without citizenship or full membership in a community, what Arendt calls “a right to have rights” (Arendt 1985, 296), a requisite for engaging in politics is missing, since being deprived of this right does not mean being “deprived of […] the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion” (Arendt 1985, 296).

But how are appearing on the public scene and self-disclosure related? Aren’t human beings not also acting and communicating in the private and the social sphere? They certainly are, and Arendt doesn’t doubt this. However, it is only in the public sphere that the individual reveals ‘who’ he or she is, since it is the only sphere of life “where people are with others and neither for nor against them – that is, in sheer human togetherness” (Arendt 1998, 180). It is only in this sphere that one can “distinguish oneself from all others”. Excellence, by definition, always requires “the presence of others […], and this presence needs the formality of the public, constituted by one’s peers” (Arendt 1998, 49). It is the public realm of politics that provides the possibility for exercising ‘virtuous dispositions’, for example, for acting inspired by love for equality. When people act in concert or present their opinion about the world that they care for, they
actively perform what is human in their existence, their “being-in-the-world-with-others”. Only under the condition that they keep their interest in the common world alive and only insofar as they feel related to it and to their fellow humans are they seen, heard and judged not for ‘what’ but for ‘who’ they are.

Arendt was concerned about the implicit danger of the withering away of the public realm. Such a process threatens what is distinctively human in human affairs, i.e., “the revelatory character of action as well as the ability to produce stories and become historical, which together form the very source from which meaningfulness springs into and illuminates human existence” (Arendt 1998, 324).

Conclusion

Human plurality has “the twofold character of equality and distinction” (Arendt 1998, 175). The mode of acting and speaking, thinking and judging that Arendt is engaged in is her particular unique effort to reverse the tradition of philosophy. She suggested a different attitude and approach to human affairs, an approach that is keenly aware that men in all active and contemplative activities never move outside the world of appearances. In her view the identity of the human being is closely related to its ability to appear to others – be it through acting, speaking, or judging. By exercising these activities every newcomer gives his unique answer to the question ‘who are you’? The necessary condition for this is a world of human plurality, a world we have in common and where we can move among peers. Whenever we are willing to engage in our world, i.e., to act together, to speak or to judge, our activity is twofold: we reveal ‘who’ we are and we experience that we have a world in common. However, human beings can never totally control how they appear to others, since their distinct identity, their daimon, appears and is visible only to others. They are the doer of their deeds but they are not the authors of their life stories. Such life stories can only be told once the person has ‘ceased to be among men’.

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1. For a more detailed investigation of Arendt’s view of the philosophical tradition, in particular her critique of the claims to scientific knowledge, see Steve Buckler, “Coming out of Hiding: Hannah Arendt on Thinking in Dark Times”. The European Legacy. Vol. 6, No. 5, 2001; 615-31.

2. For a more detailed elaboration of the performative nature of political action and the profound meaningfulness inherent in many political metaphors derived from the theatre see Robert C. Pirro, Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Tragedy. De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001, in particular chapter two.

3. Arendt distinguishes the unmasking of a person where nothing is left but the ‘natural man’, from the unmasking of the hypocrite. The hypocrite pretends “to be the assumed role”, and
therefore he leaves nothing behind once the mask is torn away. “Psychologically speaking”, she writes, “one may say that the hypocrite is too ambitious; not only does he want to appear virtuous before others, he wants to convince himself. By the same token, he eliminates from the world, which he has populated with illusions and lying phantoms, the only core of integrity from which true appearance could rise again, his own incorruptible self.” (Arendt 1990, 103). This is the reason why it is not the criminal but the hypocrite who is “really rotten to the core” (Arendt 1990, 103).

**Bibliography**


POLYSEMNY AND DISSEMINATION
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If one makes a comparison between hermeneutics and deconstruction, the first thing that needs to be recognized is the great number of agreements: interpretation is seen by both as starting with a preliminary projection or design that develops possibilities within a text; all designs of a text are contextually determined, historical and finite; author and addressee are both absent in the text; the text develops its own history through its interpretations – and so on. But usually the relation between hermeneutics and deconstruction is depicted as an opposition between identity and difference: hermeneuticians like Gadamer and Ricoeur are supposed to be striving for unity, understanding and truth, whereas Derrida and other so-called ‘deconstructivists’ draw attention to difference, otherness, interruptions and aporias that cannot be identified within the hermeneutic circle. There are several strategies to discuss the similarities and differences between hermeneutics and deconstruction.2 Derrida has often described this distinction as one between polysemny and dissemination: polysemny being the effort to maintain the many meanings of one word within the extensive framework of the hermeneutic circle and the hermeneutic horizon, while dissemination is the force that inevitably breaks through this circle. Polysemny and dissemination are thus presented as two different strategies to deal with the plurality of meanings in language.

This article discusses the relation between polysemny and dissemination by focusing on the way Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida actually use these terms. Since in Derrida’s comments on polysemny and dissemination the notion of horizon plays an important role, this concept will be discussed as well. Two questions are at stake here: what do Ricoeur and Derrida mean by these terms: polysemny, dissemination and horizon? And are their approaches really incompatible? First, Ricoeur’s views on polysemny and the hermeneutical horizon will be outlined (§§ 1 and 2), then Derrida’s alternative approach will be sketched (§ 3) and critically discussed by taking a closer look at a few of his arguments (§ 4); finally, conclusions will be drawn with regard to the relation between polysemny and dissemination, as well as hermeneutics and deconstruction (§ 5).

Ricoeur on polysemny

Paul Ricoeur regularly uses the term polysemny, mainly to refer to the range of meanings that a specific term under discussion or analysis can have. Only rarely does he discuss polysemny itself. The most detailed analysis of this notion can be found in ‘The Problem of Double Meaning as Hermeneutic Problem and
as Semantic Problem’. In this text Ricœur approaches the question of double meaning or multiple meanings in an interdisciplinary manner, combining structuralist linguistics and hermeneutics. He makes a distinction between, on the one hand, two levels of structuralist studies of linguistics and, on the other hand, hermeneutic interpretation: lexical semantics, structural semantics and hermeneutics. Lexical semantics operates on the level of words; structural semantics on the level of combinations of words, e.g., oppositions, conjunctions and disjunctions; hermeneutics on the level of language use in texts. Only within the domain of lexical semantics is the phenomenon of multiple meanings elaborated by Ricœur with the help of the notion of polysemy. In the other two fields, structural semantics and hermeneutics, he prefers to speak of symbolism.4

Ricœur draws the term polysemy from Stephen Ullmann, who, in his The Principles of Semantics, places polysemy in a scale of appearances of sense multiplicity,

From the strictly synchronistic point of view, several phenomena totally different in character are related to the multiplicity of senses. As usual, it is easy to set up clear-cut types but impossible to establish sharp demarcation-lines. The three cardinal types may be aligned in the following arrangement:

1. Several aspects of one sense: shifts in application; e.g. ‘healthy climate’—‘healthy complexion’.
2. Several senses of one word: polysemy; e.g. ‘human head’—‘head of department’—‘bridge-head’.
3. Several words: homonymy; e.g. ‘sea’—‘to see’—‘a see’.

Polysemy, according to Ullmann, “…in synchronistic terms, […] means that one word can have more than one sense.”6 The contexts of speech determine which meaning is at stake in singular language use. The larger the differences in meaning, the more important these contexts become in determining meaning; in the words of Ullmann, they “canalize meaning”.7 But contextuality is not the only factor. An important characteristic of polysemy is that the several meanings of the same word do not only have different references, but also intend each other.8 The different references are thus still linked to each other, e.g., in the different meanings of ‘head’ or ‘operation’ — in fact this is an important difference between polysemy and homonymy. In addition, Ullmann underlines that the frontiers between these three stages are never clear-cut and sometimes even fluid; one can change into the other.9 All these features together show the importance of a diachronic approach, without which the synchronic phenomenon of polysemy cannot be understood.10 For the scope of this article, it suffices to conclude at this point that, in Ullmann’s linguistics, the contexts of language use have a double function with regard to polysemy: on the one hand, they canalize and limit the proliferation of meaning by polysemy; on the other hand, they are an important source of polysemy, because the actual use of language can produce a new meaning.
Most of what Ricœur writes on polysemy is in line with Ullmann’s linguistics, although he prefers to work with the linguistic distinctions and terminology of de Saussure and Jakobson. Like Ullmann, he makes a distinction between a synchronic [langue] and a diachronic [parole] approach of double meaning. Polysemy is defined by Ricœur as, strictly speaking, a synchronic concept: within a certain language system the same word can have different meanings. The word ‘bar’, e.g., can mean tavern, block, barrier, stick (wooden stick, chocolate stick), and so on. From a diachronic point of view the double meaning can be seen as a change of meaning or transference of meaning. One needs both perspectives to reach the right view on the multiple meanings within a lexical level: “…for the changes in meaning have their synchronic projection in the phenomenon of polysemy…” Every study of the ‘mechanism of language’ performs its task, according to Ricœur, in between these two levels. Comparable relations come to the fore in other Saussurian distinctions, between the language system and spoken language, and between associative and syntagmatic combinations of signs. In all these relations the former part is the level on which polysemy can be discerned, whereas the latter part functions on the level where polysemy is taken up in the working of symbolism. The level of polysemy is portrayed by Ricœur as static and closed within its own system, while the level of symbolism is more dynamic and open to the development of new meanings in the actual use of language. Polysemy, therefore, cannot be understood from the perspective of the language system only. It is the static projection of a dynamic change and development of meanings. In general, according to Ricœur, the systematic rules of language should never be studied exclusively, but always in relation to actual language use. This is a recurrent point of view in his discussions of structuralism and hermeneutics.

Paradoxically, however, if it was left to itself, polysemy would be able to develop an infinite range of meanings, even until words tend to be meaningless. Probably there is no inherent limit to the possible expansion of significations of a word:

It is at the level of the mechanism of language [i.e., in between the two levels of synchrony and diachrony, E.E.] that the rule of ordered polysemy, which is that of ordinary language, is discovered. This phenomenon of ordered or limited polysemy is at the crossroads of two processes: the first originates in the sign, considered as ‘accumulative intention’. Left to itself, it is a process of expansion which continues to the point of a surplus charge of meaning (overload), as we see in certain words which, because they signify too many things, cease to signify anything, or in certain traditional symbols which have taken on so many contradictory values that they tend to neutralize one another (the fire that burns and warms, the water that both quenches thirst and drowns).

But there are external limits that change this boundless polysemy to a ‘restricted’ or ‘regulated’ polysemy. Ricœur mentions two restrictions. On the one hand there are semantic fields – a notion that he derives from Jost Trier – that structure the semantic use of words by relating them to each other. These
semantic fields confine the ‘cumulative intention’ of words, without restricting them to just one meaning. ‘Operation’, e.g., in the meaning of ‘medical treatment’, also refers to other sorts of ‘operation’, like military or other strategic operations. Another limit is given by the contexts of language use. The use of language in speech and writing always takes place in a specific context, thereby choosing one meaning (or more meanings, as we will see) of the range of possible meanings of a word. Going back to the example of the word ‘bar’, when I say “let’s go to the bar and have a drink”, it is clear what kind of bar I mean. In fact, the semantic fields can be taken as projections of language use with several simultaneous meanings on the linguistic system:

ordered polysemy is properly a meaning effect produced in discourse. When I speak, I realize only a part of the potential signified; the rest is erased by the total signification of the sentence, which operates as the unit of speaking. But the rest of the semantic possibilities is not canceled; they float around the words as possibilities not completely eliminated. The context thus plays the role of filter;¹⁷

Again we see here that the sifting of meanings by the context does not entirely take away the other meanings. They keep floating around. And it also occurs that several meanings of one word are at work in the same context at the same time. Actually, Ricœur has taken here the step from polysemy to symbolism:

It happens, however, that a sentence is constructed so that it does not succeed in reducing the potential meaning to a monosemic usage but maintains or even creates a rivalry among several ranges of meaning. Discourse can, by various means, realize ambiguity, which thus appears as the combination of a lexical fact – polysemy – and a contextual fact – the possibility allowed to several distinct or even opposed values of a single name to be realized in the same sequence.¹⁸

If we take a look at the same example again, with the sentence “let’s go to the bar and have a drink”, I may mean a bar in a hotel, a bar outside of a hotel, or maybe even the minibar in my hotel room. The latter meaning would be a joke of course, but it is a possible meaning of the phrase.

When Ricœur writes of ‘restricted’ or ‘regulated’ polysemy, one might wonder who regulates here and if it is really accurate to speak of regulation. There are no strict rules to the way the context deals with the potential meanings of an utterance. And if we can speak of rules here, these rules are happily trespassed in sentences with an equivocal meaning, like jokes, irony, metaphors, and so on. This is exactly the innovative and imaginative use of language Ricœur is interested in and that he tries to understand: the working of symbolism.

In order to approach this symbolism with scientific rigour, he examines its linguistic apparatus, making use of structuralist linguistics, but at the same time assigning it its restricted place. Structuralist linguistics studies the linguistic system as a closed system, without looking at its references to the reality outside of language. The linguistic structures cannot be understood as strictly autonomous, they are the sediments of actual language use. Linguistic analysis
of this systematic residue is illuminating, but it has a price, “the price of keeping
the analysis within the enclosure of the linguistic universe.”19 Within this closed
universe, however, the effects of polysemy seem to be boundless. The effects
are decreased once the analysis has been opened up to the level of speech and
writing. Here, in linguistic invention and imagination, we find the source of the
multiple meanings of language of which polysemy is the sedimentation.

The question arises, however, what causes the limitless expansion of
meaning, if the closed synchronic semantic realm of signs is dependent on
active language use for its renewal and development. If the innovating
imagination of language use is restricted or even regulated by the context in
which it takes place, where does the infinity of possible meanings come from?
Perhaps polysemy has its origin not only in language use, leaving its sediments
in the language system, but also in the system itself. This is suggested by
Ricoeur, when he writes that the limitless process of meaning expansion “…first
originates in the sign.”20 Another explanation might be that the restrictions and
regulations of polysemy are not that strong, as is already suggested by the
occurrence of ambiguity and symbolism. Polysemy is not as ordered and limited
as Ricoeur seems to think. Now, if polysemy is the sedimentation of innovative
use of language, then the limitless expansion of meaning might be seen as the
sedimentation of the lack of boundaries in this innovative language use. This
gives hermeneutics an opening on to dissemination.

Ricoeur on the hermeneutic horizon

As we have seen, in ‘The Problem of Double Meaning’, Ricoeur makes a
clear distinction between the levels of linguistics and hermeneutics. Hermeneutics studies the actual use of language and its results, analyzing
language on the level of sentences and texts, and thereby breaking out of the
closed system of signs:

In hermeneutics there is no closed system of the universe of signs. While linguistics moves
inside the enclosure of a self-sufficient universe and encounters only intrasignificant relations
[…] hermeneutics is ruled by the open state of the universe of signs.21

In other words, within hermeneutics the multiplicity of meaning is not
discussed in the realm of language but in-between language and reality outside
of language, “…at the hinge between linguistics and nonlinguistics, between
language and lived experience (of whatever kind).”22 Texts, in Ricoeur’s
hermeneutics the main carriers of meaning, refer to a unity of events, persons,
institutions, etc., taken together as “…an entire ‘economy’, an entire signifying
whole…”23 The multiplicity of meaning within this unity is opened up and
revealed within several sorts of hermeneutics. In both Freudian and religious
hermeneutics, ‘archeological’ and ‘teleological’ interpretation,24 the opening of
language towards the equivocalness of reality belongs to the core of
hermeneutical interpretation:
I will venture to summarize this in a few words: the sole philosophical interest in symbolism is that it reveals, by its structure of double meaning, the equivocalness of being: ‘Being speaks in many ways.’ Symbolism’s raison d’être is to open the multiplicity of meaning to the equivocalness of Being.  

On the level of hermeneutics we thus find a paradox that mirrors the paradox of boundlessness and restriction on the level of semantics. In semantics, according to Ricoeur, within the closed system of language the process of meaning expansion is unlimited, but finds its restriction when the system is opened up in the application of language in speech and writing. In hermeneutics, the multiplicity of signification is released in many directions, but always in a process of revelation of meaning, within the unity of being; this unity is an ‘economy’ and a signifying whole that includes ambiguity and equivocalness – the ‘equivocalness of Being’. The two paradoxes, in short: there is infinity of meaning extension in a closed system and finitude of meaning in the open universe of hermeneutics. In the previous section we saw that it is unclear how infinity can appear in a closed system. Now we will see that it also remains unclear how unity and equivocalness can go together.

This combination of ambivalence and unity has been discussed by Ricoeur in other texts in terms of ‘horizon’. In several books he follows Hans-Georg Gadamer’s usage of the metaphorical notions of ‘horizon’ and ‘fusion of horizons’. The horizon is that which lends unity and coherence to the contexts in which phenomena appear to us, as well as to the contexts within which texts and other expressions develop their meaning. When we interpret a text, we find our starting point in a linguistic, historical and cultural horizon that structures beforehand our expectations of the text. On the one hand, this horizon limits the possible significations of the text: it cannot mean everything at the same time. On the other hand, this limit is very flexible and open; it changes in the course of interpretation, which is a dialogue of horizons. Horizons always move with us, they can never be exactly fixed and located. A horizon can be compared with a threshold that delimits and shows an openness to its outside at the same time. Moreover, for Gadamer a horizon is always a coherence we share with others, it is a greater whole to which we already belong. In Wahrheit und Methode, Gadamer usually emphasizes the Hegelian moment of unity and coherence, albeit always within a Heideggerian world of finitude and historicity.  

Ricoeur almost entirely agrees with Gadamer’s view on the horizons of interpretation. He often adds his own nuances in the application of this metaphor by speaking of a ‘horizon of expectation’. In Temps et récit Ricoeur adopts the terminology of the German historian Reinhard Koselleck who speaks of a ‘space of experience’ (Erfahrungsraum, espace d’expérience) and ‘horizon of expectation’ (Erwartungshorizont, horizon d’attente). The expectation with which we start an interpretation is the orientation that guides the interpretation,
without completely determining it, including the possibility of a radical change of the expectation. Horizons change in their fusion. These changes cannot be controlled, but they are also not completely without direction. ‘Horizon’ thus stands for the combination of coherence and openness, unity and ambivalence, guidance and free imagination. According to Ricœur the theory of fusion of horizons finds the right balance between fixed objectivity and absolute understanding, as well as between Hegelian absolutism and a Nietzschean “radical pluralism”. The fusion of horizons neither leads to being incommunicado nor to absolute knowledge.

We exist neither in closed horizons nor within a horizon that is unique. [...] The very word horizon indicates an ultimate repudiation of the idea of a knowledge wherein the fusion of horizons would itself be grasped.

In short, our interpretations find their way in horizons that move with us, that provide coherence to our understanding, that cannot be controlled or localized, that are open to new perspectives and that are receptive for ambiguities. But how can the ambiguities and the indeterminacy of the horizon go together with the certainty that there is or has to be unity and coherence? Is there also a possible equivocalness or multiplicity of meanings that cannot be understood as appearing within a coherent unity? An ambiguity that withstands an ultimate coherence? According to Ricœur, this would lead to a complete loss of meaning, to a dissemination that needs to be avoided. Ricœur usually steers a middle course between two extremes. For Ricœur, dissemination, a term he hardly uses, is an excess that one should try to avoid.

The tension between unity and diversity is a recurrent theme in Ricœur’s work. Let me give two different examples. In Temps et récit he speaks of the narrative unity of stories as a coherence that can take together incoherent elements within what he calls a ‘discordant concordance’. A reader can be surprised by an unexpected switch in the story, but this change cannot be too strange in order to let the reader still be able to ‘follow the story’. Ricœur tries to avoid here both a loss of understanding in chaos and a too rigorous format of consistency. But how can the balance between these two be justified? Is there necessarily a unity to be found in stories? If this unity is to be thought as a regulative idea, how can this idea be legitimized?

In Ricœur’s theory, stories are prepared, construed and applied in three steps of mimesis, three modes of figuration: prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. The constellation of ‘discordant concordance’ takes place in the emplotment of configuration. In order to question his theory to the limit, Ricœur also mentions an ‘anti-novel’ that seems to challenge the idea of unity and configuration, i.e., James Joyce’s Ulysses. He even mentions here the possibility to regard the emplotment of this novel as a ‘defiguring’.

Indeed, it consists of holes, lacunae, zones of indetermination, which, as in Joyce’s Ulysses, challenge the reader’s capacity to configure what the author seems to take malign delight in
defiguring. In such an extreme case, it is the reader, almost abandoned by the work, who carries the burden of emplotment.\textsuperscript{31}

But this is an exception that does not stop Ricœur from stating that configuration is a constructive feature of narration as such. One might wonder here, whether defiguration should not be taken as a serious alternative for configuration, and whether this suggestion fits into the notion of horizon as a unity including ambivalence.\textsuperscript{32}

Another example can be found in \textit{Soi-même comme un autre}, when Ricœur discusses at length the question whether personal identity as the unity of an entire life can be found within narratives. According to Ricœur, narratives are the only way to deal with the question of personal identity. In the introduction of his book, Ricœur is very clear about the relation between polysem[y and dissemination. Since the question of personal identity is in itself already many-sided, Ricœur speaks of a polysem[y of ‘who?’, that leads to the fragmentary character of his book, dividing it in different studies on various aspects of the question ‘who?’.

In introducing the problematic of the self by the question ‘who?’, we have in the same stroke opened the way for the genuine polysem[y inherent in the question itself: Who is speaking of what? Who does what? About whom and about what does one construct a narrative? Who is morally responsible for what? These are but so many different ways in which ‘who?’ is stated. […] This fragmentation, however, has a thematic unity that keeps it from the dissemination that would lead the discourse back to silence.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus polysem[y leads to a fragmentation that is moderated by a ‘thematic unity’ and withheld from dissemination into meaninglessness. Whether Ricœur has succeeded in avoiding dissemination by finding this thematic unity in the construction of his book, I leave aside here. The polysem[y he refers to does not only affect the edifice of his book, but also the question of personal identity itself. Do narratives always provide unity to self-understanding, or can we also lose ourselves in the fragmentation of many stories and story lines? One of the questions in this regard considers whether literary stories are not too different from our actual life histories to provide them with unity. In the sixth study, Ricœur discusses four problems with regard to the application of fictive stories in real life; he first mentions the problems one by one, and then tries to answer them.\textsuperscript{34} The second problem consists in the fact that fictive stories have a beginning and an end, whereas our experiences of our own life do not have such a clear beginning and end. To this problem, Ricœur briefly adds another one:

Along the known path of my life, I can trace out a number of itineraries, weave several plots; in short, I can recount several stories, to the extent that to each there lacks that ‘sense of an ending’…\textsuperscript{35}

In fact, Ricœur brings to the fore a double problem: not only do not all of the several plots of my life story have a clear ending that gives them a coherence; one can also ask if these several story lines can and need to be taken together
in a determinable unity of one life story. But in his efforts to provide answers
to the problems he has listed here, this question that was added to the second
problem, finds no answer. The question of the unity of narrative identity is thus
left open and is understood by Ricœur first of all as an ethical assignment.

The same tension comes to the fore when Ricœur distinguishes several levels
of unity within a narrative: the levels of acts, practices, life plans and unity of
an entire life. He criticizes Alasdair MacIntyre for too easily accepting the unity
of life in a biography. In Soi-même comme un autre it remains an open question
for Ricœur whether several life plans (career, love life, family life, etc.) can be
united in the employment of one biography. In general one can say that,
according to Ricœur, the unity of one’s personal identity is an ethical task that
can never be completely fulfilled.

In conclusion, according to Ricœur, the polysem y of words in language
systems is the sedimentation of the variety and change of meaning that is
established in language use and that finds its fragile coherence in an insecure
and moving horizon. The infinity of meaning expansion within closed language
systems, as well as the finite unity and coherence of meaning produce unsolved
tensions in Ricœur’s philosophy. Ricœur prefers to emphasize the ‘positive’
side of disclosure and imagination that unites heterogeneous elements inside
an ever changing horizon and thus tries to avoid the diversion and loss of
meaning by dissemination.

Derrida on polysemy and dissemination

Derrida brings the notions of polysemy and dissemination into play in a very
different way. He treats them on many occasions as an opposition. Polysemy is
taken as the element of a philosophical effort to understand, whereas
dissemination is a force or movement that withdraws from this understanding
and interrupts it. In ‘Tympan’, the introductory text of Marges de la
philosophie, philosophical understanding is characterized by Derrida as an
attempt to dominate and control its object. This domination treats its own limit
as a being and as something of its own. Philosophy, according to Derrida, is
“…the infinite mastery that the agency of Being (and of the) proper seems to
assure it; this mastery permits it to interiorize every limit as being and as being
its own proper.” After having distinguished two types of this domination,
hierarchy and surrounding, he writes that both types function as a circle: “they
both follow the movement of the same wheel, whether it is a question, finally,
of Heidegger’s hermeneutical circle or of Hegel’s ontotheological circle.” In
Derrida’s view, both circles are exponents of logocentrism. Of course, Derrida
is well aware of the differences between hermeneutics and Hegelian dialectics,
but he underlines their familiarity as movements of understanding that try to
grasp and seize their objects, even to grasp all of Being. Derrida sees polysemy
as part of this circular movement. In his view, the hermeneutic horizon is a
circle of enclosure that maintains multiplicity and variation within a meaningful coherence. Polysemy, Derrida writes in *La dissémination*, always puts out its multiplicities and variations within the horizon, at least, of some integral reading which contains no absolute rift, no senseless deviation – the horizon of the final parousia of a meaning at last deciphered, revealed, made present in the rich collection of its determinations. [...] All the moments of polysemy are, as the word implies, moments of meaning.  

Even if it is conceded that complete understanding can never be reached – as is clearly the case in Ricœur’s approach of the multiplicity of meaning – then still the horizon functions at least as an effort and as a promise of total comprehension and assured presence of meaning in clear coherence: Polysemia, as such, is organized within the implicit horizon of a unitary resumption of meaning, that is, within the horizon of a […] teleological and totalizing dialectics that at a given moment, however far off, must permit the reassemblage of the totality of a text into the truth of its meaning.  

In Derrida’s point of view, polysemy thus suggests that the multi-interpretability of texts can be kept under control, since the versatility of language is limited by a gathering of meaning within a semantic and hermeneutic horizon. This notion of horizon here clearly has a different meaning than it has in Ricœur. For Derrida, the horizon functions as the means of a “teleological and totalizing dialectics”. This usage of the metaphor of horizon has a Husserlian origin and can be found in the first texts that the young Derrida wrote in the 1950s and ’60s. In his dissertation, *Le problèm e de la genèse dans la philosophie de Husserl*, Derrida shows how the later Husserl, while elaborating on genetic phenomenology, had to deal with the problem of the origin and historical development of scientific knowledge. This knowledge presupposes the life-world as the ultimate background of any judgment and ideal object, as “the horizon of all possible substrates of judgments.” This world is in itself not ‘worldly’, it is not constituted, but the presupposition of every constitution, it is an a priori world and horizon, “the idea of an infinite totality of possible foundations of every judgment.” In his introduction to Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry*, Derrida explains how Husserl needs to understand this infinite teleological horizon as an a priori Kantian Idea, as a regulative idea that preserves an openness for new theoretical determinations. In addition, he describes the teleological horizon of scientific and theoretical knowledge as part of an even broader horizon of a linguistic community, of humanity in general and of an “infinite determinability of being in general, […] the ultimate horizon for every theoretical attitude and for all philosophy.” This horizon, however, is, according to Derrida, less general and neutral than it seems to be: “Within the horizon of this consciousness of fellow mankind, it is ‘mature, normal’ mankind that is ‘privileged’, both ‘as the horizon of civilization and as the linguistic community’.” In Derrida’s reading this implies “…the index of an ideal normativity which is *on the horizon* of de facto normal adults.” Comparably,
the horizon of a linguistic community is one in which normal adults find a unity of understanding, “…whose unity would always furnish the ultimate arbitration of every misunderstanding.” But one might ask where the normative distinction between normal and abnormal reading, between understanding and misunderstanding, comes from. If the ultimate possibility for communication is “…a kind of inaccessible infra-ideal”, Derrida adds, “can we not say, then, just the opposite of what Husserl said? Are not non-communication and misunderstanding the very horizon of culture and language?”

In Derrida’s interpretation, the notion of horizon is decisive for Husserl’s phenomenology. He summarizes Husserl’s use of this notion as follows:

We are clearly dealing with a primordial knowledge concerning the totality of possible historical experiences. Horizon is the always-already-there of a future which keeps the indetermination of its infinite openness intact. […] As the structural determination of every material indeterminacy, a horizon is always virtually present in every experience; for it is at once the unity and the incompleteness for that experience – the anticipated unity in every incompleteness. The notion of horizon converts the abstract condition of possibility of criticism into the concrete infinite potentiality secretly presupposed therein. The notion of horizon thus makes the a priori and the teleological coincide.

Thus, in Derrida’s early writings on Husserl we see the development of a concept of the horizon that is different from the hermeneutic view of the horizon: it is taken as a normative regulative idea that determines a presupposed unity. Polysem, in Derrida’s view, is an effort to keep the many meanings of a word or utterance within such a regulative unity of a horizon.

Dissemination is explicitly brought to the fore by Derrida as an opposition and alternative to polysem. It is the force of writing that undermines this attempt to keep meaning within a horizon:

Dissemination, on the contrary, in order to produce a non-finite number of semantic effects, can be led back neither to a present of simple origin […] nor to an eschatological presence. It marks an irreducible and generative multiplicity. The supplement and the turbulence of a certain lack fracture the limit of the text, forbidding an exhaustive and closed formulization of it, or at least a saturating taxonomy of its themes, its signified, its meanings.

Dissemination is the process of expansion of meaning that breaks through the horizon that was supposed to keep it within bounds. Dissemination fractures the limits of the text, “…the force and form of its disruption explode [crèvent] the semantic horizon.” As a consequence of its effects, dissemination cannot be defined clearly. A proper definition of dissemination would be a contradictio in terminis. The notion of dissemination can be placed in the line of Derridean quasi-concepts, like différence, hymen, supplement, writing, pharmakon, etc. On the one hand, they can be described and thematized, although not in a fixed definition, on the other hand, their effects and consequences are variable and unpredictable. There is a tension within these quasi-concepts, by which they never stand on their own, but are related to what they deny. The spreading out of meaning by dissemination can only be thought in relation to the attempt to comprehend, as a withdrawal from understanding.
Dissemination is at work on both the level of words and the level of texts. Every sign has the force to break with its context and to break through semantic and hermeneutic horizons. There is no inherent limit to the infinite range of meanings that a word may have. But that does not mean that it could work outside of any context. In ‘Signature événement contexte’, and also in his discussion with John Searle on this text, in Limited Inc., Derrida uses the term iterability to discuss the possibility of a finite and relatively stable meaning that a word or an utterance has within a context. In iterability repetition and otherness always go together. The ideality of judgments and ideal objects, which Husserl was looking for, implies a repetition of the word that refers to it. Such a repetition takes place in a change of context, and this again implies a possible difference of meaning. The possibility of meaning change is necessarily and structurally linked with repetition. This is also why a possibility of misunderstanding is structurally inscribed in any communication. Derrida’s perhaps most famous diction testifies of this possibility: “Il n’y a pas de hors texte”. According to Derrida, this means “nothing else [sic!] : there is nothing outside context,” which refers to an “incessant movement of recontextualization”, but has nevertheless led to grave misunderstandings. In short, iterability includes both the relative stability of meaning within contexts and the possibility of dissemination, the structural risk of becoming unstable: the unique character of this structure of iterability […] lies in the fact that, comprising identity and difference, repetition and alteration, etc., it renders the project of idealization possible without lending ‘itself’ to any pure, simple, and idealizable conceptualization.58

Dissemination thus is the destabilizing factor that nevertheless partakes in making contextual meaning and thus repeatable theoretical knowledge possible. It works as the withdrawal from understanding that, as a possibility, is structurally inscribed in every process of understanding. This withdrawal can have different effects, expansion as well as loss of meaning:

The seminal […] disseminates itself without ever having been itself and without coming back to itself. Its very engagement in division, its involvement in its own multiplication, which is always carried out at a loss and unto death, is what constitutes it as such in its living proliferation.59

The limitless lively proliferation probably also results in loss of meaning and death. In a crucial passage on the notion of différance, Derrida combines several tensions of difference and dissemination: the circular movement of thought and its interruptions, as well as the different effects of these interruptions:

How are we to think simultaneously, on the one hand, différance as the economic detour, which, in the element of the same, always aims at coming back to the pleasure or the presence that have been deferred by (conscious or unconscious) calculation, and on the other hand, différance as the relation to the impossible presence, as expenditure without reserve, as irreparable loss of presence, irreversible attrition of energy, even as death instinct, and as relation to the entirely other, apparently interrupting every economy?60
In these last two quotations we see several different consequences of the disseminative work of *différance*: lively proliferation of meaning, expenditure, loss, attrition, death, and a relation to the wholly other. Before we take a closer look at these effects, let me resume the agreements and differences between Ricœur and Derrida with regard to the multiplicity of meaning.

To start with the agreement: both try to describe the tension between coherence and fragmentation, unity and multiplicity of meaning. But there are many differences in their characterization of this tension. Ricœur looks for coherence instead of chaos; Derrida emphasizes free dispersal of meaning above domination. Ricœur describes polysemy as a feature of language systems, whereas Derrida discusses it as a strategy of comprehension. Ricœur locates polysemy on the level of lexical semantics; Derrida discerns polysemy in semantics as well as in hermeneutics.

Ricœur speaks of the closed system of signs in linguistics and the open universe of signs in hermeneutics. On the one hand, he regards polysemy as the projection of changes by language use within the linguistic system. On the other hand, a process of expansion of meaning originates within language “to the point of a surplus charge of meaning (overload),” that is limited and regulated by semantic fields and contexts of language use, and thus protects polysemy from becoming dissemination.

Derrida underscores the limitless proliferation of meaning in dissemination – which also leads to an overload and a loss of meaning. He is suspicious of polysemy, which he regards as a strategy to regulate and master the spreading of meaning within a totalizing dialectics and a regulative horizon. Whereas Ricœur regards the horizon as a lively, moving and open border, Derrida speaks of the horizon as a surrounding and controlling border that is ruptured by dissemination. From Ricœur’s point of view, the idea of breaking through a horizon is hard to understand. A horizon can never be broken, because it cannot be fixed, it cannot even be localized, and it is certainly not a tool of domination. This is what distinguishes the notion of horizon from a Hegelian endeavor to control the limits of reason by reason itself – in Derrida’s terms: the “mastery” that permits philosophy “...to interiorize every limit as *being* and as being its own *proper*.” According to Derrida, the hermeneutic horizon is a weakened and provisional version of this Hegelian totalizing circle, it functions as a regulative Kantian Idea. From a hermeneutic point of view, however, the horizon is radically different from this Hegelian domination, for it is an indeterminate condition that shapes us instead of being governed by us as a device of understanding and control.

**Effects of dissemination**

But how exactly does dissemination work? In what way can it produce the effects that Derrida has mentioned in the quotations above? As we have seen,
dissemination cannot exactly be defined. Nor is it a clear method that can predict its outcomes. Although these outcomes are unpredictable, the course of the development of meaning can be followed: “We here note a point/lack of method [point de méthode]: this does not rule out a certain marching order [marche à suivre].” In this section, I shall trace and follow several possible developments of the disintegrating movements of dissemination: proliferation or dispersal of meaning; death or loss of meaning; attrition or wearing out of meaning; meaning in relation to the radical other. The questions I try to answer are: How exactly does dissemination work? How do these phenomena of dissemination relate to the notion of horizon? I will also try to limit these descriptions to linguistic phenomena.

i. Dispersal

The literal meaning of dissemination refers to the spreading out of meaning, with a potential of radical change. Since words and utterances are dependent on contexts for their functioning, a new context can raise new meanings of a specific word. In the course of time, a word or a phrase can even receive entirely new meanings that could not have been foreseen by its author or users. Some familiar examples are ‘subject’, ‘art’ and ‘postmodern’.

These changes take place through the solving of misunderstandings, through the development of new theories, through ingenuity, through a free play with language, and so on. When we try to trace these changes historically, we can follow them step by step. A philosophical text, e.g., can, according to Gadamer, give us an idea about the linguistic need (Sprachnot) that the author must have had, when she suffered to articulate a new idea or an innovating theory. This linguistic need leads to linguistic inventiveness (Sprachfindung). In this way completely new words can be invented or new metaphors that may give old words new meanings.

Another example can be found in misunderstandings with regard to the meaning of a terminology or of whole theories. Even entire lines of thought can develop out of copy mistakes or interpretation mistakes. ‘Il n’y a pas dehors texte’ and ‘deconstruction’ are good examples in this regard. All these changes, however, can be traced and reconstructed by conceptual history.

Also in other domains than science and philosophy such linguistic inventiveness takes place, e.g., in multicultural societies where the youth in the street mixes several languages and dialects; and also in digital telecommunication unexpected linguistic innovations can occur by mobile phone messages or chatting.

Finally, we might also think of a dispersal of meaning that Ricœur refers to in terms of surplus charge or overload. This happens when an expression or a symbol can refer to so many things at the same time that may even contradict each other, that it becomes too vague to have a clear meaning.
The question now is: is this polysemy or dissemination – and in which meaning of these terms? Do these changes stay stable and caught within an already deciphered und controlled coherence of a horizon in the meaning Derrida gives to this metaphor? Or can we trace a break or interruption in such a horizon by which something absolutely new could flourish? I think that in all the cases I just mentioned, we can neither speak of a controlled process nor of a breakthrough that bursts a pre-given horizon. Step by step adages, utterances and new meanings can be added or changed, horizons of speech and writing are moved and broadened, new horizons can be discovered – and every time our horizons move with us.

ii. Loss

When can we speak of a loss of meaning? Every expression has several possible meanings. The interpreter has to make a choice out of these possibilities. In every interpretation, therefore, specific parts of the content or performance will be laid open, discovered, while other parts will be neglected, forgotten, covered up. The disclosure (Enthüllung) always relates to a concealing (Verhüllung) as its counterpart. We might call this the loss of a possible understanding. But this potential interpretation might as well, one day, come to the fore in an unexpected and original reading – like a book that has not been read for decades and just stands on the bookshelf, covered with a thick layer of dust, but can still be rediscovered and read. Perhaps we should not speak of a loss of meaning in this case.

But books or artworks can also be really lost, e.g., when a library or museum is burned. Sometimes the remembrance remains of a text that once existed, e.g., the lost parts of Aeschylus’ Prometheus Bound. Other works, however, can be completely forgotten a long time after their loss, just like historical events, stories and people. Of course, it is not possible to give examples here.

When such a meaning or such knowledge gets lost, it disappears behind the horizon. We leave it behind, while our lives and history move on. It is hard to see, however, how a horizon could be broken or interrupted here. In the quotation I just gave of ‘La différance’, Derrida writes of the unavoidable risk or possibility of a loss of meaning that cannot be secured by an economic calculation. Such an absolute calculation, however, is not at all searched for or presupposed in the hermeneutic circle.

iii. Attrition

It is possible that a linguistic sense can be worn out. The specific, personal or cultural value of an utterance can disappear in a slow process of wearing out. What once was an innovating and surprising utterance can slowly, or sometimes even fast, change into a cliché. Living metaphors turn into dead metaphors and concepts.
These alterations take place in historical developments that can be traced and reconstructed by conceptual historiography. They all take place in moving horizons. I can even go further and suggest that what is worn out has become part of the horizon. New phenomena have a central place in our field of vision. What is well known has become evident; one hardly perceives it anymore. The evident and the worn out belong to our background and horizon. Wear and tear in this sense is even the opposite of an interruption of horizons, it is part of the constitution of horizons.

iv. Radical otherness

According to Derrida, **différance** relates us to the entirely other that cannot be contained within a horizon. In terms of language, radical otherness can be discussed as the ineffable. We have an experience of ineffability when we cannot find the language to describe an experience. It can be a negative as well as a positive experience: one can be indescribably happy, but also inexpressibly sad. In any case, language falls too short.

It is possible to discern a scale of the unspeakable. There are phenomena for which we cannot find the right words, but that can be described with a few sentences instead of one word. There are experiences we cannot describe well, but from which we can sketch a figure, with the help of an evocative style and imagination. And there can be experiences that cannot be mentioned, that leave us speechless, experiences that make any language simply fail.

What can always be uttered, however, is the ineffability itself. What is entirely ineffable always shows itself indirectly, as ineffable. This indirect appearing can become a way to do justice, at least partly, to otherness. The other manifests itself as other, as different, within our world and horizon, as other, maybe as completely other, perhaps even as ineffable, but then, still, it manifests itself within the context of our horizon. When the otherness of the other does not appear, but withdraws from our world, beyond our horizon, it does not break the horizon, but appears in the world as entirely different.

But what if I have a very traumatic experience, when I am, e.g., completely ruined? Then I can have the experience that ‘my world falls apart’. Maybe this is a way we can speak of a breaking of horizons. But even then, this falling apart can only appear against the background of a greater horizon, the horizon of worldliness as such. The world as horizon of all horizons can never be broken or interrupted. Perhaps here we can have an impression of what Ricœur means when he writes that the multiplicity of meaning reveals the ‘equivocalness of Being’. What is broken through here, are fixed patterns and procedures, our allegedly self-evident worldview has collapsed – and then we experience the ineffability of the horizon of horizons: the fact that the world appears to us as a unity that cannot be surveyed, that cannot be defined – and that also cannot be understood as the unity of a teleological Kantian Idea. The lack of language
that we experience here appears within the search for the right words. We stumble and stammer, but on a later occasion we might articulate very well how we could not find the words to express our feelings. In short, the experience of a loss of world cannot but appear within a world; the ineffable can always be expressed as ineffable. Otherness appears as otherness within a horizon.

The forgotten umbrella

A final example forms the opposite of something ineffable: it is a singular phrase that seems to resist a suitable interpretation. In Spurs, Derrida criticizes Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche as an appropriation that deprives Nietzsche’s oeuvre of its heterogeneity and many-sidedness. At the end of his text, Derrida quotes an isolated phrase that was found in Nietzsche’s posthumous notes, “Ich habe meinen Regenschirm vergessen”. We can never be sure, Derrida argues, what Nietzsche wanted to say with these words. He gives a number of proposals, including a Freudian reading, but mainly to show the lack of a final interpretation. This lack of a definite interpretation “would withdraw it from any assured horizon of a hermeneutic question.” Reading this phrase – “For this text is readable. [...] Everyone knows what «I have forgotten my umbrella» means” – comes down to puncturing the horizon of the veil-makers, the Schleiermachers, the hermeneuticians that make horizons like veils.

Once more it is clear in these quotations that Derrida sketches the hermeneutic horizon as an effort of domination, as a strategy that is looking for absolute certainty. This suggestion, however, is doubly wrong. From a hermeneutic point of view, the horizon is neither something that is made as part of a strategy, nor aiming at absolute certainty. The abundance of possible meanings would only be a problem for a hermeneutic approach if this approach would be searching for an ultimate meaning beyond any discussion – but that is not the case.

In all these examples, it appears that dissemination does not break horizons. Nor do the given examples show us a polysemy that keeps all varieties of meaning within a strict border. The dissemination Derrida tries to thematize can be better understood if we adopt a more hermeneutical notion of horizon. Although Ricœur speaks of a ‘regulated polysemy’, his notion of horizon differs from a Husserlian-Kantian Idea. On the other hand, the examples of dispersal, loss, attrition and otherness also show that the hermeneutical circle is not only a condition for unity and coherence, but also a condition for lack and loss of coherence, for tension and multiplicity.

Conclusions

Many similarities can be found in the reflections of Ricœur and Derrida on the versatility of meaning in language. In both we can see how language use
results in relatively stable, though uncontrollable, significations. Nevertheless, usually the differences of their approaches are stressed. Ricœur emphasizes the limits and coherence that keep polysemy within bounds. Paradoxically, he states that, from a structuralist linguistic point of view, language is a closed system that nevertheless can develop an infinite range of meanings, whereas hermeneutics is described as the open realm of language use that limits the proliferation of meaning by the contexts and horizons in which it functions, thus preventing dissemination. Accordingly, polysemy is the sedimentation of many-sided language use, operating within the equivocalness of Being.

Derrida describes polysemy as a strategy for unity by use of the hermeneutic circle, and dissemination as an interruption of this strategy, by breaking through or even exploding horizons. His descriptions of these interruptions, however, are much more in line with a hermeneutical understanding of the horizon as an open and flexible border, always already beyond our reach, than with the horizon as a means of domination and control or as a regulative Idea. The hermeneutical horizon is neither a tool for domination nor a supposedly guarantee for a fixed understanding.

On the other hand, Derrida’s underlining of phenomena like attrition and loss unveils possibilities within a hermeneutic approach that are too often neglected or avoided by Ricœur. Dissemination is the radical version of polysemy that results in unexpected and far-reaching developments of signification, operating within open and moving horizons that always already comprise us. The notion of dissemination, therefore, is not so much a refutation as an enrichment of a hermeneutic understanding of interpretation.

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References
1. I would like to thank Kalpana Seshadri and several of her Boston College colleagues, as well as an anonymous reviewer of the JBSP, for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.
4. In this text Ricœur discusses the three levels in the sequence of increasing “scientific rigor” (p. 69/66): hermeneutics, lexical semantics and structural semantics.


11. This is my example, not Ricœur’s.

12. Paul Ricœur, ‘Le problème du double-sens’, 70/66-7; I changed the translation, in the original French it is, ‘car ce sont les changements de sens qui ont leur projection synchronique dans le phénomène de la polysémie.’


30. See, e.g., Ricœur, *Du texte à l’action*, 325/238.


51. In Derrida’s later work the notion of horizon still plays a prominent role, e.g., in his thoughts on justice and messianism, but I leave that aside in this article.


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60. Derrida, ‘La différance’, in: Marges, 1-29: 20; transl. as ‘Différance’, 1-27:19. I changed several details of the translation; the main difference is the translation of usure by attrition [it might also have been wear] instead of usage.
66. Derrida, Spurs, 128-9; translation slightly changed.
CONFLICTING SCENARIOS REGARDING
EXISTENTIAL SPATIALITY IN BEING AND TIME

DIMITRI GINEV

1. Introduction

Since the pioneering paper of Robert Frodeman, published in this Journal, the discussion of Heidegger’s concept of existential spatiality gained currency in the 1990s.¹ At stake were issues like the transcendental role played by de-severance (Ent-fernung); the phenomenological meaning of directionality; the derivability of spatiality from temporality; the relationship between individual space and public space in Heidegger’s notion of environmental region; the extent to which the existential spatiality is independent of the three established philosophical theories of space (Newton’s absolute theory, Leibniz’s relational theory, and Kant’s transcendental-epistemological theory). Progress was also achieved in studying the way in which Heidegger’s approach to the ontological priority of existential spatiality over the theoretical concepts of space overtook the Husserlian contradistinction between the life-world’s intuitions of space and the formal codification of abstract spaces in modern science.²

Unfortunately, the interest in Heidegger’s existential spatiality declined in the last decade. A prominent exception, however, deserves mentioning. Theodore Schatzki’s (2007) is the first monographic investigation of the spatiality issues in Heidegger’s philosophizing before and after the Kehre.³ It is quite successful in diagnosing the transformations of the spatiality concept which supervene on Heidegger’s farewell to the transcendentally oriented existential analytic. Among Schatzki’s significant achievements (with regard to the hermeneutic-phenomenological interpretation of spatiality/space) is the undoing of Heidegger’s dichotomous way of opposing the “lived space” (Schatzki’s expression) to the objective space. To be sure, there are forms of objective space that do not result from procedures of idealizing objectification. They are instrumental in various spheres of everyday public life. Schatzki is completely right when he states that objective space is seen as something omnipresent (cf. 2007, 48), and that “when humans cope with objective space they need to be aware of it.” Yet this observation requires addressing the intermediate forms of space between existential spatiality/space and cognitively objectified space. By implication, one has to elaborate on the whole architectonic of spatiality’s problematic in the existential analytic. In refraining from taking into consideration Heidegger’s conception of science’s existential genesis (including the genesis of the mathematical idealization of space), Schatzki misses the opportunity to address important aspects of this architectonic.

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The aim of this paper is to rehabilitate the interest in Heidegger’s hermeneutic-phenomenological construal of spatiality. I will pick up the thread of those authors who, by defending the status of spatiality as a primary existentiale, make the case that the relationship between temporality and spatiality has to be spelled out as an equiprimordial and not as a foundational one. The equiprimordiality of both existentiales implies interdependence between temporality and spatiality. In what follows, I will start by addressing the status of spatiality in the existential analytic of *Being and Time*. The next step will be a reconstruction of Heidegger’s two scenarios of treating the genealogical relationship between the existential spatiality and the formalized concepts of space in *Being and Time*. My contention is that the scenarios are conflicting since they suggest alternative doctrines of how spatiality gets temporalized. The issue of whether spatiality is independent of temporality is at stake in both scenarios devoted respectively to (a) the existential genesis of science’s theoretical attitude that operates with mathematically homogeneous space, and (b) the transition from that primary intuition of space which is concomitant with existential spatiality to the formal construction of space’s morphology.

In scrutinizing the origin of the theoretical attitude out of circumspection, Heidegger observes that by committing to such an attitude one overlooks not only the tool-character of what is ready-to-hand within-the-world, but also something that is inherent in the equipment of circumspective concern – its place (1962, 408-9; *GA* 2, 357-8). The contextual locations of a tool (the multiplicity of its places) become a matter of indifference whereby a manifold of spatio-temporal positions begins to take shape. The theoretical attitude requires a formal closure of this manifold with regard to some invariant structure. The “mathematical projection” of such a structure – so Heidegger’s argument goes – transforms further the manifold of spatio-temporal positions into a formally codified space. What is decisive in the mathematical projection is that this projection discloses something that is a priori for theoretical idealizations about empirical phenomena. According to Heidegger’s existential interpretation of science, the mathematical codification of space discloses at the same time a possible domain of empirical theorizing, distinguished also by a formally codified space. The transformations taking place in the existential genesis of science’s theoretical attitude are described in spatial terms, but they are not explained in such terms. These spatial transformations are rather derived (in an explanatory manner) from modifications in the way in which “the temporality of circumspective concern temporalizes itself.” This is an important argument in *Being and Time* for rejecting the equiprimordiality of spatiality (and space) and temporality (and time).

In contrast to the existential interpretation of science, the second scenario (developed in *Being and Time* section 24) presupposes such an
equiprimordiality. It is a scenario that devises an autonomous trajectory of changes in the existential spatiality leading to a theoretical concept of space. The changes in question are not derivable from modifications in the ecstatic-horizontal temporality. Accordingly, this scenario anticipates that evolution in Heidegger’s path of thinking whose upshot is the confession (in the 1962 lecture “Time and Being”) that the attempt to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable. Yet in Being and Time Heidegger does not pay sufficient attention to this scenario since it contradicts the basic idea of the existential analytic that all phenomena of Dasein’s being-in-the-world are first and foremost characterized by the ways in which they are temporalizing horizontal temporality. Edward Casey goes on to assert that “the dogmatic restriction of Platz and Gegend to the instrumental world and of Raum to the scientific world closes down on their scope within the existential analytic of Dasein.” (1997, 254). Nonetheless, I will argue that there are resources in Being and Time not only for defending the equiprimordiality of spatiality and temporality, but also for developing a genealogy of the concepts of space that is not derivable from horizontal temporality.

2. Spatiality and Making-Room as Existentiales

Let me first of all depict the existential spatiality Heidegger deals with in the existential analytic. Spatiality as a particular existentiale is entangled with the primordial existentiales of understanding, state-of-mind, discourse, and falling. Thus, spatiality is always interpretatively understood, attuned by a state-of-mind, expressed within a configuration of discursive practices and by means of a certain discursive genre, and thrown in the world of the average everydayness. And of course, in all kinds of entanglement with the primordial existentiales there are particular regimes of temporalizing of spatiality. The existential spatiality is always temporalized. The way of treating Dasein’s temporalized spatiality is not to be detached from the way of conceiving the world as a horizon that temporalizes itself in temporality. In advocating this claim, Heidegger distinguishes between the “spatiality of the ready-to-hand within-the-world” and the “spatiality of being-in-the-world” (1962, 135-48; GA 2, 102-13). The former is the nearness (closeness) of utensils and equipment that Dasein implements in the circumspective manipulation within-the-world. This spatiality is a function of the closeness’ self-regulation in the ongoing articulation of contexts of equipment (Zeugzusammenhänge). Closeness expresses the contextual being of a utensil or equipment. (The rationale for saying that closeness regulates itself is provided by the very nature of the worldhood of the world. To the changing configurations of practices within the world correspond changing connections among contexts of equipment. It is the changeability of both, configurations and contexts, that provokes variability of the spatial locations of tools and equipment employed in circumspective manipulation.)
Heidegger attributes the “production of closeness” to the trans-subjective totality of interrelated practices and contexts of equipment. This production is irreducible to a purely subjective behavior. Furthermore, closeness is a function of the contextual involvements of a tool or equipment that is ready-to-hand in circumspective manipulation. Obviously, closeness cannot be measured objectively, since it is the circumspective manipulation within a context of equipment that ascertains whether the utensil is sufficiently “to hand”. What gets ascertained is the place of the utensil within this context. Because spatiality is a complexity of contexts and environments that does not display characteristics of a dimensional space, the contextual place of a tool is not reducible to a position in a mathematical manifold of positions. By the same token, nearness or remoteness of a tool in a particular environment cannot be equated with a distance which is a purely geometrical notion applicable solely to metric spaces. Heidegger insists on the fact that nearness and remoteness are not measurable variables. They are entirely dependent on the contextuality of circumspective manipulation. Following this line of reasoning, he defines the spatial profile of a context of equipment as a multiplicity of places which are not statically present-at-hand, but depend on the definite “here” and “yonder” that accompany the dealings taking place in the context (1962, 136; GA 2, 102).

Roughly speaking, in introducing the “spatiality of being-in-the-world”, Heidegger intends to demonstrate that there is a higher degree of spatiality’s “ontological autonomy” from the readiness-to-hand. This type of spatiality characterizes not what is going on within-the-world circumspectively, but rather the situatedness of the “circumspection of concern” in a world that is always already transcendent. Dasein is dealing with readiness-to-hand – so Heidegger’s argument goes – with familiarity just because this spatial dealing takes place “in” the world that transcends (as an open horizon) all particular contexts of equipment. It is the “transcendence of the world” that launches the spatiality of being-in-the-world. (The example Heidegger provides with regard to the above-mentioned “ontological autonomy” is the left-right-directionality. Left and right are not something entirely dependent on Dasein’s concernful circumspection. They are directions of the directedness into a world that because of its horizontality is always already transcendent. Thus considered, left and right are directions of the spatiality that belongs to the “transcendence of the world”.)

The difference between both types of spatiality reflects to a certain extent the ontico-ontological difference since the spatiality of the ready-to-hand within-the-world can be established by a purely “ontic observation”, whereas the spatiality of being-in-the-world requires an ontological reflection upon the transcendence of the world. In this regard, Heidegger goes on to lay the claim that the spatiality of being-in-the-world (as related to the transcendence of the world) provides the ontic possibility of Dasein’s environmental encountering of readiness-to-hand. (This spatiality is generated by the “worldhood of the
world”. But there is a worldhood because the world is transcendent.) In what follows, I will use the expression of “existential spatiality” for designating the dynamic unity of both types of spatiality in the process of meaning constitution.  

There is also another dimension in which both types of spatiality (or aspects of existential spatiality) are to be differentiated. Since the spatiality of being-in-the-world gets constituted by means of the way the world is transcending all kinds of subjectivity (including the inter-subjectivity of being-with-one-another), one should ascribe to this spatiality a sort of trans-subjectivity that is irreducible to inter-subjectivity. By contrast, the spatiality of the ready-to-hand within-the-world is only a characteristic of being-with-one-another because it is generated by the inter-subjective articulation of the environmental region. (I am using the expression of an “environmental region” as a translation of what Heidegger calls Gegend [1962, 136; GA 2, 103].) Thus, the opposition between trans-subjectivity and inter-subjectivity plays an important role in elucidating the difference between both types of spatiality.

In the existential analytic, the notion of “making room” is assigned to render possible the dynamic unity of types. Making room (spatializing) within-the-world consists in releasing the ready-to-hand for its possible contexts of equipment and environmental regions. Making room is constantly accompanying the constitution of meaning as ongoing appropriation of possibilities. Put differently, there is no interpretative articulation without spatializing. Furthermore, one can state that in each context of equipment Dasein is making room for a leeway of possibilities that can be actualized. At the same time, these are possibilities projected as a horizon by the same configuration of practices that discloses a particular environment of interwoven contexts of equipment. As an existentiale making room belongs to both the contextual spatiality of manipulating the ready-to-hand and the spatiality that is called into being and established by the transcendence of the world. Only by making room for entities within-the-world is one able to encounter a totality of spatial involvements of these entities that can be made accessible for cognition. In so doing, one is thematizing space as an object of knowledge sui generis.

From the viewpoint of the transcendental position advocated in Being and Time, space becomes accessible for cognition and is constituted as a possible object because the contextual making room belongs at once to the circumspective manipulation and to the transcendence of the world, i.e., it belongs at once to the ontic availability of what gets spatialized and to the transcendental condition of having such an availability in the world. All “entities” (including space) that are disclosed in the world by Dasein’s circumspective being-in-the-world can be made under certain conditions possible objects of knowledge. This is why the possibility of space as an entity that can be thematically objectified is laid bare not within the epistemic subject-object relation: Space is not in the subject, nor is the world in space. In stressing
the pre-epistemological origin of space, Heidegger indicates several lines of
developing this claim (1962, 146; GA 2, 111). On his account, the possibility
of objectifying space depends on the changeability of the circumspective
deliberation inherent in making room within-the-world in an attitude of de-
contextualizing spatial relations (of contextual involvements) whereby the latter
become relations of positions in a mathematically expressible manifold.

Let me note again that, according to Heidegger, there are concepts of space
(both in Dasein’s average everydayness and in doing research guided by a
theoretical attitude) just because the interpretative appropriation of possibilities
within-the-world is constantly making room, thereby uniting the spatiality of
circumspective manipulation and the spatiality of being-in-the-world.

Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology shows the ubiquity of the existentiale
of making room. There is no scheme of ecstatic temporality without a specific
regime of making room (a regime of spatializing that accompanies a certain
kind of temporalizing). This is why in Being and Time there is a section devoted
to “the temporality of spatiality” (sec, 70). Its task is to outline the integrity of
“Dasein’s spatio-temporal character”. More specifically, Heidegger tries in this
section to address (though quite programmatically) the problematic of how
the modalities of temporalizing get (necessarily) complemented by modalities of
spatializing whereby in each “chrono-topos” one is making room for one’s
leeway.

The existential spatiality upon which the uncovering of space within-the-
world is founded is characterized by the two “parameters” of de-severance
(Ent-fernung) and directionality (Ausrichtung). More specifically, Dasein’s
making room for its own leeway of projected possibilities is constituted by
directionality and de-severance. The former is not to be confused with the
notion of vector that is only definable in a mathematical space. In its
“deliberative circumspection” Dasein manages to eliminate the farness of what
is ready-to-hand to it. By contextualizing utensils in the everyday dealing
within-the-world, Dasein constantly creates de-severance. In other words, the
delineation of a particular context of equipment brings to the fore a kind of de-
severance. This is why Heidegger goes on to assert that Dasein is essentially
de-severant, i.e., Dasein makes the farness vanish by putting utensils in
readiness. Consequently, in Dasein’s primordial mode of being-in-the-world
an “essential tendency towards closeness” takes place. The “morphology” of
existential spatiality is defined by the “circumspective concern” which decides
as to the closeness and farness of what is proximally ready-to-hand
environmentally.

Directionality is a characteristic of the circumspective concern which is de-
severing. By means of it, in this concern a “supply of signs” for “whithers” to
which something belongs or goes, or gets brought or fetched is coming into
being. Making room within a configuration of practices through appropriating
and actualizing possibilities is temporalized since it is a directional awaiting of a relatively autonomous environment. Thus, the temporalized directionality of dealing with the ready-to-hand is a prerequisite for articulating the world in environmental regions. Finally, out of the temporalized directionality of making room the fixed directions of right and left being already discussed arise. Like de-severance, directionality of making room mediates between the spatiality of readiness-to-hand and the spatiality of being-in-the-world. The former contains only contingent and occasional directions of near and remote directions, while the latter stabilizes and privileges directions like the up and down of vertical axes, right and left, before and behind of the horizontal plane, and so on. The images of “oriented space” are called into life thanks to privileged directions in the constitution of meaning through actualizing possibilities. These are images that help one to identify “great” and “small” as well-defined, qualitatively different sizes.

Like the levelled-off sequence of “nows”, there is a tendency towards levelling off all places in the inauthentic average-everyday mode of being-in-the-world. In accordance with the existential analytic’s plan, one can assume that the way of making room for anticipation that indicates Dasein’s ownmost potentiality-for-being, or the way in which the “authentic future” is winning itself from the “inauthentic future”. In addressing this issue, one can make the case that the way of making room for anticipation (as opposed to awaiting an inauthentic future) constitutes the spatiality of resolute existence. However, Being and Time does not offer resources for elaborating on a distinction between authentic and inauthentic spatiality. This dispensability provides additional evidence for the secondary status of spatiality and making-room as existentiales. Nonetheless, the existential analytic specifies a counter-tendency to the above mentioned tendency of levelling off all places of dealing with what is ready-to-hand and present-at-hand within-the-world. In analyzing this counter-tendency, one might devise a “topography” of the “special places” which Dasein’s circumspective concern distinguishes in one way or another.12 Furthermore, the spatiality of being-in-the-world privileges various directions of circumspective manipulation. The pre-scientific images of space reflect these privileged directions. By implication, the “oriented space” of routine everydayness is essentially anisotropic. The most important step on the way to geometrical concepts of space is the change of anisotropic images to isotropic constructions.

Obviously, the whole existential-analytical characterization of spatiality is based upon a sharp contrast between the “space” which is constituted by Dasein’s making room within-the-world and the concepts of space constructed through the implementation of theoretical means and by following epistemological criteria. Yet we are told that there are no theoretical concepts devoid of existential genesis. By implication, all concepts of space are
(somehow) rooted in the circumspective concern of the average everydayness as a primordial mode of being-in-the-world. Accordingly, the genealogical relationship between existential spatiality and the formalized concepts of space is an unavoidable theme in *Being and Time*. This theme is addressed by Heidegger in two completely different contexts, and by devising two conflicting scenarios. The analytic of existential spatiality allows two hypothetical transitions from the environmental space of circumspective manipulation to the formalized concepts of space. On the one hand, the transition is to be carried out by homogenizing the “oriented space” in a manner that creates a strong incommensurability between circumspective-environmental spatializing and the objectifying construction of mathematical space. On the other hand, one can figure out a step-by-step transition that draws on privileging the constitutive role of place in the formation of environmental regions. On this account, the primary theoretical understanding of space is the morphological one, in which the notion of *situs* preserves essential features of the environmental regions as they are disclosed by the existential analytic.

Before tackling the essential differences between the two scenarios, I should like to stress Heidegger’s motivation for touching upon the mathematical problematic. Unlike Hermann Weyl and Oskar Becker, Heidegger’s (by no means peripheral) dealing with concepts like “the mathematical projection of Nature” (most of all in the lecture course “The Basic Problems of Phenomenology”, 1927) and “the mathematical” (in the lecture “What is a Thing?”, 1935/36) is not guided by an interest in the phenomenology of mathematics (in particular, geometry). More specifically, it was important for Weyl and Becker (although for quite different reasons) to integrate a phenomenological conception of transcendental constitution into various forms of scientific theorizing. Both of them tried to provide phenomenological foundations for geometry. In case of Weyl, a kind of phenomenology of consciousness’s constitutive acts was integrated into the construction of his purely infinitesimal “world geometry”. Appealing to phenomenological constitution also served the task of overcoming the chasm between the intuitive continua of space and time and the mathematical continuum. For Becker, the phenomenological foundation of geometry had to provide an account of the double status of the geometrical concepts as distinguished by empirical content and apriority. Yet, though Heidegger dispensed with such interests, the existential analytic of *Being and Time* implies the possibility (and even the necessity) of a constitutional study (a study of the “existential genesis”) of mathematical idealizations. In particular, a study of this kind is indispensable with regard to the contrast between pragmatic knowledge of the “deliberative circumspection” and the knowledge grounded upon idealized theoretical constructions – a contrast that plays a crucial role in clarifying the methodological specificity of the existential analytic.
3. The Scenario in the Existential Conception of Science

The intention of searching for a genesis of geometrical spaces out of the pre-theoretical “circumspective deliberation” should presumably specify the existential interpretation of science. On this interpretation (developed predominantly in section 69), scientific research is a secondary mode of being-in-the-world based upon average everydayness. Interestingly enough, spatial terminology dominates the vocabulary of the existential interpretation of science since at stake in this interpretation is the issue of the formation of regions of scientific inquiry. Heidegger entangles the discussion of this issue with a conception of the existential genesis of science’s theoretical attitude whose kernel is the “mathematical projection of nature”. Roughly speaking, by projecting a syntactically homogeneous formalism (e.g., the Michaelis-Menten equation for time course kinetic analysis), one discloses a strongly delimited region of measurable variables (in this case, the region of studying the kinetics of enzyme catalyzed reactions), whereby an experimentally oriented research process “in” this region can be initiated. The epistemological equivalent of the mathematical projection is what Heidegger calls “objectifying thematization” (1962, 414-5; GA 2, 363-4). The outcome of the mathematical projection is a de-worlding (releasing entities that are ready-to-hand from their environmental-contextual situatedness) and a delimitation of a region of inquiry. (From a semantic point of view, the region is a totality of all possible models in which the projected formalism is true. Each region remains invariant with respect to a group of transformations.)

Nature is departmentalized in such regions characterized also by formalized concepts of space: In most cases, the mathematical projection of nature is at the same time a projection of a certain geometrical metrics that determines the formal space in which the measurable variables under investigation are “contained”. A decisive moment of Heidegger’s existential interpretation of science is the contrast between the environmental regions of circumspective deliberation within-the-world and the delimited regions of scientific research. The interrelatedness of all environmental regions is the spatiality of the ready-to-hand within-the-world. Each of these regions at once confines the involvements of the entities ready-to-hand within it and opens a horizon of possibilities that transcends the ways of making-present within the region itself. An entity is situated in an environmental region through its possible involvements. But to this situatedness belongs the transcendence of the open horizon of possibilities. The horizontal unity of situatedness and transcendence within an environmental region of concernful dealing and circumspective deliberation is what Heidegger calls the place or location of ready-to-hand equipment (1962, 171; GA 2, 133). The (non-metric and anisotropic) space generated by the involvements of what is ready-to-hand in such a region is defined by the multiplicity of places of equipment. It is not the volume (the
extension) but the changing configurations within this multiplicity which bring the space of circumspective concern into being.

The multiplicity of places gets “neutralized” by the mathematical projection (objectifying thematization). One can assign places only to entities that have a tool-character. In “overlooking” the tool-character, the objectifying thematization levels-off the multiplicity of places in such a manner that the place becomes a spatio-temporal position (a “world-point”). The transformation of places into world-points is a particular aspect of a broader process of homogenizing the intuitive apprehension of space as it is generated by existential spatiality. An outcome of this transformation is the introduction of a metric space (in which de-severance is replaced by the measurement of distances) as a prerequisite for the reduction of entities to measurable variables. This space is a cognitive structure that gets established through releasing entities as embedded in practices from their specific “environmental confinements”. Thus, the environmental space of practical existence becomes a homogeneous (isotropic and metric) space. It can be detached from Dasein’s circumspective concern, and analyzed with regard to its own properties that are independent of Dasein’s ecstatic existence within-the-world. Independence itself is “guaranteed” by the group of transformations that preserve the invariance of space’s basic properties. Put differently, the projection of an abstract mathematical structure allows one to disentangle space from the spatiality of Dasein’s everyday mode of being-in-the-world.

To sum up, the existential interpretation of science admits that there is a transformation of the space of circumspective manipulation into metric space. This transformation is due to that “neutralization” of the spatiality of the ecstatic unity (of Dasein with what is ready-to-hand) which takes place in the objectifying thematization of scientific research. The objectifying thematization is what interrupts the transition from the pre-reflective intuition of space to the theoretical concepts of space. (As I will argue in the next section, this intuition is by no means tantamount to the ordinary conception of space which gets established in average everydayness as a diversity of anisotropic spatial images.) The existential conception of science concedes that there is an ineluctable discontinuity in the aforementioned transition that contributes to suppressing the intuitive image of place-environment-space in the world of science. Mathematical space is an outcome of the “mathematical projection of the world”. The former depends entirely on the structure of the latter. Hence the analytic of existential spatiality has nothing to do with the formation of science’s concepts of space. Like science’s existential genesis, the formation of these concepts requires an analysis carried out exclusively in terms of the theory of ecstatic-horizontal temporality. If this genesis is also to be addressed in terms of a theory of ek-static spatiality, then spatiality must be regarded as a primary existentiale. This is what the author of Being and Time cannot accept.

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The transformation of circumstrospective making-present into a theoretical attitude that operates through mathematical projection is elucidated in that work as an intrinsic transformation of Dasein’s ek-static temporality. On this elucidation, circumstrospective making-present “is grounded in a retention of that context of equipment with which Dasein concerns itself in awaiting a possibility.” (Heidegger 1962, 411; GA 2, 360). What is ready-to-hand in a context of equipment is laid open in awaiting and retaining in such a manner that it is brought closer by Dasein’s envisaging (Vergegenwärtigung). This formulation demonstrates the sense in which making-room (bringing-closer) is a derivative of the ecstatic unity of retaining and awaiting. (Put differently, making-present as a temporal modality is a condition for the possibility of bringing-closer as a spatial modality. Making-room can only occur within the horizon of awaiting and retaining. There is no spatializing that is not grounded in the ecstatic-horizontal unity of temporality.) Notoriously, Heidegger argues that in circumstrospective deliberation and making-present the understanding of equipment is not (usually) expressed in a predication (1962, 410; GA 2, 359). According to his doctrine of “hermeneutic as”, the deliberative dealing with what is ready-to-hand in a context of equipment is always already in an as-structure of Dasein’s pre-predicative understanding. This as-structure is “ontologically grounded” in the temporality of understanding. The genesis of the theoretical attitude (and scientific research as a mode of being-in-the-world) is rooted in the temporalizing of this temporality as temporality of circumstrospective deliberation. More specifically, the hermeneutic situation of this genesis – so Heidegger’s argument goes – comes into being through modifications in the temporality of circumstrospective deliberation that transform the contextual-deliberative making-present into a pure presence that can be represented theoretically by an epistemic subject. Due to this transformation, the contextual entities of circumstrospective deliberation are “no longer spoken within the horizon of awaiting and retaining an equipmental totality and its involvement-relationships.” (Heidegger 1962, 412; GA 2, 361).

In this scenario, the transition from the pre-reflective intuition of space to the theoretical concepts of space does not have an autonomous trajectory. This transition is illuminated entirely as an epiphenomenon of that transformation of the temporality of circumstrospective deliberation which leads to the genesis of science’s theoretical attitude. Since the pre-reflective intuition of space not only accompanies the spatiality of circumstrospective deliberation but is a constitutive moment of it, the transformation of the space produced by the concernful spatializing within-the-world into formalized spaces is only to be explained through analyzing the temporal horizon of awaiting and retaining. In discarding an explanation in terms of intrinsic transformations of spatiality, the existential conception of science provides an additional argument for the claim that spatiality is not only a secondary exitentiale, but it is (in principle) derivable from temporality.
To be sure, the scenario developed in the existential interpretation of science is a corollary to a much broader strategy aimed at the derivability of spatiality from temporality. An epitome of this strategy is spelled out in section 70 of *Being and Time*. Roughly speaking, the section stresses a principled asymmetry: there is a temporality of spatiality, but there is no spatiality of temporality. Dasein’s spatriality is an existentiale that (in contrast to temporality) does not reveal autonomously the meaning of the being of care. It is impossible – so the argument goes – to come to grips with the constitution of meaning within-the-world on the basis of analyzing existential spatiality. The transcendental-ontological reflection upon this constitution is only to be achieved on basis on the analytic of ecstatic temporality. Hence “Dasein’s specific spatiality must be grounded in temporality.” (Heidegger 1962, 418; GA 2, 367). In this perspective, to derive existential spatiality from ecstatic temporality amounts to devising a transcendental inquiry into temporal conditions of the possibility of spatiality. These are the temporal conditions under which Dasein takes place in the world. Since to “take place” is a modality of existing as factically falling, the temporality of falling has priority in the analytic of the temporality of spatiality. Heidegger argues that the place in which Dasein makes room for a space is not the determined and fixed “here”, but the leeway (Spielraum) of manipulating what is ready-to-hand in a context of equipment. Because in this manipulating the relationships of involvement of the context’s entities are intelligible only within the temporal horizon of a world, the way of making room is a “directional awaiting” of the environmental region which spatializes the very context of equipment. Thus, Dasein’s taking place which makes room “discovers” an environmental region. This “taking place” is grounded in “an ecstatically retentive awaiting of the ‘hither’ and ‘thither’ that are possible.” (Heidegger 1962, 420; GA 2, 369). This is Heidegger’s main argument for reducing spatiality to temporality in *Being and Time*. Since it is informed entirely by the analytic of the temporality of falling, prima facie it seems to be an argument that is independent of the existential interpretation of science. In fact, however, the argument should be “supplemented” by a proof that the spaces which are detached from the environmental regions within-the-world are also “in principle” grounded in ecstatic-horizonal temporality. The scenario of the temporal genesis of the mathematically idealized spaces in the existential interpretation provides this unavoidable “supplement”.

4. The Scenario in Section 24

To begin with, in section 24 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger announces a program for treating the stages of conceptualizing spatial relations within the scope of the existential analytic. It is a program of investigating the existential genesis of the main geometrical concepts of space. Heidegger states,
The spatiality of what we proximally encounter in circumspedition can become a theme for circumspedition itself... When space is intuited formally, the pure possibilities of spatial relations are discovered. Here one may go through a series of stages in laying bare pure homogeneous space, passing from the pure morphology of spatial shapes to *analysis situs* and finally to the purely metrical science of space. (1962, 146-7; GA 2. 111-2).

This quotation makes it clear that there is no rift between the pre-reflective (circumspective) envisaging of space (as this envisaging is constituted within the environmental regions) and the homogeneous space constructed through mathematical means. In contrast to the discontinuity between existential spatiality and the introduction of formally codified space (the interruption caused by the objectifying thematization) postulated in the existential interpretation of science, this program stresses a continuous transition from the spatiality of the readiness-to-hand within-the-world to formalized space. The “non-circumspective discovery” of space through the “neutralization” of the environmental regions to dimensionality does not need the interruption of objectifying thematization.

Immediately after outlining the sketch of this transition, Heidegger declares that its investigation will not be undertaken in the present book. Yet the way in which Heidegger approaches the issues of the existential genesis of mathematical space in section 24 shows that this problematic is by no means of subsidiary importance within the scope of fundamental ontology. Searching for this genesis is *sine qua non* for overcoming that hypostatization of mathematical space which characterizes the ontological approach to the world as *res extensa*. Thus considered, it is a precondition for destructing the “ontology of presence” (*Vorhandenheitsontologie*). It is not by accident that in *Being and Time* the announced sketch of the program supervenes on the hermeneutic critique of the Cartesian conception of the world.

To be sure, there is an important “mathematical aspect” in Heidegger’s sketch. Obviously, what he has in mind in stressing the “series of stages” is a version of Felix Klein’s hierarchy of geometrical spaces. Heidegger believes that by addressing the problematic of spatiality of circumspective manipulation within-the-world from the viewpoint of a kind of (phenomenological) constitutional analysis of meaning, one would give an account of those changes in the articulation of environmental regions of routine practices which lead to the need for conceptualizing and formalizing space. Furthermore, he believes that the most extended group of algebraic transformations of geometrical relations have a *direct genesis* from regimes of spatializing within the circumspective manipulation of the everyday being-in-the-world, while the more restricted groups (including those of Euclidean geometry and metrical geometry that conserves the property of distance) arise through enhancing already existing geometrical idealizations. On the scenario in section 24, the homogeneous (topological) spaces as expressed by continuous transformations,
which bring the new points into a one-to-one correspondence with the old points, are closest not to pre-scientific (ordinary) images of space but to a primary intuition of space-as-multiplicity-of-places (as this intuition is engendered immediately by the “existential spatiality” within-the-world). The topological transformations not only preserve spatial properties of objects which are under continuous deformations, but they keep intact to a certain extent the idea of “place” or “locality” (as basic moment of the spatiality of circumspective manipulation). It is another question whether localities in the spatiality of circumspective comportment within-the-world are related to an anisotropic heterogeneity of spatial relations that is incompatible with space’s homogeneity implied by the topological transformations. Edward Casey points out convincingly that at certain critical moments Heidegger invokes features of place to describe temporality itself (Casey, 1997, 245). The description of Dasein’s ek-static existence as being outside-of-itself in and for itself is a case in point. To be sure, after the Kehre these features of place come more and more to the fore. This is an additional reason for approaching Heidegger’s first attempt at emancipating spatiality from temporality.

The approach to the continuity between existential spatiality and all mathematical spaces (regardless of their degree of idealization and formalization) retains a significant resemblance with the treatment of spatiality in the essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”. The paramount claim Heidegger raises in specifying the “site of the fourfold” is that spaces open up by being let into the dwelling of “mortals” (Heidegger 1978, 359). In the second part of this essay, by making a strange detour in his main line of reasoning, Heidegger addresses the same issue he dealt with in section 24 of Being and Time. He suddenly starts to pay attention to the possibility of measuring things in space as spatium and extensio. The first step in this detour is to treat – not the thing/locale which makes space for a site of the fourfold, but its surrounding items as places: the space allowed by the thing-as-occupying-a-locale – so Heidegger’s argument goes – contains many places variously near or far from the thing.

In a next step, Heidegger goes on to reflect upon a stronger abstraction achieved by treating places as mere positions between which there lies a measurable distance. Thus, he again search for a “smooth” transition from the spatiality (of the fourfold in this case) to formalizing the concept of space as a variety of positions. In this formalization the nearness and remoteness between human beings and things are reduced to mere distances, “mere intervals of intervening space”. Height, breadth, and depth are transformed into such intervals. The outcome is a pure spatium as a container of things. Yet the formalization can go further.

Once the measurable distance gets established as the only identifiable relation between positions, there is no obstacle to work out the concept of the
manifold of the three dimensions. The room made by this manifold is no longer
determined by distances. Heidegger argues that this room is no longer a
spatium. It is an extensio that can be further formalized by placing emphasis on
analytic-algebraic relations. What he has in mind is not so much analytic
geometry (representing geometrical shapes in a numerical way), but the
construction of manifolds with an arbitrary number of dimensions. Thus
idealized, “space” contains no spaces and no places. The alienation from
the dwelling-spaces and the “topology of the fourfold” is complete. On this
construal, spatium and extensio are intermediate stages in transforming the
space of dwelling-building into an idealized entity that by means of further
constructive procedures may generate other idealized entities (some of them
with a possible empirical interpretation). Spatium and extensio make room for
things whose existence is only determined by computing the magnitudes of
distances, spans, and directions.

In making a detour in the field of space’s formalization (and approaching
the problematic of a pragmatic-constructive philosophy of geometry),
Heidegger manages to delineate a context for discussing “the relation of man
and space”. The starting-point is the claim that spaces of dwelling and building
cannot be interpreted as something that faces man. These are spaces that are at
once constituted and opened up by the finitude of mortals. Only finite beings
able to stay before the divinities, on the earth, and under the sky are in need of
dwelling. In dwelling they persist through spaces by virtue of thrownness
among things-as-occupying-locales. Being thrown and going through spaces is
a destiny that human beings cannot avoid. To put it in a terminology closer to
Being and Time, because of their ek-sistence in spaces of dwelling human
beings are never here only as present encapsulated bodies. Human beings can
never leave these spaces since mortals cannot leave behind their belonging to
the fourfold. They are doomed to stay with things-as-occupying-locales. This
is why Heidegger reaches the conclusion that mortals’ relation to locales, and
through locales to spaces, inheres in their dwelling. At the same time, building
(as a constant response to the summons of the fourfold) is closer to the “origins
of space” than any geometrical and mathematical theory. Yet these origins are
common to the spaces of dwelling/building and mathematical spaces. On a
further argument developed in the essay under discussion, there is no
mathematical space that does not stems from forms of dwelling-building, and
accordingly, that does not hide sites for the fourfold. This argument brings the
scenario from section 24 to completion.

Yet there is a significant difference between this scenario and the approach
suggested in “Building Dwelling Thinking” as well. Notoriously, the latter is
based on a radical de-transcendentalization (and de-anthropologization) of the
ontico-ontological difference. This difference is no longer explained in terms of
a transcendental-hermeneutic unveiling of “the structure of transcendence”. In
addition, the series of transformations which the transcendental reflection takes into consideration when studying the genealogical relationship between existential spatiality and the concepts of space does not play any role in the “topology of the fourfold”. To sharpen further this divergence, the spatiality-space continuity devised in section 24 is due to the most thorough commitment to the hermeneutic search for conditions of possibility. It is this search that demands a transcendental reflection not only upon the ways in which the existentiales temporalize temporality but also upon the ways in which they spatialize ecstatic-horizontal spatiality.

Now I am in a position to address the issue of pre-reflective intuition regarding an ecstatic-horizontal unity of spatiality. My claim is that this intuition, which Heidegger ignores, is not to be extricated from an existential “topology” whose problematic is implicitly touched upon in section 24. To begin with, we operate in our everyday life with several non-scientific “models” of space. However divergent they might be, important features are shared by all of them. These features have a common denominator that is to be regarded as the “ordinary concept of space”. In the same vein Heidegger (though avoiding the expression) admits that there is an ordinary understanding of space (in analogy with the ordinary understanding of time) that stems from the “circumspective thematization” of the spatiality of the environment within the everyday practices of dealing with what is ready-to-hand. For this ordinary (vulgar) understanding, space embraces manifolds of places. Accordingly, there is a primacy of space’s extension over space’s morphology. On this understanding, space is a “container” of fixed places and movable things. The fixed places are in a certain manner co-present-at-hand within space. In contrast to the “nows” of ordinary time the places of ordinary space do not pass away. Thus, the idea of place is subsumed in the ordinary understanding to the idea of a space-container.\textsuperscript{20}

Furthermore, in the same manner in which Heidegger speaks about “public time”, one can introduce the notion of “public space”. This would be the kind of space “in which” the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand within-the-world are encountered. Yet the aforementioned “circumspective thematization” (and the formation of a vulgar concept of space and “public space”) is by no means the incipience of the transition from existential spatiality to the conceptualization of space. The incipience is rather the very “neutralization” of the environmental regions (or the spatiality of the contexts of equipment). Such a region, however, is in the first instance the “whither” for the possible belonging of equipment which can be placed. On this view, making room through equipment is equipment’s possible placing in a context. Possible placing/belonging in this formulation is tantamount to equipment’s involvements. Thus considered, place (as a moment of circumspective concern and interpretative articulation) becomes a privileged notion in the analytic of
spatiality. (The analytic itself becomes to a great extent a “topology of the Da of Dasein” – a topology of the constitution of environmental regions.)

By placing equipment in a context that is in an ongoing spatializing, one gets a primary intuition of the environmental region’s space. This is an intuition of the spatial range of an equipmental totality in which the “here” is dispersed in possible involvements. At the same time, the primary intuition of space is an intuition about a (horizontal) unity of possibilities already actualized in contexts of equipment and possibilities that can be appropriated. Because of this unity, an environmental region of routine practices never has the character of a static presence. This depiction can be symmetrically reversed in the following manner.

The horizontal unity of actualized and projected (but not actualized) possibilities of spatializing and regionalizing circumspective concern takes place in a manner that reveals being as care. The intuition of place as a leeway of possibilities for ecstatic making room precedes (genealogically) the ordinary concepts of space (as “public space” and as a world-space). The image of place-environment-space that is concomitant with the ecstatic making room gets suppressed by the ordinary concept of space (i.e., the interpretation which “the direction of concernful common sense” brings into play). The ordinary concept is what “proximally prevails” in average everydayness. This is a concept created and imposed by the “they”. The intuition of space gets eclipsed by the everyday levelling-off of places and environmental regions. The conclusion that “in the ordinary conception of time something has been covered up” (Heidegger 1962, 479; GA 2, 426) might be generalized to refer to space as well: the constitutive role of place and environmental region is covered up in the ordinary conception of space. But this role is intact in the primary intuition of space.

According to the scenario of section 24, the formalized concept of space which is closest to the pre-reflective understanding of space (as involving a “vision” of existential spatiality’s ecstatic-horizontal unity) is that of geometric topology. This is why Heidegger starts out the series of stages in laying bare pure homogeneous space with the morphology of spatial shapes as it is developed by analysis situs, and not with the metrical theories of space. (Situs here keeps resemblance to the place where the ecstatic-horizontal unity of spatializing comes to the fore.) A topological space that allows (through a fundamental group of manifolds) a definition of dimensionality “neutralizes” in the first instance all environmental regions. In contrast to the neutralization advanced by the objectifying thematization, however, this neutralization has a quite specific character: The neutralization preserves in a new form much of what it overcomes. The account I have outlined in this paper stresses the possibility of tracing back the roots of the “topology of being” to the existential analytic of spatiality in Being and Time. Yet the tentative version of such a topology in this work is in complete harmony with the transcendental
interpretation of the ontico-ontological difference. This harmony is no longer the case after the turning.

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References
2. See, in particular, Neumann 1999.
3. Another monographic investigation that to a certain extent also contrasts the decline of interest in Heidegger’s existential spatiality is Malpas 2006. Of primary importance in this regard is the search for recasting Heidegger’s idea of a “topology of being” by analyzing the nexus of place and situatedness. (Malpas 2006, 39-63) Yet in this highly promising program at issue is not so much existential spatiality but rather the replacement of the spatial structure of transcendence (as it is spelled out in the existential analytic) with the topological structure of Ereignis (as it is thematized in the analysis of the gathering of the fourfold) after the “turn”.
4. Arisaka (1996, 34-9), in particular, makes the case that the relationship between temporality and spatiality has to be spelled out as an equiprimordial and not as a foundational one. The equiprimordiality of both existentiales implies interdependence between temporality and spatiality.
5. It is another issue that after the Kehre in the new context of post-metaphysical philosophizing several valuable issues of the original concept of existential spatiality got lost.
6. At the same time, one might speak of the “spatiality of understanding”, “attuned spatiality”, “spatiality of discourse”, and “spatiality of falling”, all of them being distinguished by concomitant kinds of temporalizing of temporality. What gets temporalized are the ways of making room for a meaningful articulation of the world.
7. Schatzki (2007, 53) argues that the analyses of the two types overlap: the analysis of readiness-to-hand’s spatiality repeats, with different emphases, the analysis of the spatiality of being-in-the-world, and “to distinguish between the two is only to emphasize different aspects of a single spatiality.” Though this statement is formally correct I will try to expose several reasons for disagreeing with it. Generally speaking, the dynamic unity of the two types does not preclude one from searching for essential differences. Schatzki overlooks these differences. To a great extent, his failure to address in an appropriate manner the two types of existential spatiality is due to a tendentious interpretation of Dasein that he carries out when holding that the existential analytic admits a monadic view of human existence – “it is an analysis of the existence of an individual (functional) human being.” (Schatzki 2007, 50) He ignores the trans-subjective-horizontal dimensions of Dasein’s existence. Since the transcendence of the world cannot be separated from Dasein’s existence, the latter is irreducible to the existential totality of an individual human life. It is precisely this irreducibility that prompts Heidegger to differentiate between the two types of existential spatiality.
8. Remoteness and closeness are qualitative features of Dasein’s circumspective throwness in everyday practices. To this throwness belong the “relativity effects” of spatiality. In this regard, Heidegger provides the following illustration,

When a man wears a pair of spectacles which are so close to him distantly that they are ‘sitting on his nose’, they are environmentally more remote from him than the picture on the opposite wall. Such equipment has so little closeness that often it is proximally quite impossible to find. Equipment for seeing – and likewise for hearing, such as the telephone receiver – has what we have designated as the inconspicuousness of the proximally ready-to-hand. (1962, 141; GA 2, 107).
Generally speaking, the relativity effects are due to the discordance between contextualizing a utensil for reaching a purpose and grasping the outcome of that contextualization as an actualized possibility.

9. By privileging the lived body as an absolute point of spatializing, Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, eliminates the need for distinguishing between the spatiality of readiness-to-hand and the spatiality of being-in-the-world. Since bodily experience unites man’s transcendence of the things within-the-world and the modes of spatializing and constructing images of space, there is only one source of spatializing. Accordingly, primary spatiality (the “lived space” of man’s directedness to things) gets specified in connection with the typical grasp on man’s body in various “anthropological spaces”.

10. In *Being and Time*, the notion of “environmental region” occupies an intermediate status between the notions of spatiality and space. An environmental region is the directionality of the de-severance in articulating contexts of equipment within-the-world. It is a particular “whither” of encountering “things” that are ready-to-hand. Thus considered, the environmental region is the spatial unit of the worldhood of the world.

11. For a detailed analysis of de-severance and directionality, see Frodeman (1992).

12. Jeff Malpas makes an essential use of the distinction between topography and topology when investigating Heidegger’s approach to place and spatiality when investigating Heidegger’s approach to place and spatiality before and after the *Kehre*. This distinction is to be elucidated in terms of complementarity rather than of contradiction. The “topographical method” of early Heidegger is what essentially underlies his later development of the idea of “topology of being”. The “topological orientation” of Heidegger’s thought persists in the shift away from the transcendental as an abandonment of the preoccupation with transcendence. (See Malpas 2007, 126-30).


14. Here I am using the notion of involvement in the sense of section 18 of *Being and Time*.

15. From the viewpoint of the transcendental approach of *Being and Time*, the possibility of (having a concept of) metric space has much to do with the possibility of having a theoretical attitude guided by epistemological norms. Metric space is a cognitive structure that becomes possible when ecstatic unity is replaced by an epistemic distance between knowing subject and objective reality.

16. In scrutinizing Heidegger’s existential-analytic thesis that Dasein’s specific spatiality must be grounded in temporality, Edward Casey explains the failure in *Being and Time* to advocate this thesis. He makes the case that there is no demonstration of any grounds for this “must” in the existential analytic. More specifically, there is no specific deduction of the dependence of spatiality on temporality. In analyzing section 70, Casey stresses that it remains unclear what the treatment of the modes of the regional directionality gains by being described as an “ecstatically retentive awaiting” (1997, 257).

17. Roughly speaking, Klein’s celebrated program is an attempt at characterizing geometries on the basis of projective transformations and group theory. On the basic assumption of this program, the more one progressively restricts the range of transformations, the greater is the enrichment with regard to specific spatial objects. In another formulation, the less of the properties remain invariant under the respective group, the greater is the number of particular geometrical objects whose existence is allowed by the algebraic transformations.

18. The “series of stages in laying bare pure homogeneous space” Heidegger refers to is to be continued by another series distinguished by moves from one formally codified space to another, i.e., from one group of transformations to another, each of which determines a class of possible spatial objects one can construct in the framework of a certain geometry. Accordingly, such a group defines criteria of existence of spatial objects as characterized by invariant properties (with respect to the algebraic transformations). Thus, only some very general properties (such as sidedness, insideness, outsideness, and all “connectivity properties”) can be identified as invariant under the most extended group of topological transformations. If one is in need of a stronger idealization (formalization) of the concept of space, one has to restrict the topological transformations (as defining the morphology of spatial
shapes), specifying thereby the group of projective transformations. The latter do not preserve sizes or angles. Yet the relations of incidence and cross-ratio remain invariant under this group. In a next move one arrives at the transformations of affine geometry which in contrast to projective transformations preserve the property of parallelism. Under this new group the properties of the homographic spatial objects are invariant.

19. See in this regard Ginev 2011.

20. Heidegger also introduces the concept of the world-space which is an analogue to the concept of the world-time as a sequence of “nows” which are what get counted.

Bibliography
Olafson, F., “Heidegger a la Wittgenstein or ‘Coping’ with Professor Dreyfus”, Inquiry, 37/1: 1994, 45-64.
That Heidegger’s critique of technology is innovative, widely read, cited, and analysed is beyond dispute. In fact, it is probably the most famous and influential aspect of his thinking. As Heidegger makes clear, however, not only is “machine technology [...] identical with the essence of modern metaphysics”, but “technicity [is] the destiny of metaphysics and its completion.” As such, any thorough engagement with Heidegger’s critique of technology must also engage with his critique of metaphysics. While discussions about Heidegger’s analysis of technology do, generally, highlight the link between Heidegger’s critiques of technology and metaphysics, they tend to focus on providing a detailed analysis of the former and downplay discussion of the ways in which modern technology can be overcome. For example, Don Ihde focuses on Heidegger’s analysis of technology in order to offer a critique of Heidegger’s argument that modern technology, in its enframing, contains a universal essence. For Ihde, such essentialism “keeps one from seeing particularities of technology and thus makes it impossible to discern the differences of contexts or of cultures into which technologies are embedded.” While this calls into question key aspects of Heidegger’s critique, it does not explicitly discuss the overcoming of metaphysics. From a different direction, Søren Riis offers an innovative analysis of Heidegger’s account of the enframing of modern technology to show that, contra Heidegger, the enframing of modern technology was also a constitutive part of technology in ancient Greece. While this enhances our understanding of the technological enframing inherent to ancient Greece and shows that there are problems in appealing to the ancients to reveal an alternative form of technology, Riis doesn’t go on to discuss how the enframing of technology can be overcome.

As such, this paper does not simply offer yet another analysis of Heidegger’s critique of technology, but complements these analyses by not only showing how Heidegger’s critique of technology feeds into, is dependent on, and supports his attempted destruction of metaphysics, but also explicitly engages with the issue of how the technological enframing of metaphysics can be overcome.

The argument developed defends Heidegger against a particularly prevalent interpretation of his work that takes his attempted destruction of metaphysics to mean the annihilation of all metaphysical thinking. Starting with this premise and subsequently identifying aspects of metaphysical thinking within his thinking has resulted in numerous commentators claiming that Heidegger fails in his attempted destruction of metaphysics.
While accepting the notion that aspects of metaphysical thinking remain in Heidegger’s thinking, I show that there are two related reasons as to why this is the case. The first is that Heidegger’s talk of destructing the metaphysical tradition does not mean the annihilation of metaphysics. It means a return to the origins of metaphysical thinking to uncover aspects of the original mode of thinking that led to metaphysical thinking with a view to purifying thought to alternatives. This is why Heidegger discusses “preparatory” thinking as the way to re-engage with what he calls “originary” [CP 34], non-conceptual, non-instrumental, meditative thinking. I will not, however, discuss this aspect of Heidegger’s thinking in depth because doing so would require a detailed engagement with Heidegger’s critique and attempted reconstruction of thought, a discussion that would take us too far away from the topic of this essay.

I will, however, spend significant time detailing the second way in which this critique of Heidegger goes astray; that is, the way this criticism of Heidegger misunderstands the relationship between metaphysical thinking and post-metaphysical thinking or thinking beyond metaphysics and, in particular, the means to ‘achieve’ the latter. By maintaining that any going-beyond of metaphysics requires and necessitates an irreducible and absolute break with metaphysics, these critics insist that the remnants of metaphysical thinking that remain in Heidegger’s thought undermine his stated intention of going beyond metaphysics. I will show, however, that Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics is far subtler than these critics recognise. Far from merely going beyond metaphysics in a way which forgets or annihilates metaphysical thinking, Heidegger makes the subtle point that traces of metaphysical thinking must remain in his thought because any “mere countermovement [...] necessarily remains [...] held fast in the essence of that over against which it moves” [WN 61]. Because “a regard for metaphysics still prevails even in the intention to overcome metaphysics” [TB 24], any attempt to surmount metaphysics remains embroiled in metaphysics. As such, Heidegger is aware that his attempted surmounting of metaphysics contains, and indeed must contain, aspects of the metaphysical thinking he aims to overcome.

This is relevant for his critiques of technology and human subjectivity because, while Heidegger will point beyond modern conceptions of technology to an alternative, the way in which this is to be achieved is, at best, vague and, at worst, appears to ignore or prevent any individual, political, or social action that may contribute to its bringing-forth. In a sense this is because Heidegger does not want to establish guidelines that would imprison thought within the domain of merely representing his solution(s). But I also want to suggest that it also demonstrates the extent to which Heidegger struggles to reconcile his notion of trace with his critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism.

Whereas Heidegger’s notion of trace demands that a trace of metaphysics remain in that which overcomes metaphysics, his critique of metaphysical
anthropocentrism appears to reject the idea that human being has any role to
play in the overcoming of the technological enframing of metaphysics. As a
consequence, a number of commentators have suggested that Heidegger
endorses a passive approach to the overcoming of metaphysics that simply waits
for being to reveal an alternative to metaphysics. According to these
commentators, this passivity not only excludes human action from contributing
to the overcoming of metaphysics, but also undermines his notion of trace.

In contrast to this conclusion, and while Heidegger is, admittedly, not
always consistent on this issue, I turn to comments he makes in Country Path
Conversations to suggest that Heidegger came to distinguish between different
forms of willing, one of which allows him to incorporate a form of willing
into the overcoming of metaphysics that remains consistent with his notion of
metaphysical trace and critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism. As such, a
trace of metaphysical anthropocentrism, in the form of human willing, will,
to however small a degree, be a necessary, if partial, aspect of any overcoming
of metaphysics and the technological perspective that accompanies and re-
enforces it.

Being, Metaphysics, and Anthropocentrism

True to his insistence that genuine thought remains concerned with only one
thought, Heidegger’s entire philosophical enterprise focuses on and revolves
around one question: the question of being. In line with the ancient Greeks,
Heidegger insists that the question of being is the question; only by inquiring
into this question can we hope to adequately answer any issue. But being is not
god, a cosmic ground, or a transcendent realm, nor is ‘it’ an entity that we can
see, feel, or touch. Being is distinct from, while intimately connected to, beings;
being is that which allows beings to be. By distinguishing between being and
beings, Heidegger maintains that, while we tend to focus on the latter and
answer the question of what an entity is through recourse to descriptions of its
properties or form, any discussion of the essence of beings cannot be thorough
or genuine unless the being of the entity is identified and discussed. Thus, while
the question of being has long been forgotten, ignored, or believed to be
unimportant, irrelevant, or nonsensical, Heidegger insists that not only is ‘it’ the fundamental question, but it is time to “raise anew the question of the meaning
of being” [BT 20].

However, while he holds that the question must be raised, Heidegger is well
aware that there are significant obstacles to this endeavour. In short, we have
long since become accustomed to think of the question of being as nonsensical.
This is not simply a modern phenomenon, but goes back to the very beginnings
of ancient thought. Thus, it is not simply a matter of choosing to inquire into the
question of being; doing so simply risks examining the question through the
lens of the thinking that covered it over. Before raising the question, it is
necessary to destruct the entire tradition of Western thought to show where it has gone wrong and how it has concealed the question. This destructing will, so Heidegger contends, show the necessity of the question of being and how this question must be thought [BT 44].

Importantly, however, this destruction is not simply a negative endeavour, nor does it aim to simply annihilate or set itself in opposition to metaphysics and the metaphysical tradition [MFN 16, 54]. The aim is to return to the “primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of being – the ways which have guided us ever since” [BT 44]. With this act of return, or purification as Heidegger calls it [CP 154], the aim is not only to identify what was concealed by metaphysics, but to also see if an alternative is possible. Heidegger’s notion of destruction does not, therefore, simply aim to annihilate metaphysics or set itself in opposition to the metaphysical tradition. It aims to return to the origin of metaphysics, shake its assumptions and ways of thinking, negate its concealing aspects, and delineate and take over “the positive possibilities of that tradition” [BT 44]. Ultimately, this return to the “originary domain” will determine whether there is an alternative way of posing and revealing the question of being than that which informs the metaphysical tradition; an alternative that will open up alternative manifestations of being [BT 44].

While we will return to Heidegger’s notion of ‘destruction’ in subsequent sections, at this stage, it is important to recognise that the reason that the question of being may appear nonsensical or, at least, difficult to comprehend is because thinking since ancient Greece has settled on a particular way of thinking being while simultaneously covering over and forgetting both that this choice has been made and, indeed, the question of being itself. This interpretation of being is not necessarily wrong, but it is partial in that, while it reveals aspects of being, this revealing also entails a concealing that prevents the truth of being from revealing itself. Indeed, we will see that one of the major ways in which this concealment propagated and propagates itself was and is through the dominance of technology. Heidegger names this dominant, concealing approach to being: metaphysics. This approach to being finds expression in all walks of contemporary Western society, but is particularly prevalent in conceptions of technology and human being. Metaphysics, technology, and human being are, therefore, intimately connected in Heidegger’s analysis; each is distinct from, but intricately linked to and reinforced by, the other two. This inter-connectedness means that, before moving on to Heidegger’s critique of technology, it will be helpful and necessary to say something about what he means by metaphysics and the metaphysical view of human being.

There are three aspects to Heidegger’s use of the term ‘metaphysics.’ In other words, thinking is metaphysical if it conforms to at least one of these three
aspects. First, metaphysics secures itself in or from a foundational ground. That is, metaphysics locates itself in and from a fixed point that provides it with meaning and delineates the parameters of its thinking. Traditionally, this has been God, but it has also been the I taken as pure subject, spirit, and the unnamed first mover. For Heidegger, this need for stability not only conceals aspects of being, but closes thought off to the temporality of being.¹⁵

The second form of metaphysics builds on the first in that it merely defines entities by comparing them to other entities and so does not inquire into the being of an entity.¹⁶ By failing to inquire into the being of an entity, metaphysics fails to ask that which would allow it to properly understand what an entity is. As such, it takes aspects of an entity for granted or merely assumes that its way of approaching the entity is correct.¹⁷ This corresponds to and re-enforces the first form of metaphysics in that it does not ask about the being of God or the being of the foundational ground but simply takes it for granted and, as such, finds a fixed ground.

The third aspect of metaphysics relates to its logic. For Heidegger, metaphysics works through strict binary oppositions such as, for example, essence and existence, and subject and object [LH 249f.]. For Heidegger, binary logic imprisons thought and being within static, fixed parameters and so conceals or closes thought off to alternatives. The result is that metaphysics entails a closed, self-reinforcing system where the logic of binary oppositions is unable and unwilling to inquire into the being of each entity or the binary opposition itself and merely takes for granted certain assumptions about the entities that form the binary opposition. This ensures a rejection of and closure to the alternatives that do not conform to those defined as ‘true’ by the metaphysical system.

But accompanying and re-enforcing this metaphysical stance is a particular view of the human. For Heidegger, metaphysics takes the human being to be a pure subject placed at the centre of beings determining, creating, and controlling them. Metaphysical “anthropomorphism is an explicit or implicit, acknowledged or unknowingly adopted conviction that ‘beings in the whole’” are what they are and how they are by virtue of, and in accordance with, the representation that, among other processes of life, proceeds in man, the animal endowed with reason. [Thus] what is named and known as being is human contrivance [MFN 137].

By portraying human being as the special, unique entity from which all else emanates, metaphysics takes humans to be “the measure and the centre of beings. Man is what lies at the bottom of all beings; that is, in modern terms, at the bottom of all objectification and representability”.¹⁸ While this view of the human finds expression in modern technology, in so far as technology is taken to be a mere instrument of and for human use, it is a view that Heidegger vociferously critiques and, ultimately, aims to overturn.¹⁹
What is important to remember at this stage though, is that, for Heidegger, metaphysics is synonymous with anthropology and the view that the human being is a subject opposed to an objective world [AWP 128, 133]. Metaphysics and anthropocentrism are, therefore, intricately entwined; any attempt to overcome one must also overcome the other [NIV 33]. But, as mentioned, Heidegger also maintains that metaphysics and anthropocentrism are re-enforced by and, in turn, re-enforce the dominance of technology. As such, understanding Heidegger’s views on metaphysics and anthropocentrism requires an engagement with his critique of technology.

Technology

It is important to note, however, that in a similar vein to his usage of the word ‘metaphysics,’ Heidegger also uses the term ‘technology’ in three different ways. First, technology can mean “the totality of the extent machines and apparatuses, merely as objects that are available – in operation”.20 In other words, technology refers to the objects that can be used to undertake and complete a particular operation. Secondly, technology refers to the method of producing the objects used to undertake and complete an operation. Thirdly, and more generally, technology relates to “what has been specified into one with the humans and the groups of humans who work in the construction, production, installation, service, and supervision of the whole system of machines and appliances” [TL 132]. In other words, in its most general sense, technology relates to and describes a matrix of interlocking activities that combine to create a particular mode of thought and being defined in relation to and out of its constitutive relationship to appliances, machines, and objects.

Heidegger starts his discussion of technology with the seemingly paradoxical claim that “technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology”.21 In other words, we cannot simply look to technological objects to delineate what technology is or means. The essence of the computer, for example, is not simply discovered by looking at the components of the computer itself. Heidegger is referring to the third definition of technology outlined above: technology is more than mere objects; it refers to a way of being. As such, the essence of technology relates to the way of being instantiated and supported by technology. For this reason, technology is anything but neutral; it values one way of being over others.22 In particular, modern technology values and affirms an instrumental approach to technology in which technology is taken to be a passive instrument that simply waits to be picked up and used to fulfil a human end.

The consequence of this instrumental vision of technology is profound. While philosophy has traditionally identified four causes of a thing, the instrumental view of technology reduces it to one. Thus, while the four causes of philosophy are *causa materialis*, which delineates the matter out of which the thing is made; *causa formalis*, which delineates the thing’s form; *causa finalis*,
which describes the end of purpose of the thing; and, finally, *causa efficiens*, which describes the means that brings about the thing, modern technology reduces the four causes to *causa efficiens* and values the efficient and effective production of objects over all else [QT 6, 11]. With this, and while the object is brought forth out of unconcealment and revealed through the combination of the four causes, modern technology reveals its object in a particular, partial manner. Importantly, however, modern technology maintains that this partial concealment is the only way the thing can be properly approached. With this, modern technology delineates the parameters that determine how things appear and reveals that technology is intimately connected to knowledge [QT 12].

To re-enforce this, Heidegger traces the root of the word technology to the Greek word *technē*. While there is a tendency for commentators to focus on defining *technē* in relation to different production practices with the modern, instrumental, techno-scientific mode of production compared to a more holistic and organic craft mode of production, Heidegger pushes us to recognise that, while this is an aspect of the meaning of the word, there is a more fundamental, essential meaning that relates to knowledge or *epistēmē*. Thus, “what is decisive in *technē* does not lie at all in the making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *technē* is a bringing-forth” [QT 13]. The result is that “technology is a mode of revealing” [QT 13]. In other words, forms of technology instantiate and are re-enforced by specific ways of thinking and being. While the relationship between technology, thinking, and being was also found in the craft production of ancient Greece, the holistic, organic nature of craft production meant that it was integrated into nature in a way that was conditioned by nature itself. In contrast, modern technology sets upon and tries to impose itself on nature. As such, the impact of modern technology is far more insidious, dangerous, and total. For this reason, it is this form of technology that Heidegger focuses on.

While Heidegger recognises that the anthropological, instrumental view of modern technology tells us something about technology, he rejects the notion that it discloses the essence of technology. Because it divorces technology from human being and makes the former a mere instrument for the latter’s ends, the instrumental view takes humans to be the masters of technology and so re-enforces the anthropocentrism of metaphysics. This, however, forgets, ignores, or misunderstands that technology is a way of revealing being to humans and so is not at the mercy of human activity and understanding. As a world-view, technology shapes how human being pictures and thinks about itself and the world. Far from being the masters of technology, human activity and understanding are, in actuality, at the mercy of technology [QT 4, 12].

The revealing that accompanies modern forms of technology is manifested as “a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply
energy that can be extracted and stored as such” [QT 14]. Heidegger maintains that this challenge was absent from previous forms of technology because these were orientated around a more holistic and organic approach to nature. Thus, while it is true that the old windmill is turned by the wind, this windmill is at the mercy of the wind blowing and so does not control its movement or impose itself on nature. There is, however, something fundamentally different about modern technology’s approach to nature in that modern technology imposes itself on nature and seeks to extract resources from nature. Nothing escapes this process, “agriculture is now the mechanised food industry. Air is now set upon to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium” [QT 15]. Even something as powerful and apparently untameable as the Rhine River becomes a means to an end. Turbines are placed in it to generate power, which is transferred to a power station and distributed to homes in the form of electricity [QT 16]. As such, and far from leaving nature alone, modern technology sets up a challenge to nature and expects ‘her’ to fulfil it. But rather than fulfil this expectation by conforming to the rhythm of nature, modern technology imposes itself on nature and attempts and expects nature to conform to its ends.

The challenge modern technology sets up for nature is that it becomes a reservoir of potential to be used for a particular human project or operation in the future. As such, “the revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth” [QT 16]. This setting-upon ensures that “the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed and what is distributed is switched about ever new” [QT 16]. This setting-up and challenging is accompanied by an ordering of components, mechanisation, mathematics, and an emphasis on exactitude which help more efficiently and effectively to unlock the potential of nature [ID 34f].

To enable nature to be used at any moment to fulfil the ends of a particular project, modern technology employs a particular view of its objects. Far from leaving them alone, it transforms them into things with a potential use; a potential that must remain operative at all times. Everything is on stand-by ready for the call to be used. As such, each thing is taken to be a ‘standing reserve’ [QT 17]. The example Heidegger provides is that of an airliner that sits on the runway. It is surely an object, but it is taken to be more than an object. If it is simply reduced to an object, Heidegger insists, it conceals its essence. Modern technology transforms it into a thing ready for transportation. To fulfil this role, it is not taken to be simply an inanimate object on the runway; the entire view of the object is transformed to one that is always ready for imminent use. It may never actually have to transport anything and so may simply stand there motionless, but, in this motionlessness, there is pent up potential energy that can be released at any moment [QT 17].
Importantly, modern technology imposes this notion of standing reserve on all things, including humans, each of which is taken to ‘possess’ a fully-charged energy that is ready to be expelled for the accomplishment of a project or is placed on stand-by to fulfil a role for the good of a project. Thus, “what is peculiar to technology resides in the fact that, in it, the demand speaks forth, the demand to challenge nature forth into placing it at our disposal and securing it as natural energy” [TL 137]. What is so unique and ominous about modern technology is that it sets upon the world and imposes a particular meaning on nature that takes nature to be a potential energy that is and must be ready for use as and when desired by humans, all the while concealing the alternatives and making it appear as if this worldview is the only one possible.

While humans reveal technology in this manner, Heidegger wants to decentre them from the central position that metaphysics gives them. As such, he maintains that, while it is true that humans reveal objects in this manner, they are not in control of this revealing [QT 18]. Humans reveal objects in this manner because being reveals itself through structures and a form of rationality that brings humans to reveal objects in this way. Rather than being the masters of this revealing, humans are conditioned by being itself to reveal objects in this way. As such, humans are at the mercy of this form of revealing and the structures and rationality that underpin it [QT 18]. This is because modern technology enframes being [QT 19].

Enframing (Gestell) entails some kind of apparatus that reveals being in an enclosed and partial manner. Much like a picture-frame encloses what is within it, so the enframing of technology closes being within its parameters. This is not simply a shutting-out of alternatives; enframing reveals being in a particular, partial manner that conceals co-possibilities. Note that enframing does not create being; it delineates the way in which being is and will be revealed. As such, enframing delineates what will be revealed while also revealing it in the appropriate manner. More specifically, enframing sets upon being and imposes an order that brings it forth in a way that reveals it as an object with a standing reserve [QT 20]. Enframing is, therefore, intimately connected to the third, and most general, definition of technology previously discussed, in so far as it reveals being in the manner of objects to be used for a specific human-made purpose, while simultaneously interlinking the various appliances, projects, and modes of thinking and being together to produce the blanket uniformity of modern technology.

However, we have to be careful how we understand this notion of enframing. Enframing does not mean something transcendent to being that is imposed on being; nor is it something that stands external to being ready to be imposed on being. Enframing is more organic than this, in so far as it emanates from being ‘itself,’ and shapes the manner in which being is revealed. As such, enframing is not stamped on being,26 but is being revealing itself in a particular, partial,
closed manner. It is the ‘framework’ [ID 35] that delineates the parameters through which being reveals itself. “Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological” [QT 20]. Enframing is the essence of modern technology [QT 23, 25].

Enframing is also intimately connected to and re-enforces the scientific outlook that values and reveals objects in a quantifiable, objective, measurable manner. This allows the standing reserve of each to be more easily determined and manipulated to ensure the completion of the operation towards which each human is directed and, according to the metaphysical tradition, has chosen. For Heidegger, modern science obliges and re-enforces this objective, calculable view of nature. But, again, this is not because nature reveals itself in these objective, calculative ways, but because it is made to by the enframing of modern technology. In other words, enframing brings scientific theory to base itself on the premise that being is nothing but “a coherence of forces calculable in advance” [QT 21]. When being is set up in this manner, it is logical to ask and conduct experiments in ways that explore the implications of this premise. As such, science sets up experiments to validate and explore the consequences of its foundational, unexplored, metaphysical premise. The result is a discipline that values objectivity, exactitude, and calculability; exactly the ‘things’ that validate and re-enforce the enframing constitutive of modern technology. The result is that “the reality within which man of today moves and attempts to maintain himself is, with regard to its fundamental characteristics, determined on an increasing scale by and in conjunction with that which we call Western European science”.27 But the scientific outlook is not ‘natural,’ nor is it based on explored, foundational premises. It sets upon being and makes being conform to its unexplored, foundational premises. As such, science frames being in a way that reveals, validates, and re-enforces the enframing, metaphysical outlook of modern technology.

With this, Heidegger is led to make what appears to be a historically inaccurate claim; that is, that while modern technology arose two centuries after science, it actually precedes modern science and made science possible [QT 21f]. Such is the bafflement over this claim that at least one commentator has argued that Heidegger got things mixed up here and that, in actuality, for him, the essence of science is the essence of technology.28

Unfortunately, this criticism fails to appreciate the three senses in which Heidegger uses the term ‘technology.’ The apparent chronological confusion in his account and disagreement over the relationship between technology and science arises because Heidegger is using the term ‘technology’ in three senses and is seamlessly moving between all three. Thus, while it is true that the first two senses of technology, that is technology as technical appliances and technology in the sense of the work processes that led to the creation of these
technical appliances, occur around two centuries after the rise of modern science and so would appear to vindicate the view that the essence of science is the essence of technology, when Heidegger insists that modern technology precedes modern science he is talking about the third sense of technology. As such, while modern technological appliances had to await modern work process that resulted from the emphasis on calculation, exactitude, and objectivity constitutive of modern science, modern science’s emphasis on calculation, exactitude, and objectivity was dependent on the enframing constitutive of the third sense of technology which arose around two millennia prior to the advent of the modern scientific outlook. Thus, while its external manifestation in objects and tools appears to disclose that it occurred later than modern science, in its essence as enframing, modern technology is historically prior to modern science [QT 28].

What this discloses is that the enframing of modern technology involves a specific world-view; one that is thoroughly restrictive in that it imposes itself on being and reveals being in a partial manner. The result is a uniformity in thinking that takes things to be objects confronting a subject and reduces them to calculable, instruments things [AWP 152]. While this enframing reveals aspects of being, it is a partial, enclosed, and reductive approach that has disastrous consequences for being in general in that its instrumental approach leads to environmental degradation, weapons capable of obliterating the world, and the stunting of human being. Indeed, in respect to the latter, Heidegger maintains that the real threat from modern technology does not arise from its capacity to annihilate the physical aspect of human being, but from the constraining impact it has on the spirit of human being.29

It achieves this because the closure of enframing impacts on the essence of human being. Whereas Heidegger insists that the essence of human being is ek-sistence,30 meaning that it ek-sists in the clearing of being that allows it, and it alone out of all entities, to reveal being, he insists that the enframing of modern technology conceals this special relationship and imposes an alternative, less exalted, closed essence on human being. Far from being revealed as the open-ended being it truly is, modern technology reduces human being to an entity amongst other entities, albeit one that is in control of these other entities. This ensures that the anthropocentric, metaphysical view of human being becomes dominant. As such, human being does not remain untouched by the enframing of modern technology; it itself becomes enframed so that humans become both a being in control of its environment and one at the mercy of the calculable, instrumental projects of others. The result is that “today’s humans are themselves challenged forth by the demand to challenge nature forth into preparation [Bereitstellung]. Humans themselves are set up [gestellt]; they are thereby demanded to correspond to the aforementioned demand” [TL 138]. Human being does not escape the constraints of the
revealing of enframing; it is subject to it and so is set up as either a subject choosing how to use the objective world for its own ends or an object with a standing reserve that can be used to complete an operation or project. In other words, the enframing of modern technology, itself an example of metaphysics, reveals human being through the binary subject-object division constitutive of metaphysics and so re-enforces the metaphysical tradition.

Thus, human beings are not the masters of modern technology; they are subject to its enframing and are revealed in a way that re-enforces the metaphysical tradition. This ensures that the enframing of modern technology is beyond human control,

no single man, no group of men, no commission of prominent statesmen, scientists, and technicians, no conference of leaders of commerce and industry, can brake or direct the progress of history in the atomic age. No merely human organisation is capable of gaining dominion over it. [DT 52]

Far from revealing humans in the open clearing of being that is their essence, the destiny of enframing conceals this open clearing, imposes a closed, metaphysical framework on being, and so reveals being in general and human being in particular through this closed, metaphysical schema. The problem Heidegger has, however, is that if the enframing of modern technology is a destiny beyond the control of human will, it would appear that human being is at its mercy. In other words, while certainly innovative, it would appear that Heidegger’s critique of anthropocentrism and his analysis of the consequences of the enframing of modern technology prevents any way out of the danger of enframing. As he notes, if technology is a manifestation of being, and human being is revealed in the way of modern technology, then human being cannot overcome technology through its own actions because its actions simply re-affirm the metaphysical tradition, as manifested in the enframing of modern technology, that it aims to overcome. This re-affirms what Heidegger says elsewhere: metaphysics cannot be overcome by offering ‘more’ metaphysics or “by climbing still higher, surmounting it, transcending it somehow or other” [LH 254]; the enframing of modern technology and the metaphysical tradition in general will be overcome, if indeed they can be overcome at all, through alternative means than the anthropocentric willing of metaphysics.

Overcoming the Enframing of Modern Technology

But this does not mean that Heidegger simply abandons us to the enframing of modern technology; he does think that its overcoming is possible. However, he argues that this overcoming does not arise from us merely turning away from modern technology or from setting ourselves in opposition to it. Overcoming the enframing of modern technology will, somewhat paradoxically, emanate from the enframing of modern technology itself. In other words, the essence of technology itself harbours the growth of that which will save us from the
enframing of modern technology [QT 28]. This paradoxical thought must, however, be understood in the correct manner.

Heidegger thinks the answer lies in the meaning of the word ‘essence’ and its relationship to technology. Put simply, while we tend to think of ‘essence’ as denoting what the thing is, whether this is as substance or genus, Heidegger maintains that enframing as the essence of technology does not conform to this definition. Enframing is not the substance or genus of each appliance, but denotes the epistemological formation that brings forth each thing in such a way that each thing is revealed as a standing reserve. Thus, enframing is the essence of each thing as a way of revealing. However, enframing’s way of revealing as challenging calls us to challenge whether modern technology’s way of revealing through challenging is the only way in which being can be revealed. In other words, the challenge instantiated by enframing leads to the challenging of enframing itself. But in line with his absolute critique of anthropocentrism, it is not human thought that brings forth this insight, “it is technology itself that makes the demand on us to think in another way what is usually understood by ‘essence’” [QT 30].

While we tend to think of essence as that which delineates both presence and endurance, Heidegger wants us to rethink this, not in the sense of creating another sense of essence, but in that he thinks that the notion of essence as presence-endurance is dependent on a more primordial moment described as granting [QT 31]. Essence presences and endures because it is granted presence and endurance by being. But because humans ek-sist as the shepherds of being in the open clearing of being, they are the ones through whom being is revealed in this manner. Importantly, because humans exist in the open clearing of being, which is ‘itself’ open-ended, humans are defined by the open-ended possibility of being. However, the danger of the enframing of modern technology is that it threatens this openness and replaces it with the anthropocentric, calculable, instrumental world-view of modern technology. As noted, though, the attempt to conceal the openness of human being actually reveals the openness of human being [QT 32]. As such, the concealment of enframing actually opens “a path [...] for man to experience beings in a more originary way” [ID 40].

In itself this does not overcome the enframing of modern technology, but it shows that enframing is never total; through enframing, different ways of revealing being are at least partially unconcealed. To bring to light this partial unconcealment requires, so Heidegger maintains, that we “pay heed to the coming to presence of technology” [QT 32]. In other words, it requires that we ponder technology and the impact that it has on being. Rather than merely passively accept it, or take it for granted, Heidegger wants us to reflect on modern technology because he thinks that through genuine reflection we will not only come to see the damage that accompanies the enframing of modern technology, but “when we once open ourselves expressly to the essence of
technology, we find ourselves unexpectedly taken into a freeing claim” [QT 26]. With this freeing, we discover that different ways of revealing being to that of the ordering calculation of modern technology present themselves.

But this alteration in thought requires more than a mere change in emphasis or alteration in how we think; it requires a new relationship to being [NIV:116f]. Rather than view being, in all its different manifestations, as things with a standing reserve to be calculated, measured, and used for a chosen predetermined end, thought must release itself towards being and simply let being be [DT 54f]. While this requires preparation in the form of the destruction of the metaphysical tradition, as noted, this destructing is not simply the annihilation of that tradition. It is a purifying that aims to return to the root of the metaphysical tradition to uncover those aspects concealed by that tradition [NIV 183f]. With this, alternatives to the tradition will, so Heidegger contends, be revealed.

But this return cannot simply be thought; it requires, instantiates, and supports an alteration in how we understand human being. While Heidegger vociferously rejects the metaphysical tradition’s insistence that the human is the lord of being, in so far as it is in control of being and uses it for its own freely chosen projects, and so exhorts us to truly understand that only the human being ek-sists in the clearing of being that gives the human being a unique relationship to being, he also insists that this realisation requires an alteration in how we think about being. Rather than view ourselves as the lords of being as the metaphysical tradition insists we are, Heidegger maintains that we must rid our thinking of the instrumental, calculative thinking of metaphysics and replace it with a meditative thinking that reveals and recognises the human’s unique relationship to being, ponders things more deeply and slowly, and does not seek to impose constraints or world-views on being, but lets it be to reveal itself as it actually is [DT 46, 54]. In this way, and without constraining thought or being within a predetermined plan or worldview, Heidegger points towards an alternative path to the framing of modern technology and the metaphysical tradition that supports, instantiates, and re-enforces it.

*The Destruction of Metaphysics*

Despite this effort, however, numerous critics have argued that Heidegger fails in his endeavour. For example, Graeme Nicholson argues that by engaging with the metaphysical tradition and addressing himself to the same questions as that tradition, Heidegger’s thinking contains “an element of philosophy or metaphysics”. 31 Similarly, Otto Pöggeler argues that Heidegger’s attempt to destruct the metaphysical tradition necessarily fails because not only does he engage with the same questions as the tradition (why is there being? what is the ground of being?), but he uses terms and phrases, such as fundamental ontology and metaphysics of presence, which are intimately connected to the
While these commentators critique Heidegger’s engagement with the metaphysical tradition as evidence of his indebtedness to that tradition, Robert Mugerauer focuses on another aspect of Heidegger’s destruction of the metaphysical tradition to argue that he ultimately fails in his attempt “because he does not manage to go on to say the still-coming and still-calling-for-thinking in non-metaphysical terms”.

While it is questionable whether Heidegger would actually be able to say what the ‘beyond’ of metaphysics actually entails without offering a form of enframing of future activity that would: a) close off alternatives and bring those coming after him to focus on re-presenting his alternative; and b) simply re-instantiate the emphasis on production constitutive of the metaphysical tradition, there is something in the critique that Heidegger’s attempt to go beyond the metaphysical tradition is imbued by aspects of the metaphysical tradition itself.

Indeed, it is possible to find many other examples of metaphysical thinking in Heidegger’s thought, such as his privileging of human being over other entities, which, as he admits, advocates a humanism in the extreme sense [LH 245], his distinction between and valorisation of authenticity over inauthenticity, which, despite his statements to the contrary [CP 60f], appears to point towards an absolute ground in the form of a transcendent, normative standard against which the actual mode of human being is compared, and momentary lapses into the language of metaphysics, such as when he talks about technology affecting “our inner and real core” [DT 54], which re-affirms the ontological dualism, between the outer appearance of human being and its substantial, inner core, of the metaphysical tradition [LH 248].

But while this is the case, it is important to note that Heidegger does not view this as a failure. While his critics maintain that Heidegger’s destruction of metaphysics aims to obliterate all forms of the tradition from being and by claiming to discover remnants of metaphysical thinking in his thinking demonstrate that he fails in his attempt, Heidegger argues that this misunderstands what overturning entails. Far from creating an irreducible and irrevocable break with that which is being overturned, any attempt to go beyond something is intimately connected to that thing. In other words, a ‘trace’ [NIII 4] of metaphysics will always remain in the attempt to overcome metaphysics. As Jacques Derrida puts it rather dramatically, no matter the attempt at overcoming metaphysics, “metaphysics always returns […] in the sense of a revenant [ghost]”.

This is a constant theme of Heidegger’s that is found in a number of his texts, albeit a theme that is expressed slightly differently throughout his oeuvre. For example, in Contributions to Philosophy, Heidegger makes the point that any criticism of metaphysics is still dependent on metaphysics so that any attempt to overturn metaphysics simply returns to metaphysics and so remains
embroiled in that which it attempts to go beyond.\textsuperscript{35} The same point is made in “The Word of Nietzsche ‘God is Dead’” when Heidegger explains that “as a mere countermovement it [any reaction against metaphysics] remains, as does everything, anti, held fast in the essence of that over against which it moves” [WN 61]. Because metaphysics always remains as a trace or returns as a ghost to any attempt to go beyond it, any attempt to move beyond metaphysics by simply annihilating or divorcing itself from metaphysics is destined to fail.

This is altered somewhat in \textit{Nietzsche}, where he explains that the impossibility of escaping from the metaphysical tradition altogether ensures that we have to re-think this relationship. Rather than think of destructing as being an annihilation of the metaphysical traditional, or put differently, as the complete escape from the metaphysical tradition, we have to recognise that such is the power and continuing relevance of the trace of metaphysics to any attempt to go beyond metaphysics that far from simply seeking to leap out of metaphysics, any going beyond metaphysics must itself be guided by metaphysics. As Daniel Dahlstrom puts it, Heidegger came to the conclusion that “one foot must be planted firmly in a tradition in order to be able to push off from it and make the leap to a new beginning with the other”.\textsuperscript{36} In other words, the leap ing out of the metaphysical tradition requires that we take the tradition seriously while also using the tradition to guide the leap beyond that tradition. As Heidegger puts it, “[t]hinking of Being is so decisively caught up in the metaphysical thought of the being as such that it can only grope its way with the help of a staff borrowed from metaphysics” [NIV 250]. In a sense, this is closer to the words of \textit{Being and Time}, where Heidegger talks of the destructing of the tradition as that which preserves the positive possibilities of the tradition while purifying thought of the tradition’s negative aspects as detailed in Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics [BT 44]. We also see this in his critique of technology in that the leap ing out of the enframing of modern technology requires and occurs through the enframing of technology.

The implications of this are profound. Because any attempt to overcome metaphysics remains embroiled in metaphysics, Heidegger maintains that “our task is to cease all overcoming, and leave metaphysics to itself” [TB 24]. There are two aspects to this. First, it resonates with Heidegger’s attempt to open up an alternative orientation towards being than the one prevalent in metaphysics which takes human being to be the master of beings who imposes itself on being to achieve its freely chosen ends. Rather than impose oneself on being, Heidegger advocates a “releaseasment towards things”\textsuperscript{37} that lets being be to disclose itself on its own terms.

Secondly, and more fundamentally, it points towards an alternative method of disclosing being. While the Heidegger of \textit{Being and Time} seeks to understand and uncover the importance of the question of being through an engagement with beings, namely the human being, his later thinking undergoes a turning
that recognises that that approach appears to privilege human being in the same way as metaphysics does. As such, Heidegger turns away from questioning the human being to raise the question of being, to a direct engagement with the question of being ‘itself.’ This so-called turning is manifested in his relationship to metaphysics. Rather than engage with being through the mediation of a primordial destructing of metaphysics, Heidegger comes to the conclusion that the trace of metaphysics means that this task is a futile one. Instead, Heidegger turns to a direct engagement with being to let being disclose itself on its own terms unhindered by mediating concerns, such as the destructing of metaphysics [NIV 161]. Presumably, this so-called turning is to be mirrored in the approach to technology so that, rather than getting caught up in critiquing or destructing the enframing of modern technology as the means to overcome this enframing, we need to learn to turn towards technology itself to re-think how we approach and think about it unhindered by a prior, mediating need to first destruct the metaphysical approach to technology.

But the question remains as to how exactly these alterations in being, thought, and human being arise. What is clear is that Heidegger offers a sustained critique of the ways in which being has been thought and/or forgotten in the history of Western society and philosophy and points towards the need for a renewal of this question. This renewal of thought does not simply entail a re-orientation of thinking, but also requires a new understanding of human being and a different approach to technology. What is not clear, however, is how exactly these alterations will arise. Or, put differently, what the impetus will be for the re-evaluation of thought, human being, and technology that Heidegger calls for.

This feeds into a criticism frequently levelled against Heidegger; that is, that his thinking, for all its originality, lacks any appreciation or space through which political or social action could gain a legitimate hold to alter the being of thought and human being. As Michael Zimmerman puts it, “while insightful in many ways, Heidegger’s account appears to leave no room for what many people regard as the legal, political, cultural, and social expressions of resistance to the ‘disciplinary matrix’ of modern technology”. 39

While there are slippages in his account that disclose that Heidegger appears to insist that these changes will result from human effort and endeavour [DT 46f, 56], his critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism prevents him from placing the impetus for this alteration in the ‘hands’ of humans. To do so would simply re-enforce the anthropocentrism of metaphysics. 40 In line with his attempted decentring of human being from its central place in the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger insists that being ‘itself’ will open itself to alternatives [CP 58ff]. As to why, when, and how this will occur, Heidegger has nothing more to say than that this remains part of the mystery of being [OWA 51]. All we can do is release ourselves to being and be open to the alternatives that emanate
from being [DT 55]. But this simply reiterates the issue: who or what is the cause of this release and openness? If it is human beings acting spontaneously and autonomously does this not fall back into the anthropocentrism Heidegger rejects? If it is being, then, not only does this contradict some of Heidegger’s own statements, but it would appear that we must simply wait for this to happen and so forego the illusion that human-inspired political, educational, and social action help bring the alteration about. Indeed, in many respects, as a manifestation of the anthropocentrism that Heidegger diagnoses as the problem, willing social and political change would, presumably, simply exacerbate the problem.

While it appears that Heidegger is at an impasse, I want to suggest that there is a way out that goes through Heidegger’s notion of metaphysical trace. This will not only make sense of the passages in which he apparently lapses into metaphysical thinking, especially the anthropocentrism of metaphysics, but, so I will argue, also goes some way to tackling the issue of how to make the leap out of metaphysics to the alternative non-enframing way of thought and human being Heidegger’s thinking points towards.

As previously noted, Heidegger’s notion of metaphysical trace reveals the impossibility of completely overcoming metaphysical thinking because any attempt to overcome metaphysics distinguishes itself in opposition to metaphysics and so becomes embroiled in metaphysics. As Heidegger recognises, this means that there will always be an aspect of metaphysical thinking in any attempt to chart an alternative to metaphysics. However, in his critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism, he is consistently adamant that we must absolutely abandon the notion that human being is the master or lord of being who controls or is capable of imposing itself on being. All that is required is for human being to wait for being to reveal alternatives to metaphysics.41

From this, it is tempting to conclude that there is a tension in Heidegger’s account between his absolute critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism, which rejects the idea that human will has any part to play in bringing forth an alternative to metaphysics, and his notion of metaphysical trace, which insists there is a place, however limited, for action based on human will. It appears we are faced with a choice: either we accept Heidegger’s critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism and so fall foul of the problems that result from this when trying to explain or understand exactly how and when an alternative to metaphysics will be brought forth; or we accept and affirm his notion of metaphysical trace, which appears to undermine his absolute critique of anthropocentrism.

Rather than forcing this either-or choice, however, a choice that, in its binary opposition, is inherently metaphysical, is it possible to think about the overcoming of metaphysics that does not fall foul of this binary opposition? Is there, in other words, a way to reconcile Heidegger’s notion of trace with his critique of metaphysical anthropocentrism?
My suggestion is not only that there is, but that this alternative can be found in Heidegger’s writings. In *Country Path Conversations*, Heidegger points towards a path that escapes this either-or metaphysical binary opposition by not only incorporating a form of willing into the overcoming of metaphysics and so remaining true to his notion of metaphysical trace, but doing so in a way that does not simply perpetuate the anthropocentric willing of metaphysics. To do so, Heidegger undertakes a discussion of willing and its relationship to not-willing to show that the problem with affirming the passivity of not-willing as a way to overcome the aggressive, closed, and enframing willing of metaphysics is that, as the negative of willing, passively not-willing remains tied to willing.\(^4\) This leads Heidegger back to a discussion of willing and, by distinguishing between different forms of willing to what, following Bret Davis,\(^4\) I will call non-willing; a different form of willing to the closed, enframing willing of metaphysics.

Non-willing does not, therefore, entail an absence of willing as a way to overcome the enframing of metaphysics, or the aggressive, closed, and enframing willing of metaphysics, but entails a third option: a form of willing that wills an open releasement towards being, which, in accordance with the releasement towards being of meditative thinking, does not impose itself on being, but stands in the clearing of being to let being reveal itself to thinking [CPC 92].

While there is, admittedly, more to this issue than I can hope to do justice to here, this does, by way of conclusion, reveal that Heidegger starts to explore an alternative path out of metaphysics than the metaphysical binary opposition that pits the active, aggressive, closed, and enframing willing of metaphysics against a passive approach to being that simply waits for being to reveal itself. As a consequence, we discover that a form of human willing can and will have a role, however small, to play in bringing forth alternatives to the anthropocentric, metaphysical tradition Heidegger constantly critiques. This responds to some of the questions that continue to plague Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics regarding how the alternatives to the technological enframing of metaphysics may come about, while doing so in a way that, while affirming a limited role for a form of human willing, remains true to his notion of trace and attempted destruction of metaphysical anthropocentrism.

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References
14. CP 34.


35. CP 122, 127, 130f.


37. DT 54, italics in original.


The story of the French Resistance has often been retold, as have the stories of the particular acts of French intellectuals during this period. Newly-translated into English, *Camus at Combat* is an important collection of the underground and later more open writings of this novelist and essayist during, as it is said, dark times. But what has seldom been attempted is an exposition of the philosophical underpinnings of the various acts and works of this group, many members of which went on to still more celebrated literary and philosophical careers after the war. It is especially pertinent that such a delineation be attempted, because we now have an abundance of material from Camus, Beauvoir, Sartre, Weil and others that attests in various ways to their feelings about the Occupation, France’s role as a resister, and the stratagems to be employed by intellectuals during such a crisis.

Camus’s trajectory on these issues is now fairly easy to trace, and new work with respect to the wartime diaries of Simone de Beauvoir is also provocative. In general, questions having to do with culpability, punishment and moral obligation are at the forefront in these works, as is a general concept of statehood and the place of the Western powers in the then larger colonial scheme of things. It will be the purpose of this essay to focus largely on the work of Camus and Beauvoir, and to contrast their differing senses of obligation. What is constitutive of a notion of justice in wartime situations? How might that concept play out in an individual’s everyday life? These pertinent questions are relevant for our own time as well.

In his Foreword to the collection of Camus’s Occupation writings for Resistance publications, David Carroll is concerned to make the argument that, for Camus, justice towards those who failed to resist was always an important issue. That Camus’s thinking on this topic changed over a period of time is an important indicator of the depth of his thought, and it is also a barometer of the extent to which large moral questions drove his writing and his work, even at the height of the war. Initially, Camus’s position was that collaborators had sealed their own fate, but in moves that presaged the later Camus of *The Plague* and his postwar writings, his stand on the collaborators began to change towards the end of the war. Carroll writes,

> No issue was more difficult for Camus to deal with…than the one the French confronted immediately at the time of the Liberation: how to deal with French collaborators…. The failure
of justice in the purge trials increased Camus’ doubts about the legitimacy of capital punishment in general and led him to become a resolute opponent of the death penalty.  

Part of what originally drove the rather harsh line that Camus was inclined to take against members of the Milice, for instance, probably had to do with the sheer enormity of their crimes. In some of his earliest pieces for Combat, Camus details the actions of the Milice members and other collaborators, and gives little indication that he will later develop any other lines of thought. It is by no means obvious that the author of these brief articles will later go on to write “The Just Assassins.” In a piece dated April 1944, he writes, “[Milice] is defending the lives and the interests, the shame and the calculations, of a small proportion of Frenchmen who have turned against France and who face annihilation when victory comes.”  

What Carroll referred to as the “failure of justice in the purge trials” generally took two or three forms. Some individuals were pardoned, others targeted for execution, apparently without any adherence to overall principles or standards. In addition, it was also the case that many persons who were scheduled for execution were taken out of prison by groups or other individuals and given a summary execution before the time. Camus’s views shifted from what might be referred to as simply retributive – albeit retributive in circumstances that many might claim did, indeed, merit retribution – to stances reflecting a larger, deontological concern for rights. In a sense, his views began to assume a shape that, slightly later, will be codified in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights. This more holistically-inclined Camus is the one we associate with The Plague, well-known for its sections on capital punishment and the lack of respect shown for the individual by such jurisprudential proceedings. As Camus writes in his signed editorial of January 5, 1945, 

We want to say that all of this was to be expected [the injustice of the trials] and that it is probably too late now for justice to be done. The justice we called for was difficult to implement because it required reconciling the country’s pressing need to destroy the treacherous part of itself with our insistence on due respect for the individual.  

In The Burden of Responsibility, Tony Judt, in assessing Camus’s somewhat special place among the French intellectuals, notes that he had been characterized by Mauriac, among others, as having a “suppressed Christianity.” This point, Judt argues, is by no means poorly taken, since the spirit of the remark is that Camus was given to see polemics, disputes and debates in large terms that were humanistic rather than pedantic or narrowly self-serving. This is why The Rebel became so controversial; Camus gradually came to see that the violence that characterizes revolutions cannot, in the main, be justified, no matter its origins. His view encapsulated the notion that each individual human life was worth something, even if we disagreed strongly with the bearer of that life, or, more straightforwardly, felt that the agent was depriving others of their rights. Thus Camus’s overall work began to push in the direction of something
grandly rights-oriented, and the consequentialism that drove most thinking at the end of the war began to appear anathema to him.

II

Beauvoir’s response to France during the Occupation will turn out, in many ways, to mirror her earlier concerns, as manifested in her student diaries, concerning the relations between self and others. In general, Beauvoir’s wartime writings show comparatively little interest in the sorts of questions that motivated Camus, but there is no doubt that the circumstances of the war and the confrontation with the German military provided much impetus for further philosophical exploration. As Beauvoir wrote in an early entry to her journals, composed while she was still a teenager, “Stick to this plan of living established since long ago. I used my entire being to work it out; I can therefore have faith in it.”

The problems of war provided fuel for philosophical speculation, according to both Beauvoir and Sartre, in the sense that they illustrated and highlighted the difficulties of individual consciousness. Although both ultimately participated in Resistance work, with varying degrees of success, much of their writing in the early part of the decade showed little standard response to the social conditions around them. Rather, the impinging nature of those conditions – the difficulties of meeting in occupied Paris, the hardships involved in communicating with the front, the sheer necessity of care in correspondence due to the censors – seemed to provoke further thought, particularly in Beauvoir’s case, on the nature of individual cognition. Her newly-translated Wartime Diary provides a great deal of evidence for this. As Margaret Simons notes, “But while Beauvoir argues, in her wartime diary, that political solidarity is grounded in a notion of humanity … she also paradoxically argues … that consciousness, as freedom, is isolated from facticity.

One of the most notable features of the Wartime Diary is the extent to which, from the beginning days of the war, it records Beauvoir’s own personal reactions to the sequence of events and reveals them, essentially, from a largely apolitical stance. In this respect, Camus and Beauvoir respond to the war in ways that – at least on first perusal – are diametrically opposed. Whereas Camus is ever political, and in fairness is writing a series of journalistic pieces rather than a personal diary, Beauvoir is not political, for the most part, in the ways that one might expect. The opening sequences having to do with the German invasion of Poland and the announcement of the declaration of war reveal this in ways that make a profound impact. In the phenomenological style that we have come to associate with some of Sartre’s work, Beauvoir describes her realization of the state of war insofar as it occurs to her in the midst of her daily activities,

I went toward the Dome [a café] with nothing to do, in a quandary…. There were moments when it struck me: That’s it, we are at war! I went out again; a few people were carrying Paris-
Midi; others stopped them, asking to read the headlines… [Sartre and I] went to get his musette bags and shoes in the cellar. I noticed our skis in a corner; it broke my heart.  

It is, of course, the juxtaposition between the ordinary pleasures represented by the mundane skis and the state of war that produces this effect; but this is, nevertheless, a completely personal response. Given that the importance of a project is crucial for Beauvoir – since it is what allows a human being, trapped in the body, to move beyond mere immanence and facticity – one might think that a political project or some form of engagement might be salient for her in the early days of the Occupation, but the diary does not reveal this to be the case. Rather, the interactions with others that are necessitated by the movements of the war provide further fuel for her analysis of interpersonal relations, some of which more clearly resembles works such as *She Came to Stay*, or even the later *A Very Easy Death*. An intense desire to describe internal sensations heightened by the dangers of wartime is evident throughout the early passages of the daily transcriptions, but again is rarely overtly political. For example, about a month after the material cited above, Beauvoir notes that the word “war,” “[W]hen it was written in bold letters in the newspapers,…meant an undefined horror…. Now, there is a vague scattering of nuisances and minor fears; it’s no longer anywhere or anything.”

Beauvoir’s response to the European catastrophe will shift somewhat as the enormity of the situation and continued discussions with Sartre alter her opinions of what is to be done. It is remarkable, however, that philosophical training – at least in this case – manifests itself in a way that is much more interiorized than one might naively have expected it to be. But this is completely consistent with Beauvoir’s emphasis on the self’s encounter with others, and on the struggle of the self towards preservation. The sense that Europe was in its death throes brought differing responses from different philosophers.

III

As Camus’s attitude towards the collaborationists begins to change, we can see the development of the voice that, in *The Rebel*, will castigate movements of rebellion driven by some notion of adherence to a “cause” rather than those that derive solely from the personal concern of the individual involved. His larger notion of justice will, eventually, not allow for the bad faith of those whose motives are hidden behind some sort of labeling, be it Marxist or otherwise. It is this feature of Camus’s later thought that caused the most difficulties for him, and yielded the greatest degree of misunderstanding. What Camus will go on to term “resentment” is that false sense of being able to adjudicate for others, in the name of justice, an internalization of their situation that they can only achieve for themselves. In *The Rebel*, Camus writes, “When good and evil are reintegrated in time and confused with events, nothing is any longer either good or bad, but only either premature or out of date.”
More so perhaps than in any of his essays, Camus’s work in *The Plague* presents a full articulation of his broader moral notions, clearly derived at least in part from his wartime experience. Dr. Rieux goes on fighting the plague, even though he knows he cannot win, because something in the human condition compels him to do so. His encounters with the priest, with Tarrro and with other characters – including the older man who memorably spends his days counting dried peas, and who remarks that the plague is nothing but “life itself” – reinforce the novel’s conclusion that some day the plague may make itself manifest in a happy town. In other words, as Camus knows, our realization of our frailty and of the circumstances of our lives impels itself upon us even when we may think that we are comparatively immune to its effects. Thus morality and justice for Camus become not so much hallmarks of any given situation – as he might initially have thought they were when writing his essays for *Combat* – but rather attitudes towards ourselves and others that manifest themselves in our everyday conduct. When Dr. Rieux remarks in his encounter with the spokesperson for Catholicism that he does not believe in a deity who makes five-year-old children suffer, he gives utterance to some of Camus’s most profound feelings, sensations that were no doubt developed not only by the injustices of the war itself, but by his own growing realization that, in his personal attitudes, he could manifest injustice or work towards a greater good.

Judt remarks, in tracing the development of a general moral outlook associated with Camus – and denigrated by those, like Sartre, who disagreed with *The Rebel* – that this trajectory is one upon which Camus began to travel somewhat unwillingly, but upon which he moved along more rapidly as time progressed. As he began to become acquainted with a wider variety of points of view, both from his exposure to the experiences of the war and from his travels in Algiers, Paris and beyond, he became less and less certain about any one “morality.” Hence his insistence that a sort of cowardice was behind the movements of Marxist and other “revolutionary” agitators who refused to face the consequences of their acts. Ironically, this placed him in the position of moralist (Judt refers to him as the “reluctant moralist”), but there is no question that it also left him in the position of one who was at least aware of, if not a steadfast articulator of, the great moral questions. As Judt notes in *The Burden of Responsibility*,

Camus’s real target was not of course the left, but political extremism itself. In *La Peste* the enduring image is of men of moderation and of moral measure revolting not for an ideal but against intolerance and intransigence. In his writings during the Cold War he strove to warn of the moral and political costs of ideological rhetoric.

Thus, as we have seen, a refusal to take positions, at least in the traditional French intellectual style, becomes a position in and of itself, and, ironically, becomes the one position that, at least latterly, is most associated with the voice of justice.
Beauvoir’s somewhat later philosophy of the 1940s displays a greater interest in the political, and certainly a greater interest in interpersonal interaction. In part, this has to do with her own experiences in listening to Sartre’s accounts of his politicization after his time in a German prisoner of war camp. But it may well be that a pivotal wartime experience for Beauvoir, the writing of *She Came to Stay*, had much to do with the later change, even if it is somewhat difficult to trace the path.

Beauvoir’s mindset, approaching the authoring of her first lengthy work, was, as she herself asserted, to some extent “solipsistic.” By this she simply meant that, from a semi-phenomenological point of view, the presence of an Other was always somewhat unreal to her, and so was the thought pattern and cognition of that Other. This focus on her own mentality and state of consciousness was what allowed her, for example, to respond to the beginning of the war by noting how daily objects took on an altered appearance as she underwent the transformation of knowing that her future life could not be the same. But the novel is, in toto, about how the Other begins to impinge on the self, and how the self becomes increasingly uncomfortable with that realization. It is this aspect of *She Came to Stay*, taken in conjunction with some of the work in both her student diaries and her wartime diary, that has led commentators to alter their impression of the development of Sartrean thought itself. In fact, it appears now that Beauvoir wanted to preserve certain public beliefs about Sartre, and for this reason she hid the extent to which she had originated work on the problem of multiple consciousnesses for the self.

Beauvoir seemed to walk something of a tightrope throughout the war, but it is interesting to note – as commentators seem to agree – that, as time passed, she became more interested in the social and was able to respond to the events around her on a more socially-oriented basis.

Although *The Mandarins* and later work will present a response to the war that is more standardly political, Beauvoir apparently came to such a response only slowly. Certain experiences – viewing crowds, seeing returning soldiers, talking to Sartre – were apparently pivotal, as was re-reading Hegel, with the concomitant emphasis on historicity. Most poignant of all is Beauvoir’s sometime interest in the plight of the Jews, even though it was apparent from the first few days of the Vichy government that their fate was sealed. For instance, a diary entry for July 14, 1940 still describes wartime events in a detached way that fails to signal their importance for those who might be the targets of them,

Tours was almost deserted; the bridges were being mined, and every night the city was bombed…. The Germans were expected during the night, and people were shaking with fright. Several hours later [friends of hers] left the train and asked the railroad crossing guard for shelter; he put them in the woodshed.
Whereas Camus’s writings focus on the political from the first, Beauvoir’s shift to a philosophical view with even a minimal emphasis on anything other than a highly individualistic response is a very gradual one.

Although part of the shift in Beauvoir’s thinking may well have had to do with an increased awareness of the lives of others – and what might be referred to as their own internal phenomenologies – some of the shift may simply have been due to the altered life of the capital, and changed conversations with Sartre when she was able to encounter him on his leaves from the meteorological corps. He himself displayed a new attitude; he had become politicized, and, as Rowley notes in her recounting in Tete-a-Tete, told her that “they had to expel the Germans from France”. It also probably helped greatly that, from late 1940 on, the conversation of intellectual Paris in general gradually began to assume the tone of the Resistance. Many have noted that France has a tendency to overidealize this period, and that the Resistance was slow in developing, but the rationing in the city, the presence of street signs in German, and the absence of crowds from familiar Parisian areas no doubt subtly began to change the rules of discourse. As Judt remarks in his historical overview of this period,

Being a part of History—having no choice but to respond to your circumstances and take charge of them—meant breaking with the aesthetic impulse of some thirties intellectuals to be “wherever the crowd isn’t”, and it meant taking seriously the idea of evil, the possibility that human existence might hang in the moral balance …

Although Beauvoir might very well have been one of those whose coming to realization on these issues was late, there is no question that she did, over the course of time, begin to see the war from another point of view. What is surprising is the extent to which that view was still shaped, at least in part, by her original self-analyzing point of origin.

V

The extent to which French intellectuals were able to respond to the events of the 1940s in ways that ultimately proved to be liberatory is related to the various sorts of French schooling and intellectual preparation and, of course, to individual developments subsequent to that. Camus turned in one way; Beauvoir, at least initially, in another. But it is important to note that Simone Weil, for one, also wrote a great deal that derived from the lycée and Normale instruction, even if it was not overtly political. In a delineation of the different sorts of responses that the French produced, Marie Cabaud Meaney has written of Weil,

At a time when civilization seemed in grave danger, when the new barbarism of the Nazis seemed victorious, Weil significantly turned to the classics. Rather than interpreting this as an escape into the ivory tower, it should be understood as one of her ways of contributing to the raging spiritual battle. For her, Nazism was a pseudo-religion …

In this way, a general sense of a past in which things had been written or thought that might be relevant to the then-current dilemmas drove a good deal
of the thinking during the wartime period. In this regard, the work of Camus, in large part, might be deemed to have a greater similarity to that of Weil than the work of Beauvoir, but what is most instructive is to note that, over a period of years, a number of different strands of thought began to come together.

Pre-war thought in France, and on the Continent in general, tended to revolve around disputes between the Left, in the form of socialism, and the Right, and of course various versions of these disputes surfaced in the Spanish Civil War, in the formation of the government of the Third Republic, and in published commentary in general. But it may be worth remarking that at least some of what drove the Left was a general consensus that “justice” required a redistribution of wealth, and that France could become a leader in this effort. Thus the initial reaction to the Vichy government, on the part of those later deemed to be collaborators, was not nearly as negative as it later became. As Past Imperfect documents, some actually welcomed the instantiation of that particular group of individuals as a formed government. 28

Camus appears to have been affected by the tone of the discussion, but in his case all of the intellectual movement begins to push in another direction. His general conception of that which is just seems to be, in the somewhat philosophically ancient sense of the deontological lines of argument, that which is merited. As Camus sees retribution for wartime activities being instantiated in ways that are shocking – show trials or no trials, summary executions and so forth – he begins to develop an overarching view of that which is human as common to every person, regardless of what the person has or has not done. His sense of the human condition, its finiteness and its limitedness, impels him to begin to see even collaborators and war criminals as worthy of a hearing and a fair chance to present their side. As Judt remarks, disbelief in the “certitude of History” tends to sharpen the focus on the here and now, and on the application of principles of justice to all. 29

By contrast, there is a streak of the unremittingly personal that never leaves Simone de Beauvoir’s work, and it is interesting to note that it is present from the beginning of her student diaries. Nevertheless, a nascent focus on others – at least in the form of friendships, occasional assistance, and groups – also comes to the fore. 30 As a teenager, she joined Equipe Sociale, a social action group that aimed at working with youngsters from lower class and lower middle-class backgrounds. 31 But the war will gradually pull her not only to joining with Sartre in the formation of at least literary resistance groups, but to a greater awareness of the lives of others and the inevitable effect of atrocities on everyone. For Beauvoir, this is a slow transition, episodes of which are still punctuated by the rumination and concern for self that mark many of her early writings. As Simons writes in her Introduction to the Wartime Diary,

[She] grounds political solidarity in the biological reality of humanity as a species. In her postwar writings, Beauvoir continues her interest in political solidarities formed around a
biological difference, arguing for a defiance of social practices confining humanity within a biological “nature”.

That all of this was difficult for Beauvoir, and went against the grain, so to speak, probably has a great deal to do with her intrinsic introversion and desire – apparent from an early point in her life – to spend her time in such solitary pursuits as reading, viewing paintings and artistic works, and extended periods of reflection and thought. Nevertheless, the impact of the war was such that no one escaped, and intellectuals were perforce altered in their paths of theorizing.

In reflecting back over time, and attempting to think through how history had affected France in the past and might affect her in the future, Camus and Beauvoir may well also have been influenced by the classical work that they would have read as part of their own secondary school training. Greek thought, in particular, with its emphasis on the moral and simultaneous focus on the political, might have provided ample fuel for further theorizing. In this spirit, Weil wrote “The Iliad or the Poem of Force,” a work that was among the first to be translated into English at the end of the war. If both Camus and Beauvoir thought about justice and the impact of group relations on the individual, Weil’s thought perhaps crystallizes this sort of thinking for those on the Continent. Meaney has noted,

War can paradoxically teach true caritas: to be just, one has to know the empire of force without being seduced by it…. The Achaeansest themselves were conquered eighty years after the conquest of Troy…. This would have placed them in a situation where they could judge war from the point of view of the loser as well as that of the winner, which would explain the objective perspective within the poem.

Hector’s death, the interaction between Priam and Achilles, and other themes of the Iliad make the epic an overarching testimony to the effects of war. If Weil’s concern ultimately becomes the period after the war – which she did not live to see – Camus and Beauvoir are more directly affected, especially in the years immediately after 1940, with the situation within France itself. But it is remarkable that French intellectuals each, in his or her own way, began to develop a philosophical overview of the effects of occupation and battle.

VI

I have been arguing that Camus and Beauvoir, among other French thinkers of their time, developed opposing and seemingly unrelated views of the trauma of wartime through which they lived, although both writers responded philosophically. Camus, working through an initial outlook that focused on notions of retribution against the collaborators, ultimately becomes Judt’s “Camus the Just,” and develops a general – if somewhat imprecise – view of justice towards those in war as being the portion due every person, regardless of affiliation. Beauvoir proceeds, to some extent throughout, with a view that is essentially phenomenological, and somewhat detached from the notion of other persons. What is remarkable in her case is the extent to which her views change as she sees the amount of harm inflicted on the population, and as she
comes to see actual instances of cruelty and hurt done to those whom she knows personally. To recapitulate, there is no doubt that her conversations with Sartre after his time in the prisoner of war camp (during which he wrote a precursor to “The Flies”) had a great deal to do with the alteration in her outlook.

Camus’s original other-oriented view changes from one of retribution to charity; Beauvoir’s interior-aimed view moves from cataloguing her own mental state to noting the changes in the lives of those around her. But while Weil, for example, wrote pointed essays about the war from an early date, what makes the testimonies of Beauvoir and Camus especially worthy of note is that the dated entries, in diary form and in Combat, allow us to trace the progression of their thought.

World War II, seen from a certain vantage point, might not be thought to present many more opportunities for philosophizing than any of the calamities that had preceded it, including the war in Europe of the previous generation. But in addition to the massive violations of human rights, the intellectual scene in France and many other countries immediately before the war probably lent itself to conceptual development in new and intriguing ways. Camus had already begun the literary work that was ultimately to bring him fame; Beauvoir, although she herself had written comparatively little, was in touch with the French literary milieu. Both thinkers – and others as well – were driven by this new set of opportunities, unhappy though they were, to some of his or her best work. Perhaps one effect of war, as Rilke saw in the preceding generation, is that it reminds us of the humanity of all participants, including the opposing combatants. It is for this reason that a great deal of what was ultimately written by Beauvoir, Camus and others has to do with human needs in general, rather than the needs of one specific polity or nation. In a recent work on some of Weil’s less explored writings, Vance Morgan notes that her interest in science and mathematics was tied to her general humanism. Although he is not concerned with other philosophical work during this period, the point that Morgan makes is one that might be extrapolated to other thinkers.

All of the philosophers of the war period were propelled to address issues having to do with human affairs, even if we cannot always agree with their modes of categorization. The notion that justice is reserved for some under some circumstances is one of the first casualties of war for the thoughtful observer. The work of Albert Camus and Simone de Beauvoir more than proves this point.

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References
3. Ibid., xi, xv.
9. Beauvoir, Diary, 55.
11. Ibid., 13.
13. Simone de Beauvoir, A Very Easy Death. New York: Pantheon, 1965. This work, sometimes overlooked, is important for its detailed description of the objectification provided by encounters with mortality.
17. Judt, Burden, 123-4. Judt writes, “Central to Camus’s politics, and to his pleas for measure in all things, was his growing awareness of the sheer complexity of the world, or rather the worlds in which humans must live.”, 124.
18. Ibid., 123-4.
21. Simons covers these issues in more than one section of her “Introduction.” Very important material on these issues is found from roughly on pp. 18-33.
22. Beauvoir, Wartime, 311. (Entry for July 14, 1940.)
27. Ibid., 2.
28. Judt, Past, 26-44. The title of the chapter with details on this part of the French overview is “In the Light of Experience.”
29. Ibid., 84.
30. The adolescent diaries, for example, are filled with pages of quotations from Schopenhauer and remarks about the “incommunicable self.” (Beauvoir, Diary, 252-4.)
31. Simons remarks that this decision made her father quite angry. (Beauvoir, Diary, 32-3.)
32. Beauvoir, Wartime, 12.
34. Again, Judt, in Burden, is quite specific about the length of time it took Camus to work out his views.
In *Lévinas and the Postcolonial*, John E. Drabinski tenders a unique and provocative contribution to the, sometimes parochial and conservative-minded, field of Lévinas scholarship, as well as the field of postcolonial thought, and phenomenology more generally. From the outset of *Lévinas and the Postcolonial*, Drabinski situates himself as a theorist who values Lévinas’ radical ethics. However, Lévinas’s Eurocentric attitude coupled with his strange mix of political quietism and outbursts of logocentric chauvinism give Drabinski pause. It is these troubling features of Lévinas’s work that inspire the project at the core of *Lévinas and the Postcolonial*. Drabinski uses the Preface and the Introduction to orient the reader towards the historical, political, and material blind spots in Lévinas’s work, which Drabinski believes require serious interrogation. As a prism through which to critically re-think Lévinas’s ideas on these fronts, Drabinski puts aspects of Lévinas’s philosophy into conversation with an impressive cast of postcolonial and postmodern theorists, including such luminaries as Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, and Gayatri Spivak. Another interlocutor worth special mention is Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatista movement, whose *parole* Drabinski cites in his examination of political subjectivity. The passages concerning Marcos stand out as rare examples of praxis in what is essentially a theoretical discourse. An overarching theme in Drabinski’s comparative investigation of Lévinas is a materialist consideration for the experience of difference in the world as an event engendering an ethical encounter within ontology. This clearly signals a fundamental departure from normative Lévinasian thought. Drabinski wastes no time in setting the boat of traditional Lévinas commentators to rocking, launching his first volley against Lévinas’s formula of ethics as first philosophy.

It is this primacy of the ethical that I would like to contest. This is not to say that the ethical *should not be* or *is not* first, but rather that Lévinas’s relation to conceptions of culture, history, and politics obscures the ethical where it is most demanded – across geographies informed by history. (3)

Drabinski contests Lévinas’s assigning difference to the impenetrable height of the other in a relation without relation to the singularly responsible I. *Contra* Lévinas’s assertion that the ethical is blind to the particularities of embodiment, Drabinski infuses difference with the weight of a historically inscribed signification announced by the ontological categories of race, class, origin, etc., thus entwining the ethical moment with history and difference, as they are written upon the body. Through the embodiment of difference in demarcations of being Drabinski sketches the outlines of a theory of difference and the ethical which he dubs ‘incarnate historiography’. Here, Drabinski seeks to employ the phenomenon of schisms within being, to generate an opening for a genuine ethical reflection within the dimensions of politics and history.

My appeal here is not ideological, but simply phenomenological. Do we not experience, in the sense of *Erlebnis*, the affect of responsibility precisely as the weight of history bearing upon the moment? Is there not this other diachrony in the embodied
encounter that splits the time of my present not just from the time of the Other, but also the time of history and its pain as the time of other Others? If history and pain inform the event of the ethical, deepening (rather than distracting from) our sense of the obligation, then history is written into the body itself. Perhaps, even, I am vulnerable and exposed on the basis of this history and its incarnation. (41)

For Lévinas scholars of a more orthodox disposition Drabinski’s argument will likely provoke a critique aimed squarely at his muddling of the ontological and ethical planes. Such reactions are to be expected, and are certainly not without their own merits. However, Drabinski largely diffuses such critiques by clearly acknowledging the heterodox character of his re-imagining of Lévinasian concepts at several points throughout the text. Further, Drabinski is nothing less than diligent in rendering extremely lucid and insightful summaries of Lévinas’s own concepts and arguments. In fact, as a reader, I have rarely encountered such a clear and comprehensible description of the major themes expressed by Lévinas in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being*, in so limited a space. At no point does Drabinski seek to advance his own thesis through the obfuscation of the character of Lévinas’s original assertion of the radical and incommensurable difference between the saying and the said. Rather, Drabinski seeks to generate a forum for thinking about Lévinas’s ideas outside of the conventions of a Eurocentric theoretical vocabulary.

Lévinas’s account of difference is only possible with the operative concept of Europe in place. Such provincialism, in addition to eclipsing the implication of Europe in a wider sense of moral and political identity, compromises the radicality of Lévinasian thinking about difference by putting historical experience in brackets – while still functioning within the historical experience of Europe as an internal structural item. (68)

Drabinski dubs his effort to draw Lévinasian thinking out of a logocentric grammar, ‘decolonizing Lévinas’. The actual exercise of ‘decolonizing Lévinas’s’, however, yields rather uneven results. The strongest effect of ‘decolonization’ is the manner in which it prompts the reader into a substantive engagement with the figure of the Other. Of particular note is the way in which the anti-narrative challenge of Gayatri Spivak’s portrait of the subaltern, and the question of voice, spurs the reader to re-consider the source of the call of the Other. Additionally, Drabinski’s nuanced presentation of Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity makes a good case for apprehending the ‘fracturing of subjectivity’ as an ontological ‘denunciation’ of identity wrought by the experience of exile and displacement. This direction in the discussion provides a rich vein of possible comparative insights when thought alongside Lévinas’s notion of ‘exteriority’. Commensurately, the trope of fracture in Drabinski’s analysis helps to inform a later discussion of the rhizome. Drabinski re-tools the concept of rhizome from the original formulation advanced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to accord with a sense of ethical responsibility, and diffuse subjectivity.

However, as is perhaps inevitable in a work as diverse and wide ranging as *Lévinas and the Postcolonial*, Drabinski’s analysis becomes susceptible to the perils of attempting to include an unmanageable number of theoretical concepts and comparisons in so slim a volume. The consequences of corralling so many involved theoretical models into such a limited space is that Drabinski’s comparative schemes become too fragmented at times – even for a reader of great postmodern sympathies. Hence intriguing notions such as the sense that Édouard Glissant’s concern with futurity, and a ‘metaphysics of the future’, might provoke in relation to Lévinas’s poetic discussion of time and fecundity, are deprived of the breadth such an abstract comparative dialogue requires. The result is that a potentially riotous discussion which, when coupled with
embodiment, would be of great interest to an audience interested in temporal theories and phenomenology, is given a disappointingly brusque treatment.

Taking such shortcomings into consideration, Drabinski has, nonetheless, delivered an erudite, innovative and timely contribution to Lévinasian theory. The dialogues constructed by Drabinski within *Lévinas and the Postcolonial* offer compelling and necessary juxtapositions wherein ethics as first philosophy is confronted by the stark material experience inscribed in postcolonial political theory. Drabinski exhibits a dynamism that demands a focused engagement on the part of the reader. Equally, *Lévinas and the Postcolonial* poses questions that command the attention of all philosophical camps for which the imperative of ethics, the experience of politics and the spectre of history form the crux of reflection.

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To write about the work of Cornelius Castoriadis is almost necessarily to take a stand on the questions his work raises. Suzi Adams does exactly this in *Castoriadis’s Ontology: Being and Creation*. While her book is likely to be read as an introduction, she admits that it is “not intended as an introduction to Castoriadis’s thought” (228). Instead, her explicit purpose, as her articles on Castoriadis have been suggesting for years, is to argue that Castoriadis’s ontological ideas undergo a major shift in the 1980s. In contrast to other, perhaps more patent readings of Castoriadis’s trajectory, which might locate his ‘big’ turn either when he officially breaks with Marxism in the 1960s or between the dissolution of *Socialisme ou barbarie* and the advent of 1975’s *Imaginary Institution of Society* (*IIS*), Adams instead argues that Castoriadis makes his most decisive turn after *IIS*, when he moves from a concern with specifically human ontology to a concern with ontology as such. Adams’s overarching thesis has two wings, which I shall evaluate separately.

First, Adams highlights Castoriadis’s early focus on the absolute specificity of *nomos*, or the human realm, as distinct from *physis*, or nature. She shows, however, that in *IIS* Castoriadis was associating *physis* with scientistic thinking and deterministic ontology. As a result, in that text, Castoriadis’s critique of natural explanation (as inadequate to explain the human creation of society and meaning) was strongly linked to his rejection of determinism. Indeed, only when Castoriadis eventually dissociated nature from determinism, and then came to apply his notion of diverse ‘strata of being’ to nature, did he develop the idea that the determinist stratum of nature was just *one* of many. Only then could he develop a kind of non-determinist *Naturphilosophie* that places value on the non-human living being (140). He eventually came to see, she argues – Adams rightly employs Castoriadis’s essays ‘*Physis* and Autonomy’ and ‘The State of the Subject Today’ here – that even non-human living beings form the world for themselves.

Castoriadis clearly began in the 1980s to speak about the creativity of the not-necessarily-human ‘living being’. However, one might argue that Adams should be careful to avoid terminology that would suggest that Castoriadis came to see humans and society as modes of nature, e.g., “the living being is a concrete exemplar of radical *physis*” (193). After all, Castoriadis always argued that nothing like ‘Nature’ creates the world. Rather, it is each living being itself that is ‘each time’ creative of its world as it leans on conditions; and the anonymous collective creativity of society along with the
psyche’s radical creativity that make us unique. Nevertheless, one should not accuse Adams of this slip. As Part II of her work clarifies, Castoriadis was not moving in that direction. “Castoriadis’s shift toward a transregional ontology of creative physis”, she argues, “[does] not signal the reduction of the social to naturalistic explanations, nor is the social conceived as the outcome of cosmic processes” (144). Instead, she notes, Castoriadis thinks that human nature could only ever truly be a ‘hyperphusis’, in the sense that humans create a world beyond nature – a world of nomos – which is irreducible to nature or to any other living being and in which humans are uniquely faced with the radical prospect of autonomy. Thanks to this clarification, Adams can make sense of Castoriadis’s insistence on the uniqueness of the special stratum where we humans are faced with the question either of giving the law to ourselves deliberatively (‘autonomy’) and establishing the institutional supports for this project (‘effective autonomy’) or of refusing to question the law and continuing to self-constitute ourselves in a non-deliberative state of blindness (‘heteronomy’).

The second aspect of Adams’s argument reveals where her particular interests lie, namely in reading Castoriadis in relation to the hermeneutical and phenomenological tradition. Adams admits that Castoriadis was combative towards hermeneutics in particular, since it occludes ‘radical creativity’ by always contextualizing the new or unique; that is, it always treats the new as if it were an unfolding of the old, or of the context. However, Adams highlights the fact that for Castoriadis, even the radical creativity of the psyche is creative in conditions and with conditions (even if it is also radically ex nihilo). Adams thinks, for this reason, that Castoriadis ‘implicitly’ embraced hermeneutics as a consequence of his larger ‘ontological turn’ (130). However, she admits that Castoriadis does not exactly complete the transition to hermeneutics, for he maintains even at the end of his career that creation is ex nihilo and irreducible to context.

This second aspect of Adams’s argument suggests that she is committed to a more Ricoeurian notion of creation ‘from something to something’ or, in her terms, creation ‘to another form’ (220). This commitment may at times affect her interpretation of Castoriadis’s own concept of creation, for she brings him closer to her view than perhaps he really is. For example, when attempting to explain what Castoriadis means by ‘re-creation’, she asks rhetorically, “But what is re-creation if not an interpretation [… ] of an existing creation?” (130). Here, I think that a Castoriadian could respond by arguing that ‘re-creation’ is firstly (a) a case of radical new creation which, by virtue of its occurring in and with created conditions, (b) generates a quasi-real continuity with those conditions, which is analyzable as continuous only ex post facto. In other words, to argue that Castoriadis’s notion of creative or re-creative ‘newness’ is really just an interpretive unfolding from existent to existent may be to beg the question against Castoriadis’s whole idea of the ex nihilo and his critique of hermeneutics. It may confuse the created continuity of re-instituted conditions with the creative instance itself. As a result, Adams’s larger thesis to the effect that Castoriadis moderated his notion of creation might be challenged: it may be that Castoriadis grew clearer and clearer in its specification of exactly how important it is for there to be creation, since conditions and institutions do not re-generate themselves.

In the end, Adams does a fine job at relating Castoriadis to his context in continental philosophy, at defending a plausible reading of his corpus, and at relating Castoriadis to us. Minor reservations aside, Adams skillfully reconstructs Castoriadis’s ontology in a way that is sensitive to its development and changes. Throughout, she is strikingly adept at linking Castoriadis to his sociological (esp. Weber) and philosophical (esp. Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur) predecessors and combatants. And in fact, despite her own suggestion otherwise, she has written a great introduction to Castoriadis’s difficult
thinking, to concepts such as the psychic monad, ensidic thought, etc.; she reveals their interest and their tensions. Readers of Adams and of Castoriadis will surely recognize that there is a certain ‘enthymematic’ quality to Castoriadis’s arguments, a quality that mirrors his understanding of reality: he does not necessarily connect every local pattern of reasoning into one interconnected whole; nor are his arguments necessarily modeled according to one overarching paradigm. Therefore, the exegete who seeks to generate a vision of Castoriadis’s ontology on the whole must determine for him or herself where the diverse arguments are connected and where they are not connected. In this way, the exegete takes a stand and must become a philosopher in exactly the sense that both Castoriadis and, ironically, Plato’s Eleatic Stranger (*Sophist*, 252-68) are philosophers: recognizing that some things relate and others do not, they assume the task of making determinations, of forming themselves while forming what comes to be. Whether Castoriadis intended that his work induce us to take a stand in this way is a question I could not answer. However, as Adams’s book displays, his work in fact incites this movement, and I believe Castoriadis would be happy accordingly.

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Reference

1. There is currently only one other major work devoted to Castoriadis in English. This work is Jeff Klooger’s outstanding *Castoriadis: Psyche, Society, Autonomy*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Compared to Adams’s work, Klooger’s is focused more on the implications of Castoriadis’s philosophy for, for example, epistemology and the philosophy of physics (although he is also sensitive to the socio-political aspects of Castoriadis’s work).


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

The goal of the course, Merleau-Ponty states, is to deepen the analysis of perception in order to understand, “the expressive relation the body – the sensible, natural or mute world man – the institutional, cultural or speaking world.”

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

In Le monde sensible et le monde de l’expression, Merleau-Ponty again challenges the Cartesian framework that remained implicit in Phenomenology of Perception. Instead of a positive consciousness that stands in front of an impenetrable extension, he seeks to redefine perceptual consciousness as well as the perceived world. To have consciousness of something can no longer be conceived as a possession of ideas or significations, because such a consciousness “can only have to do with its own significations” and things “can only touch it by awaking one of the significations it conceives”. Perceptual consciousness is both closer to and further away from the things it perceives, closer because as a part of the world it is not cut off from the perceived but “encroaches on it, surrounds it”, further away because the perceived only reveals itself “through its vibration in me”, which means that the things always remain beyond the perception of them.

Consciousness is not “possession of representation” but an “exact divergence [écart]”. The perceived thing is not positively given, instead it is negatively defined by what it lacks as much as by what it possesses; it is not an essence, but an “internal logic”. With the perception of a circle as a privileged example, Merleau-Ponty radicalizes Gestalt psychology and extends the figure’s dependence on the ground to the perceived’s dependence – on its imperceived. The meaning of the circle is a “mode of divergence” it is not perceived as the geometrical circle, but as a “change of direction at every moment but always in the same manner”, and that in relation to which it is divergence is not posed, but only recognized in all the points that the circle does not observe. As perceived, “it offers a tacit meaning that reveals itself in the exceptions where it is missing rather than in its own position”, The circle is not a sensory givenness, but a meaning that expresses itself before us through a mixture of perception and imperception.

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

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

Merleau-Ponty’s elaboration of movement starts from a double critique of, on one hand, an idealist’s standpoint and, on the other hand, an empiricist’s one.17 The idealist would examine our verbal concept of movement rather than movement itself and, pretending to know what he searches for, only imply what he sets out to find. The empiricist, on the other hand, would view it as an objective transition between two points. The idealist’s view empties the meaning of the phenomenon of movement, whereas the empiricist’s view makes movement itself impossible. As Zeno’s paradox shows us, if we conceive space as consisting of an infinite number of parts, there can never be any movement because either the transition between two variable points is done or it still remains to be done, but the movement itself is never there. Merleau-Ponty claims that this is what Bergson sensed, i.e., that it is the actual and infinite division of time and space and their composition from an infinite number of units that made the movement described in Zeno’s thought impossible. If movement is to be possible, it requires that time and space are divisible but not divided, that they permit an-in-between for the positions and instants, which is not possible in itself.18 Thus the thetic consciousness “stiffens the movement”, which can only be seen “out of the corner of the eye, on the condition that one does not reflect upon it, that one does not know what he sees, like an appearance or an illusion”.19

In order to show that there is no movement in itself but only the phenomenon of movement, Merleau-Ponty compares real movement with the stroboscopic. Even when real movement appears, there is only, on the retina, a successive activation of different regions which means that the perception of it resembles the perception of the stroboscopic, to the extent that a subject who does not already know which is which cannot distinguish between them. With terminology borrowed from Gestalt psychology, he explains that movement appears in the same way as the figure on the ground, because the figure’s segregations are made by man and not given by stimuli, and the identification of the movement is of the same order as the identification of a figure at rest with itself. The movement is composed of ‘figural’ characteristics – it is like a figure that by itself realizes a spatio-temporal segregation.20

Merleau-Ponty deepens the conception of movement as a figure on a ground, and claims that movement can no longer be understood as a change of place, but instead as a revelation of being, resulting from its inner configuration.21 He compares the perception of an insect on the window to one of an airplane at the horizon. They are perceived “without passing through the relation of the objectively appearing size-distance”, i.e., they are not identified by an intellectual recourse to an idea, but through a different configuration of the perceived field wherein they describe different structures. They can be confused, i.e., the insect can be thought to be an airplane, but both when they are recognized and mistaken they are perceived as a “style of movement”. There is a mutual dependence between the meaning and the style of movement, “the meaning is a means to account for the movement’s style but appears only through it.”22 This can be compared to how the expressiveness of language is understood in Prose of the World, where Merleau-Ponty describes how the writer makes his language expressive through his characteristic style of using the words. From Saussure, he borrows the idea that
significations are negatively defined by their relation to one another, and transposes this idea to the perception of movement,

One could say, signs, but in a modern meaning, not as a sum of given things but as realizations of one and the same power of phonetic variation, that only differs from itself by opposing itself, and that are diacritical and in interaction. In that sense perception of movement is like reading.\textsuperscript{23}

The very existence of movement requires, according to Merleau-Ponty, that there must be a “blend of before and after, of here and there, encroachment”. This is only possible if the movement is neither solely in the things nor for me as a viewing subject, but instead performed “through a kind of blend between me and the things”.\textsuperscript{24} Movement is only possible in interplay with our body, our motricity is the “foundation of the object’s mobility”.\textsuperscript{25}

From the phenomenon of movement, and with important influences from Paul Shilder as well as the neurologists Pierre Bonnier and Henry Head, Merleau-Ponty elaborates the notion of the body schema. He describes it as an “opening towards a world through motricity”\textsuperscript{26} and understands it as a schema in the sense that it is a “system of references” and not a thing in space. It is not spread out before us like an object but rather is a “system of immediate, intersensorial equivalences”,\textsuperscript{27} that arouses the perceived space and reveals both the body’s and the world’s existence. It is “a certain structure of the perceived world and this latter has its roots in it”.\textsuperscript{28} It is not here in the sense of an inter-objective relation, but as my contact with the outside, its voids indicate that we are with it, situated in it. In a normal resting position it is not sensed, because then “the body is similar to its ground” and nothing is “sensed as figure”; it is in relation to this position that everything else is “divergence, anomaly and thus perceived expressively”.\textsuperscript{29} Again, Merleau-Ponty makes a comparison to language: in the same way as language expresses differences in significations and not significations, the body schema is not a perceived thing but an index of our prethetic relation with space, and what we perceive are only differences or divergences in relation to it.\textsuperscript{30}

The body schema is also “relation with the other, language, thought”, and speech, which is described as an “especially fragile superstructure of the body schema”.\textsuperscript{31} Merleau-Ponty claims that language is that which “furthest sublimates the human movement” because here the “body opens itself to a gesticulation according to a law of construction that is not natural and not gestural”.\textsuperscript{32} Language can no longer be understood as based on the bodily gesture, as it was in Phenomenology of Perception, and although there are a number of analogies drawn between the body’s relation to the perceived and our relation to language, the latter “passes to another order”.\textsuperscript{33} With the discussion of movement, Merleau-Ponty accounts for how natural expression can be transformed into cultural expression, but not how the difference between them should be conceived. He states that language is “not only sketching a perspective, an articulation of the physical and social world, but further reaches a truth”.\textsuperscript{34} Does this mean that language has a privileged position as a vehicle of truth? Merleau-Ponty asserts that this will be further examined in another course next year, which means that he does not answer the initial problem of the perceived’s relation to being and truth, but rather prepares the path for an answer.

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

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

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References

4. «restait tout de même ordonnée à des concepts classiques», 45.
5. «d’accès à l’être », 46.
7. *Le monde sensible et le monde de l’expression*, 48 «...cette conscience ne peut avoir affaire qu’à ses significations... », « Rien ne peut la toucher qu’en éveillent en elle une des significations qu’elle conçoit. ».
8. «...il empiète sur elle, il l’entoure. », «...par sa vibration en moi... », 49.
10. «logique interne », 49.
11. « mode d’écart », 56, «...change de direction à chaque instant mais toujours de la même façon... » 50.
12. «...il offre un sens comme tacite qui se révèle plutôt dans les exceptions où il manque que par sa position propre... », 49.
13. «...la propriété qu’a un phénomène, par son agencement interne, d’en faire connaître un autre qui n’est pas ou même n’a jamais été donné. », 48.
16. «...ce sont plutôt des significations comme celles du tableau: une touche de vert placée ici fait sourire une joue sans que nous sachions comment, en vertu d’une syntaxe que nous pratiquons sans en avoir la science. », 50.
17. 70.
18. 91.
19. «Pas de mouvement devant conscience théétique qui le fige... », « On ne peut le voir que du coin de l’œil, à condition de ne pas réfléchir, de ne pas savoir ce qu’on voit, comme apparence ou illusion. », 90.
20. 95f.
22. « ...sans passer par le rapport objectif grandeur apparente - distance. », « style de mouvement », « ...le sens est moyen de rendre compte du style de mouvement mais ne paraît justement qu’en lui... », 114.
23. « Si l’on veut signes mais au sens moderne non d’une somme de données, mais de réalisations diverses d’un seule puissance de variation phonématique, qui ne se distinguent qu’en s’opposant, qui sont diacritiques et en interaction. En ce sens là perception du mouvement = lecture. », 111.
24. « ... qu’il y ait mélange de l’avant et de l’après, de l’ici et du là, empiétement. », « par une sorte de mélange de moi et des ‘ choses ’ », 90.
25. « Notre motricité comme fondement de la mobilité des objets. » 120.
26. « ouverture à un monde par motricité », 158.
27. « système de référence », « système d’équivalences intersensorielles immédiates », 129.
28. « Donc le schéma corporel est aussi une certaine structure du monde perçu et ce dernier a sa racine en lui. », 144.
29. « rien ne serait senti comme figure », « le corps rejoindrait son fond », « écart, anomalie, expressément perçu. », 143.
30. 143.
32. « sublime davantage le mouvement humain », 164, « ... le corps s’ouvrant à gesticulation selon loi de construction (langue) non naturelle, non gestuelle ... », 162.
33. « passe à un autre ordre », 165.
34. « ... non seulement dessiner une perspective, une articulation du monde physique et social, mais encore rejoindre une vérité. », 162.