

*Essays, Lectures*

“HOI DIKRANOI: The Figure of Doubling in the Poem of Parmenides”

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“Foucault and the Genealogy of Modern Architecture”

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*Essays, Lectures*

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# Preface

This book contains a selection of essays written since the beginning of the 1990s. While there is no one single thread uniting them, the selection reflects, in a prismatic way, essential features of the work I have been engaged in over the past fifteen years.

The first four chapters deal with certain *limit* situations in Western metaphysics, and, re-reading these texts today, it seems clear that they all in one way or another constitute attempts to approach a twofold understanding of the limit: on the one hand, as that which *resists* thinking, the unthought lodged inside thought. In that sense they inscribe themselves in a tradition of philosophical-historical reflection that was opened up by Heidegger. On the other hand, the limit is also an internal structure, a “turn” or a “fold” that does not so much resist thought as “give” the act of thinking, provide it with an “image” of its own operations. This second understanding of limit engages a certain conception of the subject, or processes of “subjectification,” in the wake of the work of Foucault and Deleuze, and it proposes a necessary corrective to the view of the history of metaphysics that has become predominant since Heidegger.

In Parmenides’ Poem, which is the topic of the first chapter, we encounter one of philosophy’s initiating gestures that sets up a violent tension between appearance and reality, and inscribes this tension in a text that constantly asks us to call its own signifying structure into question. The image of thought in Parmenides is always split, “two-headed,” and it points to the necessary finitude of “mortal” thinking. The second chapter turns to Augustine, who writes at the other end of antiquity and faces the challenge of how to mediate between Greek ontology and Christian revelation. By searching himself, he creates the possibility of a modern form of philosophical discourse, centered around the ego and its acts, while at the same time pointing in advance to the limits of this discourse. Heidegger’s turn from fundamental ontology to the meditation on the history of being is the topic of the third chapter, and here we find a decisive questioning of the limits

of the transcendental project of laying foundations, and just as in Augustine, the basic problem concerns time and subjectivity, although here it is formulated in the vocabulary of modern phenomenology. The fourth chapter deals with the idea of an “image of philosophy” in Deleuze, whose resistance to the tradition of phenomenological ontology that informs the three previous chapters is well-known. His way of understanding the event, the fold, and the construction of variable modes of subjectivity seems infinitely removed from Heidegger’s, and yet a dialog between these two positions seems to me to be of the utmost importance.

The following four chapters prolongs some of the earlier themes in a different direction, and it engages the questions of technology and nihilism in modern art and architecture. The status of Heidegger’s analyses of the essence of technology is pivotal in this connection, and here I attempt to confront them with other conceptions of modernity at once very close and very distant, in Ernst Jünger and Walter Benjamin, and in various conceptions of the avant-garde as an apotheosis of technology. Here, too, the final essay provides a different take on the issues, and looks to the work of Foucault as another way to think the genealogy of modernity as a nexus of power, knowledge, and the production of subjectivity.

Some of these texts have earlier been published in anthologies, others in journals, and some draw on lectures presented on various occasions (see credits at the end). For this book I have revised all of them, in some cases only on the level of style and updating of references, in other cases I have decided to rewrite or add substantial parts. This was done in order to unpack arguments that seemed too dense or convoluted in their original form, thus hopefully making them more clear and accessible to the reader. The substance of the argument, however, remains the same in each of them.

I would like to express my deepest thanks to Staffan Lundgren, who convinced me to put this collection of texts together, and without whose unceasing enthusiasm it would surely not exist. A special thanks must go to Lars Kleberg, who in the last minute provided help with the Russian references in chapter 5. Many others have read and commented on these texts at one stage or another: let me here just men-



tion Jonna Bornemark, Daniel Birnbaum, Marcia Cavalcante-Schuback, Brian Manning Delaney, Sten Gromark, Helena Mattsson, the late Alexander Orłowski, Hans Ruin, and Fredrika Spindler, whose insightful criticisms and commentaries have been decisive throughout the years. The patient students and colleagues at The Department of Architecture at the Royal School of Technology in Stockholm have always been a great support. And last but not least, the Department of Culture and Communication at the University College of Södertörn remains an indispensable environment and a constant source of inspiration.



# HOI DIKRANOI

## The Figure of Doubling in the Poem of Parmenides

*Panton de palintropos esti keleuthos*

Parmenides, B 6, 9

### *I. The Semaphor*

The history of thought seems to begin with a bifurcation: two paths that diverge, a text with two irreconcilable parts, and whose (im)possible interrelation constantly calls for new interpretations. The figure of doubling, a certain dissimulation that links the truth of appearance and the mere appearance of truth, watches over the beginning of thought. In this sense, Parmenides' emphatic *esti*—the “is” as the first word that claims to say being (*eon*) and the thinking of being (*noein*), and nothing more than *it*, and explicitly expels non-being and negation from the domain of the sayable and the thinkable—already harbors a “twofold” and a duplicity, a *Zwiefalt* or *Faltung* within its very inception, whose resonance extends up to the present day.<sup>1</sup>

1. The expression comes from Martin Heidegger, “Moira,” *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957): “*eon*, *das Seiend*, is thought [...] in the two fold (*Zwiefalt*) of being and beings, and it is said in a participle, though without the grammatical concept being thought as such as a knowledge within language” (36). Jean Beaufret views the ambiguity in Parmenides' *eon* in a similar way, in *Le poème de Parménide* (Paris: PUF, 1955), 34 f (“The participle is, grammatically speaking, characterized by a remarkable ambiguity [...] In one sense, *to eon* is the singular of *ta eonta*, and nominally it signifies one of the *eonta*. But more fundamentally, *eon* no longer signifies a singular being (*ens quoddam*, *un étant*, *a being*, *ein Seiendes*) but the

What has been handed down to us as Parmenides' didactic poem "On Nature" (PERI PHYSEOS) is the first text that within philosophy's retrospective narration of its own history can lay claim to constitute something like a systematic thought. Together with Heraclitus's Fragments, the Poem is the founding document of Western thought, however paradoxical this may be, given that it stems from a period where the very concept of *philosophia* remained unknown. In Parmenides we encounter a movement of thought that still lacks all the traditional names we use to circumscribe philosophy as a "discipline," a thinking which cannot be enclosed within our institutional and discursive frameworks, and that does not obey any recognizable procedures, i.e., what we today would call a "method." But in this fusion of genres and figures, of the metaphorical and the literal—which should not be read as a "less than" or a "not yet," teleologically oriented towards the (Platonic) moment of separation—we might still pick up the resonance of a *methodos*

singular of *einai* (*esse, être, to be, sein*) in which all *eonta* take part, without the former being exhausted by any one of them.") Klaus Held, in *Heraklit, Parmenides und der Anfang von Philosophie und Wissenschaft. Eine phänomenologische Besinnung* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1980), like Heidegger makes use of the neologicistic construction "das Seiend" for *eon*, but curiously proceeds to talk about an "indifference": "Parmenides' theme thus precedes the ontological difference. *To éon* is not ambiguous, it signifies univocally: ontological indifference (*Indifferenz*). It is only if one loses sight of this simple indifference that *to éon* appears as something which can be interpreted in a double—and contradictory—way" (513). The alternative between *eon* as indifference and difference is perhaps too simple, which comes across in the expression "das Seiend," whose verbal-participial ambiguity seems at once to open and to bar the access to the ontological difference. The in-different *Zwiefalt* of being and beings gives rise to both interpretations (and to the ways of truth and seeming), and my intention here is rather to prolong the duplicity of this reading into another dimension by investigating how the ontological (in)difference is reflected in the organization of the text, i.e., in the relation between the two ways.

in an earlier sense of *hodos*, a route or a way, a movement and a process that brings about a certain separation, a *krisis* that precedes and determines the subsequent divisions of thought. The route and process of the Poem unfold in a space where *mythos* and *logos* are still intertwined, where the “purification” from myth staged by Plato, and even more so the “rationalizing” interpretation of Aristotle, have not yet taken place. In order to unearth such a dimension of the “pre-philosophical,” which clears the space for philosophy while still not being reducible to any of the conceptual articulations that philosophy makes possible, the reading proposed here—partial and fragmentary as it must remain—will focus precisely on the “staging” of the Poem, and to a certain extent suspend or bracket what has traditionally been assumed as its explicit doctrines on being and nothingness. This cannot mean simply opposing a “literary” to a “philosophical” reading, not the least since such oppositions are Platonic through and through; nor can it mean dissolving philosophy in a general notion of an infinitely stratified and duplicitous “text” that would somehow absorb all generic articulations, which would be a Romantic gesture. The reading here proposed must rather uncover a moment inside thought that still remains outside it, a certain pre-philosophical experience that “gives” thought its momentum without being reducible to anything simply non-philosophical. Such an exercise might indeed say something about the problems inherent in extracting a definite Parmenidean doctrine on being, and about the unstable operation by which we draw a line between *how* a philosophical text speaks (rhetoric, staging, the metaphor as the outside of discourse) and that *on what* it is supposed to speak (the truth, the object, language, thought, as so many variations on the *thing itself*), although we should be wary of any attempt to reduce philosophy to another discipline that would dominate it from the outside.<sup>2</sup>

2. In choosing this perspective certain fundamental decisions concerning interpretation have of course already been made, especially, in the present context, the choice between the tradition stemming from Heidegger and his archaeology of Pre-Socratic thinking, and the analytical

After a century and a half of modern philological exegesis of the Poem, it has become a well established fact that its “teaching” is inserted into a mythological framework, and several analyses have been proposed of how motifs from epic and didactic poetry (Homer, Hesiod) not only come to form an external dressing, but also have a bearing on the very form of the argument. One of the most careful modern studies on this topic sees as its explicit task to show how “Parmenides uses old words, old motifs, old themes, and old images precisely in order to think new thoughts in and through them”;<sup>3</sup> the question as to how this *passage* from “motif” to “thought” takes place contains in fact a series of almost infinite complication, since the task is to describe *philosophically* the passage from non- or not-yet-philosophy to philosophy, or even—if we should choose to accept the Heideggerian conception of a *Denken* that would, both in a logical and chronological fashion, come before philosophy, if such a distinction has any relevance here, and yet would be neither religion nor mythology—to describe within thought, and not within philosophy, as that which is made possible by thought, the irruption of thought on the basis of what would be non-, or not-yet-thought.

This structure is what here will be addressed in terms of the fig-

tradition that uses current conceptual analysis to unravel early Greek texts. If this essay, in its attention to the “literary” details of the Poem, appears to situate itself in the first tradition, then this is because it is my conviction that no reading, be it analytical or fundamental-ontological (or something else) can afford to disregard the textual dimension as a merely external and mythical dressing if it is to avoid turning Parmenides into just another case of linguistic fallacy. For a precise discussion of these two approaches, see Barbara Cassin’s recent translation and commentary, *Parménide. Sur la nature ou sur l’être* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 122-134

3. Alexander P D Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides. A Study of Word, Image and Argument in the Fragments* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1970), 39.

ure of doubling. The intention is not to *replace* tools of textual analysis such as motif or theme; nor is it to refute the doctrinal reading, which would amount simply to a giving in to a pre-critical naiveté, but to point in the direction of an organizing principle that would be *neither* epic or mythic *nor* philosophical or logical, and yet not something simply *other*: the figure here referred to as *doubling* pervades the text in its entirety, independently of its shifting thematic focus, it constitutes both a rhetorical principle and an active structuring of the content of what appears as explicit ontological propositions.<sup>4</sup>

But if we in this way inscribe the doctrine on being, *to eon*, in a *figure*, i.e., in something which is neither philosophy nor what from a Platonic retrospective position appears as philosophy's other (myth, epic, literature in a wide sense), we have constantly to keep in mind that Parmenides *also* opens the ontological question, the whole trajectory of metaphysics, by separating being from nothingness, and by thinking beingness as such in a gesture that somehow (all necessary historical precautions taken) has to be qualified as the origin of a certain rationalism. The doctrinal content of the Poem *will* indeed lead to Plato's doctrine of Forms,<sup>5</sup> and to the Aristotelian quest for a sci-

4. Mourelatos (13; cf. also Cassin, 51, note 1) locates a germ of such a doubling as early as the beginning of the Proemium—in I 6, there are “two spinning wheels” on “both” sides, and shortly afterwards the bronze gates turn “alternately” in their joints, etc.—and he sees this as a “motivistic convention” taken from epic poetry; but would it not be equally possible to see duplication at work already here, before the encounter between Dike and the thinker, as an aspect of the *demonic* dimension of the Poem in its entirety? For an interpretation of *to daimonion* as the hidden in the ordinary, and as the basis of *Un-heimlichkeit* (the youth led astray by the *daimones* on a path “remote from the ways of men”), as rapture towards the extra-ordinary, and the Goddess herself as *daimon*, cf. Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides, Gesamtausgabe* 54 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1982), 145-193.
5. The first “Platonizing” reading of the Poem can be found in Sextus

ence that studies being as being in Metaphysics Gamma. The classical theories of being as “said in a manifold ways” (*to on legetai pollachos*), where the “focal point” is substance (*ousia*) as given in an analogy relating us to a unity (*pros hen*) connecting all the various forms of beings, are all germinating in the thought of *eon* as that to which all saying must refer.<sup>6</sup> And when this “content” of the Poem has been freed from its apparently external mythical-narrative clothing, it *will* lead us there—although this systematization perhaps obscures something initial in Parmenides, the proper demonic dimension, the specific ambivalence of the initiating gesture before philosophy’s conceptuality has spun its web around thought. Accounting for both of these moves, the one as it were folded into the other, and for the steps that lead from an initial openness into the space of philosophy without obeying any strict necessity and yet not because of some external and contingent violence, would then constitute the proper challenge of reading early Greek thinking, and Parmenides in particular, as an origin of philosophy that is always held in *reserve*.

It is indeed true that Parmenides thinks *eon* as unity and permanence, but he does not (yet) do it in terms of fixed categories and schemas, he does not (yet) represent being in terms of a systematic

Empiricus, *Adversos Mathematicos VII*, where all the textual element from the Proemium and onwards are systematically coordinated with their Platonic counterparts (cf. Cassin, 14 ff). This reading is still predominant as late as Hegel; cf. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Werke, ed. Moldenhauer-Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 18, 284 ff.

6. It should be noted, however, that the idea of the One (*hen*) beyond predication and categories is a later invention, primarily created by Simplicus and Proclus (who in their turn draw on Plato’s Parmenides). As Cassin points out, “one” in the Poem remains one predicate among others (Parménide, 12, note 3). On the other hand, she understands the structure of the text as a “progressive constitution of the noun-like and the substantial... its detachment, its autonomization” (*ibid*, 30).



explicability. For him, thinking relates to being through a certain kind of “perceiving” (*noein*), although this should not be understood in the modern sense of a perception, an act or constitution pertaining to the sphere of consciousness: as perceiving of being, thought is finite, or in Parmenides’ language, “mortal” (*brotos*), and thus internally divided, “ambivalent” or literally “double-headed” (*dikranos*), as if to inscribe the twofold into the head itself. Thought—i.e., that which *will become* philosophy, but has not yet assured itself of this sanctioned name—will have to include and reflect on this doubling of the head, in present both truth and appearance, in short, present in its own duplicity as a double reflective act that inscribes the double head. This second doubling will not absorb the negativity and finitude of thought in a pure noetic gaze, but rather situate it, reinscribe it in an economy linking truth and appearance inextricably to each other by pitting them against each other. If Parmenides in the famous third fragment can state that “the same is to think/perceive and to be” (*to gar auto noein estin te kai einai*), then this cannot mean that he states a direct and straightforward identity of the mortal thinker and being, instead it shows us that this identity, this (t)auto-logy between *eon* and the mortal, only comes to be when there is the highest tension, where identity is a forever deferred *result*.<sup>7</sup>

7. These formulas could lend themselves to an almost Hegelian reading, where appearance is essential to essence because it has to appear, as Hegel presents it in the “logic of essence”: “The essence has to appear (*erscheinen*). This appearing (*Scheinen*) onto itself is its sublation to immediacy, which as reflection in itself is permanence (matter) as well as form, reflection-in-another, a permanence sublating itself. The appearing is the determination whereby essence is no longer being, but essence, and the developed appearing is phenomenon (*Erscheinung*). The essence does not lie behind or beyond the phenomena, but since essence is what exists, existence is phenomena.” (*Enzyklopädie*, § 131) Hegel’s thinking, which connects appearing, phenomenon, and truth in a specular logic, obviously has a background in Parmenides, just as Heidegger’s

This duplicity is expressed by the fact that the Poem is divided into two parts, which, since the time of the first commentators in Antiquity, traditionally have been called “the way of truth” and “the way of appearance,” although the more precise interrelation between them has been a constant source of dispute. Is the second part nothing but a contingent addendum, a willful parody of a theory that Parmenides himself held as absurd, as was suspected by the first modern editor of the Poem, Hermann Diels? Or could it be as Nietzsche believed, that the latter part of the Poem represents an abandoned theory from Parmenides’ youth, included simply for sentimental reasons?<sup>8</sup> Today neither of these interpretation seem plausible, but this makes the *philosophical* question even more pressing: why should Parmenides, after having presented the truth, find it necessary to proceed to a presentation of appearance, i.e., of that which according to the text of the Poem neither *can* nor *ought* to be thought, that which must remain outside of any truthful speech? Why *should* he do it, and how can it even make sense to *attempt* to do it, given that the “doctrine” of being proposed earlier, as immobile, unchanging, without lack, etc., is held

meditations do, if in a somewhat different way. The following discussion of finitude and appearance will often cross the paths of both Hegel and Heidegger, although the clarification of precisely how exceeds the limit of this essay. Heidegger’s relation to Parmenides undergoes many changes, and ever since *Sein und Zeit* (1927) he will translate and comment upon various parts of the Poem—especially fragment III—on innumerable occasions and in highly divergent ways.

8. Hermann Diels, *Parmenides Lehrgedicht* (Berlin: G. Reymer, 1897). Nietzsche sees Parmenides’ decision to stick to his youthful theory as a refusal to disavow the sensible world—“a fatherly view, which, even though it might lead to errors, is part of the remains of humanity in someone who through logical rigidity had become fully petrified and almost turned into a thought-machine (*Denkmaschine*).” *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, in Colli-Montinari (eds.): *Werke* (Berlin & New York, 1980), vol. I, 836.

to be true? The proposed solutions to this problem are multitudinous, and the most contradictory hypotheses have been forged on the basis of these enigmatic fragments.

Here I will attempt to rethink this problem by way of a concept which might seem peripheral, although it in fact constitutes one of the essential organizing structures of the text, namely the concept of the *sign* (*sema*). This idea has already been suggested by Eugen Fink,<sup>9</sup> but it has received little recognition, perhaps due to a lack of communication between those who understand the Poem as a literary and philological problem, and those who quickly move away from its textual dimension

9. Eugen Fink, *Zur Ontologischen Frühgeschichte von Raum-Zeit-Bewegung* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957), 53-103. Held too emphasizes the concept of the sign, but seems at first to reach a diametrically opposed conclusion: the signs would be direct presentations (“das einfache Sich-Enthüllen, das schlichte Zum-Vorschein-Kommen des einfachen ‘Seiend,’” *op. cit.*, 515); the signs are “not only characteristics (*Merkmale*) of our process of knowledge, they are just as much ways in which the being in question shows itself” (516). For Fink the semaphorical distance between the Goddess and the youth in fact implies the *impossibility* of anything like an “einfaches Sich-Enthüllen”: the signs are *signs of...*, *indications of...*, and never a direct presentation. At the end of his analysis, Held modifies his stance and seems to align himself with Fink: “it is true that we dispose of the thought of being, but strangely enough, in such a way that we have to approach it from the domain of the seeming rule of the thought of nothing [...] In spite of this, we presuppose it [the thought of being]. This presupposition, thought’s anticipation of a though-enactment (*Denkwoollzug*) which is impossible for us mortals, is what justifies Parmenides’ usage of a divine helper for his thesis.” (572) Cassin on the other hand reduces the *semata* to an “epic palimpsest,” and understands them as a reference to models of recognition in epic poetry (as in Odysseus’ return to Ithaca, where a series of signs indicate his true identity) that the Poem would transfer to the status of “characteristics” of being (*Parménide*, 53-60, 217-24).

in the direction of what is supposed to be its theses or content. This division of exegetical labor is however precisely what a text like the Poem puts into question, since it unfolds in a space of language and thought not yet differentiated by attractors such as myth and philosophy, poetry and discursive prose, metaphors and proper meanings.

The concept of the sign may seem an excessively modern semiotic problem, but ever since the advent of deconstruction it is obvious that it can be used in order to reorganize the reading of the texts of metaphysics in a highly productive way, by focusing on the interplay between the “philosophical” and the “literary,” or rather by rethinking this (modern, and in the last instance, *Platonic*) opposition on another basis, which does not have to entail providing another *ground*, another equally illusory *fundamentum*.<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, the tradition has always sought to *reduce* the sign, the detour and the substitution, in favor of something that is supposed to be directly accessible (*truth* as the self-presentation of the divine, the eidetic light, a cogito in direct contact with itself, etc.), but on the other hand, the signifying structure will always already have started its work of erosion inside the schemas of

10. For an analysis of the systematically ambivalent status of the sign in the constitution of Greek ontology as it comes across in Plato, cf. Jacques Derrida, “La pharmacie de Platon,” *La dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972). If Fink’s and Held’s commentaries are the main sources of inspiration for this text, its indebtedness to Derrida’s way of reading the classical texts needs hardly be stated, especially concerning the way in which he focuses on what seems marginal, mere “stage instructions,” etc. A similar approach, the conclusions and motivations of which however differ considerably, can be found in Stanley Rosen’s works on Plato, *Plato’s Symposium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), *Plato’s Sophist—The Drama of Original and Image* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), and *Plato’s Statesman: The Web of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), which launch a so-called “dramatic phenomenology,” where a concept like “stage instructions” acquires a wholly concrete sense with respect to the dialogues.

ontology, and the detour will remain irreducible. The concept of the sign as such is perhaps not an explicit *theme* or *problem* in the Poem (as will later be the case when Plato portrays writing both as something necessary for *mneme*, the preservation and propagation of truth, and as one of many dangerous *hypomnemata*, artificial and external aides for memory that betray the inner life of thought), but on an implicit level it indicates the extent to which philosophical concepts are wedded to language as a kind of facticity, and also, as we will see, that language itself is rooted in mortality and finitude. The *sema* is that which gives life *and* death, opens and closes language as the movement of signification, it is something *in view of* the visible, and something that forever bars and defers that which should have become present and offer itself to the act of *noein*.

This multidimensionality of the sign returns in several decisive passages in the Poem, and it by no means belongs only to one of the two parts, as if the sign would pertain *either* to truth or to appearance. The Goddess disseminates her signs along the way of both seeming and of truth, and there is no point at which the sign would be superseded, no point where her words would be presented in any other form than indirectly and equivocally—*semaphorically*, as it were. In the language of the Poem itself we might say the following: since the mediated character of the sign will never be abolished, truth will never be presented directly, the relation between being and thought will always be permeated by appearance and seeming, and the truly being will always be entangled with the merely seeming, being with nothingness. But would not this entanglement of being and non-being, this *symploke to me on to onti*, be “absurd” (*atopon*), without a *place* or *site*, *unassignable*, as Plato will state emphatically (*The Sophist*, 242c)—and all the more so in Parmenides, where this mixture is precisely that which neither *can* nor *ought* to be thought or said? Or is this entanglement in another way precisely necessary and unavoidable, in fact the very structure of Necessity (*Ananke*) *itself*? The reading of the Poem I would like to propose here might shed light on these questions, not by focusing on the explicit arguments in the text—in a certain way, I will not attempt to say something new on the Poem’s explicit *theses*—but by investigating the way in which it speaks, its stage directions, i.e., precisely that which makes its method

into a way or a route that ceaselessly has to become two, a narration continually doubling and folding back upon itself, not in order to display a rhetorical mastery, but to show its own finitude.

We have in fact *two* principal characters, the Goddess (*Thea*) and the mortal and youthful thinker (*Kouros*), whose perspectives never coincide, and who never enter into a proper dialog (in fact, the youth never speaks), but remain asymmetrically related to one another; *two* ways, truth and seeming, and although one of them is *said* to be both impossible and impassable, the first nevertheless refers to the second in its incessant attempt to disentangle itself from it; and then, in the second part, we encounter *two* elements or forms of creation (*morphas dyo*, VIII 53), light and darkness, where the second retains a certain priority, as if the “fall” from the sphere of pure and unchangeable being would successively propagate itself through the text in the form of a progressive duplication. What is essential, is that we never reach a logical structure which would be given in a non-narrative synchrony, a vision that would not be mediated through this signposted way. Erring, the Homeric *plane*, everywhere haunts the philosopher-Odysseus.<sup>11</sup>

11. The first to explicitly associate the Poem with the motif of the voyage in the *Odyssey* was Eric A Havelock, “Parmenides and Odysseus,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 63 (1958). Mourelatos develops this theme systematically, though without drawing any heavy philosophical conclusions; Cassin integrates the epic references in her reading, where Parmenides’ text becomes the “Poem of the Greek language itself,” which “from one palimpsest to another, appropriating all other forms of discourse, becomes the poem of saying (*le poème du dire*), the story of language, and the story of all grand stories” (*Parménide*, 66). A small but in this context significant detail is the fact that the verb *phrazo*, with all its derivations, in Parmenides presumably retains the earlier epic sense of indication and *pointing*, and does not have the later sense of propositional speech, which further substantiates the reading of the Goddess as someone who indicates through signs rather than proffering true statements on *eon* in the form of propositions; cf. Mourelatos, *op. cit.*, 20 note 28.

*II. Proemium: the way up and the way down.*

The Poem starts with an ascending movement from darkness to light, where the daughters of the sun, the Heliads, carry the thinker towards the sphere of the Goddess. This is what conventional wisdom claims anyway, but even on this point some commentators have voiced their doubt.<sup>12</sup> Are there not certain indications that the journey away from the dwellings of the mortals in fact leads downward, not into the heavens—that it descends into a subterranean darkness? This of course would turn the ascending reading into a mere cliché, where we would presuppose that the dialectical path of knowing leads upwards, from darkness to the supersensuous light of the eidetic heavens. Given the latter view, the heavenly ascent of the Proemium would amount to a conventional Platonism, opening onto the “heavenly site” of Forms, their *topos ouranios*. A reading of the Poem that looks forward to Plato would thus be opposed to a backward-looking reading connecting it to epic motifs (such as the often cited visit to the kingdom of death in *The Odysseé*, 11), and already in the Proemium this ambivalence would take the form of spatial alternative: up or down?

These epic traces notwithstanding, it can hardly be denied that the rhetoric of the scene as a whole indicates a darkness passing over into light—the Heliads leave the house of the night, they push their veils back from their faces, and the hidden gradually becomes visible, although we need not assume that this light must be understood in a Platonic way. The journey takes us to a gate where the paths of day

12. Mourelatos gives an overview of the different arguments and cites relevant passages from epic literature, *op. cit.*, 14 ff. If “the topography of the journey is blurred beyond recognition,” (15) then this is perhaps because it “must have a certain impressionistic, sketchy, dreamlike quality to prevent identifications with persons and places familiar from the epic.” (41) Mourelatos provides a rich comparative material relating to the journey as a pre-philosophical motif which is highly relevant for my discussion here, and for the transformation from epic motifs to philosophical themes.

and night part, a gate whose keys are held by the goddess Dike, and that are said to be changing, plural, to have a double usage (they can both open and close), or to be alternating.<sup>13</sup> The Heliads flatter the Goddess, seduce her into opening the gate: the secret has somehow to be elicited from her, since truth from the beginning resists being presented directly. The youthful thinker does not himself speak, but merely listens to the conversation of the Heliads and the Goddess, and already here we encounter a basic passivity—he listens to the speeches of others, he encounters signs to be deciphered, a situation which will apply to the Poem in its entirety (the text seems to be structured by a series of injunctions: *listen, behold, see...*). And then, as if to indicate the separation, the *krisis* staged by the Poem, the gates open onto a “gap” (*chasma*), and show us the parting of the two ways.

After this breakthrough a shift occurs in the situation, and the youth is received by the Goddess (*Thea*), whose relation to Dike, who was guarding the gate he just passed through, is uncertain.<sup>14</sup> Thea

- 13 “[M]uch-avenging Dike guards its changing keys” (ton de Dike polypoinos echei klidas amoibous, I 14). Diels has “die wechselnden Schlüssel”; Beaufret, “les clefs à double usage” (Le poème, 77), which is associated with the theme of doubling: the keys are capable both of opening and shutting, the gate may both open and close. Mourelatos prefers to refer back to the preceding epithet “much-avenging” (polypoinos) and translates “keys of retribution” (The Route of Parmenides, 15); the same line of argument can be found in Cassin, who settles for “clés d’alternance”; see her discussion of the adjective amoibos, in Parménide, 135 f.
14. The personifications in the Poem are extremely difficult to interpret, as is the nature of the Goddess who presides. In I 3, the “goddesses” (*daimones*) lead the youth onto the distant way, and in this respect the whole of the Poem unfolds in a “daimonic” sphere; but after he has passed the first gate, the personified Dike changes into a more abstract “Goddess,” and the characters who had previously lead the youth on his way are recast as the abstractions *Dike* and *Themis*. Further on Dike appears once more, now as the one who holds being itself in bonds (VIII 13), a



greet him and reminds him that he is far from the human world, and that he has been brought along this remote way by law (*themis*) and justice (*dike*). He will indeed experience everything, she continues, both the “unshakable heart of persuasive [or in Simplicus’ version: well-rounded] truth” (*aletheias eupeitheos [eukykleos] atremes etor*, I 30), and the “opinions of mortals” (*broton doxas*), which contain no certain truth, since we are here dealing with mere seeming, with “how what seems must seem, since it pervades everything” (*hos ta dokounta chren dokimos einai dia pantos panta peronta*, 31-32).<sup>15</sup>

Now, and we are already at the heart of the question, why these two roads,<sup>16</sup> why this doubling, which seems not only superfluous and

role which immediately thereafter is ascribed to a personified Necessity (*Ananke*, 30), and, confusingly enough, a few lines further on to Destiny (*Moirai*, 37). For a discussion of personification in Parmenides, see Cassin, *Parménide*, 149-53.

15. Diels has “wie [...] sich jenes Scheinwesen verhalte”; Beaufret, choosing the opposite interpretation and underlining the necessity of appearance, translates in a more interpretative and verbose fashion: “[apprends aussi] comment la diversité qui fait montre d’elle-même devait déployer une présence digne d’être reçue” (*Le poème*, 79); Cassin: “comment les choses qui apparaissent doivent être en leur apparaître” (*Parménide*, 73). For a discussion of different translation strategies, cf. Beaufret, *Le poème*, 23 f, Cassin’s discussion of *doxa*, 174-185, and Mourelatos, whose thoroughness and variety of contrasting examples borders on the confusing (205 ff). The conflict between the positive and the negative sense of *doxa* is concentrated in the question of how to read *chren* in the beginning of line 31: is *doxa* characterized by *necessity*, or does the expression apply to something which once happened by *chance*, as if the fall into appearance would be an historical contingency? As will be clear, the reading adopted here is based on the first alternative.
16. It is sometimes claimed the Poem in fact discerns three ways, one pertaining to truth and two to appearance, which has occasioned a vast confusion. Held’s solution to this problem seems convincing, i.e., the real

pointless, but in fact harmful? Why isn't the true alone sufficient?

First we have to understand that it is not so much a question of true and false statements as of two ways of doing research (*hodoi dizesios*, II 2; V 3; VII 2), two directions of the gaze, or two forms of narrative. The image of the way is decisive, since it indicates the insurmountable difference between the perspective of the Goddess and that of the youth, which will always remain that of a mortal. She enjoins him to preserve the "words you heard" (*mython akousas*, II 1), but in this hearing there is already a discrepancy and an indication that the youth can do no more than repeat, *take dictation*,<sup>17</sup> as it were, but never proffer a speech from the vantage point of the Goddess herself. In this sense, no part of the Poem, at least from the point of view of the youth (and maybe we could say that there is no other *point* of view, since this

way that may be walked is the *third*, where the mortals stray, whereas the second and false way, which can neither be said nor thought, is only a fictitious way, since it contains that which the way of the mortals would really be like if it were to be formulated as an explicit doctrine. This however never occurs, since the mortals are characterized as not having to undergo the decision (*elenchos, krisis*) that necessitates a clear separation between the ways; cf. Held, *op. cit.*, 476 ff; their privilege, we could say, is that they can remain *suspended* in the separation, *postpone* their decision.

17. In his essay on the Anaximander fragment, "Der Spruch des Anaximander," Heidegger describes a condition analogous to the one indicated here, and significantly enough his reconstruction also oscillates between the active and the passive mode—thinking is receiving, but through this it is also a creating: "Thinking says the dictate (*Diktat*) of the truth of being. [Heidegger's marginal note adds: "i.e., thinking is responding (*Ent-sagen*)"]. Thought is the original *dictate*. Thought is originary poetry (*Urdichtung*), preceding all poesy (*Poesie*), but also the poetic (*das Dichterische*) in art, in so far as it is set to work in the domain of language." *Holzwege, Gesamtausgabe* 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1988), 328. Anaximander receives a "dictate," he re-ponds to the truth of being in a way strikingly similar to the youth in the Poem.

very concept implies mortality and finitude), will be situated outside of the way, and there is no unambiguous doctrine or content to be extracted from the unfolding of the story. Truth *as such* may indeed be one, unshakable, timeless, permanent, etc., this “as such” is only accessible to us in terms of a way and a trajectory, even though here it is set beyond the linearity of intra-worldly time. In this sense, narration must be understood as essential to the doctrinal content, and it is only when the Poem is unfolded as a diegesis, as a *circle of signs*,<sup>18</sup> that we can understand the nature and presencing of being. If this is a performative contradiction, it is indeed a contradiction that belongs to the relation between *aletheia* and *doxa*, between true and appearance. And when we proceed to what seems to be the heart of the Poem, the place where the Goddess appears to speak directly of the truth, of *eon* and *aletheia*, we will see the extent to which this tension is brought to its culmination: the unshakeable and well-rounded heart of truth will be divided, split, and poised against itself, and only thus can it allow for the configuration of mortals, language, and world to emerge.

### *III. The way of truth.*

The large fragment VIII contains the most explicit presentation of the way of truth. But, we should note, this is also when the Goddess presents her teaching as a *way*, and what we encounter are signs, “many signs,” in Parmenides’ concrete diction placed “on” (*epi*) the way, like signposts (*taute d’epi semat’easi polla mal’*, VIII 2-3). All of the determina-

18. Perhaps this is how we should read fragment V: to come back (*palin*) to the starting point indicates that the signs form a circle, a path turning back on itself (*palintropos*, VI 9), which we can never escape, only relate to in a naive or reflected way. In the same sense, truth is determined as well-rounded (*eukykleos*, I 29), not because it would be circular in any natural spatial sense, but since the circle and the sphere for the Greeks is that which returns to itself, palintropically, and in this way is something completed (*teletesmenon*, 42).

tions of being provided by the Goddess are in fact nothing but signs placed along this way, mediated determinations proposed as a way to bridge the gap separating the Goddess from the mortal thinker. As Eugen Fink notes, these signs function as “ontological analogies”<sup>19</sup> and not as transcendentals, i.e., they cannot be read as *direct* determinations of being. We have to pass through the circle of signs in order to understand the nature of truth and of being, we have to *read through* the signs, but without fooling ourselves into believing that their mediated character could be overcome. As we shall see, the signs are both negative and positive: they negate natural or “ontic” determinations while pointing in *the direction of* that which belongs to being itself.

Which, then, are these analogical determinations? Without misreading the series as an architectonically structured system, or as a chain of arguments in a strict sense, we can discern four groups of signs,<sup>20</sup> all of which are introduced in abbreviated form in VIII, 3-4, and then explicated step by step:

1. *The temporal dimension* (5-21): being is without beginning (*ageneton*), and thus imperishable (*anoletron*). The temporal aspects cannot be applied to being, since it is “all together” (*syneches*) in a “now” (*nyn*) that knows of neither beginning nor change, since it is situated beyond

19. Fink, *op. cit.*, 61

20. This division is based on Held, *op. cit.*, 519 ff. These groups are connected, not in the sense that they would form premises and conclusions within a more or less deductive order, but in the sense that they circle around *eon* as that which is common to them all: “Every SEMA says too little and too much: too much, since it first understood on the basis of things, even though it denies them; too little, since it only a finite determination of the infinite.” (Fink, *op. cit.*, 61); “[W]hen we characterize the One with a plurality of signposts, this plurality is in fact inadequate to the singularity of this one ‘it is’; because this is not a manifold, but [...] a pure simplicity (*schlichte Einfachheit*)” (Held, *op. cit.*, p. 521). The groups of signs constitute varying forms of access or perspectives, and never “objective” predicates.

the normal temporal flow within which things arise and perish. Coming-to-be, passing away, and change over time all imply a moment of “non-being,” and therefore they cannot be applicable to being.

2. *The spatial dimension* (22-25): being is not “divided” (*diaireton*) “since it is all the same” (*epei pan estin homoion*) and does not consist of several parts, or of a more or a less. This second group of signs displays the same negative characteristics: being does not consist of parts, it is a “whole,” which however should not be understood in spatial terms, in the same way that the now is something temporal that nevertheless is removed from the ordinary conception of time as a succession of before and after. In this way the positive and the negative sign refer to each other, they are always imbricated, which means that we always have to start from the intra-worldly aspect as *that which is to be negated* in order to ascend toward the positive. The question will be whether we have to understand being in its time- and spacelessness as the result of a privation, or if this “not to be in...” (space and time) has a positive significance, namely as that which by not being *in*, in fact “gives” space and time as the regions of the intra-worldly.

3. *The kinetic dimension* (26-30): being is unshakeable (*atremes*). This third group can most easily be understood as a corollary to 1 and 2; since there is neither before nor after, and no parts that exist “in” space, no movement can occur, and being remains a plenitude, wholly in itself (*en tauto menon*), resting in its own (t)-autology. The a-kinetic is, once again, both an absence (privation) of natural movement and a positive characteristic in the sense of a *stillness* and an *abiding* beyond the opposition rest-motion. This abiding is however further complicated by the fact that it lies “within the limits of mighty chains” (*megalon en peirasi desmon*), as is guaranteed by Necessity (30) and Fate (37), instances who in this context appear as an outside of being, as if the plenitude could be subjected to external principles. Is this just a mythical figure, a trace of a religious personification, or is it rather something which indicates the inscrutability of being, its inaccessibility to a mortal thought that here comes up against an impenetrable Law, a limit of comprehension? With this question, we have already moved into the fourth and last group of signs:

4. *The dimension of totality* (31-49): being is without end (*ateleuteton*),

but in another way also complete (*telelesmenon*). This is how we should grasp the image of being as a “well-rounded sphere” (*eukyklou sphaïres*, 43); just as Plato in *Timaeus* understands the sphere or the ball as an image for the world in its totality,<sup>21</sup> the all-comprehending space which includes all Heres and Theres, the Parmenidean sphere is a figure for that which remains closed in upon itself so as to know no lack. Thus encircled within the totality, tied by mighty bonds, we have to think its exterior in the form of Dike, Ananke, Moira: Justice, Necessity, Fate, those three forces that bind us to truth as the well-rounded totality. Thought is nothing other than being, it is the (t)auto-logical reception (*noein*) of the “it is,” and thus it is chained in the same way as being. This Parmenides states in the beginning of the fourth group of signs: “The same is to think and the thought that it is. Because not without being, in which it is said, will you find thought (*tauton d’esti noein te kai houneken esti noema ou gar aneu tou eontos, en ho pephatismenon estin, heureseis to noein*)” (34-6). This binding is also what is signified by the sixth fragment’s claim that it is necessary to think and say that being is (*chre to legein te noein t’eon emmenai*); a necessity which seems to come from without, given as it is by Ananke, but that, fully comprehended, proves to reside in the totality’s (t)auto-logy that binds being and thought together. The binding, the bond (*desmos*), extends between being and its reflection in the act of receiving as thinking as perceiving.

Now, what is decisive here is that all of these characteristics are understood as signs scattered by the Goddess on the thinker’s path, as analogies we use in order to understand being. The movement between privation and positivity shows us that to understand the signs as identical to what is signified always means to understand being on the basis of *one* of the beings which are “in” the world, and thus to miss its essential dimension. The analogy must in this sense function

21. “Now for that Living Creature which is designed to embrace within itself all living creatures the fitting shape (schema) will be that which comprises within itself all the shapes that are; wherefore he wrought it into a round, into the shape of a sphere (sphaïroëides).” *Timaeus*, 33 b.

as a bridge, a meta-phorical transfer that allows the tension between privation (*away from...*) and positivity to remain. Later we will see to what extent language as such is entirely caught up in this analogical tension, which means that the signs at their highest point must seek to abolish themselves, the analogy must in a negative way present its own insufficiency, and language—which is never anything but signs, *semata*, scattered on a path—must point ahead to what it cannot say. The double nature of the bond appears in this, and the truth of appearance also proves to be the way in which the true shines through the fabric of the phenomenon.

#### *IV. The way of seeming.*

If truth can only show itself in the light of an analogy, what, then, are we to say of its opposite, mere seeming or opinion (*doxa*)? The second part of the Poem begins in VIII 50, where the reliable speech (*piston logon*) of the Goddess is interrupted and gives way to a “deceitful order” (*kosmon apatelon*). But wherein lies the deceitfulness? We have already seen that Hermann Diels, who provided the first modern edition of the text, believes the second part to be an unnecessary hypothesis, or at best a misguided parody of a doctrine that Parmenides rejects as wholly false. This is however contradicted by the obvious fact that the Goddess herself still presides. Another and more sophisticated reading can be found in Karl Reinhardt, who claims that the Goddess rather says the truth *about* the false: “The false does not reside in her teachings, but in what they are about: she communicates the truth about an illusion, how it came about and why this was necessary [...] She relates an original event, as it were, a kind of Fall of knowledge from which all other errors in our ideas necessarily followed.”<sup>22</sup> Even if Reinhardt’s reading constitutes progress compared with Diels, it does not fit too well with the text, which moves on without reservations to

22. Karl Reinhardt, *Parmenides und die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1959 [1916]), 25 ff.

state an explicit cosmogony, without the Goddess's speech shifting in tonality. Would it not be possible to find another articulation of the two parts, which would show both to be necessary, and allow us to understand how appearance is necessarily connected to essence?

As Eugen Fink has noted, a possible solution to the problem can be found a couple of lines *before* the Goddess discontinues her reliable speech (which renders any interpretation like Diels's even less plausible), in VIII 38, in the midst of the exposition of what we referred to above as the signs of totality: everything the mortals say will be names (*onoma*), "instituted by them in the belief that it is true (*hossa brotoi kathento pepoithontes einai alethe*)," signs that detach themselves from and come to stand in opposition to being as stillness and unity.<sup>23</sup> But what, then, is a *name*? And why would this other, merely apparent and cosmogonic way of the Poem revolve around a reflection on the essence of naming and of language?

The cosmogony proposed further on in the Poem speaks of two forms, light and night, and of how singular things are formed by the mixing of these forms, which generates a world or a "probable order" (*diakosmon eoikota*, 8, 60). The mortals, Parmenides suggests, "instigated the belief, that two forms should be named—one of which should not, and in this they err" (*morphas gar kathetento dyo gnomas onomazein*,

23. Fink, 68 ff. A similar explanation can be found in Held, 546 ff. Both Fink and Held refer to the necessity of Schein in Kant's Transcendental Dialectic, even though Schein here has the opposite significance: the Kantian Schein appears when we believe ourselves to be able to both think and perceive totality, and to transcend finitude; Parmenides' doxa appears when we descend below the totality and remain caught within the finite. Kant's Dialectic rests on a gap between intuition and thinking that is overcome too soon (the infinite can and should be thought, but cannot be given in intuition), whereas Parmenides' Schein comes from a premature split between thinking and being that closes off the horizon of thought; nevertheless, both of them are necessary illusions, and simply opposing would perhaps be the most seductive and illusory of illusions.



*ton mian ou chreon estin, en ho peplanemenoi eisin*, 53-54). Does Parmenides really mean that only one of the forms, for instance light, ought to be named, and does he thereby ascribe priority to the element of light as more essentially related to the appearing of truth? The line is difficult to interpret, and possibly formulated in a misleading way.<sup>24</sup> In fact, appearance *has* to separate two forms that it then endows with “signs” through the act of naming; what’s essential about *doxa* is that it implies naming, and thus the diacritical force of the sign. We should not immediately associate this theory of naming with the influential model that was later put forth in Augustine’s *Confessions*, i.e., a psychological association between pre-existing objects and names, but neither should we see it as any kind of conventionalism, as in the Sophistic distinction between *physis* and *nomos*. Parmenides’ naming is the primordial and inevitable way in which language articulates and opens a world on the basis of mortality and finitude. Language does not communicate subjective states, and *doxa* should thus not be understood as “subjectivism” or “psychologism,” but as the natural tendency of language to hide and reveal its own possibility in the act of speaking, to presuppose and render invisible its relation to *eon* and *aletheia*, which it can neither say nor name, since all saying is a constitutive finitude. Language obscures its relation to being and truth by always presupposing it as an inner and hidden relation to in- or non-finity, a “binding” that it itself cannot thematize. We always and necessarily speak of *eon* as if it were a name of “some-thing,” and yet it lies beyond the horizon of thingness, beyond all horizons (since every horizon derives from a *horizo*, limiting and encircling), although without being some other being than those beings that presence and appear in everyday

24. Cf. Held: “The strophe does not only give rise to misunderstanding in the different translations, but also in the Greek original [...] One could understand it in the following way—and many interpreters have done so for a long time—that the fault of *doxa* would be that it assumes one form too many, namely non-presence [i.e., night]. This can not be Parmenides’ view.” (552)

life.

Language is the dimension through which understanding of being becomes possible for us, and yet it will always obliterate and occult this origin, so that *eon* will appear as a name among others. In and through language *aletheia* appears as *doxa*, although not as something false or untrue in the sense of not being adjusted to facts, or of not being representationally “correct,” but as a necessary *seeming* (*dokein*). The differentiating principle that the Goddess first locates in the difference between light and darkness, this diacritical force of language in the fullest sense of the word, is its essence as essencing, as coming to presence.<sup>25</sup> This initial force of differentiation will in turn become the ground of all other differences in the world, down to the sexual difference and the power of *eros* (as in fragment XIII and XVIII).

The *telos* of language is to erase itself in the light of phenomenality, the essence of the sign is to be sublated into the signified. And yet this whole semiotic profusion, this richly disseminated way, shows that we always have to *start* in the sign, in the world and its occultation. In the phenomenal and doxic order there will never be anything but signs—language, sign, and world are coextensive, and thus we should not interpret *doxa* as subjectivism or psychologism, but precisely as the necessary seeming that belong to the things themselves.

Another consequence of this, one that is just as paradoxical for Parmenides, would be that the first part of the Poem can be understood only *on the basis of the second*. What the Goddess scatters is nothing but signs, *semata* that are in the process of transcending their basis in the name. We have seen how the ontological analogies are constructed as a series of negations, but this also means that they operate as expansions or extensions of concepts, wresting them out of the sphere of

25. I use the word “essencing” as a translation of Heidegger’s *Wesen*, which does not denote a static *quidditas* or a generality subsuming particulars, but the movement of coming to presence and disclosure. Heidegger treats this theme in many places, cf. for instance “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” (1930), in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe* 9.

ordinary experience and everyday language. These sign-concepts or concept-signs are uniquely singular, not in the sense of being opposed to the plural or the universal, but in a more enigmatic way. Perhaps Parmenides was the first to think what Hegel at the other end of the history of metaphysics will call the “speculative proposition,” which models itself on the normal sentence with its difference between subject and predicate, but whose further explication will dissolve and even “destroy” and “annihilate” its starting point in the movement of reflection-into-itself.<sup>26</sup> The concepts of thought have to be taken from *doxa*, but in the next step they must transcend this everyday basis, and then finally overcome themselves in a movement towards *eon* that still will remain necessarily incomplete and unfulfilled. Mortal thinking seeks *eon* through the plurality of *semata*, it begins in *doxa* and returns to it, but it comes back in a transformed way. Parmenides does not tell us that this world is nothing, a mere vacuous seeming that ought to be

26. Singular words, Hegel says in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, contain in their passing-over into the form of sentences a becoming-other (sec. 20), which he illustrates with propositions on God: they indeed posit the absolute as a subject, but not as the movement of a reflection-into-itself. In such a proposition the subject is understood as a *point* to which the predicates are affixed, but the movement must also be understood as pertaining to the point itself (sec. 23). In the final instance (sec. 61) the subject-predicate structure of the judgment is “destroyed” (*zerstört*) by the speculative proposition, which assumes the task of presenting the movement as coming from the subject itself. This conflict between propositional form and conceptual unity we find, Hegel suggests, already in the relation between metrics and accent in poetic rhythm, where “rhythm is the result of the hovering middle (*schwebende Mitte*) and reconciliation of both.” In the same way there is a harmony between subject and predicate in the philosophical proposition, which “annihilates” (*vernichtet*) the difference in form in the normal proposition. Cf. *Phänomenologie des Geistes, Werke*, ed. Moldenhauer and Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 3, 20, 27, 59.

discarded, but shows us how the presencing of things itself, the movement of disclosure, cannot but hide itself in own presentation. The erring of the sign is infinite and yet not without its palintropic logic that folds the two paths together and holds them apart in a tension that gives movement to mortal thought.

At the same time, the Poem also opens onto the first (in the order of narration) path, the anticipation of infinite knowledge in the form of the Goddess, however unattainable this may be for mortal thought. It remains doubtful—if such a question at all makes sense, which is by no means certain—whether the Goddess views the signs *as* signs, the ways *as* ways? As a finite configuration of signs that still presents the interweaving of a godlike and a mortal speech, the Poem cannot say anything about this, it can only indicate it through its own structure, thus dividing and separating the sign from itself. The way up and the way down loop around each other, truth and seeming are the same but not identical.

The signs are at once privative, “on the way to...,” and conceived on the basis of infinity as the trans-semiotic. The *krisis* between the two ways opened by the Poem becomes infinite, just as the movement of interpretation that it opens up. The difference between the *doxa* situated on the first and obscure way, and the light of *aletheia* on the second, is impossible to determine once and for all. The sign is always on its way to *Aufhebung* in truth, and yet we always have to *remain* within its grasp, gazing in the double direction of the palintrope, double-headed: *dikranoi*.





# In regione dissimilitudinis

## Time and Subjectivity in Augustine's *Confessions*

*in tempora dissilui*

### *I. The ego between finitude and infinity*

Within traditional history of philosophy, the Patristic moment occupies an important and yet often overlooked position in what could be called the “history of subjectivity”: the history of those ways in which man has constituted himself as subject and object, explicated his relation to himself, and opened up a space of self-reflection in a “truth game.” It is from this perspective that Foucault talks of a “hermeneutics of the self” that would not relate to that which is “true or false in knowledge, but to an analysis of those ‘truth games,’ the games with the true and the false in which being is constituted historically as experience, i.e., as something that can and ought to be thought.”<sup>1</sup> Such a conception of a history of truth in some respects overlaps Heidegger’s

1. *Histoire de la sexualité 2: Usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 12 f. For a comparison between Foucault and Heidegger, and a discussion of interiority as a kind of “folding,” cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986). Since the first publication of this essay (1993) the list of published works by and on Foucault dealing with the process of subjectification and individuation has grown tremendously; here it may suffice to mention his lecture series from Collège de France, 1981-82, *Herméneutique du sujet* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001). For more on this theme, see “Foucault and the Genealogy of Modern Architecture,” below.

view of the history of metaphysics as a gradual transformation of the different horizons within which beings can be given in experience. In both views, truth no longer means the correlation between mental representations or propositions and states of affairs, but a pre-objective and pre-subjective “openness” for all types of subject and object positions, that which Heidegger names *aletheia*, the clearing in which beings can be encountered. But unlike Heidegger’s archaeology of thought, which unearths those decisive philosophical moments in the history of metaphysics where beings as such are given in new ways, the perspective opened up by Foucault’s rereading of the *dispositifs* of sexuality and his analyses of processes of “subjectification” and “technologies of the self” allow other and more mundane practices than the strictly philosophical ones to play a constitutive role, and they open up a more stratified understanding of the subject and the domains of truth in which the subject comes to relate to itself.

Such a relation to the self exceeds the division between the theoretical and the practical, the philosophical and the non-philosophical, or perhaps we could say that it probes a different, more affective and corporeal dimension, a different entanglement of *philein* and *sophia* that allows *eros* to unfold in all of its dimension—all of which in fact amounts to a return, beyond the stylized “Platonism” of traditional historiography (to which Heidegger succumbs to a surprising extent), to Plato’s multifaceted engagement with concrete life. In this it also circumvents, or rather inscribes, the modern Cartesian attempt to locate the *cogito* as the universal ground of knowledge. In fact, the Cartesian project can in this sense be seen as a (no doubt self-conscious) radical and audacious attempt to *narrow* the space of questioning, and to reduce the complexity of experience to the purified language of a *mathesis universalis* assumed to be the only discourse of pure reason. The question of how we should read the genealogy of subjectivity, either on the basis of a history that understands the subject as determined by the unfolding of the history of metaphysics, or as formed through certain technologies, could of course simply be dismissed as a category mistake: the first option is grounded in ontology or transcendental philosophy, the second in empirical research on the historical formation of selfhood. But today, after Nietzsche and everything that



has been proposed in his name (philologically warranted or not), this division is far from clear, and a thinking of the subject that attempts to move beyond certain petrified positions seems necessary.<sup>2</sup>

This essay will propose to enter this discussion by way of a limited analysis of a key moment in such a genealogical history of the subject. It has often been noted that Augustine in certain ways already makes use of the Cartesian method in the “I doubt” (*dubito*) that he formulates, and which traverses his *Confessions* as one of its profound leitmotifs. While this might to some extent be true, there are also massive and undeniable differences between them that need to be acknowledged. In Augustine the *dubito* is never transformed into the autono-

2. A paradigmatic case of how this difference is played out in the writing of the history of philosophy would be the dispute between Derrida and Foucault on how to read the Cartesian *cogito*: for Foucault it is part of a set or practices of the self in which philosophy has no particular privilege, for Derrida it retains a hyperbolic and excessive value outside of all specific determinations, even those imposed by Descartes himself. In a certain way, Derrida wants to save not only a certain transcendence but also the institutional authority of philosophy, whereas Foucault sees the processes of truth-formation as immanent institutional procedures, and if there is a transcendence or an outside, it does not belong to philosophy but to practice. This exchange began with Derrida’s 1961 essay on “Cogito and the History of Madness,” it was continued in Foucault’s retort in 1971, “**Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu,**” and concluded with Derrida’s lecture from 1991, “To Do Justice to Freud: The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis,” in Arnold I. Davidson (ed.): *Foucault and His Interlocutors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a discussion of this exchange, which is highly complex and overdetermined, and engages many of the key motifs of both thinkers, cf. Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida: The Other side of Reason* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).; for a discussion of the reading of Descartes, from the point of view of Descartes scholarship, cf. Jean-Marie Beyssade, *Descartes au fil de l’ordre* (Paris: PUF, 2001), 13-48.

mous certitude of a *cogito*, it never becomes the first link in a deductive chain of proofs, and it does not transgress time by achieving a full self-possession, but rather unfolds as a constant process of reflection and introspection that can only overcome time by radically *dethroning* the ego from its alleged position of mastery. But, and this is the thread that will link these seemingly distant historical moments, and whose interlacings I would like to follow just a little bit, this experience of a *loss* of mastery, of the insistence of *an other* within the same, curiously enough *also* belongs to the “truth game” of the Cartesian—and later Husserlian—*cogito*, although relegated to what seems like a secondary position. This does not amount to saying that Augustine was *already* a Cartesian, or that Descartes (and Husserl) simply *remained* within the space opened up by Augustine, but that the “experience” of a certain conflicted relation to the self can be understood as a history with a *longue durée*. Foucault picks up this expression from the historian Fernand Braudel in order to indicate the long memory inherent in subjectification, the fact that in spite of all drastic shifts in knowledges and power relations there is still, somewhere inside us, a Greek, a Roman, an early Christian, etc. Although his reference here is to the experience and problematization of “sex,” transferring this idea back into philosophy might prove useful, since it shows how such a memory, such a matrix or “image” of thought, has its profound effects on the metaphysical positions that seem far removed from such concerns. Instead of the alternative between philosophy as an autonomous quest for truth and as an effect of relations of power, maybe we should perceive the history of metaphysics as a *stratification*, a series of superimposed semi-transparent layers that will allow the underlying sheets to become visible in time as the surface configuration is changed. Perhaps we should see it in the sense of a memory that must always be reconsidered, an archive constantly being rewritten, rather than as a linear unfolding of a series of “steps” approaching a predetermined end, the unfolding of subjectivity as the will to power or technology as the fulfillment of metaphysics as planetary domination. That such a conception contradicts a certain Heideggerian *doxa* is obvious; whether it also remains irreconcilable with Heidegger’s deeper motifs seems more like an issue for thought, as part of *das Zu-Denkende*

as such, than a question which should be settled by a simple yes or no, which in fact would amount to no more than the creation a new *doxa*.

Such a process of reflective subjectification, or rather a teleologically structured protocol of the experiences undergone, is what is presented in Augustine's *Confessions*, where an ego gradually comes to appear for itself and for us as a completed portrait. It is important to note that this art of the portrait is subjected to important strictures, but this too is an aspect that connects the church father to Descartes. Augustine's way back to, into, himself, is constantly understood in terms of the soul's way to God and as a model to be imitated, just as the Cartesian ego is the bearer of a universal structure of reason.<sup>3</sup> The ego is the place of

3. When Augustine in the *Retractationes* (II, VI, 1) looks back on the *Confessions*, he proposes that they aimed to praise God and to "transport to Him human affects and intellect" (*atque in eum excitare humanum intellectum et affectum*). This, he continues, is "what they produced in me when I wrote them, and what they produce in me when I read them" (*hoc in me egerunt cum scribentur, et agunt cum leguntur*). The text is a *dispositif*, that is supposed to produce (*ago*) certain effects, first in the writer and then in the reader. "I know that they have pleased and still please many brothers," Augustine concludes. The narrative structure in Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* and his *Méditations de prima philosophia*, which puts a series of different "I's" into play, attempts to bring about a similar conversion, and in this respect, Descartes' disclaimer at the beginning of the *Discours* that the text is only a recollection of a personal trajectory and not meant to be imitated by anyone else, must be understood as a subterfuge in order to avoid censorship. For a discussion of Descartes' narratives, see Jonathan Rée, *Philosophical Tales* (New York: Methuen, 1987). The use of the title "Meditationes" would seem to point to a religious and mystical background, and several such motifs do in fact surface in the text; for a discussion of the meditations as a practice intended to transform the self, see L. Aryeh Kosman, "The Naïve Narrator: Meditation in Descartes' Meditations," in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.): *Essays on Descartes' Meditations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

a certain *substitution* that will be at work on different levels, as we will see, and its function is just as much to constitute a paradigm for the individual sinner's path to salvation as it is to give us access to a unique and singular subjectivity. The I presented is indeed another, but every other is also a version of such a possible I, and the *Confessions* is a technology of the self that can be used in order to effect this substitution.

This paradigmatic function of the ego is one fundamental difference between Augustine's sensibility and that of the modern autobiographical writer, who inevitably bears the traces of Montaigne and Rousseau, where the ego has value as a singularity, with a contingent history, a unique destiny, and a set of passions and desires that will always render any ultimate clarity impossible. The Augustinian ego is a deliberate construction within a theological and philosophical system, and all the incidents related in the text are carefully calculated moments in the drama of conversion. Further on we will come back to the structure of conversion, the *conversio* or *epistrophe*, that retrieves important aspects of the "turning around" (*periagoge*) in the Platonic myth of the cave, but above all picks up themes from Plotinus, whose metaphysics constitutes the model for Augustine. In the *Enneads*, the path of the soul leads through a turning (*epistrophe*) back to the One, although this turn for Plotinus still remains somewhat obscure, since the concept of individual freedom tends to disappear—the movement is already prefigured on the supersensible level where the hypostases are understood as reflections, and the noetic return is always already effected in the circular structure of "eternity," the *aion* that will be the horizon against which worldly *chronos* must be understood.<sup>4</sup> For Augustine the

4. Cf. Heinz Robert Schlette's comments in *Das Eine und das Andere. Studien zur Problematik des Negativen in der Metaphysik Plotins* (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1966), chap. 5. Augustine's idea of evil (*malum*) adds an ethical and existential dimension to Plotinus' determination of matter as *kakon*, and evil will not just be understood as a *privation*, but as a *positive* drifting away from the good. The Augustinian question "whence evil" (*unde malum*) in this way transforms its Plotinian counterpart *Pothen ta*

question of the individual act will become decisive, although it will at once localize and delocalize the ego in a series of substitutions—in the act of conversion, as the ultimate form of the ego’s attempt to become itself, the subject of enunciation will be that of an (the) Other.

In the terminology developed in the Book XI of the Confessions we could say that the “intention” and “distention” of the soul (*intentio* and *distentio animi*) pass over into each other, both on the level of the logic of the narrative, and in the experience of the ego. In fact it is only here, after the completion of the “story” in the proper sense, that a more profound meditation on the nature of time will be able to comprehend the splitting and doubling that characterize the figure of conversion, and that the fracture of time and ego will be superseded. This has led many to perceive the first nine books as a completed unity, although there remains something deeply unsatisfying in dividing the book into two independent halves, and the laconic remark by one commentator, “Augustine composes badly,” needs to be qualified.<sup>5</sup> Somehow it seems necessary to locate an overarching

*kaka* (*Enn.* I, 8) from an ontological inquiry to an individual decision, although this is still expressed in a Neo-Platonic vocabulary.

5. “Augustin compose mal.” Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: de Brocard, 1938), 61. In the *Retractationes* (II, VI, 1) Augustine speaks about the “thirteen books of his Confessions,” and suggests that they “from the first to the tenth deal with me (*A primo usque ad decimum de me scripti sunt*); the three following with Holy Scripture, on the basis of what is written: ‘In the beginning, God made heaven and earth,’ up to his rest on the Sabbath.” But we should not understand this “de me scripti” as autobiographical in the modern sense: the primordial *You* constantly addressed in the text, the one “in the face of which” (*coram*) is its presented, is not the reader but *God*, the “in front of you, my God” (*coram te deus meus*) precedes all worldly addressees. The verb *confiteor* thus has less the sense of admitting something, betraying a private secret, and more means making present, declaring, and manifesting. And even this form of confession is paradoxical, given God’s

compositional structure, and to see how the two parts in fact presuppose and reinforce each other. A decisive moment in the structure of the work is when we, after the nine books accounting for Augustine's life up to his conversion and his mother's death, encounter the author as he is in the moment of writing, indexing him to the present: "But as to what I am now, at this very time that I make my confession (*ecce in ipso tempore confessionum meum*), many men wish to know about this, both men who have known me and others who have not known me" (X, 3, 4). After this follows the three last books containing the discussion of the nature of time, of the complex form-matter, and finally of creation, in the form of an extended meditation on the introduction in *Genesis*. This has led some commentators to assume that the work has a tripartite structure: memory (*memoria*), apprehension in the present (*contuitus*), and expectation (*expectatio*).<sup>6</sup> Even if this implies a considerable leveling of the structure (it would for instance be hard to subsume the narrative complexity of the first nine books solely under the rubric "memoria"), it still brings out the central position occupied by the analysis of experience of time in Book XI, and its close relation to the ego, since it is in this nexus that the unity of the three "tempo-

omniscience—for, as Augustine notes in Book X, "Lord, before whose eyes the abyss of man's conscience lies naked, what thing within me could be hidden from you, even if I would not confess it to you." (*The Confessions*, transl. John K. Ryan [New York: Doubleday, 1966], X, 2, 2. All further citations from this edition). In this sense the first nine books constitute the story of an incomplete life, an existence in search of a foundation that can only be produced by the exegesis and interpretation of the Scripture. Exegesis however presupposes conversion, and in this sense the prolonged commentary on *Genesis* and the *Verbum* that begins in book XI and extends to the end *repeats*, in an almost Heideggerian sense, the earlier books and provide them with a philosophical and theological grounding.

6. So, for instance Jean-Marie Leblond, *Les conversions de saint Augustin* (Paris: Aubier, 1950).

ral ecstasies” (to use Heidegger’s term) is to be established. If we are to articulate this structural division with the help of Plotinus’ schema falling-turning around-returning (*exitus-conversio-reditus* in Augustine’s terminology), then this would mean that the existential and as it were “phenomenological” dimension that was unfolded in Book I-IX in terms of an *ordo cognoscendi* would first reach its fulfillment when it is reintegrated in the theological dimension, i.e., creation as an *ordo essendi*, and the structure of the book would be circular. For our purpose here it may suffice to point out that in this interpretation as well the meditations on time in Book XI will form the core of the book, since it is here that the juncture between subjective finitude and the structural infinity of God will be established.<sup>7</sup>

The temporal articulation of the ego, and the bridge that it establishes between finitude and infinity, which in its turn forms the “hinge” of the text, is in fact inseparable from a whole complex that will remain a substructure of the whole of philosophy, namely the encounter between Christianity and Greek thought, and the inscription and constitution of an ego in the new truth game established in a “Christian metaphysics.”<sup>8</sup> The transformation of Word and Form to flesh and body retrieves the Platonic model for the “participation” of the thing in its form and the Form’s “being with” the thing (*methexis* and *parousia*), but it also introduces a wholly new aspect. The decisive encounter between infinity and finitude now takes place in a specifically human form, first in Christ and then secondly in each of us, and in this sense the exemplary being is no longer the thing or the third-person entity, but the *person*, and the stage is set for the transformation of ontology to

7. These summary remarks do of course not suffice to survey the debate on the unity of the text; for further bibliographical remarks, cf. Aimé Solignac’s introduction in *Les Confessions, Bibliothèque Augustinienne* vol XIV (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962).
8. For the conception of a “Christian metaphysics” in relation to the Greek tradition, cf. Claude Tresmontant, *La métaphysique du christianisme et la naissance de la philosophie chrétienne* (Paris: Seuil, 1961).

an existential drama in the form of subjective experience. Henceforth the debate over Christ's nature will provide the model for all subsequent split subjects: the Cartesian individual subject divided between a thinking soul and an extended body, although these two, as Descartes says, are "coniunctum et quasi permixtum," the Kantian ego attempting to straddle the gap between a phenomenal I subjected to the flux of time that constantly lets the active part escape our grasp ("the paradox of inner sense") and a noumenal "person" whose supersensible determination is to relate to the Law, and finally and most problematically, the Husserlian subject, a pure transcendental subjectivity that incarnates itself in the act of a "mundanizing self-apperception" (*verweltlichende Selbstapperzeption*), which as it were "apperceives" itself in the psycho-physical human form that constantly reflects its transcendental origin in a strange parallelism, where the two sides are at once wholly separated and infinitely close, like the two sides of a sheet of paper.<sup>9</sup>

9. Given that all positive references to a divine sphere are explicitly evacuated from Husserl's meditations, the allusions to the immortality of the transcendental subject can on the one hand be seen as a slightly bewildering and almost "pre-critical" rest of theology in phenomenology, on the other hand as the full realization of a metaphysics of Life and the Living Present, which has to supersede individual finitude in order to achieve itself; cf. on this point the final section in Jacques Derrida, *L'origine de la géométrie de Husserl* (Paris: PUF, 1962). For a useful overview of Husserl's texts with respects to theology, see Angela Ales Bello, Husserl. *Sul problema di Dio* (Rome: Edizioni Studium, 1985). It is as if St. John's Logos that turns into flesh, and the structure of reflection that forms the Logos as a self-relation, would form the backdrop for Husserl: the transcendental subject is already a living body (*Leib*) before it is reflected in itself as an external and physical body (*Körper*). Concerning the metaphysical problems of incarnation, cf. Paul Galtier, *L'Unité de Christ: Être... Personne... Conscience* (Paris: Vrin, 1938); on Augustine's different attitudes to the problem, see Etienne Gilson, *Philosophie et Incarnation chez saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 1947) och Robert J O'Connell,



Even though we, from Descartes to Husserl, become gradually more and more removed from a Christian, theological, and creationist context, the position of the problem somehow remains intact: a division between finitude and infinity opened up inside the subjective domain itself, which constantly calls forth new and yet strangely similar answers to the question of what it means to have two natures woven together in a form that is at once caught in space, in nature, and among things, and yet retains a capacity for going beyond, for transcendence, or for “escaping” (*échappement*), as Merleau-Ponty will say in an expression that bears more than a trace of its Neo-Platonic origin.

Augustine was perhaps the first to face these problems in their full scope, and the *Confessions* is the first text to articulate them on a theoretical as well as personal level. As Paul Ricoeur notes, narration can be understood as an existential solution to this metaphysical crisis, or more precisely as a poetic working through of it,<sup>10</sup> just like the Aristotelian *katharsis*, where the oppositions remain, although transposed

*St. Augustine's Early Theory of Man* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968). A recent work surveying theories of incarnation from early Christianity to Merleau-Ponty, and that in many ways intersects with my proposals here, although unfortunately appearing too late to be taken into account here, is Ola Sigurdson, *Himmelska kroppar: inkarnation, blick, kroppslighet* (Gothenburg: Daidalos, 2006)..

10. Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit I, L'intrigue et le récit historique* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 24. Ricoeur's profound and precise analysis of the structure of temporality in Augustine and Aristotle remains a constant reference in the third section below. It should be noted that Ricoeur's "narrative" solution encounters a certain limit, and that it is forced to reintroduce a discussion of Aristotle's mathematical and physical analysis of time from the *Physics* in the third volume of the book, even though it belongs to those things that the first volume, in its exclusive focus on the *Poetics*, claimed to be able to exclude. (And is it simply circumstantial that the analysis of the *Confessions* in terms of repetition, promised in volume I, 50, note 1, disappears from the third volume?)

to another level—even though the Augustinian conversion, the *epistrophic* move, in the end lays claim to a certitude that overcomes the *catastrophic* dimension in the *peripeteia* of tragedy, and does so in the terms of salvation.

## II. *The present of conversion*

The first nine Books provide us with an outward description of the events in Augustine's life, leading up to the moment of his conversion to Christianity. We follow him from the first days in Thagaste to his studies in Cairo. We get a vivid picture of his intellectual and emotional battles with the Manicheans, then we meet him during his sojourn in Rome in the vain hope of an academic career, where after a long period of bad health and financial distress he is forced to accept a temporary position in Milan. This is where he first studies the Neo-Platonists at greater depth, and he also enters into contact with the charismatic bishop Ambrosius who directs his attention to the Bible. And then finally, an evening in the year 386 in his Milanese garden, the decisive conversion occurs that gives perspective and a retrospective sense to his earlier errant life. The scene is famous and has been commented upon frequently, and here I would just like to highlight a particular detail bearing on its temporal structure, one that constitutes precisely that point of articulation we referred to earlier.

The passage can be found in Book VIII, and it consists of only one page. And yet it is here that the whole narrative structure comes to fulfill its latent promise, much more than in the description of the death of Augustine's mother, "the ecstasy in Ostia" of Book IX, which in spite of its elevated lyricisms only serves as a confirmation of what has been achieved. The scene of the conversion is preceded by a discussion of the nature of the will, and already here the problems that will form the substructure of the scene become visible. Augustine fights with himself, and this interior battle is concentrated in the question: *who, which one*, really wills inside the will? How should we understand the relation between the will and the ego? He enters into a kind of paralysis, "bound as I was, not by another's irons but by my own iron will" (VIII, 5, 10). The breakthrough of conversion is only

a step away, and yet this step seems impossible to take. The parting words of his dialog partner Ponticianus force him into an even more profound solitude: “All arguments were used up, and all had been refuted. There remained only speechless dread.” (7, 18). In a state of confused rage he leaves his friend Alypius and rushes out into the garden. But once more his will refuses to obey him, and no decision can take place. It seems as if the conversion cannot be brought about by any *operation* of consciousness, by any *act* that would flow from an ego (a *Leistung*, as Husserl’s terminology has it, an “achievement”)—all of which, in the theological language that Augustine can apply later, of course means that it can only occur through *grace*, because the will is radically damaged by original sin. This argument is however not yet available, and for the time being we have to grasp the phenomenological structure of grace independently of the religious certitude and theological insight that it will eventually produce.

If the relation between the will and the body is that of a commanding and obeying instance, then the relation of the will to itself is of a more complex nature.<sup>11</sup> “Mind commands mind to will: there is no difference here (*nec alter est*), but it does not do what it commands itself to do. Whence comes this monstrous state? Why should it be? I say that it commands itself to will a thing: it would not give this command unless it willed it, and yet it does not do what it wills” (9, 21). It is in the chasm opened up between these two agencies, the active-commanding and the passive-obeying, that the will is cast down—or, what amounts

11. Augustine here sounds a theme that will be picked up and radicalized by Nietzsche: the will can only command another will, never a body, which is one of the essential tenets in the conception of a will to power that rejects all foundations in a substance. As Gilles Deleuze notes, the will is “not exerted in mysterious way on muscles and nerves, and even less on a matter in general, but necessarily on another will. The true problem is not the will’s relation to the involuntary, but the relation between a will that commands and one that obeys, and does so to a greater or lesser extent.” (*Nietzsche et la philosophie* [Paris: PUF, 1962], 7 f, my italics)

to the same, is *constituted* in and as this very division, for if the will is *one* it cannot command, and if it commands it cannot be *one*: “Therefore there are two wills, none of them is complete and what is lacking in one of them is present in the other” (*ibid*). We encounter an inner limit in the subject, where its activity can only appear as passivity—the will cannot command itself without internally dividing itself and appearing to itself as another passive object. In a certain way, Augustine here sets up a situation that later will resound in Kant’s descriptions of the categorical imperative: freedom as the *ordo essendi*, the *ground of being* of the law, can only be given to us as an effect of the law, the *ordo cognoscendi* that allows us to know *that* freedom exists, although not *how* it is possible. The moral law makes sense to us only because we are (or: *must* be, without knowing how) free, but freedom can only be known to us when it is subjected to the law. The “agent” (the moral law), placed outside of us by the Kantian analytic so as to avoid any confusion with freedom and natural appetites, comes back to us as a voice from an outside in a non-spatial, non-natural sense, an outside that is in fact the ethical core of the subject as “person,” i.e., that which is at once most “inner” and “outer.” It is only the imperative that gives the Kantian “faculty of desire” (*Begehrungsvermögen*) its higher legislation, just as Augustine will systematically oppose the will as a potential relation to a higher truth (Law), to desire as a bond of physical necessity: “For in truth lust is made out of a perverse will (*quippe voluntate perversa facta est libido*), and when lust is served, it becomes habit, and when habit is not resisted, it becomes necessity (*necessitas*)” (5, 10).

This paralysis can only be overcome by a leap, where the proper agent inside the will is relocated outside of the subject to the place of the Other, as if in a calculated surrender of the ego’s mastery. What is unique in Augustine, and gives his text a phenomenological depth, is that this Other does not immediately present himself in terms of the presence and authority of God, but first of all appears as a mobile position in discourse, in turn occupied by several different agents. Before God enters the stage, he is an *inverted trace that anticipates*; or, choosing another interpretation, more closer to our post-Nietzschean age, “God” is one way of reading, deciphering, and stabilizing a *trace that precedes* him.

We now enter into what appears as the central point of the drama,

in a move that is also reflected on the grammatical level. There is a small yet decisive shift in the tense of the verbs, and for the first time we enter into the *present*, and although it is a present that will only last for a brief moment, as the place of a fundamental disclosure, it still carries the whole burden of a “proof.” Such a shift is no doubt already in Augustine’s time a literary convention, i.e., a “historical present” that serves to make the story more “alive” and “vivid,” and it could easily be overlooked as just another narrative trick. But its function is not exhausted by this; the present tense signifies that exact moment where the whole *raison d’être* of the text is made *present*, the moment of intervention of the Other, although, as we will see, an other which still withdraws himself from *presence*.

Augustine has just sunk down into the deepest despair, and he desperately calls onto God to give him a sign, and not to defer the decision forever: “How long, how long? Tomorrow and tomorrow? Why not *now*? Why not *in this very hour* an end to my uncleanness?” (12, 28, my italics). And then, as an answer to his prayers, the change of tense that enacts the movement from speaking to listening, from ego to other: “Such words I *spoke*, and with most bitter contrition I *wept* within my heart. And lo, I *hear* from a nearby house (*et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo...*) a voice like that of boy or a girl” (12, 29, my italics).<sup>12</sup> This voice that enters the text (although it does not speak, but is first only referred to) and breaks up the solitary reflections of the author comes from a place outside the immediate spatial system (“from a nearby house”) and of psychological focus of the narrative (“a voice like that of boy or a girl, I know not which”), and it suggests that he should assume another position of passivity, in the well-known exhortation: “Take up and read, take up and read” (*tolle lege, tolle lege*, now in imperative form). Strangely enough, the ego does not respond to this as an imperative, but it turns back to itself in order to search its memory, the intensity of the scene drops and we fold back into the past tense: “I *began* to think most intent-

12. This point is lost in Ryan’s translation, which proceeds in the past tense: “And lo, I heard from a nearby house...”.

ly whether children made use of such a chant in some kind of game.” But memory fails: “I could not recall hearing it anywhere.” And then this lack of memories, this emptiness within him, is the reason why the I “interpreted this solely (*nihil aliud interpretans*) as a command given to me by God to open the book and read the first chapter I should come upon.” But not even this action is carried out directly, it is in fact relayed by yet another memory: “For I *had heard* how Anthony had been admonished by a reading from the Gospel at which he chanced to be present.” Augustine rushes back to Alypius and picks up the Bible he has left there before venturing out into the garden. After reading just a few lines, which claim that we should not make “provision for the flesh in its concupiscences” (from *Rom.* 13:13, 14) he stops, since there is neither desire nor need to go on reading; the content of the text from Paul in fact seems rather fortuitous, and the reading was only an *idea* of reading as a subjection to another,<sup>13</sup> not a way to grasp any particular

13. The model of reading already imposes itself early on in the text, for instance in the nineteen year-old student’s encounter with Cicero’s (now lost) Hortensius, which, Augustine says, “changed my affections” (*mutavit affectum meum*, III, 4, 7) and made him search for immortal wisdom with an “incredibly heated heart” (*aesti cordis incredibili*). In these years of apprenticeship the task was to see through the pagan text: beyond the skillfulness of Cicero’s language (*acuendam linguam*) and its artful expression (*locutionem*), it was “what was expressed” (*quod loquebatur*) that caught him. At the time “I did not know what you were doing with me” (*nesciebam quid ageres mecum*, III, 4, 8), but already then, he proceeds, he was missing the name of Christ, which his heart had absorbed already in his early childhood, and the encounter had to remain an anticipation of what was to come. The scene of conversion picks up the idea of reading as a subjection, which was common in Greek culture, and often had sexual overtones (to read is like taking the passive part in intercourse, like being sodomized), although Augustine purifies it of its sexual connotations. For a discussion of reading in Greece, cf. Jesper Svenbro, Phrasikleia. *Anthropologie de la lecture en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1988).

message encrypted in one of Paul's Letters. Then, instantly, at the end of the sentence, a "peaceful light" comes into his heart, all the "dark shadows of doubt" disappear, and the conversion is completed.

This scene seems to have an almost infinite complexity, in its constant referral back from the present of action to the praeteritum of memory, to a "have heard," "have been told," "have read," etc., all of which seems to supplement lacunae in the present and its acts of will, which tend to suspend their own force and let the ego sink down into a state of passivity. It is also true that this scene as such already repeats other scenes (in Book III, VII, and VIII), where Augustine more or less successfully attempts to achieve ecstatic states modeled on Neo-Platonic techniques. In this sense too the figure of conversion is already an echo, a repetition that tends to undermine its present.<sup>14</sup>

This perpetual splitting of the present means that we to a certain extent remain caught in the paradox of the will, the aporia is never lifted, and the conversion does not become an action or a choice in the full sense; it is in fact given to the subject in terms of a mimetic structure, a set of relays and referrals that always point out of the now of decision. Just as the I of narration is a vicarious subject (someone we all should be able to follow and imitate), the central event of the conversion is already a representation and a vicarious experience that first has to have been experienced by *another* in order to enter into the now of consciousness. Or, put in terms of the narrative: just as the *Confessions* relate an event of conversion, the conversion of the text is something re-told, it only acquires its pivotal position by being re-memorized, re-written, thereby placing the diegetic present in an essentially secondary position.

Prolonging this inquiry, we could pose a question that no doubt would have seemed unreasonable to Augustine, indeed as the very essence of the soul's unreasonable erring, but that his text neverthe-

14. For a discussion of the relative "success" of the earlier cases, cf. Robert J O'Connell, *St. Augustine's Confessions. The Odyssey of the Soul* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), 101 f, and Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur Les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: Brocard, 1950), 157 f.

less poses for him: is the system of mirrors that shatters the present a result of God's infinite alterity, of the transcendence of Him who is the first author of Scripture—or is God's alterity a kind of limit-value projected by the inner distancing and displacement of narration? Is the series of imitations and repetitions that tend to overtake the scene of conversion an effect of God's position beyond mimesis, which exposes us to the irrevocable distancing of "taking and reading," forcing it upon us to read and imitate, in short condemning us to the diaspora of infinite exegesis—or is God's transcendence in fact nothing but the transcendental illusion of the existence of a final Author, which itself is produced by the structure of mimesis?

There are no contextual clues that would allow a definite answer to this enormous question, and of course no additional context would bring us any closer to an answer. What will occur as Augustine's text continues to resituate and rework these paradoxes is rather that this decentering, this inner divide between a concentration and a dispersal of the subject, becomes the object of a another type or reflection that theorizes and provides a foundation for the first person experience of conversion. This is what we encounter in Book XI and its analysis of time, unfolding in a difference between the temporality of human narration and the infinity of God that will allow us to understand the dialectic between present and presence in a new way. What, then, is time, *quid est ergo tempus?*

### *III. Intention, distention, and the nature of time*

Augustine places this question after the completion of the story of his life up to the conversion, and it is inserted into a whole theoretical architectonic that in turn incorporates meditations on memory, time, form and matter, and the nature of creation. This whole structure, comprising Books X to XIII, cannot be dealt with here; and I will focus only on Book XI and the question of temporality. In this part we find the fundamental presuppositions for the previous narrative, and the structure of the work is sutured in such a way that time will prove to contain the same dialectic and division as the will. It is the relation between time as dispersal and unity, as finitude and infinity, that will shed light on the



paradoxes of experience: a will torn in half, an I opposed to itself.

Augustine inscribes this division in a structure inherited from Platonism, and he understands our expulsion from eternity as an exile into the “realm of dissimilitude” (*in regione dissimilitudinis*, VII, 10, 16). This expression comes from Plato’s *The Statesman*: “When God, having ordered the world, saw that it was in distress, he had worries that it would dissolve in the storms of confusion and sink into the infinite ocean of dissimilitude” (*anomoiontos apeiron onta ponton*) (273d). Plotinus will later cite this passage in the *Enneads* I, 8, 13, in the context of his explication of the origin of evil, and this may be Augustine’s source. But as a contrast to both of them, we can see the characteristic existential dimension within which he understands the term: the realm of dissimilitude is neither the world of things as images (*eikones*) of Forms, as in Plato, nor the darkness and obscurity that gradually infuse matter in proportion to its distance from the One, as in Plotinus, but a fundamental difference between creator and created that passes through ourselves as egos. God creates man in his image, but each image contains the possibility of drifting off, a capacity for becoming unchained. The Platonic struggle against the simulacrum primarily takes place on the level of the thing and its false likenesses (as in the work of art), it is an epistemic semblance that is at stake, whereas Augustine’s struggle relates to man: each one of us is a potential similitude *and* simulacrum of God, and the general ground for similitude (*Similitudo*) is the Similitude per se, the Word, in which all that is “like” participates. Platonic participation (*methexis*) is transformed via the motif of creation, and man acquires a new status as its center, the place where the battle between Similitude and Dissimilitude occurs. The true similitude holds between the Father and the Son, where imitating and imitated remain in identity in spite of their inner distance (the procession of the copy is infinite, beyond worldly time), whereas human similitude and identity is a secondary and thus always precarious and unstable imitation of this first imitation.<sup>15</sup>

15. On the theme of similitude, see Etienne Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de*

In this sense, since our subjectivity is inscribed into the separation and dispersal of time, we will remain different and dissimilar. And this play between contraction and dispersal, whose first form is the evanescent form of the present, also applies to “a longer action,” and the same thing “holds for a man’s entire life, the parts of which are all the man’s actions. The same thing holds throughout the whole age of the sons of men, the parts of which are the lives of all men.” (XI, 28, 38). Here we can see the extent to which the meditation in Book XI not only deals with a limited metaphysical problem centered on subjective experience, but can be understood as a matrix for the whole of Augustine’s thought, for instance his idea of history as it is developed in *De civitate Dei*, as a tension between the erring of the earthly state and the eternal presence of the divine *civitas*. In this way, the different levels or layers of time can be understood as enveloped one into the other. But in order to more fully grasp the logic capable of generating this system of analogies, we need to return to the starting point. What, on the most basic level, is the relation between the ego and time?

As we have already noted, Augustine’s meditation is first and foremost inscribed in a division between eternity (God who creates the world through word in an “eternal” happening) and our human time, characterized by subjective finitude and a temporal dispersal in which we have been “dissolved” (*dissilui*). This division between the human and the divine level gives his text its particular tone, which is notably different from similar passages in Aristotle and Plotinus, whose reflections on time function as implicit frames of references. Both in *Physics* Delta and the third *Ennead* the question “what is time” becomes the

*saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 1929). The possibility of an unchained similitude is precisely what Augustine’s theory wants to contain, as comes across for instance the polemic in *De Civitate Dei* against Varron and the theatrical, mystical, and poetical theology of Roman culture that multiplies God in an infinite series of pragmatic simulacra, and invents the possibility of a new God for every situation; cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *Économie Libidinale* (Paris: Minuit, 1974), 84 ff.

object of a calm, controlled reflection that gathers together and situates its aporias and paradoxes without anxiety, distributing them between an “exoteric” (external, to some extent naive and not yet philosophical) and “esoteric” (internal, for the initiated, fully philosophical) discourse, where the second holds the key to perplexities of the first. Augustine on the other hand proceeds in a rather different voice, no doubt because the aporia of time is also the aporia of the ego, *of himself*, as Jean Guitton points out.<sup>16</sup>

In this way Augustine’s quest, his *quarere*, displays a vibrant tension that can only rarely be heard in its Greek counterpart, the *zetein* (and this also separates him from skepticism: Augustine seeks, but he is never out to deny, and the aporias are only a step on the way to a kind of security). We pose the question of the sense of time in order to solve the riddle that *we ourselves are*, and so long as it escapes us we will remain strangers to ourselves, closer to nothing than to being. Augustine’s text proposes ever new solutions, but each one gives rise to new aporias, and we seem to be caught in a paralysis similar to the one in the analysis of the will that opened up the scene of the conversion. The presentation seems only to move ahead by arresting itself, it constantly rejects what has been achieved, and it is interspersed with prayers and hymnic passages where the ego asks God to grant a yet deeper access to truth, to the “hidden things of your law” (*abditae lege tuae*) (2, 3).

The Law, *lex*, is here another term for *principium*, principle and beginning alike (as in the Greek *arche*) and what remains mysterious is above all “how ‘in the beginning’ you ‘made heaven and earth’” (*quomodo in principio fecisti caelum et terram*) (3, 5). How should we understand the relation between God’s eternal and divine Word in Genesis, and the worldly word formulated by Moses, he who “wrote them and passed away” (*scripsit et abdit*) (*ibid*)? The Platonic conceptual schema applied by Augustine, opposing the temporal and transient to the timeless, has to provide space for a different form of creation as *event*, as something that can no longer rest in its self-sufficient stillness and

16. *Le Temps et l’Éternité chez Plotin et saint Augustin* (Paris: Vrin, 1933), 224.

perfection, but has to accommodate a certain movement and action. This means that if the divine voice uttering the word will be produced in a reduction of everything that belongs to the world: body, space, sign, etc., then this cannot just be a simple evasion of the temporal, but must be a movement that reverts from constituted to constituting time, from *derivative* to *originary* time. Only then can the fugitive writing of Moses be justified.

The comparisons usually made between Augustine's and Husserl's analyses of time often stop at the level of a similarity between the way in which both of them understand the now in terms of extendedness (in Husserl's case the modifications "retention" and "protention," in Augustine's the modes of the "distensio animi"), but in fact they communicate already on a more profound level, where the difference between a divine *verbum* and its human counterpart is located. Husserl rethinks the divide between the infinity and finitude of the verb in terms of a difference between a phenomenologically reduced "voice" as the non-worldly substratum of meaning, and the empirical voice that exists and resounds in the objective space of acoustics and physiology, and as we will see, *also* in the sense that this difference will relate the ego to a foundation that harbors a profound alterity.<sup>17</sup>

This association between time and the splitting up of language in signifier and signified, syllables and words, in contradistinction to the transdiacritical eternity of God, is a constant theme in Augustine,

17. See for instance Günther Eigler, *Metaphysische Voraussetzungen in Husserls Zeitanalysen* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1961). My chief inspiration here is of course Jacques Derrida's *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: PUF, 1967), which was decisive in opening up a new path in the discussion of the sense of presence in Husserl and the phenomenological tradition, and it has been followed by many other studies. For an interesting recent attempt to show the richness of Husserl's work in this respect, cf. Daniel Birnbaum, *The Hospitality of Presence* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1998).

from his youthful writings, *De musica* and *De magistro*, and onwards.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the human word, divine speech does not break up in *partes extra partes* (syllables, words, signs), and it escapes the diacritical force of temporal succession. In the *Confessions* Augustine notes that, in order to acquire their proper sense, the worldly signs will have to pass through the “outer ear” to reason, whose “inner ear” is directly connected to the eternal word: “Then the mind compared these words sounding in time (*verba temporaliter sonantia*) with your eternal Word in its silence (*aeterna in silentio verbo*), and it said: ‘It is far different; is far different. These words are far beneath me. They do not exist, because they flee and pass away (*fugiunt et praetereunt*). The Word of my God abides (*manet*) above me forever.’”(6, 8) The argument is at one level directed against the Platonic idea of creation as an imposition of form on a pre-existing and somehow formless Receptacle or originary matter (the *chora* in *Timaeus*)—but in order to establish this non-Greek creationism in terms of a pure Word, a phenomenological reduction is demanded. If God’s word, like its human counterpart, were “audible and passing” (*sonantibus et praetereuntibus*), it would be dependent on a preceding empirical substance of expression: if this were the case, “then before heaven and earth, there was already some corporeal creature by means of whose temporal movements that voice would run in time” (*cuius motibus temporalibus temporaliter vox illa percurreret*) (*ibid*). We see that if God’s verb is not in space and time, then neither can it be understood as being simply outside of time, in a self-enclosed eternity that in fact would render the event of creation incomprehensible, but it must be produced as the movement of pure temporalization, as the transcendental production of the *movement of time itself*, and it only by way of an analogy between creator and created that this first verb can be called a “voice” or a “word.” On the one hand, it is on the basis of the positive temporality of the eternal auto-production, which is not a “timelessness” in the mere sense of a negation, that we must

18. For a detailed discussion of Augustine’s early theories of language, see Christopher Kirwan, *Augustine* (London: Routledge, 1991), chap. III.

understand the temporal and the worldly, otherwise we would mistake the creator for the created; on the other hand, we are only able to name the analogy on the basis of the improper and derived model. The metaphor has always begun its drift, begun to separate itself from its proper sense, and *this is the ontological structure of the Fall*. Against the Skeptics Augustine thus emphasizes that it is not “in” time that God “precedes” time, since this would amount to an infinite regress: “You precede all past times in the sublimity of an ever present eternity” (*celsitudine semper praesentis aeternitatis*) (13, 16); “Your years stand all at once (*simul stant*), because they are steadfast (*quoniam stant*)”; “your day is not each day, but today (*hodie*)”; “With you, today is eternity” (*ibid*). God’s present as a *nunc stans* is situated outside of all succession and all grammatical modes precisely because it is the root of the different extensions of time, and it is on the basis of such a root, rooted in its *stare*, that the horizons of time can have or be given as *sense*.

At one point, in order to respond to the Skeptic’s objection that God would have had to remain idle “before” he created the world, Augustine proposes that he, before the act of creation and the production of worldly objects, created time itself. “Therefore, since you are the maker of all times (*operator omnium temporum*), if there was a time before heaven and earth, why do they say that you rested from work? You made that very time, and no times could pass before you made that very time [...] There was no ‘then,’ where there was no time (*non enim erat tunc, ubi non erat tempus*)” (13, 15). Augustine here accumulates a whole series of paradoxes that all attempt to grasp something like the formation of an originary time horizon within which the world can become accessible, a pure production of time starting from a *praesentia* that cannot be traced back anything else. In a certain way, Husserl will say nothing else when he faces the problem of describing the foundational level in the self-constitution of transcendental subjectivity, and concepts like *Urzeugung* and *Urimpression* will repeat the same aporias, although in a language seemingly based on an purely immanent analysis.

But what, then, is this other time, this derived temporality starting from which we direct our gaze toward the eternity of God? The movement of the metaphor is inverted, and we fall from that which

is beyond the linguistic analogy down into language itself as analogy, into syntax, tense, and the whole diacritical “spatialization” of time. Perhaps this is what is intended in famous paradox enunciated in *14*, 17: “What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who does ask me, I do not know.” “Yet,” Augustine points out two lines above, “what do we discuss more familiarly and knowingly in conversation than time?” Language, or the need to find proper words for what we already know, opens the vertigo of unknowing, but it also provides a first security, and it is just as much this confidence that orients the whole of this analysis and holds it suspended over the skeptical abyss, as it is the conviction that the divine Logos is transparent and accessible to our thought. On the one hand we speak without further ado of the past, the present, and what is come, and the tenses never seem to give rise to any problems—and yet language is traversed by an insecurity, a speculative agitation that opens the possibility of the philosophical question: do we know *what* we are talking about? Can time at all be comprehended in the system of the question “what is...” if it is true that its essence disappears in its three moments: the past has been, the future will be, the now has to pass and give way to a then? “Does it not follow,” Augustine asks, “that we can truly say that it is time, only because it tends towards non-being (*tendit non esse*)?” (ibid)

The Aristotelian background to these paradoxes is obvious, even though we can only briefly allude to it here. The being or non-being of time, the meaning of a time that only “barely and unclearly” (*molis kai amydras*) exists, constitutes the introductory theme in *Physics* Delta 217b, and this ontological ambivalence has the same root as in Augustine. The question of the being of time is subjugated to a concept of being that is pre-comprehended on the basis of temporal presence, so that the different aspects of time will appear as stepping out of being, or time itself as if it were composed of non-beings—but, as Aristotle remarks, and this is his first perplexity, “that which is composed of non-being does not seem to be able to take part in *ousia*” (*to d’ek me onton syngkeimenon adynaton an einai doxeie metechein ousias*) (218a 2-3). Already in Plato we encounter a priority of the present that is at once grammatical and ontological, as well as an emphasis on the third

person, which will merge with the idea of the presence of the thing or of substance: “is and will be are generated forms of time (*chronou gegonota eide*) [and] we apply them wrongly, without noticing it, on eternal being. For we say it ‘is’ (*esti*) or ‘was’ (*en*) or ‘will be’ (*estai*), whereas the true expression (*alethes logon*) is ‘is’ (*esti*)” (*Timaeus* 37c).<sup>19</sup>

The *Confessions* begins by treating this question of the being of time in terms of the *measure* of time. How can we measure something that does not take part in the “is”? Augustine first rehearses the well-known skeptical arguments, whose Aristotelian background we just noted: no part of time is present in its entirety, not a year, not a day, not even the present, since it “has no space” (*nullum habeat spatium*) (15, 20), and any measurement seems illusory. But here too language or everyday experience provide us with a security, whose sense however has to be explicated: all skeptical objections notwithstanding, we speak of a long or short time, and we do it without paying attention to the proper sense of the expressions. And within the security provided by language, Augustine can continue: “where” (*ubi*) is then this time that we call long? As Paul Ricoeur notes,<sup>20</sup> this shift in the argument already anticipates the answer: the “place” of time will be “in” the soul. Augustine’s meditation will proceed via a reduction in several steps of objective, worldly time, which leads us to its existence as a

19. The classic analysis of the priority of the third person in Greek ontology is Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik, Gesamtausgabe* vol. 40 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983), §§ 17-23; see also Jacques Derrida, “Ousia et grammè” and “Le supplement de la coupure,” in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972).
20. *Temps et récit I*, 30. Ricoeur shows how this whole analysis is based on spatial imagery, although this is of course not a deficiency peculiar to Augustine. This dependence on spatial analogies is endemic, and indicates that spatial relations are not just mere analogies. It could be argued that this transferal, the originary articulation of space and time upon each other, is the first analogy that opens the movement of analogy as such, as Derrida notes; cf. “Ousia et grammè,” 67 ff.



“phenomenon” in the soul, where that which we measure no longer is the future or the past, but our expectancy and our memory, which themselves are present in the soul. Time “itself” cannot be measured otherwise than metaphorically, by way of a spatial analogy, and this is why the metaphor has to be criticized, precisely in order to be retrieved and preserved in a non-naive way.

Augustine here wants to disentangle the concept of time from its dependence on movement, which is the predominant aspect in Aristotle. Aristotelian time is by no means identical with the movement of a body, but still it is “something belonging to movement,” *kineseos ti*, i.e., the “measure” (*arithmos*) of movement—and it is precisely this connection to an ontology of things and to the sphere of the mathematical and the physical (which was evident in Plato, who in the *Tīmaeus* models time on the movement of the celestial bodies) that Augustine attempts to sever in reducing time to the immanent *sense* of time, i.e. qualities pertaining to modes of consciousness.

But in what sense, then, is time present in this inner sense? If the past and the present “are,” they are as present, but never as things. When we recall the past, it is not the past things themselves that memory brings back, but “words conceived from their images” (*verba concepta ex imaginibus earum*), and which are made possible because things in their passage through the soul leave “footsteps” or “traces” (*vestigia*) (18, 23). Something analogous applies to the future, although the argument is not entirely symmetrical (causes cannot be applied retroactively): I premeditate (*praemeditari*) future actions, and this premeditation is itself present as an image of the future, even if it is not in the same way caused by it (and Augustine’s doubt here comes across in a terminological slide; future events are present via their “causes or signs,” *causae vel signa*) (*ibid.*). Thus it is starting from an expanded present that the three phases of time have to be understood, although not as past, present, and future, but as “the present of the past, the present of the present, and the present of the future. These three are in the soul (*in anima*), but elsewhere I do not seem them” (20, 26). Past, present, and future have been reduced to aspects of the “now” of consciousness, although this is no longer understood as something punctual, but as a tripartite opening up of what in phenomenological terms can be called *intentional modifica-*

*tions*: memory (*memoria*), apprehension (*contuitus*), and expectancy (*expectatio*). As we have seen, these new expressions do not break away from ordinary language, but in fact constitute its proper sense—to speak *non proprie* and *proprie* are not opposed, but relate to each other as the non-reflected and the reflected, or to state this in Husserlian terms, as the “natural” versus the “phenomenological” attitude.

But the place, the *situs*, where these three horizons can come together is the *praesentia* of consciousness, or rather consciousness as a *praesentare*, a form of presentification and rendering present. Time here finds another root outside of God’s *praesentia*, a *derived* intuition of time (*intuitus derivativus*, as Kant will say) that is capable of harboring its fracturing power and reflect the structure of Logos in a worldly form. For Augustine this analogy between the soul and God in other contexts proves to be highly versatile, just as we earlier saw in the case of the idea of “Similitude,” for instance in explaining the connection between the three hypostases of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: the soul is indeed but an image of God, and yet God is always rendered in the image of soul. There is indeed a *distentio*, a spacing, between the divine hypostases, and although it is not of the same kind as the worldly one, it is yet determined as an “image” of it.<sup>21</sup>

21. See the annotated edition of *De Trinitate* in *Bibliothèque Augustinienne*, vol. 15 and 16 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1962). The fundamental problem is here the status of the “Holy Spirit”: the Father and the Son have the reciprocal characteristics of giving and receiving, whereas “spirit” seems to be absorbed into the divinity of God. Augustine proposes that spirit is what is common to Father and Son, their *communio* (*De Trinitate* 5.11.12-12.13), in the sense that the dyad Son-Father is completed in a third moment as the medium of their dialogue. “Spirit is the unity which God gives himself. In this unity, he himself gives himself. In this unity, the Father and the Son give themselves back to one another.” (Joseph Ratzinger, “The Holy Spirit as Communio,” in *Communio* 25 (Summer 1998), 327. Spirit is to be understood first as a gift: “He comes from God, not as born but as given” (*non quomodo natus, sed quomodo datus*, 5.14.15);

The respective opening up of these three horizons are not properties of an “objective” time, but a way in which the soul is stretched out, distended, a *distentio animi*. Augustine picks up this term from Plotinus, but he also modifies it in a characteristic and decisive way. For Plotinus, time as opposed to eternity is what appears when the movement of life gives rise to a “spacing,” a coming-apart (*diastasis* or *diastema*; cf. for instance *Enneads* III, 7, 11, 41). “Life” here however refers to the life process of the world and its differentiation, which in turn is only a reflection of divine mind, *nous*, and not to individual life or experience, which for Plotinus remain on the side of the Platonic *me on*.<sup>22</sup> For Augustine, it is the distention of the individual soul itself that we measure when we say “a long time,” and the synthesis of the three dimensions of time belong to a scene of consciousness: “it is not, then, future time that is long, but a long future is a long expectation of the future. Nor is past time, which is not, long, but a long past is a long memory of the past.” (2*8*, 37).

But when we speak of a distension of the soul we still use spatial imagery that remains unclarified. The reduction to the interiority of the soul is not enough, and we have to proceed to yet another reduction within the reduction. This is the function of the analysis of the melody in 27, 34, which should not be understood as a phenomenological exercise that merely illustrates a point recently made (as is the case of the

there is a “gift” of spirit that exceeds generation and creation, since God is the self-donating, self-giving (cf. 5.15.16). Spirit is that which enables spacing and diastemics, it is that which holds together *and* apart, and in this sense it performs a similar task as the faculty of “imagination” in post-Kantian philosophies of subjectivity; for an analysis of imagination in this respect, cf. Walter Schulz, *Metaphysik des Schwebens. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Ästhetik* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1985).

22. For a discussion of the term, cf. Werner Beierwaltes, *Plotin über Ewigkeit und Zeit* (Enneade III, 7) (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1981), 265 ff; for Plotinus’ disregard for individual time, which limits the scope of the comparison with Augustine, cf. 291 f.

melody in Husserl's lectures on internal time-consciousness, which shows the structure retention-protection at work), but rather points to a more profound aporia that forces us to perform the last reduction. The continuous melody resists measurement as long as it sounds, since nothing can be measured that is not delimited; and when the melody is completed, we fall back into the previous aporia, since we are forced to measure something that no longer exists. Skepticism, then, would seem to prevail. It is only in 27, 35, with the recitation of Ambrosius' hymn *Deus creator omnium*, that a fixed point seems to appear: what I measure is not the syllables themselves, but something in my mind that remains fixed (*quod infixum manet*). What remains is not the sounds or the signs, not something objectively spatio-temporal, but their phenomenologically reduced form in consciousness—not “the appearing sound” (*der erscheinende Laut*) but “the appearing of the sound” (*das Erscheinen des Lauts*) as Husserl will say.<sup>23</sup> This final reduction will take place through a suspension of theirthetic or positional character, i.e., their “sense” as being objectively located in space-time. And now, finally, Augustine can give the claim that it is “in you, O my mind, that I measure the times” (27, 36) its full significance: what I measure is the present state in so far as it contains meaning-components that point outside of the now, although without beingthetic; the stretching and extension of the soul provides the foundation for all worldly spatio-temporal extensions, without itself being one of them. The reduction to the simple inwardness of the soul is not sufficient to free us from the dependence on objective movement, we also have to reduce that which is objective *in the soul itself*, i.e., its worldly, “psychological” dimension, in order to reach time as pure phenomenality, where the *distentio* of the soul is not just a passive spatial extension, but an active dynamism in whose continual synthesis the three horizons are held together in a unity.

23. For a similar analysis, see Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène*, chap. III, above all the comparison between Husserl and Saussure on “reciting a verse” (50 f, note).

#### IV. *Time and eternity*

But even though we here seem to have reached the solution to the problem, the contrast to eternity remains to be understood, and in the final three paragraphs of Book XI this divide returns in full force. Augustine's analysis of subjectivity and his audacious reductions enveloped inside each other might seem like an extraordinary anticipation of a certain philosophical modernity, but if we are to give this historical connection its full force, then we also have to understand this modernity in its insecurities as well as its seeming securities. In fact, the genealogical line needs to be made more complicated, and what Augustine anticipates is less the foundational quality of the ego cogito in all of its ramifications from Descartes onwards, than the way in which this egological foundation is fractured through the intrusion of a certain infinity that cannot be contained within the subject, and yet is called upon to secure and found the project of reason itself.

If the kernel of the Augustinian ego finally will prove to point outside the immanence of consciousness, then we should not look in the *Confessions* for a (traditionally understood) Cartesian *fundamentum inconcussum* that could be understood exclusively through itself since it, in Cartesian terms, "does not require some other thing in order to exist" (*ut nulla alia re indigeat ad existendum*).<sup>24</sup> In fact, the passage enacted by

24. Cf. Descartes, *Principia Philosophiae* I, 51: "By substance we cannot understand anything else than a thing that exists in such a way that it needs no other thing to exist" ("Per substantiam nihil aliud intelligere possumus, quam rem quae ita existit, ut nulla re indigeat ad existendum"). The final substance in this sense can only be God ("Et quidem substantia quae nulla plane re indigeat, unica tantum potest intelligi, nempe Deus," *ibid.*). Husserl paraphrases this passage in *Ideen* I, § 49 ("Das immanente Sein ist zweifellos in dem Sinne absolutes Sein, daß es prinzipiell nulla 're' indiget ad existendum"), and understands it as a formula for the ontological self-sufficiency of the ego; it a "residuum" that would resist even the "annihilation of the world" (*Weltvernichtung*). This is of course only half the story: Descartes' ego will eventually prove

Augustine into the interiority of the soul finally leads us *out* of it, by way of a “conversion” that from the point of view of the immanence of consciousness might seem just as abrupt and inexplicable as the conversion in the garden in Milan. On the subjective level of analysis, the dynamic permanence of the affect (*affectio*) produced by memory constitutes the root for a time that breaks up into past, present, and future, and in this sense it as an image of God’s *praesentia*. And yet this image of God is only derivative and defective, which comes to the fore in the sudden and dramatic shift in the word *distentio* in 29, 39: “But since ‘your mercy is better than lives,’ behold my life is a *distentio*, or a *distraction*” (*ecce distentio est vita mea*; the translation has to give two words for one Latin in order to mark the shift). That which from the point of view of subjective time was the solution to how objective time, and the dependence on bodily movements in space, could be reduced to inner modifications, now suddenly appears as a *negativity*, something that tears the ego and its life apart, and we make the final transition from a theoretical dialectic between aporias and solutions to a hymnic language. The opposition no longer holds between a threefold extendedness of the now and a punctual and inert present, instead *distentio* comes to be opposed to *intentio*: a breaking up or distraction “amid times whose order I do not know” (*at ego in tempora dissilui, quorum ordinem nescio*) is pitted against a *concentration*, an extension towards the anteriority of infinity, where I am “not distended but extended, not to things that shall be and shall pass away, but to ‘those things that are before’” (*in ea quae ante sunt... extensus*) (ibid). The relative unity achieved by the subject has to be dissolved once more in order to be

to be dependent on a divine act of creation that even bestows existence upon it from one moment to another, as the third Meditation shows, and its Husserlian counterpart will always remain related to the other, both with respect to the constitution of the objective world (as Husserl shows in fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations*), but also in a certain way with respect to time as the very foundation of transcendental subjectivity and individuation, as we will see below.

regained at another level, in relation to that which is *ante*, i.e., the temporal structure of a divine verb that precedes subjective time in a time “before” time; at a certain place the reduction has to give way to an expansion (or “extension”) that allows us to see this precarious interiority from the outside, and thus redirects the whole investigation from the point of view of infinity.

It is as if the two roots of time, God’s *praesentia* and Man’s *distentio animi*, at a certain level would have to confront each other, and the previously established conceptual structure would have to be torn down. If we attempt to find a phenomenology of time in Augustine, this split would constitute a massive obstacle—unless, as we shall see, this obstacle *as such* belongs to the path of phenomenology, understood in its most radical sense. There are as it were two temporal kernels, two roots of the sense of everything subjectively and objectively temporal, and if we attempt to isolate one of them, it will point to the insistent necessity of the other. In-tentionality becomes dis-tentionality and inversely, depending on the point of view.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the intensity in the Augustinian *quarere*. The quest for the enigma of time, the *aenigma* that recurs throughout the *Confessions* in ever new forms, is also a riddle proposed by the ego to itself, in the

25. The “theological” turn in phenomenology recently criticized by Dominique Janicaud (see *Le tournant théologique dans la phénoménologie française* [Combas: L’Éclat, 1991]) surely has one of its roots in this divide. From my point of view the problem would have to be phrased in the opposite way: the theological turn is one way, but surely not the only and perhaps even not the best way, of conceptualizing the temporal split. The alternative to the theological turn would then not be a return to phenomenology as a rigorous foundation of science, as Janicaud seems to advocate, but to rigorously think through this temporal split as such, as the (non-)foundation of both the theological and the scientific interpretation; in short, to think the common root of Augustine and Husserl without prejudices of any kind, which to me seems to be one of avenues of thought opened up by Derrida.

obscure premonition that at the end it will have to make do with an answer that upsets the whole system of the question; that this meditation as it approaches its own limit will expose the kernel of the ego as the hidden presence of the other; that theoretical reflection will have to yield to another mode of intentionality that relates us to a beyond of immanent time. The paradox of conversion returns here in a different form, as a spasm in the temporal center, where the conversion becomes both intro- and extroversion.

In fact, the claim that Augustine prefigures not only Descartes, but in many respects also Husserl, then needs to be modified, but *not* as one would normally assume, i.e., in order to entrench the Augustinian moment more firmly within a theological horizon of thought which then is claimed to be alien to our sensibility, but in order to show that these inner divisions, the fold of infinity and finitude that makes the space of subjectivity into a *scene* rather than a *ground* or a *foundation*, remain with us today even though the vocabularies chosen to express them have changed. Both Descartes and Husserl, each in their own way (one “Classical” and one “Modern,” or from the perspective of Augustinian theology, as two versions of the “Modern,” if such labels make any sense), will face the challenge of a certain “infinetism” that profoundly challenges the idea of a stable subject, of the *fundamentum*, and does so at precisely those two historical moments in which it was assumed to be constituted as the bedrock of modernity, and then re-constituted as the project for laying a new transcendental ground that claims to be situated below its classical counterpart.<sup>26</sup> In both cases, a

26. As the most recent heir to this question, Levinas will explicitly lay claim to the Cartesian idea of God as one of few predecessors for his radical understanding of an ethics based on the Other. The Cartesian God as an ideatum that overflows the limit of consciousness shows a basic incapacity and passivity in relation to the other, which Husserl, in Levinas’ reading, was not ready to admit due to the primacy he gave to the theoretical attitude. On Descartes, see the remarks in *De Dieu qui vient à l’idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1986). For a classical and still relevant critique of Levinas’ some-



certain outside will insist in the interiority of consciousness, and not just in the sense of a contingency that cannot be surpassed, but as something that founds the very possibility of reason from the within, precisely by resisting the movement of appropriation by thought. Without here being able to develop such a reading in detail, a few remarks may suffice to indicate what such an argument would look like

In Descartes, this double structure will return as the relation between an order of knowing, *ordo cognoscendi*, where the cogito is the first link in the chain of evidences, and the order of created beings, *ordo essendi*, where we descend from the definition of God and downwards, and the composite “Man” appears as but one of the *ens creata*. This occurs in the third Meditation, when Descartes has established the indubitability of the sphere of *res cogitans*, but then faces with the question whether the cogitations that are present in this sphere of immanence can be understood as having any objects outside of the mind—in short, if the quest for a *fundamentum* that was to ground the *mathesis universalis* has not led to an even more profound skepticism. It is only by proving to himself that at least *one* of the ideas is not, *could* not have been, produced by the ego itself, but that there is at least one more entity which must be understood as its cause. This means that the threatening interiority of the *mens sive animus* can be opened up and the objection of the skeptic refuted. Descartes’ proof rests on a certain traditional idea of a hierarchy of reality (which in turn is distributed between the “formal” and the “eminent”) where the *ideatum* God, i.e., the idea of an infinite being having created the whole of the universe, infinitely exceeds my capacity: since I am a finite creature, I *could* not have been the originator of this idea, as is possible in the case with all other ideas (extended substance, number, shape, etc.), where I would be able to transfer my own reality to a purely imagined entity. The idea of a God that I would be unable to *produce on my own* is a kind of opening, a tear in the fabric of the *res cogitans*, and it is through this ap-

what foreshortened reading of Husserl, see Jacques Derrida, “Violence et métaphysique,” in *L’écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967).

erture that the *lumen naturale* will flow in and provide us with certainty that at least some of the ideas have objects that can be trusted (above all the “objectos puros matheseos,” i.e. the entities assumed in mathematics and geometry). The proof of the existence of God should in this sense not be understood as an after-effect of dogmatism, but as an inner and essential necessity in the project of reason, as this project appears to Descartes inside the language of “Classical” thought. (The same thing applies a fortiori to similar proofs in Leibniz, where it is even clearer that they have an essential function for the development of a coherent discourse of science. God and science are not opposed, it is only in God that science is *complete*, as Leibniz says on many occasions, which also means that the notion of God undergoes profound transformations: he is now the infinite explication or development of that which for us is implicated and enveloped, and the *Monadology* is undoubtedly the most crystalline example of this infinitist thought.) The split between the order of reason and the order of being is the way in which thought must appear to the classical mind, and for Descartes this means that the self-sufficiency of the *ego cogito* can only be assumed if it simultaneously acknowledges its dependence on an other and infinite substance that grounds its existence.<sup>27</sup>

And does not Husserl in a certain way expose himself to the same adventure? When he ends his *Cartesian Meditations* by citing Augustine: “Do not go outside, return into yourself, the truth lives inside man,” *Noli foras ire, in te redi, in interiori hominis habitat veritas*, he does this in order to reaffirm this historical link, and to situate himself at, and in fact *as*, the apex of a certain Western philosophical tradition linking reflection, subjectivity, and reason as the teleological sense of history

27. These comments are of course only meant as a sketch, and not as a systematic reading of Descartes; the classical discussion of the “orders” in Descartes is Martial Guéroult, *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons* (Paris: Aubier, 1968). For an analysis of the divergent notions of infinity in rationalism, cf. Michel Serres, *Le système de Leibniz et ses modèles mathématiques* (Paris: PUF, 1968).

itself. But Husserl too will have to account for an intrusion of infinity, or perhaps two, one inherited from Augustine and the other from Descartes, and both of them work at once to unsettle *and* to found the structure of reason, depending on how we read. The first would lead him back to Augustine, and the problem of the temporal kernel of the ego, which will prove more and more difficult to grasp as we approach the level of the self-constitution of the transcendental subjectivity through originary time. Husserl's famous outcry when he discovers that language is incapable of accounting for the deepest level, "for all of this we lack names" (*für all das fehlen uns die Namen*),<sup>28</sup> signals the limit to this kind of regressive analysis, not in the sense that it should be abandoned, but that we have to acknowledge that such a limit belongs to thought itself.

The second would lead him back to Descartes, when he in the fifth and final Cartesian meditation attempts to defeat the skeptic by showing that a reduction to the innermost sphere of the subject, the radically purified "sphere of ownness" (*Eigenheitssphäre*) will always contain the presence of the Other, i.e., components of meaning that indicate an absence that can never be transformed into presence. The Other present in me as an alterity in the second potency, i.e., as in principle different from the "appresentational" quality of the thing that can only be given in perspectival "adumbrations," is an *other* origin of the world, and as such he cannot be understood as a mere reflection of myself, as an alter ego, but must have an irreducible transcendence. Husserl does not attempt to prove the existence of the other, as is sometimes assumed, since this would have no sense for him—skepticism is not the issue, thus there is no need of proofs—but to show *how* this other is given, and how his givenness is an essential moment in the givenness of the world. It is the *presence of the absence* of the other, his transcendence *in me*, or his resistance *to my consciousness inside my consciousness*,

28. Cf. *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, *Husserliana* vol. 10, ed. Rudolf Boehm (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966), § 36, 75, and Derrida's comments, *La voix et le phénomène*, 94 note.

that shows me the sense of the world, i.e., that it is always constituted by more subjects than my own. This argument allows Husserl, just as Descartes, to assume a certain “tear” in the subject, an irreducible opening towards the world and intersubjectivity, which can now be reinterpreted as the true meaning of objectivity.<sup>29</sup> And just as once Augustine, although in a different time and in a different vocabulary, he encountered the bewildering fact that the way inwards is always also a way out, and that the distinction between the foreign and the own, or the dialectic between *intus* and *foris* that structure the path of the soul back to itself, can never be thought of the basis of a mere inner life, but that it must finally be thought in terms of the world.

29. Beyond Descartes, Husserl finally also encounters Leibniz, when he proposes that intersubjectivity should be understood as a “community of monads” (*Monadengemeinschaft*). To some extent this is a conflict between different ways to the phenomenological reduction, a Cartesian way that follows individual consciousness, and an intersubjective way based on shared meanings, and that makes possible a more positive appreciation of language as the medium of intersubjectivity, whereas the Cartesian way tends to view language as an external clothing of thought. Whether there is a contradiction here, or if these two approaches are finally compatible, is undoubtedly a conflict that extends far beyond Husserl scholarship, and touches the very root of the debate between philosophies of language and of consciousness. For a discussion of Husserl and intersubjectivity, see Dan Zahavi, *Husserl und die transzendente Intersubjektivität. Eine Antwort auf die sprachpragmatische Kritik* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1996). A reading of Leibniz that implicitly adopts a Husserlian perspective, is Aron Gurwitsch, *Leibniz. Philosophie des Panlogismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974)..





# Heidegger's Turns

## *1. Situating the turn: from fundamental ontology to the history of being*

The fate of metaphysics, its completion, limit, and possible overcoming, are all involved in what has become known as the “turn” (*die Kehre*) in Heidegger’s thinking, i.e., the move away from the project of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time* (1927), which still remained within the transcendental framework of Kant and Husserl. In this turn, Heidegger disengages from the idea of a philosophical foundationalism, and the question of being begins to be understood as historical in a new and radical sense. This does not mean that the history of philosophy as such would for the first time enter into Heidegger’s thinking—as we will see, it was already present in the earlier phase—but that the mode of reflection itself changes, and that we move away from many of the traditional forms of doing philosophy, including those still caught in Hegel’s wake that have understood themselves as historical through and through, in order to approach what Heidegger calls “thought” (*Denken*), which he situates at the limit of history, and occasionally even opposes to philosophy qua component of the history of metaphysics. “The end of philosophy,” as the title of a late essay reads, is in fact tied to “the task of thought,” to the extent that the thinking through of the end and the opening towards that which is beyond metaphysics belong together.<sup>1</sup> The questioning in the later phase no longer bears on the “sense of being” (*Sinn des Seins*), the horizon of intelligibility against which we understand different domains of beings in their being—that which determines them as being of this or that character: nature, history, mathematical-geometrical idealities, works of art, etc.—but in-

1. Cf. “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens,” in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969).

stead becomes a meditation on how the “truth of being” (*Wahrheit des Seins*) is transmitted to us as a series of historical shifts or “epochs.” Heidegger does not primarily understand “epochs” as chronological entities, but as ways in which being allows beings to be present by holding itself back and remaining unthought in the movement of presencing, and in this sense the epoch (which he derives from the Greek *epoche*, “holding back,” withdrawing”) also denotes a *limit*, a *threshold* where an exchange occurs between that which is inside the space of metaphysics, and that which “gives” this space to thought.

In this second phase we are no longer on the way towards the actual *fundamentum* that would allow us to grasp the true sense of those seemingly irreconcilable oppositions that we have inherited from the past; instead, we move toward a possible thinking after, beyond, or outside of the history of metaphysics. Metaphysics is no longer understood as a cipher of transcendence, as the “natural disposition” belonging to man that Kant wanted to tame and enclose within the limits of possible experience, but rather as the historical unfolding of the quest for such foundations. Transcendental philosophy will no longer hold the key. Instead, it is resituated as one of the phases within the history of being. To a certain extent, this implicitly situates *Being and Time* and fundamental ontology inside the space of metaphysics, and when Heidegger reflects on this historical condition of his earlier work, he often engages in a reinterpretation of it from the standpoint of his later thinking, as if to *comprehend* its aporias, both in the sense of understanding them and enveloping them within a larger structure. This yields a complex representation of the turn, and as we will see there are at least three different senses that can be given to it.

Here I will not deal directly with the later phases of Heidegger’s thought and how it restructures the question of being, but will mainly focus on how this question unfolds in *Being and Time* and some of the other writings from the same period, and try to locate some of the motifs and implicit problems that eventually would lead to the abandonment of fundamental ontology. The “turn” should then become visible both as a result of certain impasses in the earlier project, and as an attempt to return to them in order to think its “unthought,” and to understand it not only as a shortcoming but also as something posi-



tive, the rich result of the necessary finitude of thinking itself.

In this sense we should be cautious of any clear-cut distinction between a “first” and a “second” Heidegger, especially if this is seen as a sharp chronological shift. Where Heidegger, within certain limits, accepts this divide, for instance in the letter-preface to William Richardson’s *From Phenomenology to Thought*, he claims that the distinction between a Heidegger “I” and “II” can be justified only if we bear in mind that it is *from the point of view of the first phase* alone that that which is “to be thought” in the second becomes accessible, whereas the first phase requires the second as the hidden possibility of its questioning—“I only becomes possible when is contained in II.”<sup>2</sup>

Even though there is an element of retroactive stylization involved in such remarks, they show the complexity of the task of a philosophical, and not just a biographical, interpretation of the turn that wants to remain true to Heidegger’s path of questioning. We have to proceed from both ends at the same time, and see how the impasses of the earlier work already open onto a different form of questioning. Thus it will also be necessary to examine those passages in the later texts that explicitly look back and reinterpret fundamental ontology in the light of the history of being, since they shed a certain light on how the later thinking reappropriates the question of the meaning of being within the space of the “truth of being.”

The locus classicus of Heidegger’s own understanding of the failure of fundamental ontology is the *Letter on Humanism*, and although it is only with great caution that we should accept his own self-interpretations as a relevant clue for an analysis, these cryptic remarks on the architectonic structure of *Being and Time* merit considerable attention,

2. “Ihre Unterscheidung zwischen ‘Heidegger I’ und ‘Heidegger II’ ist allein unter der Bedingung berechtigt, daß stets beachtet wird: Nur von dem unter I Gedachten her wird zunächst das unter II zu Denkende zugänglich. Aber I wird nur möglich, wenn es in II enthalten ist.” (“Brief an PWilliamJRichardson,” in WilliamJRichardson, *From Phenomenology to Thought* [The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963], 401).

because they articulate and bring together several distinct meanings of the turn. If, Heidegger says, we understand the “project” (*Entwurf*) referred to in *Being and Time* as “representational positing” (*vorstellendes Stellen*), then it will appear as a “production of subjectivity” (*Leistung der Subjektivität*), and not as the “ecstatic relation to the clearing of being” (*ekstatische Bezug zur Lichtung des Seins*), as it should. But, he continues, such a thinking that takes leave of subjectivity was rendered more difficult given that the third section of the first part, “Zeit und Sein,” the crucial juncture of the book where the “whole turns around” (*Hier kehrt sich das Ganze um*), was held back from publication. Since thinking “failed in the sufficient saying of this turn” (*weil das Denken im zureichenden Sagen dieser Kehre versagte*) it was unable to “break through,” and it was still held captive by the language of metaphysics. Some indications of the “thinking of the turn from ‘being and time’ to ‘time and being’ can be found in the lecture ‘Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,’” he adds, but the most important is that the turn should not be understood as a “change of position”: it is only in and through the turn that thought attains the dimension out of which *Being and Time* was “experienced,” i.e., the “oblivion of being.”<sup>3</sup>

3. “Versteht man den in ‘Sein und Zeit’ genannten ‘Entwurf’ als ein vorstellendes Stellen, dann nimmt man ihn als Leistung der Subjektivität und denkt ihn nicht so, wie ‘das Seinsverständnis’ im Bereich der ‘existentialen Analytik’ des ‘In-der-Welt-Seins’ allein gedacht werden kann, nämlich als der ekstatische Bezug zur Lichtung des Seins. Der zureichende Nach- und Mitt-vollzug dieses anderen, die Subjektivität verlassenden Denkens ist allerdings dadurch erschwert, daß bei der Veröffentlichung von ‘Sein und Zeit’ der dritte Abschnitt des ersten Teiles, ‘Zeit und Sein’ zurückgehalten wurde (vgl. ‘Sein und Zeit’ S. 39). Hier kehrt sich das Ganze um. Der fragliche Abschnitt wurde zurückgehalten, weil das Denken im zureichenden Sagen dieser Kehre versagte und mit Hilfe der Sprache der Metaphysik nicht durchkam. Der Vortrag ‘Vom Wesen der Wahrheit’ der 1930 gedacht und mitgeteilt, aber erst 1943 gedruckt wurde, gibt einen gewissen Einblick in das Denken der Kehre von ‘Sein

Here we find an explicit mentioning of the turn in relation to *Being and Time*, although its more precise meaning is difficult to discern. What is that position where “the whole turns around,” and what is the “whole” to which the text refers? Heidegger is in fact speaking of the turn in three different senses (the third being largely implicit, though it is ultimately the decisive one), and although in the end they belong together as one complex, it can be useful simply to present them provisionally as three distinct options:

1. The first turn refers to the compositional structure of *Being and Time*, more precisely to the section “Time and Being,” that was to have formed the conclusion of the first part (whose two published sections are what remain), but also the bridge between the first and the second part, whose “destruction of the history of ontology” would have created a historical framework and a genealogy for fundamental ontology.

2. The second sense is the turn away from the book *Being and Time* toward the history of being, and here the essay “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” from 1930 provides important indications, as we will see specifically concerning the notion of “truth” and the finitude of thinking.

3. The third sense (which here remains in the background, but for Heidegger constitutes the true and ultimate one) no longer carries any biographical or compositional connotations, but instead implies that there is something like a turn *within being itself*, an “eschatological”<sup>4</sup> process to which thought must correspond and move into an-

und Zeit’ zu ‘Zeit und Sein’. Diese Kehre ist nicht eine Änderung des Standpunktes von ‘Sein und Zeit,’ sondern in ihr gelangt das versuchte Denken erst in die Ortschaft der Dimension, aus der ‘Sein und Zeit’ erfahren ist, und zwar erfahren aus der Grunderfahrung der Seinsvergessenheit.” “Brief über den Humanismus” (1946), in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1978), 325. English translation by Frank Capuzzi in *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), 231 f.

4. Heidegger occasionally uses this expression, for instance in “Der Spruch des Anaximander”: “Das bisherige Wesens des Seins geht in seine noch verhüllte Wahrheit unter. Die Geschichte des Seins versammelt sich

other “dimension” from which the first work was “experienced,” the dimension of an “oblivion of being.”

Starting from the third and most essential sense, it would be possible to say that the movement initiated by the turn is what motivates Heidegger’s whole path of thought, as it is understood in the later works, and that he constantly returns to this problem in order to deepen it and reformulate it as one of the essential issues for thought, or even as the originary “to-be-thought” (*das zu-Denkende*). The impasse of *Being and Time*, as well as the abandoning of fundamental ontology, would in this sense be the two surface indications of a much more profound problem, which has to do with the possibility of thinking being as such. Understood in this way, the turn pervades all of Heidegger’s later writings, and even at what some interpreters, for instance Otto Pöggeler, have considered to be a final stage.<sup>5</sup> In this final period the model of a history of being has ceased to be of central importance, and the question of an “overcoming of metaphysics” has receded into the background, although the turn still remains a central issue, now reinterpreted as an *Einkehr*, a “turning into” *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation that would be situated beyond or beneath the various historical transformations analyzed in the second phase. One of the central texts from this last period is a lecture from 1962 that in fact bears the same name as the

in diesen Abschied. Die Versammlung in diesen Abschied als die Versammlung (*logos*) des Äussersten (*eschaton*) seines bisherigen Wesens ist die Eschatologie des Seins. Das Sein selbst ist als geschickliches in sich eschatologisch.” (*Holzwege, Gesamtausgabe* vol 5 [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977], 327) We should however not understand eschatology in the theological sense, Heidegger adds, but rather “in dem entsprechenden Sinne, in dem seinsgeschichtlich die Phänomenologie des Geistes zu denken ist.” (*ibid*) The *Gesamtausgabe* is henceforth quoted as *GA*.

5. See for instance the interpretation put forward in *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1983, 2.ed.), a book that since its first edition in 1963 has remained paradigmatic for the discussion of Heidegger’s development.

missing part of *Being and Time*, “Zeit und Sein,” although it would be difficult to read this text as a response to the same questions that were to have been treated in the text from 1927. The distance between these two attempts to articulate the relation between time and being indicates the vast terrain traversed by Heidegger, from a reworked transcendental phenomenology in the wake of Husserl, to a meditation on the history and overcoming of metaphysics in constant dialog with Hegel (implicitly) and Nietzsche (explicitly), where the encounter with Hölderlin’s poetry, the world-forming power of the work of art and the political disaster of the 1930s were decisive, and finally to the poetic listening and meditation on the thing, on language and the Fourfold, and on building and dwelling in the reign of technology.<sup>6</sup> But if it is starting from the end, as Heidegger says, from the event of appropriation, that we have to understand this trajectory, it is still the case that the moment of inception was an inability to “break through,” an experience of being held captive and of not being able to make the turn, of not corresponding to the demand on thinking. In order to understand this threshold more clearly, we must first look at the structure of *Being and Time*, and attempt to locate the function of that missing central architectonic element which was to have been named “Time and Being.”

## II. *The question of being*

*Being and Time* opens by quoting Plato’s *Sophist*, where Plato remarks on the “perplexity” caused by the fact that the designation of the word “being” seems unclear to us when we examine it more closely.<sup>7</sup> This

6. For more on Heidegger’s discussions of technology and the work of art, cf. chap. 6 and 7 below.
7. “Stranger: Then since we are in perplexity (*eporekamen*), do you tell us plainly what you wish to designate when you say ‘being.’ For it is clear that you have known this all along, whereas we formerly thought we knew, but are now perplexed.” (*The Sophist*, 244a) The actual discussion of the nature of being in the *Sophist* seems however to be absent from *Be-*

rhetorical gesture aims to delimit that unique question, which according to Heidegger has hitherto been overlooked by philosophy since its initial Platonic and Aristotelian formulation, a question which was to guide his thinking through all of its transformations: *what is* (the sense, truth, nature, presence, event, gift, etc., of) *being*? In defining this as the sole and unique question of philosophy, Heidegger attempts to return to the foundations of Greek ontology, while simultaneously seeking to uncover a stratum of experience that is supposed to have been left unthematized by the Greeks, and consequently by all subsequent philosophy. Philosophy is indeed Greek through and through, and in this Heidegger adheres to a large extent to the “geophilosophical” schema inherited from German Idealism,<sup>8</sup> but first and foremost because there is an “experience” that was betrayed, or conceptualized in a reductive fashion, by the Greek thinkers themselves. They posed the question of being in a derived way, by already pre-comprehending the answer in terms of beings: being itself was understood in terms

*ing and Time*, and there is no mention of the “larger genres” (*megista gene*) that are the object of Plato’s analysis, and form the categorial framework for “being as logical,” as the subtitle of the dialog reads. The only aspect of the dialog that may have left its traces in *Being and Time* is the dialectic between truth and seeming, icons and simulacra, etc., which in a certain way reappears in guise of the hierarchy of authenticity and inauthenticity, *Sein* and *Schein*, etc. (cf. § 7 A, where the issue is to determine a sense of phenomenality that precedes the—Platonic—distinction between icons and simulacra). The explicit ontological question within fundamental ontology seems, however, more dependent on Aristotle than on Plato, as is indicated by the absence of Plato in the plan for a destruction of the history of ontology as it is laid out in §§ 6 and 8. For a discussion of the dialogical context of the aporia in the Sophist, which Heidegger does not consider, cf. Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s Sophist*, 204–211.

8. For a discussion of the term “geophilosophy,” see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Minit, 1991). For more on Deleuze’s relation to Heidegger, see chap. 4, below.

of intra-worldly existence, substance (*ousia*) or idea (*eidos*), both conceived of as things “present-at-hand” (*vorhanden*), and the true nature of being, its manifold ways of presenting to us, became obscured. This reductive interpretation of being was made possible by the fact that it was understood with reference to time conceived in a certain narrow way, i.e., time in the form of the *now*, or more generally, as *presence* (*Anwesenheit*). The title of Heidegger’s book, joining being *and* time, indicates the problem that has to be posed anew—and, as Heidegger later will say, the crucial part of the problem is how to understand the “and” between the two nouns.<sup>9</sup>

For Heidegger the Greek determination of being is circular in a way that forecloses the question of the “and” of being and time: being is determined as presence because it is pre-comprehended through time, and time itself is determined as presence (or as composed of a series of present moments, as is shown by the privilege of the “now” in Aristotle’s analysis in the *Physics*), because it can only participate in being by being “present.” In a late text, Heidegger returns once more to these questions, and formulates the circularity very clearly: “In this determination of the meaning of being as presence lies a temporal moment. This forces thought to explicitly pose the question of the relation between being and time [...] Aristotle thinks time on the basis of the Greek interpretation of being—in which a temporal determination (as presence) is implied. In other words, Aristotle poses the question concerning time: what is time?—but in fact his question means: what is being in time? He does not take into consideration that a secret temporal pre-determination is already in advance at work within this limitation.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, the “exoteric aporia” to which Aristotle’s first exposition leads him—time participates in *both* being and non-being—will never be lifted up to the “esoteric” level, unlike the other aporias in the *Physics*, and the “being” of time will only be understood

9. Cf. *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1973 [1929]), § 44, 235.

10. *Vier Seminare* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 75 f.

indirectly, all of which indicates the extent to which the metaphysical determination of *ousia* already requires time, a time that is secretly at work in the question of the being of beings.

The new determination of being within fundamental ontology intends to solve Aristotle's puzzle in a different way, which first means to shake the element of *self-evidence* and *certainly* in which he thought he could solve it. Aristotle allowed his analysis to be guided by the priority of the present and of a substantiality determined as "ready-at-hand," which appears to follow from it (and which in another sense is reflected in the dependence of time on external bodily movement, of which time is the "measure"). For Heidegger we need to approach time differently, as a multidimensional phenomenon that interlaces past, present, and future, all of which have their irreducible modes of being present, or of "presencing," and only then can we provide a fuller answer to the question of the "meaning" of being that does not reduce it to only one of its possible meanings. But as we know, notwithstanding all the subtle temporal analyses that traverse *Being and Time*, the final *result*, where time is to be established as the ultimate "horizon" of the question of the meaning of being in general, will leave the question mark suspended and repeat the aporia once more. Originary time, the ultimate temporal horizon that holds together the different temporal regions and their corresponding modes of being, will always remain withdrawn. As Jacques Derrida has noted, this would lead to the conclusion that there "is" nothing but the "vulgar" (metaphysical) concept of time, and that the very concept of an originary time that would escape the metaphysical determination as presence is problematical: time *is*, has always been and will always be, that which is thought on the basis of presence,<sup>11</sup> and if we

11. "Le temps est ce qui est pensé à partir de l'être comme présence et si quelque chose – qui a rapport au temps, mais n'est pas le temps – doit être pensé au-delà de la détermination de l'être comme présence, il ne peut s'agir de quelque chose qu'on pourrait encore appeler *temps*." "Ousia et grammè – note sur une note de *Sein und Zeit*," *Marges de la philo-*



want to think something radically other, either we will simply repeat the Platonic gesture and erect another metaphysical structure that divides the originary from the secondary and thus remains within the Same, or we would in a more complex way have to acknowledge that the dream of stepping out of metaphysics in order to attain its proper foundation *itself belongs wholly to metaphysics*. In short, for Derrida there will be no radical new names forthcoming, there can be no way *out* of metaphysics, and “deconstruction,” unlike its Heideggerian counterparts *Destruktion* and *Abbau*, is, at least in its initial phase, an attempt to account for this infinite groundlessness of the philosophical operation. Whether this conclusion is opposed to Heidegger, or in fact prolongs insights derived from *Being in Time*, cannot be decided here; it is however clear that it could not have been formulated *without* Heidegger, and that it remains parasitical on his texts—all of which Derrida of course readily acknowledges, and makes into one of the basic positive features of his deconstructive strategy.

For Heidegger, this determination of the being of beings as presence is what constitutes the unthematized background for the notions of *eidos*, *ousia*, and *hypokeimenon*, which are all different determinations of being-present: Plato's *eidos* or *idea* as the form of pure visibility correlated to a pure act of theoretical-noetical seeing; Aristotle's determination of *on* as *ousia* or *hypokeimenon*, concepts which function as grounds or as foundations by comprehending time and providing a basis in something that is “permanently there,” a *beständige Anwesenheit*. These two pairs will then form the basis for the modern metaphysical interpretation of being as subjectivity, i.e., presence in the form of self-consciousness, extending from Descartes and onwards, and where all other beings will become re-presentations or “images” for the constantly (self-)present subject.<sup>12</sup>

*sophie*, (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 69.

12. Throughout his work, Heidegger tells this story many times and in many slightly different ways, although the basic tenets (the reduction to of being to *presence* in Greek philosophy, the connection between

A new access to the question of being, or, as Heidegger puts it in this period, to the question of the meaning of being (*Sinn des Seins*), understood as the horizon against which all regions of beings acquire their meaning, will have to uproot these old metaphysical habits (or, better: it will have to uncover the soil in which they are *in fact rooted* without knowing it), and it will have to relate being and time in a new way. This relation can no longer be merely privative, as when we without further ado distinguish between a world of changing, temporally affected things, and a supra-temporal region of ideas, for instance logical or mathematical truths. The different modes of temporality pertaining to the respective ontological regions must according to Heidegger be understood in a *positive* way, as resulting from “temporalizations,” and these modes or regions will in their turn have to be referred back to an originary time that temporalizes itself in an originary domain of projection, the common root or ground of them all.

In pursuing this question, fundamental ontology explicitly returns to Aristotle and the two classical formulations of the ontological question. The first comes from the beginning of *Metaphysics* Gamma (1003a 33): being is spoken in a manifold of ways (*to de on legetai pollachos*), but always in relation to a unity, and to one nature (*alla pros hen kai kata mian tina physin*), a kind of focal point that in an analogical way gathers together all the different ways of speaking; the second from book Zeta (1028b 3-4), where “that which has forever been sought” (*ai ei zetoumenon*) and “always has baffled us” (*ai ei aporoumenon*)—the answer to the question “what is being” (*ti to on*)—receives its decisive determination: “what is

Aristotle and Descartes and between *hypokeimenon* and *subiectum*, and modernity as an increasing “subjectivization”) remain in place. For two concise versions, see “Die Zeit des Weltbildes,” in *Holzwege* (GA 5), and “Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins,” in *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961). The decisive change after the turn is the new priority accorded to Plato as the beginning (*Beginn*) of metaphysics, Nietzsche as its completion, and the pre-Socratics as the possibility of the “other beginning” (*der andere Anfang*).

substance" (*tis he ousia*).<sup>13</sup> As we have seen, for Heidegger the Aristotelian *ousia* only captures a certain aspect of a much richer and more diversified Greek experience of being, and if we want to retrieve this plenitude of sense, we have to grasp the common root of the Aristotelian manifold through a phenomenological analysis of the transcendental horizon of time against which this manifold, the *pollachos legomenon*, can appear as such, although this horizon remained closed off to Aristotle.

But if Aristotle and the Greek question *ti to on* are the essential reference for ontology as a "science that studies being as being and what belongs to it by virtue of its own nature," as Aristotle says (*Metaphysics* Gamma 1003a 21), the other reference is decisively modern, and comes directly from Husserl, but to a great extent also from a

13. Heidegger will translate and paraphrase this question differently in throughout his work: what is the being of beings (*Sein des Seienden*); what is beingness (*Seiendheit*); what is presence (*Anwesenheit*); what is presencing (*Anwesen*), etc. From his point of view, the whole fate of metaphysics lies in the transition from the question: what does it mean to *be*, what does the *to-be*, to *einai*, mean, to: what is that which truly *is* in the "to-be." Any translation of *ousia*, and of course first and foremost so the traditional rendering "substance," is caught up in a series of metaphysical decisions. That Aristotle's formulation of the manifold ways to say being, and the problem of the *analogia entis*, was a significant inspiration for Heidegger, is evidenced by the fact that Franz Brentano's *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutungen des Seienden nach Aristoteles* (1862) was one of the works that set him on his path, as he himself points out in "Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie," in *Zur Sache des Denkens*. And when Heidegger in summer 1931 lectures on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Theta 1-3, he uses the same fourfold framework derived from *Metaphysics* Epsilon 2 that served as the starting point for Brentano (being as accidens, as truth and falsity, as determined according to the schemes of the categories, as potentiality and actuality); cf. *Vom Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft. Aristoteles Metaphysik Θ*, GA 33 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1981), 12.

reinterpretation of Kant.<sup>14</sup> The issue here is rather to establish the difference between regional ontology, the various sciences with their specific objects, and formal ontology, the being of any object in general. This motif comes across in § 3, where Heidegger attempts to show the ontological priority of the question of being in general over the derived inquiries within the positive sciences, and his claim is that the question of being relates to the a priori condition of possibility not only of the sciences, but also of “the ontologies that lie before them as their foundations.”<sup>15</sup> The Husserlian and Kantian resonance of terms such as “a priori” and “conditions of possibility” is obvious, and here we can see that *Being and Time* by no means wants to break away from transcendental philosophy or from Kant’s dream that philosophy one day should learn the “sicheren Gang einer Wissenschaft,” and opt for some type of existentialist philosophy or *Lebensphilosophie*. The idea is not at all to take leave of or subvert the sciences, but to found them on a new understanding of meaning. But if it should be stressed that *Being and Time* indeed assumes a traditional task, it should just as well be noted that the foundation in “meaning” that it wants to provide is of a much broader and more general nature than is the case both in Frege and Husserl, in including structures of facticity, affectivity, and practical attitudes, and in reaching out to incorporate the formal-existential structures of social and historical experience. And it is precisely for this reason that Heidegger’s project, and in this respect his in fact

14. The importance of Kant is shown by his presence in many of the lecture series that surround *Being and Time*, for instance *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, from 1925-26 (GA 21) and in the series from 1928, *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (GA 25), which leads up to the published work on Kant in 1929, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*. The lectures in fact correct some of the more unappreciative remarks on Kant in *Being in Time*, and he is explicitly credited with being the first to opening the way to a new understanding of constitutive finitude, and thus to fundamental ontology.
15. *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1984), 11. Henceforth: SZ.

seems more sensitive than Husserl's, is much more attuned to the *actual crises and needs of the sciences of the time*, to their "manifold ways" to say being, than the (neo-)Kantian epistemologies or the various positivistic reductions of the period.<sup>16</sup> Philosophical inquiry should establish the essential structures of the regions occupied by the sciences—physics, mathematics, and also history, psychology, and the various political and human sciences—but in order to do that it has to provide us with a much more encompassing concept of "sense," which eventually must be able to harbor all the different regions as modifications. Such a concept of sense would then have to reduce the inherited metaphysical concepts that have come to form the unconscious substructure of the modern sciences, be they sciences of "Geist" or of "Natur" (a motif that dates back at least to Husserl's polemic against

16. The same thing holds for the lecture "Was ist Metaphysik?" (1929), with its propositions about the "Nothing" (*das Nichts*) that sparked the (in)famous retort in 1932 by Rudolf Carnap, "Die Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache." Heidegger begins his text by noting that the sciences have drifted far apart, and his search for a new foundation in the transcendence of Dasein, which constitutes the sense of the different regions of objects—the "nothinging of nothing" (*das Nichten des Nichts*) that occurs in the being of beings, and which in Carnap's no doubt intentionally misleading analysis appears as a substantialization of the logical notion of negation—in fact follows a clearly recognizable transcendental logic. Dasein is that being that by "stepping beyond" (*Überstieg*, the *meta-*) beings towards the metaphysical level can come *back* to them and understand them in their being (the essential features or "eidetic structures" of each region, to use Husserl's vocabulary). That this "beyond" of beings was baptized as "nothing" was perhaps an unfortunate move, and Heidegger would soon drop this terminology. Carnap's violent and aggressive reading of the text is however to such an extent misguided and off the mark that it cannot be taken as serious, and it was probably instrumental in establishing a long-standing incomprehension between analytical philosophy and phenomenology.

Dilthey in *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*), but not in order to discard them, as in the proposals for a “unified science” of the Vienna circle, but in order to discover their different a priori structures, which then will function as conditions of possibility for the concepts put to use in the sciences. As a question, the “meaning of being” reaches down into the subsoil of Greek thought, but it also responds to a contemporary need brought about by the division of labor between natural, social, and human sciences. The (in)famous saying “Science does not think” (“Die Wissenschaft denkt nicht”), which often been cited to demonstrate an anti-scientific bias on Heidegger’s side, may be a formula far too simplistic to capture the guiding thought of *Being and Time*, and probably of the later work as well.<sup>17</sup>

This retrieval *and* transformation of the transcendental question inherited from Kant and Husserl, which comes across in the foundationalist attitude towards the sciences, on another level indicates the “hold” exerted by the “language of metaphysics” over *Being and Time*, and it also comes across in the structural articulation of the book. The access to the meaning of being was to be opened along two distinct paths, which have a order of implication between them; first, an *analytic* of the position from which this new question is to be formulated, and secondly, a *destruction* of the history of ontology, which was supposed to

17. Cf. for instance the remarks on modern science in “Wissenschaft und Besinnung,” (1953), in *Vorträge und Aufsätze I*. Heidegger analyzes the metaphysical substructure of the sciences as relating to “effective reality” (*Wirklichkeit*), and provides a genealogy of *theoria* in Greek philosophy, and to a great extent he still assumes a certain transcendental stance with respect to the different regions of science. The word “Besinnung” carries strong Husserlian connotations, and comes close to the “Verantwortlichkeit” proclaimed as the proper imperative of phenomenology in *Formale und transzendente Logik* and *Krisis*. Is it true that there are essential differences in their respective views on *theoria*, but this cannot be understood in terms of a simplistic choice between a positive and a negative attitude.

apply the insights derived from the first step in a rereading of certain crucial moments within the history of philosophy, where the articulation of being and time is made thematic. Both of these concepts are at stake in the reading of Kant, and here we can see even more clearly the extent to which *Being and Time* remains a transcendental philosophy.

It should be noted that Heidegger's use of the term "existential analytic" instead of "analysis" is not at all circumstantial, but precisely pinpoints the link between fundamental ontology and transcendental philosophy. For Kant, the word "analytic" indicates to the essential difference between the new acceptance of finitude in transcendental philosophy, and the "infinitist" analysis of concepts in rationalism. In pre-Kantian rationalism, analysis is understood as completed in the mind of God, whereas human incapacity is a limit that we constantly push against in our attempts to grasp the plan of divine understanding. In Kant the limit becomes constitutive: it is because we are finite that we have knowledge, and no "analysis" of concepts can mean anything to us unless we relate it to possible experience, i.e., to an element that is an irreducible composite of activity and passivity, spontaneity and receptivity. Finitude does not result from the contingent limitations of our senses, it is constitutive for our essence as receptive beings subjected to space and time, and in this sense the limit is not something external that from the outside puts restraints on knowledge, but the very condition of experience as such. As an "originary intuition" (*intuitus originarius*), God would in fact have neither intuition nor categories, and he would not encounter any objects or *Gegen-stände* (where the *gegen-*, the *ob-*, indicates the moment of resistance), and in this sense there would quite simply not be anything that could be known. On the other hand, as a "derived intuition" (*intuitus derivativus*) human cognition is fundamentally receptive, and although it acts with spontaneity, it always does so upon something that must be given to it; it is only by thinking the given through the categories that there can be an "experience" of anything. For the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, this constitutive finitude will have more "content" than in Kant's quite formal expositions of the forms of intuition (space and time), and it is laid out in terms of our being-towards-death. Death forms the ultimate temporal horizon of all projects, all intentional relations, it is the ulti-

mate “given,” and it is only because we come *back* to ourselves from this final horizon that we can understand the “meaning” of the different regions of objects as structured through their respective temporal characteristics. The structure of the project and the horizon obeys a foundational logic, but the foundation is no longer a *fundamentum inconcussum*, as in Descartes (provided that this is how we should read Descartes, which is far from clear), but an opening, an ek-static relation to death as our ownmost possibility, that which gives unity to my being as a “capacity-to-be-whole” (*Ganzsein können*).

The key concept in Heidegger’s “destructive” re-reading of Kant is the idea of “schematism” in *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant suggests that the concepts of the understanding need to be temporalized in order to be applicable to experience. For Heidegger this section of the Critique, seemingly of rather marginal status, points to the irruption of a temporal problem at the core of the transcendental subject, and it indicates that reason and time belong together in a way that Kant himself was not ready to acknowledge, which in Heidegger’s reading is why he “retreated” from the more radical insights of the first edition of his Critique (1781) to the second (1787). The transcendental imagination, which for Kant is a subordinate “power,” a *Kraft* and not a faculty, not a *Vermögen* in the full sense of having its own a priori legislation, is what produces the schema for the category (“permanence in time” for substance, “succession in time” for causality, etc.). Heidegger now proposes that if we are to understand what lies hidden in this power, it needs to be twisted free from the architecture of Kant’s Critique with a certain violence, and this is the work of the repetition or retrieval (*Wiederholung*) and the de-structuring or destruction (*Destruktion*). Such a repeating-retrieving de-structuring does however not reduce the Critique to a heap of disjointed fragments, it does not merely destroy the edifice—it is not a purely negative *Zerstörung*, but it allows us to uncover a hidden dimension. In Kant’s case this would be the “common root” of reason and sensibility in the movement of transcendence as originary temporalization, which Kant was unable, or unwilling, to uncover because of his “entrapment” in school metaphysics and in a certain theory of the “faculties” of the mind. In this sense the destruction repeats or re-plays the text, it awakens a poten-



tial by dismantling (*Ab-bau*) the sedimented layers that obscure and cover over the initial experiences dormant within a certain concept, and in this it comes close to what Husserl calls "Reaktivierung."<sup>18</sup> Phenomenological *Destruction* and *Abbau* can be understood as a repetition, Heidegger says, a retrieval that returns to an initial formulation, enacts it once more, but in this repetition it frees a difference and another *possibility* and shows that the tradition, had it understood its own breakthroughs adequately, was already underway towards fundamental ontology. The destruction fulfills the promise of the tradition by reading it against itself, and the question is not how we could overcome metaphysics, but rather how to provide it with a true foundation by actualizing its concealed possibilities.

This dismantling, de-structuring, and repetition of the tradition will change after the turn, and it is instructive to see how the position ascribed to Kant will shift. In 1929 *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* can look back to the Critical philosophy for a first hesitant formulation of an analytic of Dasein. In the later texts Kant's philosophy will be situated as a passage towards speculative idealism as it culminates in Hegel and Schelling, i.e., as a moment within the completion of the

18. A case of this would be the origin of geometry, as this is analyzed by Husserl in the *Krisis*: the task of phenomenological reactivation is to return to the founding experiences of geometry that are sedimented inside its modern and merely "technicist" interpretation, to resuscitate an originary geometric experience that also opens the possibility of a tradition, and in this sense already is an idealization. Only in this way can we account for the *origin* of idealities (they do not fall down to us from a Platonic *topos ouranios*, but are constituted in an act of *Urstiftung* that took place in a particular time and place) as well as their infinite capacity to generate a geometrical *future*, their limitless *normative* quality. The interplay between these moments constitute the tension in Husserl's conception of an "intentional history," which bears many resemblances to Heidegger's "repetition," and guides his analyses of the "crisis of the European sciences."

metaphysics of absolute subjectivity. In this reading the notion of a Kantian “opening” is erased, and transcendental philosophy no longer constitutes a promise to be fulfilled in the form of fundamental ontology; the “unthought” in Kant’s Critique no longer contains a promise that we could fulfill by repeating it.

Whereas fundamental ontology wants to complete the movement of the Copernican Revolution by asking for its inner and hidden foundation, it might be possible to say that the “Kehre” away from fundamental ontology for Heidegger is a different kind of response, which presupposes the first while also reinscribing it: in one way it constitutes a step beyond the transcendental revolution, but in another and more precise sense that also accords with Heidegger’s own vocabulary, it is more like a “step back” (*Schritt zurück*) from it, not in order to lead us back to some kind of pre-critical philosophy of being, but so as to allow us to see the “transcendental” as *one* answer, maybe privileged (since it sets the question of fundamental ontology on its track), but not the final one. Whereas the analytic of *Being and Time* wants to establish a new foundation for the transcendental project, the “Kehre” abandons this project, not in being straightforwardly *opposed* to the Kantian “Wende,” but in *prolonging and deflecting its movement* into another dimension, from out of which the transcendental can be understood as one possible way of answering to the “call of thinking.”

But what, then, is the limit of the transcendental, what is the aporia that *Being and Time* so eloquently elaborates? Or, put differently, what is the “turn” inside fundamental ontology itself that the book failed to enact, not just in terms of a text that for one reason or another was “held back,” but as an ontological question whose suspension opens onto the turn in being itself?

### *III. The meaning of being and the projection of Dasein*

The question of the meaning of being starts, just as in Plato’s *Sophist*, with a certain perplexity, not primarily with regard to how we should understand a certain word, but how we should *understand understanding*, and what it *means to have meaning*. The question of being, Heidegger says, cannot start off from an empty and universal signi-

fication, but must, in accordance with the phenomenological call for a return to concreteness, begin by examining the place from which all such questions are posed. *Who* asks the question of the meaning of being? For whom “is” there such a thing as meaning? As is well known, his answer attempts to suspend all traditional conceptions of subjectivity, mind, soul, person, etc., and this being for whom there is meaning will be understood as *Dasein*, the simple fact of “being-there,” i.e., the being who is “there” before it is understood and explicated in terms of any of the “ontic” sciences, and who has the privilege of asking *questions*.

The analytic of *Dasein* will delineate, step by step, the “existentials” that come to form the structure of this There. For our purposes, the important aspect is the always-already-thereness of a certain *comprehension*, which first and foremost entails a pre-comprehension of being. The point of departure for the ontological question must be within an ordinary, vague consciousness of the meaning of being, since it cannot base itself on a general definition or an a priori evidence: in strict adherence to the theme of finitude, meaning has to emerge from out of a self-explication of the “there” itself, if it is to make sense to us. There is, Heidegger states, a pre-comprehension of the word “being,” although it is not yet conceptually grasped, and this pre-discursive, pre-conceptual understanding is a “fact” (SZ 5) whose further explication will be the task of ontology.

Heidegger will hereafter in *Being and Time* never question the factuality of this fact—it constitutes the ultimate resource of fundamental ontology, and the very condition of possibility for all questions of a philosophical nature. Ontological explication clarifies that which is already there, it begins from the place where we already are without knowing it, and this kind of hermeneutic circle (which is a *positive* determination of thought, unlike the circular understanding of being and time as presence in Greek ontology), already at work in all everyday comprehension, is what underlies the movement of philosophy. *Dasein*, Heidegger says, is ontically speaking *closest* to itself, ontologically however *farthest* away, a topology which is expressed in the formula “pre-ontologically not alien” (*vorontologisch nicht fremd*). Bridging and articulating this inner distance, transforming this “not alien”

into an explicit possession, is the task of the analytic of Dasein.<sup>19</sup> The meaning of being does not descend upon us from a Platonic heavenly place, but must come out of a context of everydayness, in the sense that meaning grows out of the subsoil of our comportments and our circumspection, out of all types of attachments, negative as well as positive, that we have the world. As a hermeneutics of facticity ontology must follow and clarify this articulation of understandability (*Verständlichkeit*) and meaning already at work in the spontaneous self-explication that occurs in all normal activities. In this sense there is no reduction or break taking place between the natural attitude and philosophical reflection, as in Husserl (or at least in Husserl as seen by Heidegger), but a continual movement of articulation and explication of an implicit and latent comprehension.

After the turn, this “fact” of comprehension will be relativized, since the investigation in this phase no longer starts within a non- or

19. Earlier we have noted the affinity between the existential analytic and Kant’s analytic of finitude, and maybe there is something to be said here about the idea of *factum rationis* in Kant, not however in the first but the second Critique, where this “fact” is the insistent presence of the moral law that calls us back from our natural desires to our responsibility as moral agents. This call, Kant notes in the Introduction to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, comes from the rational part of myself, which in relation to the sphere of desire appears as an outside that interrupts and hurts my self-love (*meine Selbstliebe Abruch tut*). The call of moral duty appears as coming from above and outside of me (the “starry sky” as the heavenly site of the imperative), and only thus can it give rise to the structure of “respect” (*Achtung*). In *Being and Time* Heidegger borrows many of these structural traits in his analysis of the “call of conscience” (*Ruf des Gewissens*), which calls me back to myself and my own authentic existence from my dispersal in everyday life. Heidegger sketches an analysis of respect as a structure of finitude in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, § 30 (see also the Davos debate with Cassirer, *ibid.*, 251 f), but never brings out the connection to the analysis of conscience in *Being and Time*.

pre-philosophical everyday situation, but with the *texts* of the tradition. Their understanding of being is in a much more radical sense dependent on their *epochal* position (and we have to bear mind that the *epoche* Heidegger refers to has to do with the “withdrawal” of being, and only on this basis can we talk of something like a chronological span), and our hermeneutic relation to them cannot assume one single transcendental horizon as its point of departure. The analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time* is itself non-historical; even though the existential structure contains historicity as one of its essential moments,<sup>20</sup> the *structure itself* is non-temporal, in the sense that its constituent moments will not shift in time, nor change their interrelation. In the perspective of *Being and Time* the relation between the hermeneutic and the apophantic “as,” which is the key to the predominance of the substantialist interpretation of being as “presence-at-hand,” is itself not subject to historical change. The “Umschlag” (§ 69 b) between the two forms of “as,” which is a passage between two modes of comprehension, belongs to the essential a priori structure of Dasein as “Verfallensein,” which remains a constant historical possibility, just as the structures of they “they” (*das Man*), curiosity, idle talk, and a whole series of existential possibilities of “falling.”<sup>21</sup> In fact, Heidegger is able to use source ma-

20. The connection between time and temporality and the whole sphere of “historicity” is of course essential, and it constitutes both a central topic and a methodological issue in *Being and Time*; cf. the discussion in Hans Ruin, *Enigmatic Origins: Tracing the Theme of Historicity Through Heidegger's Works* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994).
21. Commentators who read Heidegger from a point of view of sociology (Adorno, Bourdieu, Fredric Jameson, and many others) and tend toward a negative assessment, read these passages as a conservative diatribe against contemporary mass culture, and Heidegger becomes an ontological version of cultural conservatism. Others who favor an immanent reading normally respond that although this is undoubtedly true on *one* level, one also has to acknowledge the a priori and structural value of these distinctions—in short, there is just as much idle talk in the Greek

terial from all historical stages in order to construct the analytic, since its value remains transhistorical and universal. An obvious case would be the analysis of the Aristotelian *ousia* in the lecture series from 1928, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, where Heidegger uncovers how such a term was forged on the basis of “the productive comportment of the Dasein,” and how it is rooted in everyday understanding of concepts of property, belonging, possessions, etc.<sup>22</sup> When he later returns to the genesis of the same concept, for instance in the sketches of the structure of the history of being at the end of second volume on *Nietzsche* (to cite just one of innumerable examples), *ousia* is seen as a response to and a transformation of Plato’s *eidōs* and *idea*, and the concept is as it were uprooted from its existential analytic in order to be inserted into the movement of a historical concatenation.<sup>23</sup>

In *Being and Time* on the other hand, it is through a “ground-clearing” (*grundfreilegende*) explication of how comprehension unfolds in terms of the different meaning-structures of being-in-the-world that not only the inherited philosophical vocabulary, but also the phenomenon of meaning in general can be clarified, and a passageway

*polis* as in the Weimar Republic. Even though sociological reductionism (blatant in Bourdieu, much more sophisticated in Adorno) should be rejected, there is no denying that the analyses of “Verfallensein” in *Being and Time* have a rather schematic character, and that they—in comparison with many of the analyses made in same period, for instance by Kracauer and Benjamin—stray very far from “den Sachen selbst” and appear more like those readymade clichés that Heidegger himself rejects. For more on Heidegger and Benjamin, cf. chap. 7 below.

22. *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, GA 24, 149 ff; *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, transl. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 108 ff. Henceforth cited as *GP/BP*. Cf. also the lectures from 1930, *Vom Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit* (GA 31), 45 ff, that return to the same topic.
23. Cf. “Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins,” in *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 399 ff.

opened to the question of the meaning of being in general. The question of being thus requires a sufficient understanding of the phenomenon of meaning in itself, and this phenomenon can only be grasped if we have a sufficient understanding of that being for which meaning occurs, the “there” or “here” of being as Dasein.

This is one way of understanding the analysis of the “formal structure of the question of being” as it is outlined in § 3 in its three constitutive moments: first we have “das Gefragte,” being as that which determines beings *as* beings; then “das Erfragte,” the *meaning* of being, the specific mode of disclosure (*Entdeckungsart*) pertaining to being itself as distinct from beings; and finally “das Befragte,” that particular being which is *exemplary* in that it has the possibility to ask the question, the being *that we ourselves are* and for whom the being of its own There *is at stake*. We seem indeed to be caught in a circle, Heidegger notes, although not in the sense of a logical and vicious circle, but as the remarkable sense in which das “Gefragte” is related back to, or in advance related to (*Rück- oder Vorbezogenheit*) questioning as a mode of being of one particular being (SZ 7 f). This is both ontological and a hermeneutic circle, in which Dasein’s pre-ontological understanding always has being in general as an indefinite horizon towards which it projects the meaning of the different regions of beings, although this horizon is not available in the sphere of everydayness as a “disposable concept” (*verfügbarer Begriff*). The first step in the analytic of Dasein will then be an explication of how meaning is constituted, and it is only through this explication—although it remains a propedeutic—that a fundamental ontology can come about. Dasein can in this sense be said to be *ontico-ontological*: it contains within itself a pre-comprehension of being, because it, as Heidegger puts it in a dense formulation, “*is*” as ontological (“Die ontische Auszeichnung des Daseins liegt darin, dass es ontologisch *ist*,” SZ 12), and by virtue of this priority all explicit ontologies will have to be rooted in Dasein. Later on we will see that it is precisely the significance of this rootedness that will cause problems: in what sense should we understand the priority of Dasein’s perspective in the question of the meaning of being, and how can we move from the preliminary and propedeutic explication to the thing itself, as it were? But, given the understanding of “meaning” proposed

in *Being and Time*, can there indeed be such a “thing” or “issue” *in itself*, or should this whole line of reasoning be, precisely—*turned around*?

In these introductory steps we see that the phenomenon of meaning is essentially tied to Dasein, and further on it will be more precisely defined as the “upon-which” (*Woraufhin*) of projection, structured through a series of anticipatory modes, a “fore-having,” a “fore-seeing,” and a “fore-grasping,” from out of which something becomes understandable *as* something (“Sinn ist das durch Vorhabe, Vorsicht und Vorgriff strukturierte Woraufhin des Entwurfs, aus dem her etwas als etwas verständlich wird,” § 32). Meaning is a mode of disclosure that belongs to the “formal-existential structure of comprehension,” it is not something that solely belongs to words, statements, or propositions, but an existential of Dasein (“Sinn [muß] als das formal-existential Gerüst der dem Verstehen zugehörige Erschlossenheit begriffen werden. Sinn ist ein Existential des Daseins,” *ibid.*). Meaning is always a part of the way in which Dasein “throws” or projects itself, and this structure of the “-ject” (which holds a similar position as Husserl’s intentionality, as we will see) precedes and founds the derivative modes of subject and object: what is traditionally understood as a subject present unto itself must be rethought as the always already “-jected” ground of the project (Dasein as a “geworfener Entwurf”), and the object as that which only has meaning in terms of the whither of the “pro-.” It is precisely because we are *thrown*, i.e., *finite*, that we have to understand all things in the mode of throwing or “-jecting,” and all meaning is temporal through and through—with death, the opposite end of “thrownness,” forming the ultimate horizon for all projects, which is also why we must understand time as essentially temporalized from the future.

All understanding of being moves in this dimension, and all types of comprehension occurring in being-in-the-world will have to receive a certain temporal determination, they must be “schematized,”<sup>24</sup> un-

24. *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* will return to these questions, for instance in the interpretation of the Kantian triad apprehension-reproduction-recognition in § 33, which should be read together with the



til temporality can finally be shown to be the ontological meaning of the fundamental relation that we have to ourselves, “care” (*Sorge*) (§ 65). The totality of Dasein’s being-in-the-world is ecstatically directed towards the future, projecting itself in the direction of its own death as the utmost possibility-to-be, and in this projection it discloses the finitude of originary time.

The temporality of Dasein is however not yet the answer to the meaning of being, but only the “ground” (*Boden*) for a possible answer (17). As we have already seen, we also need a more original and detailed explication of time, based on the temporality of Dasein, as the horizon of the comprehension of being, which will set itself apart from the “vulgar concept of time” determined as a sequence of now-points from Aristotle’s *Physics* to Bergson,<sup>25</sup> and which has been decisive for

analysis of comprehension and explication in *SZ* § 69 b, where Heidegger wants to show that the mutual implication of the temporal ecstasies is the reason why that which is encountered in the mode of an object must be interpreted according to the schema of the structure “as,” and finally that this “as,” just as comprehension and explication, “is founded in the ecstatic-horizonal unity of temporality” (360).

25. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger only once mentions (433 f, note) Husserl’s *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, whose editor he became in 1928 in the version published in *Jahrbuch für philosophische und phänomenologische Forschung*, vol. 9. It is unclear how much influence Husserl’s lectures exerted on Heidegger, for instance when it comes to the relation between retention and protention, and the temporal ecstasies; most of Heidegger’s conceptions were probably worked out independently. However, he would probably have had no difficulties in aligning Husserl with the rest of the tradition emanating from the Aristotle’s *Physics*: in Husserl the now functions as the “source-point,” the locus of the “originary production” of time, and even though it could be argued that Husserl himself complicates the simple notion of the now as presence, the authority of the now is never shaken on the explicit level of Husserl’s discourse. And even more fundamentally, Husserl’s starting

the substantialist ontology predominant in the history of philosophy. This will be the task of the “destruction” in the second part, which shows us how the tradition can be repeated and reactivated. But between these two parts, the analytic of Dasein and the destruction of the history of ontology, there is this crucial juncture entitled “Zeit und Sein,” where the “whole” was to have “turned around,” but that was held back, and now we approach the heart of the matter. What would have been the contents of this section, and why was it held back?

As we have seen, the meaning-structure of Dasein’s projections is ultimately rooted in its “temporality” (*Zeitlichkeit*), which is the ontological meaning of care. But in the next step—and the relation between these two steps is the crucial issue here—we have to proceed to another and deeper dimension, the Temporality (*Temporalität*) of being, and it is only from this dimension that the full significance of temporality can be discerned (in the following, I will mark the distinction between *Zeitlichkeit* of Dasein and *Temporalität* of being by translating the first as “temporality” and the second as “Temporality”). “The fundamen-

point in an “inner” time-consciousness would be objectionable to Heidegger, who emphasizes that the “ecstatic” structure of originary time means that Dasein is always *outside* of itself, even though this seemingly sharp divide might be more of a difference in vocabulary that in fact hides a shared commitment. Heidegger himself provides support for both interpretations: to cite just two of many instances, one the hand he can propose in 1928 that “what Husserl still calls temporal consciousness, i.e., consciousness of time, is precisely time itself in the originary sense” (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, GA 26, 264); on the other hand, at the end of his philosophical trajectory, in 1969 he looks back and says that his analysis of time “went in a direction that always remained foreign to Husserl’s investigations of internal time consciousness” (“Über das Zeitverständnis in der Phänomenologie und im Denken der Seinsfrage,” intervention at the conference in Freiburg on the occasion of thirtieth anniversary of Husserl’s death, cit. in Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger et la question du temps* [Paris: PUF, 1990], 27).

tal-ontological task of interpreting being as such," Heidegger writes, "contains the working out of the Temporality of being. It is only with the problem of Temporality that a concrete answer is given to the question of the meaning of being." (19) For some reason this distinction is often overlooked among the commentators, probably because Temporality as such never received any significant treatment in the published text, but it can no doubt be argued—and as we have seen, this is in fact what Heidegger himself says—that it is *this very absence* that holds the key to why *Being and Time* was interrupted: the projective structure of temporality barred the way to Temporality, or did not allow Temporality to tie the two sides of fundamental ontology together in a way that would give each its proper due.<sup>26</sup> The place accorded to the distinction in the Introduction is in fact architectonically highly important, and the intention of the book, the unfolding of the question of the meaning of being with time as a transcendental horizon, cannot be properly understood without taking this into account. In fact, most types of anthropological and existentialist misunderstandings of *Being and Time* (as is obvious in Sartre, or for that matter even as early as Husserl) seem to stem from a misreading of these introductory paragraphs, which unambiguously state that the published part of the work is only a *preparation* for the question of being, and that the existential analytic is *not* to be read as aiming towards a self-sufficient philosophical anthropology.

When Heidegger asserts that the meaning of being must be understood in relation to the projection of Dasein, his way of expressing this occasionally indicates a certain symptomatic hesitance:

26. An interpretation of the failure of *Being and Time* that explicitly centers on this problem can be found in Jean Grondin, *Le tournant dans la pensée de Martin Heidegger* (Paris: PUF, 1987), who is a major inspiration for my argument here, especially in pointing to the importance of the lecture series from 1927 and 1928, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* and *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*. Similar conclusions are drawn in Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger et la question du temps*.

“When we ask for the meaning of being,” he says, “the investigation does not become profound, and it does not attempt to figure something out that would stand behind being (“dann wird die Untersuchung nicht tiefsinnig und ergrübelt nichts, was hinter dem Sein steht”), but we ask for being itself to the extent that it *stands into* the understandability of Dasein” (“sofern es in die Verständlichkeit des Daseins *hereinsteht*” (152, my italics). Both expressions “sofern” and “hereinsteht,” seem to indicate that Heidegger also wants to hold being in *reserve*, and allow it to “stand into” the comprehension of Dasein, in order not to grasp it *solely* as a projection from Dasein’s perspective, although Heidegger’s own explications of “meaning” would in fact authorize precisely this conclusion. And such a conclusion would indeed be to understand the meaning of being as a “Leistung der Subjektivität,” as the *Letter on Humanism* says.

The expression “Leistung” here refers back to Husserl’s notion of constitution (which of course is a much more complex notion than can be shown here, although Heidegger in the passage cited appears to privilege its “activist” aspect, against which Husserl often cautions us),<sup>27</sup> and it is difficult not to understand Heidegger’s “projection” as a transformation or reformulation of the phenomenological concept of intentionality. Heidegger’s ambition is however not just to “deepen” or “renew” the theme of intentionality, for instance by uncovering new descriptive layers that would displace the theoretical acts from the primacy they were accorded in Husserl, but to reach a principally *different dimension* from which the very possibility of intentionality can be understood and *founded*, just as the famous analysis in § 44 of truth as *aletheia*, as disclosure instead of correspondence, is supposed to show that the possibility of truth as *adaequatio* is founded in truth as an existential, and not to discard adequation as simply a false theory. This re-founding of intentionality is however precisely one of those problems that finds itself relegated to the third

27. For a discussion of constitution in Husserl, see Robert Sokolowski, *The Formation of Husserl’s Concept of Constitution* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970).

part that was held back, as Heidegger says in a footnote: "That and how the intentionality of consciousness is founded in the ecstatic temporality of Dasein will be shown in the following section" [i.e., "Zeit und Sein"] (363, note 1).

Heidegger's problem seems to be that this other dimension retains all the structural characteristics of the dimension that is being reduced, in fact tends to duplicate it. Even though concepts such as "subject" and "subjectivity" and all of their cognates are explicitly rejected in *Being and Time*, and the notion of Dasein claims neutrality or priority in relation the philosophical tradition, something of the *position* of subjectivity, the "zero-point" of projection, still remains, even though this point is understood as a breaking-forth and an opening (the question of course being to what extent the tradition from Descartes and onwards has ever said anything *else* than this). Dasein is indeed explicitly determined as a "pure *ekstatikon*," an ecstatic standing-outside of itself in the three temporal horizons that constantly undo the privilege of the present and resituate it as that to which we come *back* from the projection of the future. And still, the existential structure as *founding* will and must inevitably retain the structural traits of the *founded* concepts inherited from the philosophical tradition, and a similar doubling or repetition occurs when we approach the articulation of temporality and Temporality, from which we are supposed to "come back" to a whole series of oppositions left suspended in the first two sections, in order to explicate their "relative justification."

The way beyond the temporality of Dasein to the Temportality, and thus the very question and meaning of being, seems however to be blocked—or perhaps opened *prematurely* and *too simply*, which here amounts to the same—by the very definition of meaning itself. At the end of the first section, Heidegger writes: "'There is' being—not beings—only insofar there is truth. And there is *truth* only insofar as Dasein is. Being and truth 'are' equiprimordial. But what it means that being 'is,' and yet should be separated from all beings, can only be asked in a concrete way when the meaning of being and the scope of the comprehension of being have been clarified. Only then can we explicate in an originary way what belongs to a science

of being as such, its possibilities and derivations.”<sup>28</sup> (§ 44 c, 230)

As we have already noted, the idea of a science of being as being is a resurrected form of the Aristotelian first philosophy, as it is expressed in the canonical lines from the opening of the fourth book of the *Metaphysics*: *estin episteme tis he theorei to on he on kai ta touto hyparchonta kath'auto*, “there is a science which studies being *qua* being, and that which belongs to by virtue of itself” (1003a 21). Seen in the light of the distinction between temporality and Temporality, we can now understand why this universal science can *not* simply be coextensive with an analytic of Dasein, even though this latter part constitutes the privileged *access* to a possible first philosophy, and this to such an extent that “there is” being (“Sein [...] ‘gibt es’ nur...”) only insofar as truth *is*, which in its turn is only insofar as Dasein is. The citation marks around the first “there is” should here be understood as warding off a certain misunderstanding: “there is” not being in the same way as truth (which “*is*,” italicized), which in its turn is something that belongs existentially to Dasein (who is, without both citation marks and italics). Being is not one particular being and cannot be reduced to Dasein’s existential structures, quite simply because both of these “are,” each in their peculiar way. But what would then be the positive meaning of the “there is,” which could ascribed to being itself, *qua* being (*on he on, ens qua ens*)? Are we not here running up against a certain limit, i.e. the point where the preparation of the question would have to give way to the answer—in short, to the turning point between the existential analytic and the destruction of the history of ontology that would have been named “time and being”? One the one hand, Hei-

28. “Sein—nicht Seiendes—’gibt es’ nur, sofern Wahrheit ist. Und sie *ist* nur, solange Dasein ist. Sein und Wahrheit ‘sind’ gleichursprünglich. Was es bedeutet: Sein ‘ist,’ wo es doch von allem Seienden unterschieden sein soll, kann erst konkret gefragt werden, wenn der Sinn von Sein und die Tragweite von Seinsverständnis überhaupt aufgeklärt sind. Erst dann ist auch ursprünglich auseinanderlagen, was zum Begriff einer Wissenschaft *vom Sein als solchem*, seine Möglichkeiten und Abwandlungen gehört.”

degger has already from the outset of *Being and Time* rejected all traditional notions of being as a “concept” of which particular beings would be instances definable according to genera and species (which is the basic outline of the Aristotelian solution); but on the other hand, does not the very idea of a “science of being as being” that will treat its “possibilities and derivations” (*Möglichkeiten und Abwandlungen*) and lay claim to being as a “disposable concept” lead in such a direction? Can the classical ontological question become the object of a repetition and destruction in such a way that another possibility would be liberated inside of it, another question that does not obey the same form while still saying the same, the *same* and yet *different*?

Heidegger returns to this precise passage in the *Letter on Humanism*, in a slightly different context where he comments upon Sartre's existentialist interpretation of the analytic in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*. Sartre is referring to the death of God that leaves us with no possible guidelines for ethical action, and draws the conclusion that “we are on a plane where nothings exists except men.” For Heidegger this seems to give in to the temptation to allow the question of being to be simply absorbed by the analytic of Dasein, which leads to an existentialist and subjectivist interpretation. Commenting on the expression “there is” (with citation marks) from *Being and Time*, he writes:

Thought from *Being and Time*, this should say instead: *précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement l'Être* [We are precisely on a plane where principally there is Being]. But where does *le plan* come from and what is it? *L'Être et le plan* are the same. In *Being and Time* (p. 212) we purposely and cautiously say, *il y a l'Être*: “there is / it gives [“*es gibt*”] Being. *Il y a* translates “it gives” imprecisely. For the “it” that here “gives is Being itself. The “gives” names the essence of being that is giving, granting its truth. The self-giving into the open, along

with the open region itself, is Being itself.<sup>29</sup>

Heidegger's interpretation of this crucial passage seems to attempt to twist another sense from the text, even from a grammatical point of view. The sentence quoted above from the end of section I ("Sein—nicht Seiendes—'gibt es' nur, sofern Wahrheit ist") could not possibly be construed as having "being" as its active grammatical subject. And given the definitions of meaning and truth that frame the statement in the text, this interpretation seems even more unlikely. In fact, what Heidegger here does is to re-interpret the proposals of *Being and Time* on the basis of his later meditations on the "Es gibt" (now written with a capital E) that were systematically exposed for the first time in the published work as late in 1962, in the lecture "Zeit und Sein," and perhaps we could say that he is applying the same kind of destructive violence on his own text that he once applied to Kant—a repetition that frees something that was still "unthought" in the earlier text, and yet remains there as a possibility to be actualized.<sup>30</sup> Heidegger is here in retrospect attempting to locate the "breaking through" of the turn already in *Being and Time*, whereas he earlier in the *Letter on Humanism* says that thinking "failed" because it was still caught up in the language of metaphysics.

29. "Statt dessen wäre, von 'S.u.Z.' her gedacht zu sagen: précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement l'Être. Woher aber kommt und was ist le plan? L'Être et le plan sind dasselbe. In 'S.u.Z.' (S. 212) ist mit Absicht und Vorsicht gesagt: il y a l'Être; 'es gibt das Sein. Das 'il y a' übersetzt das 'es gibt' ungenau. Denn das es, was hier gibt, ist das Sein selbst. Das 'gibt' nennt jedoch das gebende, seine Wahrheit gewährende Wesen des Seins. Das Sichgebende ins Offene mit diesem selbst ist das Sein selber." (*Wegmarken*, 331); *Basic Writings*, 237 f. I have changed the English translation of the French *plan* as "situation" to "plane."

30. For a general discussion of how Heidegger's reading of his earlier texts in light of the later, see Friedrich von Hermann, *Die Selbstinterpretation Martin Heideggers* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1964).



Returning to the issue of being *and* time (as a question) and “Time and being” (as a section of *Being and Time*), let us state the problem in the most general and perhaps all too classically “architectonic” fashion: if the question of the meaning of being *in general* is supposed to be developed with time as transcendental horizon, then “time” must here be understood as Temporality (*Temporalität*), the originary time that temporalizes itself, whereas the temporality of Dasein is one, although privileged, mode, but cannot be coextensive with the originary domain itself. The Temporality of being would thus be the fundament within fundamental ontology, and, as Heidegger says at the end of the book, it is only from that point that the exposition “reverts back” (*zurückschlägt*) to Dasein (436). And he adds: “The exposition of the ontological structure of Dasein nevertheless remains only *one way*. The *goal* is the working-out of the question of being in general” (“Die Herausstellung des Seinsverfassung des Daseins bleibt gleichwohl nur *ein Weg*. Das *Ziel* ist die Ausarbeitung der Seinsfrage überhaupt”) (*ibid*, Heidegger’s italics). But the analysis of meaning as projection cannot by itself reach this point: if the existential-ontological structure of the totality of Dasein is founded in temporality, then there must be “an originary mode of temporalization that *itself makes the ecstatic projection of being in general possible*” (“dann muss eine ursprüngliche Zeitigungsweise *selbst den ekstatischen Entwurf von Sein überhaupt ermöglichen*” (437, my italics), and this more original mode of temporalization must in some sense go beyond the finite projection emanating from Dasein, although without becoming an infinite Idea of a simply transcendent being or an *intuitus originarius* in the Kantian sense, since this would imply a passageway to eternity, and a disavowal of the radical finitude of ontological understanding.

To do this is the burden placed upon the third section, “Zeit und Sein.” Now we can begin to sense the way in which here “the whole turns around.” In the first and second section we moved from being to time: starting in the first section from the being of Dasein, whose existential structures in the second were repeated and grounded in terms of temporality (were “schematized”), we then moved towards time itself as a transcendental horizon for the question of being as such. In the third section we would then have to be able to reverse

the order of the exposition, at the point where it “zurückschlägt,” and proceed backwards from originary Temporality to the different regions of beings in order to show how they are articulated with each other, until we finally would be ready to carry out the task of the destruction, which shows how fundamental ontology was anticipated and yet never realized in three crucial junctures in the history of philosophy: Aristotle’s analysis of time in the *Physics* that remained dependent upon a narrow view of being as presence, Descartes and irruption of the cogito that still left the “ontological sense of the *sum*” undetermined, and finally Kant’s doctrine of schematism, which was unable to establish a positive connection between time and the “Ich denke” of apperception. We can now understand the sense in which “Zeit und Sein” is the hinge of the book, the turn that allows both sides, the analytic and the destruction, to form an architectonic totality. And precisely for this reason it was held back—but also, in this failure of the first turn, announcing the possibility of a second one, which was to eventually restructure the whole enterprise.

An indication of the crucial position of this section is the amount of decisive problems that were left suspended at its point of entry. Let us here only take note of one of them, although it has important bearings on the interpretation of the inner “turn” in the structure of the book: the problem of space and the transcendence of the world and of nature. Why has the world-phenomenon always been “passed over” from Parmenides and onwards, Heidegger asks (100), and what is the “relative justification” of the Cartesian notion of spatiality as *res extensa*?(101)<sup>31</sup> In §§ 18-24 he begins to develop an analysis of this problem

31. An interpretation of this complex has been proposed by Didier Franck in his *Heidegger et le problème de l'espace* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), a study which takes as its starting point Heidegger’s unusually unambiguous self-criticism in “Zeit und Sein,” where he says that “the attempt in *Being and Time* § 70 to derive spatiality from temporality is untenable” (*Zur Sache des Denkens*, 24). Franck’s interpretation has many interesting points, and it is undeniable that several later texts introduce irreducibly spatial

in terms of the “worldliness of the world” (*Weltlichkeit der Welt*), starting off from the basic structure of things as “equipment” (*Zeug*). Equipment is always ready-at-hand (*zuhanden*) and not given as presence-at-hand (*vorhanden*), and it forms part of a complex of everyday references and concatenations that eventually forms a “totality of equipment” (*Zeugganzheit*). It is only on the basis of such an equipmental understanding of the world that we can grasp the existential meaning of space. Unlike in the Cartesian model, the existential conception of world does not begin with objective and measurable distances, but with a “putting at a distance” (*Ent-Fernung*), a non-metric “spacing” that precedes and conditions all measuring, just as originary time will precede and condition the objective “world-time” (*Weltzeit*). In the same way as pieces of equipment are linked together in a totality, places belong together in a “region” (*Gegend*), which in its turn forms part of a “totality of places” (*Platzganzheit*). Nature is *comprehended* within this totality, as becomes obvious when Heidegger in § 15 discusses the sun and other natural phenomena as means of finding one’s direction, and emphasizes that they can only be understood as functions of Dasein’s own spatiality.<sup>32</sup> At the same time he acknowledges a certain “rest,” a remainder of nature that cannot be reduced to Dasein’s compartments, although he postpones the question of its “ontological significance” (similar statements can also be found in §§ 70 and 44). Surprising as it may seem, especially given the later Heidegger’s critique of technology and his attempts to rethink nature on the basis of the Greek *physis* as that which presences from out of itself, it would be entirely correct to say that Heidegger in *Being and Time* presents us with a wholly “functionalist” interpretation of nature, in the sense

figures (such as *Gegend*, *Ort*, *Geviert* etc.), but in my interpretation the insufficient analysis of space is as such not the *cause* of the abandonment of *Being and Time*, but a *consequence* of the aporia described above.

32. For a discussion of these passages, cf. Hubert Dreyfus, “De l’ustensilité à la *techné*: le statut ambigu de l’ustensilité dans *L’être et le temps*,” in Michel Haar (ed.): *Heidegger* (Paris: Cahiers de l’herne, 1983).

that nature has no autonomy and no presence of its own outside of the projects of Dasein, except for a certain “rest.” whose treatment however remained perpetually postponed.

Space is indeed as such always treated as a derivative concept in this context, in the sense that all spatial significations must ultimately be understood as temporal: “*Only on the basis of ecstatic-horizonal temporality,*” Heidegger contends in § 70, where spatiality is to be “repeated” in terms of temporal schematization, “*can Dasein break into spatiality.*” (“*Nur auf dem Grunde der extatisch-horizontalen Zeitlichkeit ist der Einbruch des Daseins in den Raum möglich*”, 369) This problem may seem if not marginal, then at least not essential to the basic question of being—but in fact, together with the proper and positive sense of space, it is the *whole sense of the world and of nature* that remains suspended, and with it the unfolding of the question of being in the full sense.

#### *IV. The objectification of being and the finitude of philosophical thought*

In 1927, the same year as the publication of the first part — or rather, the first two sections of the first part — of *Being and Time*, Heidegger lectured on “the basic problems of phenomenology.” In the published version of this lecture cycle, the last four paragraphs (§§ 19-22) contain an extensive discussion of the problem of “time and being.” These lectures will not provide us with a *solution* to the problem outlined in *Being and Time*, but they have the advantage of stating the problem in a straightforward way: their impasse will repeat the aporia of *Being and Time*, and it will do this by outlining some of the steps that were missing in the previous work. Thus, though might not be able to find a solution, we will at least be able to see the problem more distinctly, and thus get a grip on why another form of “turn” eventually became necessary for Heidegger.

The issue, once again, is the relation between temporality and Temporality. As the exposition of the *Grundprobleme* continues, the connection soon becomes enigmatic, since the two concepts are to be clearly distinguished, at the same time as they should have a foundational relation, in the sense that the second is to be understood as the condition of possibility of the first:

The term “Temporality” (*Temporalität*) does not wholly coincide with the term “temporality” (*Zeitlichkeit*), despite the fact that, in German, *Temporalität* is merely the translation of *Zeitlichkeit*. It means temporality insofar as temporality itself is made into a theme as the condition of possibility of the understanding of Being and of ontology as such. The term “Temporality” is intended to indicate that temporality, in existential analytic, represents the horizon from which we understand Being.<sup>33</sup>

Here it is clear that Temporality, “the condition of possibility of the understanding of Being and of ontology as such,” does not refer to any kind of “objective” aspect of Being, “Being-in-itself,” as it were, but is still rooted in Dasein’s comprehension. It is as if we were caught in yet another form of circularity, reminiscent of the hermeneutic circle that constitutes the form of questioning in *Being and Time* § 3, although this time situated on a more profound level: temporality gives us access to Temporality, but Temporality is called upon to found temporality.<sup>34</sup> The turn is the location of the passage from Dasein’s temporality to the Temporality of being, and back again; it is the place where the analytic “zurückschlägt,” as the final paragraph in *Being and Time* states. And Heidegger gives an explicit and unambiguous indication of this in another lecture cycle, this time from 1928:

The fundamental problem of metaphysics requires in its radicalization and universalization an interpretation of Dasein with respect to temporality, from which the internal possibility of the comprehension of being, and of on-

33. *GP*, 324; *BP*, 228.

34. Jean Grondin suggests that this circular movement has the same basic structure as the Cartesian theory of the twofold “order of reasons”: the temporality of Dasein is the *ratio cognoscendi* of Temporality, and the latter is the *ratio essendi* of the first (*Le Tournant*, 74).

tology, will follow—but not in order merely to make this internal possibility known, since it cannot be understood otherwise than in its accomplishing, i.e., in the elaboration of the fundamental problematic itself [...] This totality of the (re)foundation and the elaboration of ontology is the same as fundamental ontology, consisting of: 1. an analytic of Dasein; 2. an analytic of the Temporality of being. This Temporal analytic is itself the turn (*Kehre*), thanks to which ontology itself explicitly turns back to metaphysical ontics (*metaphysische Ontik*), wherein it always has held itself, although not in explicit fashion. The issue is here, by way of this movement of radicalization and universalization, to conduct ontology to the shift (*Umschlag*), which lies latent in it. Here the Turning (*Kehre*) is accomplished, and we attain the shift (*Umschlag*) into metontology.<sup>35</sup>

What has happened here on the way from *Being and Time*? There, the temporality of Dasein was constituted through the unity of the three temporal ecstasies of the present, past, and future, “Auf-sich-zu,” “Zurück auf,” and “Begegnen-lassen von,” a structure that “discloses temporality as the primary *ekstatikon*,” an primordial outside-of-itself (*Ausser-sich*) that nevertheless is temporalized as a unity on the basis of the future as the “primary phenomenon of originary and authentic temporality” (*SZ* § 65, 328 f). In the *Grundprobleme* Heidegger pursues

35. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, GA 26, 201. As we have seen earlier, in *Being and Time* “Umschlag” was used to describe the passage from the hermeneutic to the apophantic “as”-structure of comprehension. In *Grundprobleme* it was used as well to translate the Aristotelian *metabasis eis allo genos* (cf. GA 24, p 332; BP, p 234), whereas it functions as a description of the “turn back” from Temporality to temporality. Heidegger often uses the term “ontics” and “metontology” in this period for the further explication of the analytic of Dasein, which was supposed to follow *after* the completion of fundamental ontology.

this theme, and now he suggests that the ecstasies contain an even more originary horizon, a more fundamental “whither” (*Woraufhin*): “We call this *whither of the ecstasis* the horizon or, more precisely, *the horizontal schema of the ecstasis*. Each ecstasis has within itself a completely determinate schema which modifies itself in coordination with the manner in which temporality temporalizes itself, the manner in which the ecstasies modify themselves.”<sup>36</sup> Here we find ourselves within what seems like a *regressus ad infinitum*: in the analytic of the temporality of Dasein in *Being and Time*, the existentials from the first section were schematized, but now it appears as if the schemas would have to be schematized once more. Heidegger is aware of this threatening situation, where we will have to find new horizons for each previous horizon, new conditions of possibility for previous conditions, etc., but he tries to escape this regress by stating that the horizontal schema within Temporality represents “the original self-projection simply as such” (*der Selbstentwurf schlechthin*).<sup>37</sup> There is no other temporal horizon beyond the one defined by the conjunction of temporality and Temporality, or, to use a metaphor that is not alien to Heidegger’s later writings, the “fold” of temporality and Temporality.<sup>38</sup>

But why was the third section “held back,” if this is all there is to be said? Does not Heidegger simply short-circuit all further questioning by closing the circle in terms of the “self-projection”? But still, as

36. *GA* 24, 429; *BP*, 302.

37. *GA* 24, 436 f; *BP*, 307.

38. Cf the notions of *Zwiefalt*, *Faltung*, etc., in the text on Parmenides, “Moi-  
ra,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* III (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 27 ff, and the  
commentaries on these notions by Didier Franck, *Heidegger et le problème  
de l'espace*. This theme has also been developed abundantly by Merleau-  
Ponty, cf. for instance *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), es-  
pecially the “Notes de travail,” which pursue the project from *Being and  
Time* to found intentionality in a more original relation to the world,  
for which Merleau-Ponty invents a whole series of new names: fold,  
chiasma, interlacing, hinge, etc.

if *en passant*, or as if “thinking aloud,” as one commentator says,<sup>39</sup> he goes on to note: “The series [...] of projections as it were inserted one before the other—understanding of beings, projection upon being, understanding of being, projection upon time—has its end at the horizon of the ecstatic unity of temporality. We cannot establish this here in a more primordial way; to do that we would have to go into the problem of the finitude (*Endlichkeit*) of time.”<sup>40</sup> Heidegger senses that a long series of problems will not let themselves be dealt with properly within fundamental ontology: first and foremost, the “negativity” inherent in the relation between time and being as such—a theme that somewhat later, around 1930 and the conference “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” (to which Heidegger often dates the turn) will impose itself as the essential relation between the truth and un-truth of being as *a-letheia*, which can no longer be interpreted as an existential of Dasein, only as belonging to the retreat of being (*Entzug des Seins*) as such. And already in the *Grundprobleme*, Heidegger poses himself a troubling question that will not receive a sufficient answer within fundamental ontology, but opens the possibility of another turn that will inscribe the first:

It would run counter to the sense of philosophizing and of science if we were not willing to understand that a fundamental untruth can dwell with what is actually

39. Grondin, *Le Tournant*, 82.

40. *GA* 24, 437; *BP*, 308, translation modified. It should be noted that Heidegger in the seminar following his conference from 1962, “Zeit und Sein,” talks about the new concept of finitude, which was only hinted at earlier: thus finitude is “no longer thought on the basis of the relation to infinity, but as finitude in itself” (“nicht mehr aus dem Bezug zur Unendlichkeit, sondern als Endlichkeit in sich selbst gedacht”) (*Zur Sache des Denkens*, 58), which indicates that finitude within fundamental ontology never reached the thought of *the finitude of Being itself*. In the same vein Grondin talks about how the failure of *Being and Time* would lead to a “radicalization of finitude” (*Le tournant*, 81 ff).



seen and genuinely interpreted. The history of philosophy bears witness how, with regard to the horizons essentially necessary for them and to the assurance of that horizon, all ontological interpretations are more like a groping about than an inquiry clear in its method. Even the basic act of the constitution of ontology, the objectification of being, *the projection of being upon the horizon of its understandability* (*Verständlichkeit*) and precisely this basic act, is delivered up to uncertainty and stands continually in danger of being reversed, because this objectification of being must necessarily move in a projective direction that runs counter to everyday comportment toward being. For this reason the projection of being itself necessarily becomes an ontic projection.<sup>41</sup>

*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* explicitly places the notion of finitude at the center of ontology. But finitude was here still thought of in terms of the Kantian *intuitus derivativus*, as a structural and constitutive characteristic of all experience and knowledge of objects. The passage quoted from *Grundprobleme* indicates that Heidegger in this text attempts to articulate something else, namely the *finitude of philosophical thought itself*, where all projections upon “understandability” (*Verständlichkeit*) necessarily imply an “objectification” (*Vergegenständlichung*), and a relapse into the ontical sphere. Being is indeed *not* a being, but the very structure of projection that is at the origin of “meaning,” and consequently also at the origin of the question of the “meaning of be-

41. GA 24, p 458 f; BP, p 322 f. Cf. here the expression from *Being and Time*, cited above: “we ask for being itself *to the extent that it stands into the understandability of Dasein* (“*sofern es in die Verständlichkeit des Daseins hereinsteht*”).” In *Grundprobleme* this *Verständlichkeit*, and the limits it imposes on philosophy—or perhaps we should say this the other way around: that kind of false *limitlessness* and *infinity* that it promises—have become part of the problem more than of the solution.

ing,” always and necessarily leads us to believe this to be the case. The turn away from the first turn inside *Being and Time* implies a more radical conception of finitude—and perhaps *radical* in somewhat different sense, since what it attempts is less to think the “root,” even the “common root,” as in Kant, as the *soil*, that out which all root systems grow, but which they themselves can never exhaust.<sup>42</sup>

This would be the finitude of being itself, thought on the basis of the ontological difference, which is always given as retreat, as essentially hiding its truth *in* or *as* knowledge and consciousness (which always are determined *within* metaphysics). In a marginal note to his copy of *Being and Time*, Heidegger notes in the place where the position of the section “Zeit und Sein” is delineated for the first time (39): “The transcendence-like difference—The overcoming of the horizon as such—the turn back into the provenance—presencing out of this provenance” (“Die Transzendenzhafte Differenz—Die Überwindung des Horizonts als solchen—Die Umkehr in die Herkunft—Das Anwesen aus dieser Herkunft”) (*Anhang*, 440). The dating of this note is uncertain, but it is nevertheless clear that Heidegger here explicitly poses the problem of the ontological difference in relation to the notion of horizon, the “upon-which of projection” that now must be “overcome,” so that another origin, another “provenance,” may be thought.

Here the “whole” indeed turns around, and perhaps it would be

42. When Heidegger in 1949 writes a new introduction to a fifth edition of “Was ist Metaphysik?,” he elaborates on this relation between roots and soil. Commenting on a passage in Descartes’ introduction to the *Principles of Philosophy*, where metaphysics is presented as a tree having the other philosophical disciplines as its branches (“Ainsi toute la philosophie est comme un arbre, dont les racines sont la Métaphysique, le tronc est la Physique, et les branches qui sortent de ce tronc sont toutes les autres sciences...” [*Oeuvres*, ed. Adam et Tannéry, vol. IX, 14]), he asks for the kind of soil in which the roots of such a tree can thrive, and suggests that the soil, without being *opposed* to the roots and the tree that will grow out of it, still remains essentially *other* than its product (cf. *Wegmarken* 361).

possible to say that the turn in 1930 was already prefigured in the incomplete or aporetic turn in *Being and Time* and other texts from the latter half of the 1920's. If Temporality consists of nothing more than the respective horizontal schemes belonging to the ecstatic projections of Dasein, we are still inside the logic of constituting subjectivity, intentionality, and transcendental philosophy. And as we have seen, Heidegger does not in this phase at all attempt to break with these traditional notions, instead he wants to found them in the ecstatic projection of Dasein. What will be discovered in the process of the turn is that this foundational operation, in its repetition and restoration of another *fundamentum* of the project of metaphysics through "dismantling" and "destruction," still, if in a more subtle way, leads us to think being only in terms of a *ground* of beings. It is only if we question the foundational project itself, if we think the *fundamentum* as an *epoch* within metaphysics, that a turn, although now in a different sense, can be accomplished, although this will inevitably entail the disruption of the philosophical architectonic, and of the idea of systematic philosophy.



# Images of Philosophy

## Deleuze and the Form of the Question

### *I. The originary gestures*

At the origin of philosophical thought, there seems to be a series of moves, gestures, and decisions that cannot be entirely justified from within the kind of experience they make possible. Neither entirely inside nor outside philosophical discourse, they inform it, give it a certain impetus, and provide us with a sense of what it “feels like” to think. It is in this sense that Heidegger, for instance, will speak of “gestures of thought” (*Gebärde des Denkens*) as somehow anterior to determined questions and responses.<sup>1</sup> And in an apparently similar vein

1. For Heidegger, we are always on the way *back* to a strangely intransitive and vertiginous relation to language, “*unterwegs zur Sprache*,” yet we will never reach a position where we can speak on, about (*über, von*) language without always having been addressed by it, caught in its address (*Zusage* or *Zuspruch der Sprache*), which precedes and is always already presupposed in all questions directed to language, and consequently in all questioning in general, including the “question of being” that formed the inception of Heidegger’s path. This is also the reason why the notion of philosophical problems and problem-solving will recede into the background in the later Heidegger: the attitude of questioning will itself appear as derivative, since it already unfolds within the being-addressed by language: “When we pose questions to language relating to its essence, then language must itself already have been addressed to us (*zugesprochen sein*) [...] What do we experience when we think this in a sufficient way? That the true gesture of thought (*Gebärde des Denkens*)

Gilles Deleuze suggests that “when we ask the question ‘what does it mean to find one’s orientation in thinking?’ it appears that thought itself presupposes axes and orientations according to which it orients itself and develops, that it has a geography before it has a history, that it traces dimensions before it constructs systems.”<sup>2</sup> Deleuze’s reference is to Kant’s short essay “Was heisst: Sich im Denken orientieren?” (1786), where Kant poses the question of how our concepts are formed. In the introduction Kant writes: “No matter at how high a level we place our concepts and how much we abstract from sensibility, sensuous representations will always adhere to them, and their proper function is to make those concepts that have not been derived from experience apt for use in experience.”<sup>3</sup> In order to “find an orientation” in thought we must remember the first, almost phenomenological sense of the term: to have a sky above us, to perceive space as oriented according to the four cardinal points and divided into left and right according to our own body, all of which provides a pre-conceptual “feeling” without which no orientation could exist. As the next step, Kant speaks of the relation to “space in general,” where we can find our bearings by using mathematical and geometrical methods. Finally, there is the “space of thought,” which we organize with the help of logic. Reason has an absolute need of such aids, Kant says, in order to “orient itself in thought, in supersensible space, which for us is immeasurable and buried deep in the most profound of nights.”<sup>4</sup> For Kant, orientation occurs through a hierarchical series of abstractions that all rest on a ground which provides the initial determination. Deleuze would no doubt suspect that Kant’s critical

is not questioning, but the hearing of the saying-unto us of that which should come to be questioned (*das Hören der Zusage dessen, was in die Frage kommen soll*).” (*Unterwegs zur Sprache* [Pfullingen: Neske, 1959]), 175).

2. *Logique du sens* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), 173. Henceforth: *LS*.
3. *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik, Werke*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), vol. V, 267.
4. *Ibid.*, 271.

operations on this point as well as on many others harbor a more profound dogmatism, as he will constantly point out from *Nietzsche et la philosophie* onwards.<sup>5</sup> For Deleuze, Kantian criticism attempts to return to a foundation that merely duplicates the founded, it produces the mirage of a ground “in the image of” the grounded. Instead of going back to a first ground, Deleuze wants to find another type of opening—at the origin of thought there is for him something that is neither rational nor irrational, something which “gives” thought in a way that sometimes appears as a gift, sometimes as a constraint, in any case as an uncontrollable *event* to which thought has to respond. We think under pressure, because there is something which eludes us and causes a certain pain; thought originates in a struggle, in the *agon*, and not in an innate love for wisdom.

The Platonic image of the turn around, the *periagoge*, is perhaps the most powerful and pervasive of all schemata for thinking, especially in providing an impetus, via neo-Platonism and St. Augustine, to Christianity. Chained inside the cave, dazzled by the play of shadowlike reflections, some of us may, in a movement granted by grace or by the awakening of reason—or, in Plato’s own, more coercive vocabulary, brought about because we are “forced to stand up and turn our necks” (*Republic*, 515c)—turn around and face the true origin, ascend from the subterranean world and step into the light. For Plato this also means to take leave of myth and of narrative (a step taken within what in Plato’s text is a wholly mythical narrative, a paradox which has intrigued readers of Plato from Heidegger, Gadamer, and Blumenberg through Deleuze and Stanley Rosen). This breaking away from common sense, from received notions and the

5. *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1962), section III: 7-8. Henceforth: *NPh*. At the same time, Deleuze has a profound and productive relation to Kant, which comes across more in a book like *Différence et répétition* than in the short monograph *La philosophie critique de Kant*. An even more complex image is given by the rich, searching lecture material on Kant available at [www.webdeleuze.com](http://www.webdeleuze.com)

sphere of the *doxa*, remains a constant theme in Deleuze, despite his outspoken anti-Platonism, even though this motif by itself is hardly enough to qualify him as a Platonist.<sup>6</sup>

Aristotle provides us with a rather different account, where we no longer turn away from appearances, but instead encounter them in wonder and astonishment, a standing back which gives rise to a kind of immersion, and bears the name of “wonder,” *thaumazein*. “It is through wonder (*dia to thaumazein*) that men now begin and originally began to philosophize [...]. Now he who wonders and is perplexed feels that he is ignorant (*thus the myth-lover* [ho philomythos] *is in a sense a philosopher*, since myths are composed of wonders); therefore if it was to escape ignorance that men studied philosophy, it is obvious that that they pursued science for the sake of knowledge, and not for any practical utility.” (*Metaphysics* A 982b 13-23, my italics). The passage from the *philomythos* to the *philosophos* here becomes a simple matter of *rationalization*, and it follows the spontaneous movement of the awakening mind: the myth-lover is already a lover of wisdom, although he is not conscious of this himself, and the passage from the one level to the next is a smooth and seamless transition, a gradual coming-into-itself of reason, and not a sudden and paradoxically self-referential gesture of expulsion, as in Plato.<sup>7</sup> Reason awakens

6. This is one of the arguments proposed for identifying Deleuze as a Platonist by Alain Badiou in his *Deleuze. La clameur de l'être* (Paris: Hachette, 1997). Badiou has other and more compelling arguments for casting Deleuze as a Platonist, although the ultimate purpose of this small book seems more to be to clarify his own position than to understand Deleuze's. A much more nuanced and rewarding exchange between Badiou and Deleuze in fact occurs in the short but densely argued review of *Le Plé* in *L'annuaire philosophique*, 1988-1989, translated by Thelma Sowley, in Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (eds.): *Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
7. This of course only refers to the myth of the cave in the *Republic*. Even though Plato demands that philosophy should “not tell myths (*ouk mython*



step by step, and unlike the Platonic scene, Aristotle's story does not involve any violent separation, instead it unfolds and articulates a harmony between thought and world that was there from the beginning. Plato and Aristotle in this sense create two different images of the beginning—either to turn away from the world, or to immerse oneself in its immanent richness.

What is original in Deleuze might be that he superimposes these two scenes: it is only by tearing ourselves away from the world of ready-made things and opinions, and moving towards the virtual multiplicity which they contain, that we can immerse ourselves in the diversity of the world and rediscover its plenitude. *Periagoge* and *thau-mazein* co-exist, there is both violence and joy, both rejection and immersion, at the origin of thought.

But it would be wrong to stay within such a divide between a Platonic and an Aristotelian motif, even though it no doubt forms a distant background to most subsequent originary gestures. The history of philosophy in fact provides us with a vast selection of original scenes: the Cartesian doubt and the quest for certitude, which sets up a strange interior discussion between different egos (doubting, posing objections, narrating, claiming to know...); the Kantian experience of thought as a “battlefield” where different schools oppose one another with their respective claims to authority, giving rise to the ideal of the philosopher as a judge who draws a line of demarcation between the faculties and negotiates a truce where each can satisfy its own “interest”; the Husserlian descent into the origin of sense, repeating the Cartesian cogito, although in such a way that its inner and outer horizons are folded into the center of clarity, transforming its singular and extra-temporal position into an infinite process

*tina diegeisthai*) to us as if we were children” (*The Sophist*, 242c), he constantly violates his own prohibition, and the myths have an important function in the dialogues, often in the sense of providing an origin and a genealogy for institutions and practices that in the present appear unfounded. Deleuze discusses this in “Platon et le simulacre,” *LS*, 347-361.

of clarification (the cogito no longer as a point of departure, but as a “task,” as Paul Ricoeur says). Many more instances could of course be added, but my intention here is not to add more items to such a portrait gallery, but rather to reflect on the logic of the collection, as it were. Following a suggestion by Deleuze, which recurs throughout most of his books, I will call all of these variations so many *images of thought*. In a sense, the image is *not yet* thought, but that which will make thought possible; in another sense, it is, or is already *more* than thought, if by thought we mean simply that which unfolds inside the space granted by each “image.”

The creation of such an image is probably what we understand when we talk about decisive philosophical events or transformations. Thus we might say that great philosophies not only propose new solutions to old and perennial problems; in fact, such a view of the continuity of history would for Deleuze be precisely that which blocks our access to the philosophical event as such. A more interesting way to look at the history of philosophy would be to search for the transformations of the *mode of questioning*. Not only the answer changes, but more fundamentally the question, the form of the question, and in this sense the nature of the system question-response is what results from the position of a problem. In this there is undoubtedly a negative moment, as Richard Rorty noted when he proposed that the point of a system like Spinoza’s might be not to solve the problems of Cartesianism (mind-body, freedom-determinism, infinite-finite substance, etc.), but rather to form a different assemblage of concepts that prevents us from posing them in the same way as before.<sup>8</sup> But, and this is surely

8. See Rorty’s introduction to *The Linguistic Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). Spinoza is of course one of Deleuze’s great sources of inspiration, and from his thesis *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression* (1968) and onwards he has always returned to this “Christ of philosophers” as the true philosopher of immanence. Apart from the idea of immanence and the possibility of thinking the world through itself, without reference to any higher plane of being, it is also the theory

more interesting for our topic here, there is also the moment of a *creation* of a new concept, which not only allows us to see the world differently (the more gentle version, as if the world was simply an objective thing given in a pre-philosophical perception, on which we could adopt a different perspective), but also gives rise to a profound mutation in what it means to *see*, in the definition of the world, and in the nature of the “we”—and here we could take the step from Spinoza to Leibniz, where the world is transformed from an infinite substance to a “virtual inclusion” in a subject no longer defined as an underlying *x*, a *hypo-keimenon* or a *sub-iectum* but as a perspective and a variable point of view, as Deleuze develops in great detail in *Le Pli*. In the Baroque world of Leibniz, which Deleuze to a great extent seems to make into his own, the subject has a genesis from out of pre-individual singularities, and to be a subject (or a monad) means to develop an integrate series of such singularities, to make them converge and fold them together, although the sense of the “enveloping” as well as of the world

of bodies and affects that attracts Deleuze. Deleuze unconditionally subscribes to Spinoza’s proposal that “no one in fact has determined what the body is capable of (*quid corpus possit*), i.e., that experience so far has not elucidated what the body—to the extent that it is not determined by the soul—can and can not do according to the laws of nature, if this is understood solely as corporeal.” (*Ethics*, Book III, Theorem 2, Remark). The body as formed by relations of powers and potencies is a theme that first appears in *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, returns in a new guise in the desiring-machines and bodies without organs of *L’anti-oedipe*, and in the intense bodies of Francis Bacon’s paintings, whose “athleticism” involves them in violent transformations, and finally attains its most complex formulation in the reading of Leibniz in *Le Pli* (where the relation to Spinoza is left somewhat obscure). This thought of the body as having a potentiality of its own points to a profound anti-Cartesianism that traverses the whole of Deleuze’s work. For a lucid formulation of what it means “to philosophize with body as a guiding thread,” cf. the first chapter in *Spinoza, philosophie pratique* (Paris: Minuit, 1981).

formed by the totality of envelopes will be different in Deleuze than in Leibniz. The subject and the object do not preexist the system of perspective, and what thinking does is to change the system as a whole.

It is in this perspective, which has to do with the very idea of “perspective” in philosophy, that I would like to approach the thought of Deleuze. This approach is particularly fitting precisely because the meditation on the form of the question, and the attempt to change the way in which we ask questions, pose problems, and structure answers, i.e., the whole system of the “problem,” constitutes a decisive theme in all of his works, from his first book on empiricism and subjectivity in Hume up to the last work, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*,<sup>2</sup> written together with Félix Guattari. Deleuze approaches this question from varying and occasionally conflicting angles, although there is a chronological development where we move from a negative to a more positive and inclusive idea of the role of the image in philosophy, and where the two books on cinema constitute a decisive juncture.

## *II. Beyond the dogmatic image: affect, sign, and passion*

In the first phase of Deleuze’s work during the 1960s we find a critique of what he calls the traditional or “dogmatic” image of thought. His comments oscillate between a more descriptive attitude and a complete rejection, which in some cases leads to the ideal of a radically “imageless” thinking, as if these images would be the enemy of thought as such. In *Logique du sens* he develops a meditation on the “three images of philosophers.” Here, the descriptive attitude prevails. The first image is the Platonic, which emphasizes ascent and altitude, the aerial dimension of thinking, as when Socrates’ irony makes it possible for him to rise above the positive laws of the *polis* and contemplate the Good, and in this sense is able to accept his verdict as a lesser evil. The second is the Pre-Socratic, which leads us downward into a subterranean world where there is always a second cave beneath the first, symbolized by Empedocles throwing himself into Etna and only leaving his sandal behind, to prove that he was “of the earth.” The third is the Stoic image of a thought attentive to the art of surfaces, which treats sense as an event different from

both bodies and propositions, and which as we will see has a close connection to the Sophists and their pragmatics of the multiple. Deleuze's sympathies undoubtedly lie with the Stoics, and the whole of *Logique du sens* forms a meditation on the surface, a refusal of both altitude and profundity in search of another way to approach the skin of things (*le plus profond, c'est la peau*, as Paul Valéry says, cited in *Logique du sens* on p. 18).

This more positive evaluation of the image is however in the first phase of Deleuze's work opposed to a negative and even completely dismissive stance, where all images tend to be subsumed under the false or "dogmatic" one. This more radical critique is initiated already in *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (2:15), and reaches its culmination in the third chapter of *Différence et répétition*. The dogmatic image presupposes a proximity between thought and its content, and from Plato's anamnesis via rationalism and its innate ideas up to Kant and phenomenology, thinking, Deleuze suggests, has been determined as the exercise of a natural faculty, a spontaneous inclination toward the true, a propensity for the good, the true, and the beautiful. Mistakes are caused by external influences and can be avoided by the learning of a sound "method"—to think is think *straight*, to display rectitude of mind and follow the "regulae ad directionem ingenii," as Descartes formulated them, if we are not to end up in idiocy, stupidity, and insanity. Thinking is thus assumed to be a universal form (*cogitatio natura universalis*), where the pure and the ideal are nothing but the consequences of normal common sense (*le sens commun*), all of which further consolidates the dogmatic position and makes it into the very element of the evident and the obvious, that which cannot be contradicted if what is said is to be part of the universal understanding.

In this model, Deleuze claims, we formally already possess the true (as a Platonic or innate idea, a priori form or pre-ontological comprehension, etc.), and as in Plato's *anamnesis* knowing becomes an act of recognition rather than an encounter, something already anticipated and prefigured rather than a violent change. Even though Deleuze acknowledges that it is true that the history of philosophy offers many different nuances and shifting details, he concludes that we can nevertheless speak of "*one single and general Image*, which consti-

tutes the subjective condition for philosophy as a whole,”<sup>9</sup> and it is on this level that he wants to launch his attack.

To this unique image there corresponds an iconoclastic desire that strives to attain a wholly imageless thought, a thinking entirely without presuppositions, and “that would not find its own character in being attuned to the pre-philosophical image, but in a rigorous struggle against the Image, now rejected as non-philosophy” (*DR*, 173). This thinking, Deleuze suggests, could be compared to the “revolution in painting that lead from representation to abstract painting” (253).<sup>10</sup>

This conception however seems somewhat of an impasse—for what is this pure thought, which begins from nothing and thinks itself in its purity, but the very dream of classical metaphysics, from Parmenides’ *to auto* that binds *noein* and *einai* together, via Aristotle’s supreme being that thinks its own thinking, to Hegel’s *Logic* where the concept thinks itself in its own circular movement outside all representation? The ban on representation and images seems to opt for the idea of an absolute *parousia*, a thought in full possession of itself without any outside, and which in this sense would be highly refractory to the event, the encounter, contingency and affects, indeed to *stupidity*, i.e. to all of those things that Deleuze wants to bring back into the

9. *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968), 172, my italics. Henceforth: *DR*.)
10. This sharp divide between representation and abstraction could be compared to what Deleuze will later say on about painterly abstraction in his study of Francis Bacon—it is *one* way into modern art, but not the only one, and Bacon will opt for a different kind of “diagrammaticism” that attempts to steer clear of both the “digital” codes of abstraction and the descent into a purely “manual space” of Abstract Expressionism and *peinture informel*, which is difficult not to read as a portrait of Deleuze himself; cf. *Francis Bacon. Logique de la sensation* (Paris: La Différence, 1981), 65 ff. The concept of “diagram” resurfaces in *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), where it is understood as an “abstract machine” that presents relations of power (for instance the Panopticon).

heart of thinking. He will also soon let go of this idea and assume a different and more productive attitude, where the images of thought can acquire a positive sense. For is it not the case, that what we in the first phase find opposed to *the* dogmatic image is not so much an abstract emptiness as a proliferation of *other* images, figures, or gesture, which in the end must transcend the very structure of the opposition (image vs. non-image) towards a thought of the multiple?

This is indeed what Deleuze elaborates in his series of monographs, on Hume and the importance of passions and affects, on Nietzsche and his critique of truth as the element of philosophy, on Bergson and virtuality and multiplicity, but also on literature, as in the book on Proust and the passion of signs. These monographs form a series on their own, each with its particular problem, but they also develop a certain line of questioning, a “counter-history” in relation to the official lineage Plato-Descartes-Hegel-Husserl-Heidegger. This is what Deleuze occasionally also calls a “minor history,” as an analogy to Kafka’s “minor literature,” and as such it provides a series of *more diversified images*, and not at all an imageless state of pure thought. In this story other names become central, the Sophists and the Stoics, Lucretius, Hume, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson, to name but a few of those that Deleuze highlights. Counter-history rewrites the question of the One and the Many in such a way that it dethrones the ego, the subject and consciousness, as so many modern versions of the One, and it also departs from a certain conception of the system, although not at all from the idea of a system as such.<sup>11</sup> It is important that we understand that Deleuze does not want to simply discard all these classical concepts, but to reconstruct their genesis and show that they always result from com-

11. Cf. the comments on the possibility of systems in “Entretien sur Mille Plateaux,” in *Pourparlers* (Paris; Minuit, 1990), and *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Minuit, 1991), 14. Henceforth: *QPh*. Already Proust’s *Recherche*, Deleuze will say, constitutes a “system of truth,” although one that is opposed to the timeless and abstract nature of truth.

plex assemblages of ideas and affections, and are not in any way ultimately “given” (and there is no doubt an essential affinity here to how Foucault practiced genealogy in the material history of the subject in terms of a series of “subjectivations”). Let me here just provide a few remarks on the readings of Hume and Proust (I will come back to Nietzsche later).

The book on Hume, *Empirisme et subjectivité. Essai sur la nature humaine selon Hume* (1953), may seem as only a youthful academic exercise, but in fact many of Deleuze’s later ideas can here be observed at a formative stage. It was published at a time when phenomenology dominated the French scene, and it makes great sense to read it as a way to counter the adversary on his own ground, the theory of subjectivity, through the choice of a philosopher who at the time had little influence on the French debate. For Deleuze empiricism is not just a reversal of rationalism that would reject that there is anything in our concepts that was not first in the senses, but a profound new way of understanding the nature of the concepts. As he will say later, “empiricism is not at all a reaction against the concept or a simple appeal to experience. It takes on the most insane creation of concepts ever seen or heard. Empiricism is the mysticism of the concept.” (*DR*, 3) Why? Because the empiricist in Deleuze’s version says: “the concepts are the things themselves, although in a free and savage state. I make and remake my concepts.” (*ibid*) Deleuze occasionally even speaks of empiricism as a kind of “science fiction,” a “novel,” or a fictitious world seen by other beings than ourselves. Theory becomes a kind of practice, and associationism turns into a “casuistic of relations” that changes the way philosophy is made.

A fundamental theme in this is that relations must be understood as external with respect to their terms: things are “loose and disconnected,” as Hume used to say, and what we normally understand as natural wholes (for instance concepts) are really *constructions*. This gives thought a relation to the exterior, and empiricism for Deleuze is based on fragments and mobile cuts, external connections and captures, random links and intensities—it is “a world where the conjunction ‘and’ dethrones the interiority of the verb ‘to be,’ a Harlequin world of motley and non-totalizable fragments where one communicates via



external relations.”<sup>12</sup> Hume produces both a physics of the soul, and a logic of relations, and in this he renews philosophy.

But what, then, is a relation? In its simplest form it is something that makes us pass from an impression or an idea to something else that “resembles” it, depending on principles that together make up the human mind. The real question, Deleuze says, is: *How does the mind become a subject?* The mind is identical to the collection of ideas that it contains, and these ideas are what is “given,” i.e., an experience. But under what conditions does this collection come to form a system? In fact the operations of the mind plunge into darkness, we are never fully able to survey its operations, and if it is true that the mind in some respects can be compared to a theater, then Hume also warns us: “The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos’d.”<sup>13</sup> And yet, there is something like a subject, and it comes into being because of the action of principles that make us transcend the given, with causality as the most important. The sun will rise tomorrow, water boils at 100 degrees Celsius, Caesar has existed because this text on a piece of paper tells me so; the principle of causality gives rise to inferences, and it founds a certain *belief* that in its turn gives rise to knowledge as a *habit*. There is however always something delirious in the passage between ideas, a gap between them, and the mind left to itself, or rather to the willfulness of imagination, will take advantage of this gap and produce fire-spewing dragons and other chimera, which is why the principles of the understanding must fetter imagination—it constantly threatens to overthrow the principles and pervert their proper use.

For Hume, belief is the basis of knowledge, and he also admits that the ideas of the Ego, the World, and God that he wants to dispel as

12. “Hume,” in François Châtelet (ed.): *Histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Hachette, 1972), rpr. in *L’île déserte et autres textes: textes et entretiens 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade (Paris: Minuit, 2002), 228.
13. David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 253.

so many illusions, also constitute beliefs—they will always loom at the horizon, and ultimately we have to approach them with a certain *humor*, as he shows in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (thus replacing the ascent of Platonic irony with a certain art of the surface). Ultimately this is because knowledge can only be understood in terms of the passions, which give movement and strength to our ideas, and constitutes the very element of understanding. For Hume one has to be a moralist, Deleuze suggests, a sociologist and a historian before one takes up the role of a psychologist of the human mind, since the passions are that which opens us up to a social space before we have become the bearers of reason. There is an irreducible passivity in human reason, which is also the foundation for Hume's political philosophy: because of the passions we are always partial beings, and the problem of moral and political theory is not how we should limit natural egoism, but how we can develop our first, partial sympathy, how we can develop institutions that support and enhance our capacity to feel. Hume rejects all theories of the social contract, which deal with the renunciation of some "natural" rights—politics must instead become a field of experimentation, a problem of the invention of social artifacts. Hume shows us the subject as always in the making, it is formed and reformed on the basis of multiplicities, and its states are not the modifications of a pre-existing unity. This for Deleuze becomes the prototype for an immanent analysis of experience that does not fold back in transcendentals, but without discarding the subject: as we have seen, the question relates to the conditions of the *emergence* of the subject, of the becoming-subject of a pre-individual experience. Empiricism is a "heterodoxical" philosophy that places a practical and passionate subject in the place of the theoretical ego; the subject is something which emerges out of a synthesis, it does not explain experience through its own form of unity, but must itself be explained as process of unification that always remains open.

In the reading of Proust proposed in *Proust et les signes* (passing several stages from 1964 until the final version in 1973),<sup>14</sup> the image op-

14. *Proust et les signes* (Paris: PUF, 1978). Henceforth: *PS*. References to *A la*

posed to traditional philosophy is the very movement of the *Recherche*. Thinking for Proust is always related to what is outside of thought and forces us to think, just because thinking as such is not a natural faculty, but responds to an encounter with opaque signs and affects, because it is a “creation” and an answer to a situation that tears us away from ourselves. The narrator will have to pass through several “circles” of signs, each with their respective level of clarity and calling for different methods of interpretation, and in this sense Deleuze’s reading continues the earlier theories of the gradual formation of the subject of the basis of passions and affects, but it also proposes a response on the level of creation that would be appropriate to this experience.

*recherche du temps perdu* are to the Pléiade edition in three volumes (Paris: Gallimard, 1954). I will here only discuss the first part of Deleuze’s book, which includes the chapters from the first version in 1964. In 1970 a new section was added, “Anti-Logos, or the Literary Machine,” which introduces themes from schizo-analysis developed together with Guattari. The Search now appears as a much more disorganized work, as a “machine” that produces truths and where the question, as Deleuze underlines, is how the machine *works* and not what it *means*. Significantly enough, the discussion of the “Essences” of art tends to disappear in these later sections. Finally, in the version from 1973 an appendix on the “presence of madness” is added, and the novel is presented as the schizophrenic work par excellence, with the narrator as a body without organs, a blind spider at the center of his web, “without eyes, without nose, without mouth, it responds only to signs, it is penetrated by the smallest of signs that traverses its body like a wave and makes it jump onto its prey.” (218) The Search is now presented like a “cobweb”, “body-cobweb-spider” that opens and closes of all the sealed vessels in a movement of “universal schizophrenia” that makes all the characters into “so many marionettes of its own delirium, so many intensive powers of its body without organs, so many profiles of its madness.” (219). These successive versions do not necessarily contradict each other, although they constitute significant shifts of accent.

Proust's novel constructs a *hierarchy* of signs, Deleuze suggests, from the emptiest to the richest, from the vacuity of the socialite world to the Essences of art, and this order will allow the narrator to reconstruct his trajectory from the point of view of the Work itself. The first world, the world of the *mondaines*, moves faster and is more polymorphous than the others; one's social standing may shift in the blink of an eye. Here we encounter Charlus, the magnificent creator of signs—but he too will lose his power in another circle (Verdurin), and finally also in his own, since the law of this world is change and oblivion. In social life signs replace thinking and action; these are the emptiest signs and they may seem utterly stupid and clichéd from the point of view of thought. And yet they have to be traversed, since their emptiness gives them a ritual and formal quality, a peculiar nervous irritability and sensibility that we cannot do without, even though we cannot remain in this world. In fact, Proust notes, few things give so much food for thought as what goes inside a stupid person's head; if they are like parrots—and this also includes intellectuals when seen as a group, through that eminent instrument which is the *telescope*—we should remember that parrots also are “prophetic birds” (II, 236).

The second circle is the world of *love*, which means to individualize someone through his or her signs (Albertine emerging from the group of young girls in bloom); the signs indicate another world enveloped in the loved one's soul, and each and every one of us is already a plurality of worlds. To love is to explicate, to develop, thus the love for the one who is not “of our world.” But in this there is a contradiction, since the loved one's gestures express a world that always structurally excludes us, and the means to overcome jealousy are the same ones that continually renew it—the signs of love are fundamentally deceitful.

The third circle is filled with *impressions*, or *sensible qualities*. They produce a peculiar joy, since they indicate another object enveloped inside them, which it is our task to explicate. Here we find the Madeleine cookie, the church bells, the stones, who in turn unfold to Combray, the young girls, and Venice. They give us an essence and a certain experience of time in a pure state (“Un peu de temps à l'état pur,” III, 872), but always connected to a more or less opaque matter, and this is why they always may fail, and the joy they give escapes our

understanding (at the end of *Le temps retrouvé*, looking back at the Madeleine cookie, the narrator notes: “J’avais alors ajourné de rechercher les causes profondes,” III, 867). We need to take a final step that leads beyond such materially incarnated truths, and this will be the signs of *art*. They are free of matter, and express an ideal essence that allows us to retrace our path; we realize now that even the emptiest signs of the salons were underway towards art.

In this way the rhythm of the text follows the movement of not yet knowing, being mistaken, and then overcoming illusion, and at the center of this is the sign as a “hieroglyph.” If the Search aims for truth, this is not because there is a natural will towards the true: we are forced to seek the true because of the pain we feel, because of an external violence. The jealous person begins his deciphering when faced with the lies of the loved one, not because of a natural curiosity; there is a violence of the sign that precedes all types of search. The mistake of philosophy is to assume a natural love for the true, but this can only produce abstract truths, to which Proust opposes the force of contingency, the encounter that imposes thought on us. The truths that the Research extracts are unlike those of good will the truths of “intelligence,” and they come afterwards. *First* there is the violence of the sign, then interpretation and truth. We discover the laws that rule the social world, the painful signs of love refer us to structures of repetition that make us rise above pain and vanity. Each love causes pain, but the broken chain in its totality is a spectacle for intelligence—we understand that we were involved in a process of learning, and we extract a higher joy.<sup>15</sup>

15. Deleuze provides a subtle analysis of series and groups, both on the level of our own love and inside the loved person, structured according to a logic of difference and repetition: we repeat because of our belief in the unique quality of the person loved, and each of the ones we love are in themselves a series of different persons. There is indeed tragic and pain in repetition, but also a comedy that appears when grasp its law. “Chaque personne qui nous fait souffrir,” Proust says, “peut être rattachée par nous à une divinité don’t elle n’est qu’un reflet fragmentaire” (III, 899).

As a search for truth and as *explication* of *implicated* signs the Search is a temporal development, and the relation of truth to time must be multi-layered, it is a *complication* of times. The signs of empty social life are wasted time, those of love are lost time, sensible signs give us lost time back, and the signs of art, finally, do the same, but in the form of an originary time that envelops all the others. These times overlap, interact, and enter into “complex combinations that constitute the *system of truth*” (*PS*, 35, my italics).<sup>16</sup>

In this process of learning we must dispel beliefs (*croyanances*, like Plato’s *doxa*), the first one of which relates to the *object* as the bearer of a truth that we only would have to recognize, and it can be found both in love and science. This is the shared illusion of perception and intelligence, that everything can be seen and formulated, and it pushes us to conversation, friendship, work, and finally philosophy—the conversation around the “thing itself” as a way to truth. Against friendship and philosophy Proust pits *love and art*: a mediocre love always teaches us more than a great friendship, just as art is above philosophy; more im-

16. Involuntary memory plays a subordinate role in this system, and the signs it produces are only a beginning of art, a preparatory exercise (“ils nous mettent sur la voie de l’art,” III, 889), and they are subordinate to fantasy. The signs of art lift us up to a different level of time, Time itself as the *complicatio* that will be explicated as the different levels of temporality: remembering, involuntary memory and discovery, fantasy, and art. At this highest level past and present co-exist in a *virtuality*, and this idea of a more profound memory is for Deleuze the true connection between Bergson and Proust, not the idea of *durée* and the critique of the spatialization of time. Memory places us immediately in the past, which is not conserved in something else, but in itself. This, Deleuze suggests, is the analysis of virtuality in *Matière et mémoire* that we also find in Proust—these signs, Proust says in *Le temps retrouvé*, are *real without being actual, ideal without being abstract* (“réels sans être actuels, idéaux sans être abstraits,” III, 873), a formula which Deleuze will make his own in his many reflections on virtuality from *Le Bergsonisme* (1966) up to the very last texts.

portant than thought is, in Proust's phrase, "ce qui donne à penser" (II, 549). The opposite illusion relates to the subject, to our capacity to compensate for our disappointment in the object with subjective associations—the adored actress Berma proves to be a bland person, but her true secret, the philosopher Bergotte suggests, is that certain of her gestures evoke antique sculptures that are completely unknown both to her and Racine.

Beyond this wavering between the subjective and the objective there is however a truly spiritual word populated by "alogical" or "supralogical" essences that are incarnated in subjects and objects. These are the true signs of art, the ultimate Differences that "constitute being" (PS, 53). Each of them is a specific point of view, which is *difference itself*, neither subjective nor objective, and this is why friendship only gives us blind windows, whereas true "intersubjectivity is artistic" (55). This qualitative difference, this "différence qui, si il n'y avait pas l'art, resterait le secret éternel de chacun" (III, 895) is more profound than the subject, it is an essence that is developed in the subject as its principle of individuation, and in this sense it is *worlds*, which only art can disclose, that constitute individuals—"Ces mondes que nous appelons les individus, et que sans l'art nous ne connaissons jamais" (III, 258).

The novel explores different worlds of signs, which are indeed untranslatable to each other, and yet the process of learning requires that we traverse them all. The sign is the foundation for the unity and difference of Proust's work, and it opposes itself to our incurable appetite for dualisms. The Search, Deleuze says, excludes physics as well as philosophy: there are neither fact nor truths, only signs and interpretations, and the appropriate profession would be the *Egyptologist*, he who encounters only hieroglyphs, which exist in the intersection of body and language: "Biology would be correct if it knew that bodies already are language. Linguists would be correct if they knew that language always belongs to bodies." (PS, 112).

The *Recherche* is to this extent a *Bildungsroman*, even though it will finally break with the categories that have structured this tradition, just as it, Deleuze underlines, is opposed to the image of philosophy that comes out of a Platonist and Rationalist heritage. It is true that Deleuze speaks in a Platonic vocabulary of an "ascending dialectic" leading us

toward the Essences, the final insights that transpose the work of art into a certain eternity located beyond the ravages of empirical life. On the other hand, the Essences that we finally reach in regained time will be the highest *Differences*, singular point of view that precede the subject.

In the concluding chapter of the first part (that ends the text from 1964), Deleuze presents the “image of thought” that transpires from the Search as a “rival” to philosophy, at least in its rationalist version (but, as we have seen, perhaps not in its empiricist version). The critique of thinking as a natural desire for the true that only needs a method to achieve its goal, the rejection of the figure of the Friend and Conversation, within which only abstract truths are exchanged and all the obscure dimensions that force thought upon us are excluded, lead to the conclusion that the poet overshadows the philosopher—he is the one who faces the signs that force us to translate and decipher, and understands that truth is always something that is “betrayed.” Intellect for him comes second, in response to signs that force our faculties toward their outer limit. Deleuze notes that such a critique could itself be seen as eminently philosophical, even Platonic—for does not Plato distinguish things that leave us in a state of passivity, and those that force us to become active, the “perceptions that are contrary to themselves” (cf. *Republic*, VII 523b-525b)? The Socratic *daimon* however watches over these encounters, whereas Proust’s Jewish humor drives him in a different direction, towards a Pathos or a profound Hieroglyph that displaces the Greek Logos.

### *III. Moving images*

If the first phase oscillates between a rejection of all images and the attempt to find other images, there is also a use of the term which is wholly positive, and a great testimony to this is the two books on film, *Cinéma 1: L'image-mouvement* and *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps*. To some extent the context would seem to make such a new evaluation tautological, for what would it mean to propose a philosophy of cinema that refuses the image? For Deleuze these two books are however not primarily “on” cinema, but already philosophy as such, or a way of creating a resonance between the cinematic and philosophical way of



thinking that allows the concepts of the first to be produced. Deleuze wants to move beyond both a phenomenological realism, rooted in Jean Bazin's theories, and the linguistic theories of Christina Metz (to name two very influential models) since both of them reduce the images of cinema to something else, a theory of subject and perception, or of language and the unconscious, eventually as part of a "cinematic apparatus" that produces subjectivity as ideology. Drawing on Peirce for his classificatory tools, and on Bergson for the metaphysical underpinning, Deleuze wants instead to examine how cinema *thinks in images*, how it produces a certain type of experience, and in this also invents various positions of the subject.

Deleuze is completely uninterested in cinema as a cultural product, for him it is only the grand *auteurs* that matter and not the average products of the movie industry; in a certain way these two volumes are about a European avant-garde tradition that belongs to the past. In his collection of essays on cinema, *Figures of the Visible* (1994), Fredric Jameson suggests that they constitute a large-scale attempt to reinvent film with a potential for dialectical experience, i.e. to do the same for modern image culture as Lukács' *Theorie des Romans* did for the novel or Adorno's *Philosophie der neuen Musik* for music, but that such a project necessarily will fail, since the experience of our time—characterized by the hyperfetishism of late capitalism, the ubiquity of the simulacrum, and an irretrievable loss of depth—no longer allows for this kind of dialectical analysis. In some ways this is indeed true, yet it is misguided, since the dissolution of organicism and dialectics, which Deleuze analyzes in terms of the passage between the two kinds of images, of movement and time, for him in no way constitutes a *loss*, but rather is the way in which cinema realizes its most radical and as it were *philosophical* potential (an idea never explicitly proposed by Deleuze, although I believe it underlies the structure of his two books), i.e. to show us an image of time and thought itself.<sup>17</sup>

17. What emerges here is perhaps a philosophy of the image in an era where the distinction between reality and representation needs to be rethought

Deleuze starts off from the first chapter in Bergson's *Matière et mémoire* and the analysis it proposes of image and matter, light and movement, which results in the vision of a decentered universe of images that precede the subject. Light, Bergson suggests in an inversion of the tradition predominant since Descartes, is not primarily in consciousness but in the things themselves, the universe consists of light, or "blocks of space-time" that traverse it, and perception is a particular kind of "living image" that subtracts and makes a selection from this first luminosity. Consciousness can then be understood as an opacity inserted into the flow of images primarily for practical purposes, as Bergson underlines; consciousness is a thing in this world that yet interrupts it. Bergson in fact encountered the same problem as phenomenology, how to transcend the dualism between materialism (movement in the world) and idealism (movement in consciousness), and Deleuze suggest that this crisis had to do with developments in science and technology, which showed that there was "more and more images in the material world, and more and more movement in consciousness" (*IM*, 84), and for which cinema could become a paradigm case.<sup>18</sup> Bergson however took the opposite way from Hus-

on the basis of technology (just as the philosophy of nature needs to be reformulates when the distinction between nature and artificium has vanished, as Deleuze suggests; cf. the interview "Signes et événements," in *Pourparlers*), and where the image must be given priority in relation to the stubborn subject-object dichotomy that permeates Lukács' and Adorno's theories, and from which Benjamin wanted to break free (for more on Benjamin, cf. chap 5 and 6 below). Perhaps it is in today's visual art and its re-use and re-functioning of cinema that these themes are developed further, as Raymond Bellour has shown; cf. for instance *L'entre-images. Photo, cinéma, vidéo* (Paris: La Différence, 1990). See also Daniel Birnbaum's discussion of Eija-Liisa Ahtila in terms of Deleuzian "time crystals," in *Chronology* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2006).

18. Jacques Rancière proposes that this understanding makes cinema into a version of "the essence of technology" in Heidegger's sense, i.e. as a

serl: consciousness is not *of* something, it *is* something. If the world as such already consists of images, light propagates itself in all directions, then consciousness is like an opaque screen that interrupts the flow of images and light. This interruption for Bergson creates centers of “indeterminacy” by inserting an interval, a causal hiatus between stimulus and action, which can then be perceived as a free choice (the response cannot be predicted), and which allows Bergson (and Deleuze) to reintroduce the spiritual and dimension without postulating another world. Subjectivity is subtractive, it selects and provides the world with a horizon that for Bergson indicates that consciousness is primarily something practical that arises from a need.

Through a series of interpretative moves, Deleuze is now able to apply this conception on the cinematic image—which for Bergson in fact summarizes all that is *wrong* with traditional ideas of time and movement, and he even baptizes it the “cinematographic illusion,” since we attempt to recreate movement by adding snapshots to each other.<sup>19</sup> Deleuze’s use of Bergson wants to show how cinema produces

privileged instance of the post-Cartesian “age of the world-picture”; cf. *La fable cinématographique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 14 ff. Paola Marrati argues against this in *Gilles Deleuze, cinéma et philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 2003) that images are in no need of a subject as the bearer of a “world-picture,” since they all exist on the same plane of immanence (38-40, 55 f, 58 f). From Heidegger’s point of view it could be argued that this is indeed how the essence of technology must appear: its logic of impositioning and framing transforms the subject into a “standing reserve,” and this is why it becomes a self-regulating system, or a “plane of immanence” in Deleuzian terms. For more on Heidegger and technology see “Towards the Essence of Technology” below..

19. For a discussion of how Deleuze reinterprets Bergson, see Paola Marrati, *Cinéma et philosophie*. She notes that Bergson here takes his place among the thinkers of immanence, and the images will become part of what Deleuze calls the plane of immanence, which is developed further in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*

images that even though they cannot be reduced to subjective perception, nevertheless allow subjective “centers” to emerge, as local and partial subjects. “Natural perception introduces pauses, anchoring points, fixed or divergent points of view, distinct moving bodies or even bearers, whereas cinematic perception operates in a continuous fashion, in one single movement whose pauses are an integrated part, and nothing more than an inner vibration.”<sup>20</sup> The images drawn out of luminosity can be of different kinds: perception- and action-images that frame, select, and form horizons, but also affect-images that becomes expressive as “pure qualities.” Cinema can descend into a perception that belongs to matter itself, or rise up to a level of time and thought that envelops the perceiving subject, which in Deleuze’s reading will become the main objective of postwar cinema.

For Deleuze we have to liberate ourselves from the idea of natural bearer of perception that would unify all images in an intentional consciousness (which is the basis for phenomenological film theories, as in Bazin), or in the suturing of the imaginary and the symbolic (as in Metz), we should rather understand this partial bearer as constructed through the movement- and time-images themselves. These images can be grasped in themselves, as belonging to things or matter (“the photograph has already been taken in the interior of things,” as Bergson says in *Matière et mémoire*), or as related to a subjective center, but none of these two have priority, and in this sense *experience does not coincide with subjectivity*. The task of philosophy (and cinema) would then be to discover those other dimensions, or as Bergson says in *La pensée et le mouvant*: “Philosophy should be an attempt to go beyond the human condition.” Dziga Vertov’s *The Man with the Movie-Camera* (1929) would be a prime case of this: Vertov wants to create connections between all points, to rediscover perception the things themselves in “a seeing without limits or distances” (*IM*, 117).

The primary task of the movement-image in classical European and American cinema is however to promote action and the particu-

20. *Cinéma 1, L’image-mouvement* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 36 f. Henceforth: *IM*.

lar kind of montage that this entails, with senso-motoric schemas at the center. Here I will just point to Deleuze's reading of Griffith and Eisenstein as the main examples of this development, since we here find a clear opposition between the organic and the dialectical as the two main forms of grand narration that will disappear after the war. In Griffith everything evolves through alternating parallel montage (men-women, black-white, rich-poor, country-city), an organic whole that emerges through series that are predestined to meet, with the duel or the missed encounter as the typical climax. This produces monumental historical representations, as in *Intolerance* (1916), which stages the whole of history from Babylon to America. And when Eisenstein criticizes Griffith for being "bourgeois," he does not refer to the content, but to the fact that the opposites are presented as *independent* and the final conflict as personal, and not as a result from a dialectical totality that creates its own oppositions at every level (as in *The Battleship Potemkin*). For Deleuze this indicates the extent to which they think history through the *image as montage*, and in this they transmit the 19<sup>th</sup> century idea of the "grand forms" into modern art. Russians and Americans, Deleuze suggests, both believe in Universal History, and Hollywood is a revolutionary dream too, which is shown the importance of historical films. They give us the image of the Promised Land of the proletariat or the immigrant, and not because of cynicism, but because of a faith that we have lost. This is what will disappear in postwar cinema, which no longer gives us images of History, but of Time as new form of *dis-joint*, more close to Proustian *complicatio* than to the *Bildungsroman*.

Italian Neo-Realism constitutes the decisive break between the two regimes of signs. Deleuze refers us to Bazin's analysis of Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* (1947), which suggests that what we see is a return to facts that merges aesthetics and ethics, and that presents the non-logical and lacunar character of reality as an ethical claim on the viewer: "Isn't this the tenable definition of realism in art," Bazin writes, "to force us to take a stance without meddling with humans or things?"<sup>21</sup>

21. André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Cerf, 1958), 206.

To a certain extent Deleuze follows Bazin's intuition, but he also underlines that this is not so much a return to reality as it takes us into the *different order of the time-image*. In Rossellini's *Europe 51* a woman from the bourgeoisie walks through the city, she has given up everything and no longer recognizes her world, but for Deleuze this is only partially explicable in terms of alienation and the social destitution of postwar Europe: "she sees," he exclaims, "she has learnt to see," the moment of non-recognition in the encounter has liberated the protagonist from the constraints of everyday perceptions, and her (finally tragic) strolls opens a new "cinéma du voyant."<sup>22</sup> What breaks forth is not the unmediated vision of the real, Deleuze claims against Bazin, it is a new conception of the mental.

Italian Neo-Realism gives us direct images of time, or time-images that break up the earlier senso-motoric schemes and the triad perception, action, and affect that organized the movement-image. Recognition does not occur, perception becomes deeper and its *abides*; no longer connected to the action, it returns over and over to the object and places us in "pure optical and sonorous situations." In the films of Zavattini, Rossellini, and de Sica action is suspended, and the protagonists become their own spectators (which accounts for the role in these films of the child as the paradigmatic spectator, without possibility of interfering). These situations are "pure" because they break away from those values and hierarchies that organizes action as a kind of *doxa*; the ties between characters and events are loosened, contingency and coincidence take over, and the spaces themselves turn into "disjointed any-spaces" (*espaces quelconques et déconnectés*). For Deleuze this is an irreversible mutation in cinema; the action film may go on, but "the soul of cinema is no longer there" (*IM*, 278).<sup>23</sup> As a discovery of the time-image,

22. *Cinéma 2, L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985), 9. Henceforth: *IT*.

23. Deleuze's distance from the world of commercial cinema is obvious, and it would make little sense to criticize him for this; his project is philosophical, and not to produce a sociology of visual culture (and as we noted earlier, his ideas are more relayed by contemporary art than in

cinema for Deleuze is rather a resistance to a world saturated by clichés and readymade images. The role of cinema is to destroy automated perception (and here we can recognize a distinct echo of Shklovsky and art as “device”), and to open for a new thought on time and the event in parallel with philosophy. But what is this beyond of movement, if it is not stillness, passivity, and nothingness, but something that should allow us to create other ways of reconnecting to the world?

In the chapter on the “Crystals of Time” Deleuze shows how these images break with the idea that the image is always in the *present*. The movement-image is based on the (ultimately Aristotelian) idea of time as measure of movement, but this only works as long as movement is normal and related to a center (an actor, a spectator, a moving body), whereas an errant and deviant movement, on the other hand, tends to liberate time, or give us a time “out of joint.” The image acquires a temporal density, it is inhabited by a past and a future, and the present may become only an ungraspable limit, as in *Citizen Kane* when Kane walks towards his journalist friend, but in fact *moves through time*. Movement no longer measures time, organic action is interrupted so as to let a crystalline image appear, made of several layers of time in one. Once more drawing on Bergson and his distinction in *Matière et mémoire* between habitual or automatic perception, and attentive perception, the first one predicated upon recognition (“I recognize my friend Pierre, just like the cow recognizes the grass,” *IT*, 62), the sec-

the move industry). But maybe there is a contradiction here of another kind, as Jacques Rancière has pointed out (cf. his discussion in *La fable cinématographique*, 145-63). On the one hand Deleuze lays no claim to being a historian (“This study is not a history of cinema. It is a taxonomy, an attempt to classify images and signs.” *IM*, 7), on the other hand the two books are clearly organized around a historical break between two forms of cinema and images. Paola Marrati proposes that it is only after the demise of History that Deleuze’s project becomes possible: his notion of time, becomings, and the event delineate a proper modernity of cinema; cf. *Deleuze et le cinéma*.

and returning us to the object over and over, Deleuze describes the crystal as a circuit that widens and grows deeper with every new act of attention. He also connects this to Robbe-Grillet's analysis of description in *Pour un nouveau roman*, and there is no doubt a close connection to French '60s cinema (Godard, Resnais; but cf. also the discussion of Rossellini's *Stromboli*, *IT*, 66).

What happens it that the actual optical image is connected to a virtual image, and together they form a circuit that constantly revolves around itself; the large circles of the crystal's circuit presuppose a cone, a point where actual and virtual meet each other, and the mirror is a classical way of showing this (as in another film by Welles, *The Lady from Shanghai*). What separates the now from the past is not a timeline (before-after), instead there is a pure co-existence of the present and its own past, organized around the limit between actual (now) and virtual (past), so the now is constantly doubled by memory.<sup>24</sup> These two form the first circuit, the originary crystal that allows time to spring forth, and this is why the cinematic image can never be fully in the present: there is a perpetual doubling at the origin of time (cf. *IT*, 108-109). The virtual image inserts itself in the interval that already existed between perception and action, it opens the subject

24. Whether there is any real difference on this point between Bergson's and Husserl's analyses of the retentive structure of the now seems unclear to me. Their respective analyses will eventually lead them in different directions, since consciousness for Bergson in the final instance cannot be sufficient to account for time. But this also holds for Heidegger, and the relation between Bergson and phenomenology cannot be decided solely by a reference to the role of consciousness. "We are the true Bergsonians," as Husserl allegedly once said to Alexandre Koyré; cf. Bernard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 21. This indicates that he saw Bergson as moving in the same direction as himself; for a discussion of Bergson in this light, cf. Rudolf Bernet, "A Present Folded Back on the Past (Bergson)," *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. XXXV, 2005..



to another time and space, and in this it transforms the affect into a transsubjective state. Just as the living image (the subject) itself was an image, a partially opaque screen inserted into the image-flow, memory and thought go beyond the subjective sphere in the direction of an ontology of time, an exterior and interior more profound than psychological inner life and external physical movement. Just as in the analysis of Proust, we reach a level of Time itself as an infinite complication of levels, and Deleuze once more refers to Bergson: the past is preserved in itself, beyond all psychology, as a pure memory inside which we can create our own memory images; we have to place ourselves in the past in order to remember. This dimension is not *subjective*, it is the *subjectivity of time* itself. Time is not inside of us, it is the interiority “in” which we are (cf. 110-111).

But what is the image of time and thought that this gives us? Can cinema, Deleuze finally asks, give us faith in the world? Can it provide new images beyond the organic and active visions that dominated early cinema? Aesthetic judgments matter little (all great works of art are incomparable, Deleuze insists), not least because their ultimate purpose is not art, but life itself, and in organic works there was a “sense” that preceded the alternative between happiness and tragedy. Classical cinema was an art of the masses, either in the Soviet or the Hollywood version, it was a revolutionary and “catholic” (IT, 222) form of art, but this hope now belongs to the past. The blow of the fist proposed by Eisenstein has turned into the monotony of action films, and the complicity of cinema in totalitarian movements is an undeniable fact.

Modern cinema first of all resists the dogmatic image of thought, Deleuze suggests, it resists the present and the *doxa*, which always hinges upon a neutralization of time. Here it encounters both Nietzsche and Proust, in proposing that truth always has a relation to time, but also Foucault and his proposal for an ontology of actuality. But can the new image of thought really do this? Cinema’s task is not to represent the world, Deleuze says, but our *faith* in the world. This is an immanent conversion, it no longer relates to that which is beyond life, but to life itself. Beyond the death of God and of revolutionary enthusiasm, there is a faith (for which Deleuze turns to Pascal and Kierkegaard) that turns to *this* world and the belief that we can inhabit

it differently, in terms of another immanence. This is our modern predicament: not the absence or void left behind by God, but the question of the world.

Finally, the question of cinema and philosophy: if the “time-images” can give a direct presentation of time as the element of thinking, they touch the very root of philosophy—and this is why we at the end of the second volume pass from the question “what is cinema?” to the question “what is philosophy?” (*IT*, 366) The understanding of the image in the books on cinema remains tied to a specific medium, but still it points ahead to the third moment, where the images have received a wholly positive and productive signification, and that we find above all in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?* In this version the image merges with the “plane of immanence” from which thinking starts off in order to create its concepts: “The plane of immanence is not a concept that is thought or thinkable, but *the image of thought*, the image it makes of what it means to think, to orient oneself in thinking” (*QPh*, 40, my italics). This is no longer a dogmatic presupposition that could be overcome in a superior iconoclasm, but the very possibility of thought in general. Here we also find a different and much more generous evaluation of the history of philosophy, where it is no longer a question of attacking certain (dogmatic) images, but more of understanding the conditions for any creation of concepts, and a study of how such images change, which Deleuze baptizes “noology.” Every great philosopher creates a new image—and Deleuze seems finally to have made at least a certain peace with Plato, Descartes, and Kant, who appear as the “masters of the concept”—, constructs the plane of immanence and peoples it with concepts, and in this sense it is a radical and new creation regardless of whether it in Deleuze’s earlier vocabulary would have been chastised as “dogmatic” or not.

#### *IV. The form of the question.*

I have here tried follow these transformations in Deleuze’s thought through some of his works, but in order to shed a different light on his path, perhaps his way of posing this question should be confronted with that another philosopher who just as incessantly asked “what is

called thinking?”), namely Heidegger. Even though, or perhaps precisely because, their respective understanding of this question, and of the nature of *questioning* and of *problems* as such, may seem radically opposed, such a confrontation bears significantly on one of today’s most significant issues, namely the fate of philosophy after the downfall of the great metaphysical systems.

As we have seen above, one of the founding parameters in the images of thought is the very position of the philosophical problem: what is a problem, what does it mean to ask for something? We find the first instance of the questioning of the question, or the problematizing of the problem, in *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (1962), where it appears in the context of a discussion of *sense*. Nietzsche’s most general project, it is stated from the outset, consists in the introduction of the concepts of *sense* and *value* into philosophy, which may seem strange—for has not the idea of meaning and sense always been philosophy’s basic issue, from the perplexity over the word “being” in the *Sophist* up to and beyond Heidegger’s repetition of the question in various forms? The sense of something is however not due to any ideal signification that would be embodied, or to a meaning-giving subject, but depends on which contingent forces that at a given moment overtake and appropriate the phenomenon, which in its turn is no longer determined as appearance, as *Schein*, but as a *sign* to be deciphered.<sup>25</sup> Sense is always a plurality, a constellation, and this pluralistic and empiricist emphasis on the external nature of all relations is not, as for instance Hegel

25. This rejection of both an ideal content and the meaning-giving subject puts the concept of sense in close connection to what Foucault will later call the *énoncé* in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: neither a proposition nor a phrase, the “utterance” has mobile places for an enunciating subject, it can enter into formalized discourses, but cannot be reduced to them. In his analysis of sense as a constellation of forces, Deleuze here also points ahead to Foucault’s conception of the complex knowledge-power, and it is highly likely that these early formulations exerted a decisive influence on Foucault. For more on Deleuze and Foucault, cf. chap. 8 below.

would have riposted, due to the immaturity or infancy of the concept, but constitutes its proper maturity. The thing “in itself” entertains varying degrees of affinity with a manifold of surrounding forces, and what we think of as its essence (for instance: the reactive nature of Christianity, the dogmatic character of philosophy), is the sense it is given at a particular moment by those forces that are in affinity with the thing’s own potential, and are capable of forming new assemblages with it that in turn discover new affinities that generate new assemblages, etc. This also means that under the gaze of the genealogist, the first appearance, the origin, can be highly misleading, as is eminently the case with the figure of the philosopher, who for a long time had to hide inside the black-coat of the priest before he was able to disclose his own profound immorality.

Nietzsche’s genealogy, Deleuze claims, is an attempt to show that all universals and essences have to be understood as produced through conflict and battle. Instead of the Platonic question of essence, “*what is...?*” (the true, the good, the beautiful, the just, etc.), genealogy redirects us to the question of the Sophists, effaced under its Platonic rewriting and yet legible as an internal unrest: “*who is...?*” “*which one is...?*” This other type of questioning shifts the unity of the manifold in the definition of essence into an open multiplicity of particular cases, perspectives, and contingent differences belonging to the sensible as such.<sup>26</sup> Against Plato’s dialectical ascension towards the unity of ideas,

26. Barbara Cassin proposes that we should read Deleuze as a modern sophist, for whom the rhetorical efficiency is more important than their “logical” dimension; cf. *L’effet sophistique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 19 f. Apart from the fact the only alternative to sophistry today hardly is a straightforward “Platonism” (whatever that may be), it also downplays the necessary element of construction in everything that appears as simply “logical.” As Stanley Rosen points out, if Platonism is about going beyond the “natural looks of things, then “the deepest problem of Plato is whether, in so going beyond them, we thereby discover that they are not natural but artificial. This is the problem of whether we

which still lives on in a transformed guise in Hegel's retrieval of difference as a moment in the logic of identity ("the work of the negative"), Deleuze, following Nietzsche, proposes a free and non-conceptual difference, a pure diversity which does not solidify into global oppositions or follows the movement of negativity, but ceaselessly transforms each unity into a spectral construction, a manifold which can only be given perspectively.<sup>27</sup> It is in this sense that he will speak of a "non-conceptual" difference, which does not separate concept from sensibility, as for instance in Kant, but is a difference within the sensible itself. However this is still a *concept* of a non-conceptual difference, and we can see how Deleuze in many passages in *Différence et répétition* is struggling to overcome a certain type of conceptuality by pushing it towards its limit. Later he will speak of this as multiplicities that are "non-metric" (uncountable, non-arithmetizable), rhizomatic and non-arborescent: the multiple is for him not a predicate (a manifold or a multiplicity of x's) but a noun, or perhaps better, the noun understood as *event*. The issue of thinking beyond classical ideas of unity is not just to say it, but

can distinguish between philosophy and sophistry." (*Plato's Sophist: The Drama of Original and Image* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 321). In this sense I do not think Deleuze would have any problem in identifying himself as a Sophist, given his insistence that concepts and universals are constructed by us, which of course does not mean that they are wholly fortuitous.

27. On this point Deleuze is part of general anti-Hegelian tendency in French philosophy, as he himself notes, for instance in the preface to *Différence et répétition*, where this is stated in a programmatic fashion. The decisive "difference" in this philosophy of difference seems to reside not only in the distance to Hegel and dialectics, but also in a rejection of Heidegger's ontological difference, which Deleuze often tends to see in an over-simplified manner as just a sequel to dialectical negativity. For a discussion of Deleuze's relation to Hegel, see Catherine Malabou, "Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves," in Paul Patton (ed.): *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (London: Basil & Blackwell, 1996).

also to do it. “Le multiple, il faut le faire,” as it said at the outset of *Mille Plateaux*. Inversely, from a classical perspective one could surely object that it is perhaps easier to *do* it than to *say* it, since saying always means predication and categorizing, and brings us back to the traditional relation between unity and multiplicity.

If Deleuze construes Nietzsche as a critique of all previous philosophy, he still has no intention to step out of philosophy or to claim that the tradition would have come to an end. The end of metaphysics, as Deleuze will never cease to claim (although some passages in the 1962 book are not entirely clear on this point), is for him a useless conception: metaphysics, and with it philosophy, starts anew in every moment, as soon as a thought encounters an object and constructs a concept which, if it is a successful one, is always a new and unprecedented event. The point is not (but you should never make a *point*, as Deleuze often says, but always follow a *line*...) whether philosophy is approaching its *end*, but what philosophy in this case might *become*. The de-founding of metaphysics occurring in Nietzsche need not lead us into a melancholic reflection on the loss of ground, it could just as well give rise to an active construction of new concepts and problems.

At this point it is instructive to turn to Heidegger, who develops another type of reading of the question “*what is...?*” and does this in the context of a rather different interpretation of Nietzsche. In one of the appendixes to the monumental two-volume *Nietzsche* (published in 1961, the year before Deleuze’s book, but drawing on lectures and manuscripts from 1936-46), Heidegger asks how the distinction between *existentia* and *essentia* is rooted in Greek philosophy.<sup>28</sup> Behind these scholastic terms he finds the Greek couple *ti estin* (*what* it is, the question of essence) and *hoti estin* (*that* it is, the position of existence). In a typical Heideggerian gesture, whose ideological overtones need not immediately concern us here (although a more detailed discussion would have to read it in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari call a “ge-

28. *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 399 ff.

ophilosophy”),<sup>29</sup> he rejects the authority of the Latin translation and instead focuses on the common root of the distinction: how, in what way, could being appear as “that” (*hōti*) and “what” (*tī*)? There is no possible knowledge of the origin of this distinction within metaphysics, Heidegger claims, since the history of metaphysics is itself founded on it. Being, as the common root of this difference, is as such withdrawn from it, and Heidegger proceeds to show that that structure *ti-hōti* in fact is a derivative distinction that becomes “possible” (the problem here being that the distinction between possibility and actuality belongs here too: the essence, the whatness of the tree, is also the *possibility* of the actual tree) on the intra-worldly side of the “ontological difference,” which for Heidegger lies between being as presencing, as the granting of openness, and beings as that which is granted. The first distinction between “that” and “what” then rests on a second and more profound difference, which has never appeared nor been thought as such, and which must necessarily remain *forgotten* within thought. The difference between presencing and the present unfolds only as the *un*-thought, but in this it is also that which *gives* thought, it is what is forever deferred and withheld as the to-be-thought (*das zu-Denkende*).

The question “what is...?” can thus just as little in Heidegger as in Deleuze be answered in the Platonic (or Aristotelian, or any subsequent traditional) mode, but has to be interpreted itself. For the Deleuze of *Nietzsche et la philosophie* any essence (of truth, of man, of language, etc.) is a *sign* to be deciphered, a surface effect that should be understood as a constellation within a multiplicity, an *imposition*, whereas essence for Heidegger is a twofold, pointing towards an originary erasure of presencing. This will lead Heidegger to speak of this first essence in a different way, namely as the essencing of being, *das*

29. Cf. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, chap. 4. The issue is here of course not to disconnect philosophy from the earth and a sense of “territoriality” in the name of a pure abstraction, but to rethink the idea of territoriality outside of a certain Occidentalism.

*Wesen des Seins*.<sup>30</sup> Both of them destroy or transform the metaphysical quest for a stable essence, an eidetic whatness, but the direction in which this transformation leads is different: in Deleuze essence is opened up, fractured and reinterpreted as a multiplicity of lines and connections, in Heidegger it is folded back onto itself, retreating into the domain of the un-said and un-thought, which nevertheless is that which gives thought remains the to-be-thought.<sup>31</sup>

#### V. *Thinking and folding*

In both Heidegger and Deleuze, the rethinking of essence will also result in a corresponding rethinking of philosophy, and of the question “what is...,” so that it turns upon itself: what is philosophy? Let us begin by noting some of the characteristics Deleuze ascribes to his “new image” of thought in terms of what he calls “folding,” and then come back to the confrontation with Heidegger.

Earlier we saw that one of things Deleuze rejects is the idea of a natural proximity between thought and its content—instead he portrays thinking as an always violent act, approaching something neces-

30. This is one the changes underlying the “turn” in the later Heidegger, for instance when the “essence of truth” as openness is understood to require a “truth of essence,” i.e., an understanding of truth as *process*, as essencing and coming-to-presence. Cf. on this point the 1949 postface to “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” (1930), in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 199.
31. I use the word “fold” to establish, or perhaps forge, a link between Heidegger and Deleuze. “Twofold” here translates the German “Zweifalt,” which Heidegger understands as the interweaving of being and beings that allows them to be apart *and* together, the complication of unity *and* difference. Cf. the essay on Parmenides, “Moirai,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), to which Deleuze also refers (in an unusually conciliatory and non-critical fashion) in *Le Plî: Leibniz et le Baroque* (Paris: Minuit, 1988), 42, note 8. Henceforth cited as *P*.



sarily alien and other, and wrestling with it. Truth is an *agon*, a capture and a combat, which is why it must become a problem (and here there is a close link to Foucault, especially to last two volumes on the history of sexuality, which Deleuze investigates in detail in his monograph on Foucault). We begin to think because we are forced to do it, compelled by outer forces and encounters with enigmatic signs, as in Proust's Search, where the narrator is forced to move from one semiological level to another, from the signs of the *demi-monde* to jealousy, then the material signs, and finally to time regained in the signs of art. Thought is an event, just like Mallarmé's dice-throw (which also appears in a crucial juncture in the book on Nietzsche, as well as in the one on Leibniz and the Fold)—and here too chance will prevail, and it has to be affirmed as the fundamental condition of thinking. It is an irruption, first of all for the one who experiences it. To think does not mean to exercise a pre-given faculty, but to undergo a change: thought is what *happens* to you.

In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Deleuze and Guattari attempt to determine the task of philosophy by setting it apart from three of its most insidious rivals. Thinking, they claim, is not the *contemplation* of ready-made forms or ideas (as in the Platonic tradition), nor is it the *reflection* on an experience already gained within another sphere (science, mathematics, art), nor does it deal with *communication* or its foundations (the formulation of rules for the transmission of knowledge as in Habermas, assuring the prevalence of consensus, or some kind of dialog, "dinner at the Rorty's"). In order to contemplate the idea, Plato first had to *invent* it; science and art have never waited for philosophy in order to "reflect" on their own practices; communication finally, is something which is required of us by the market, by the powers that be, and it is indeed the end of philosophy, perhaps in the same way that Heidegger imagined it.

Philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari claim, should be understood as the art of *creating* concepts, and as such it has no need to answer to the requirements of other types of discourse. Philosophy is not a meta-discipline, not the "logical syntax" of other sciences or discourses—although it can *use* other discourses as raw material or draw inspiration from them, and the collaborative work of Deleuze and Guat-

tari is surely one of the most striking contemporary examples of such a transversal and nomadic philosophical activity. Philosophy is not subjected to anything else, it is a radical *constructivism*, and what it constructs is concepts and to some extent also the “conceptual personae” that surround the concepts and form their “environments,” as it were (here we may note that the personae seem to assume some of the characteristics ascribed in the earlier work to the “image”).

This act of creating should not be understood as the activity of a pre-existing subject, or as a constitution in the transcendental or empirical sense. In a certain way, to think is also to *create a subject*, a subject for thought, or the concept of such a subject. But if we attempt to extrapolate from some of Deleuze’s suggestions, what is then the concept he proposes of the subject and of thought?

The lexicon of transcendental philosophy never disappears in Deleuze’s work, which would seem like a logical outcome, instead it undergoes strange mutations. From *Logique du sens* (1969) and onwards Deleuze will talk about consciousness as a transcendental field without an ego, and describe his way of approaching this field as a “transcendental empiricism,” occasionally as a “higher empiricism.” Given the history of these terms, transcendental empiricism must seem like a provocation—strangely enough, however, at one time the expression appears in Husserl’s *Cartesian meditations*, as if to indicate that what the reflecting ego encounters in its “working field” (*Arbeitsfeld*) is never wholly subsumed in advance, never just the object of a recognition. Aside from this short remark, or perhaps slip of the pen, for Husserl the transcendental field is necessarily individuated through the form of the ego, and ultimately through the temporal flow; in Deleuze the unifying synthesis is *temporary* rather than *temporal*, and it is effected by what he calls “pre-individual” forms of individuation, singular events around which other events may crystallize in variable forms. The plane on which the events is never without directions, never entirely *smooth*, to use an image from *Mille Plateaux*, but always transcendently *striated*, although not necessarily by an egological instrument—all of which of course does not imply that the ego simply *does not exist*, only that it may form *one* center of individuation on the plane, though not the primordial One. Like all universals, Deleuze claims, the Ego

is something that needs to be explained rather than assumed as an explanation. The subject is a result of a subjectification, a *con-crescentia* of singularities and series of singularities that are prolonged into each other so as to form variable centers, a “fold” that brings outside and inside in contact in a new way.

This concept of the “fold” was first thematized in detail in the monograph on Foucault (1986), where it was used to describe Foucault’s theory of “subjectivation,” i.e., how subjectivity can be understood as a construction that folds the “forces of the outside” so as to hollow out a “relative interior.” The fold has to do with the *interiority* of thought, and not with the *exteriority* of forces and singularities, and for Deleuze this becomes an answer to the Heideggerian question *Was heisst Denken?*<sup>2</sup>—what is called thinking, what calls thinking forth? In the book on Leibniz and the Fold, which is Deleuze’s final monograph and perhaps also the book where the proximity between interpreter and interpreted comes so strong as to create a new compound “Leibniz-Deleuze,” this creation of a subject through folding and invagination is that which displaces the subject as *substance*, as we find it in Descartes (the interiority of a consciousness ascribed to a thing, a *res*, even though a thing which has been transformed into that which carries its accidents as *cogitations*). The Leibnizian subject is a point of view, or better, that which comes to a point of view and remains there, and it does not pre-exist the perspective. Perspectivism does not mean that the truth varies in relation to a subject, it is the *condition under which the truth of a variation appears to a subject* (and Nietzsche will push this figure even further, so that the world on which the perspective is a point of view itself is broken up). The subject is not an entity given in advance, it is a result formed by the integration of pre-individual singularities (the perceptions in the monad’s interior), by the invagination of the Outside (world), or the actualization of a world that “in itself” is only a virtuality: the world is nothing over and above that which is actualized in the perceptual flow of each monad, it is not an object out there that would be represented or depicted in an inside.

For Leibniz, this society of monads as a plurality of viewpoints is a way to solve the problem of One and Many that preserves an irreducible individuality in each perspective. Each monad is an individual

and yet also the whole world, and their respective individuation consists in the differentiation of a particular stream of perceptions, while all streams also actualize one and the same virtuality (World). But how can the monads express one and the same world, if it is nothing over and above the way in which it is expressed in the different subjects; what is this “world” that must remain other to them? For Leibniz the world is determined an infinite series, whose rule of convergence is given by God in such a way that every monad contains everything, but only develops or unfolds a small part of it clearly. From another point of view we could say that God does not create the world in order to *then* allow Adam to sin, he *creates the world where Adam sins*, and where all perceptions are already implied, and what we mean by time is simply the stepwise explication of the series in its totality (and argument that Leibniz develops in detail in his correspondence with Arnauld). The world becomes a world by the folding of a virtual exterior into the monad (actualization), the individual comes to be when a series of pre-individual singularities are aligned and forms a series, which then can be determined as a point of individuation or *inclusion*; the subject as an envelope is what closes a perspective off. Subjects and objects indeed exist, but as variable results of processes of individuation, not as entities given in advance or empty receptacles that gradually will be filled by impressions and contents.

On the basis of this Deleuze can also extract a “Baroque grammar” from Leibniz: the predicates are not attributes, but *events*, explications in time of what was implicitly contained in the monad, and the subject is that which “envelops” a set of predicates (that makes the “mind” into a “subject,” to refer back to the reading of Hume). Thinking is not the essence or attribute of a certain substance, as in the Cartesian *sum res cogitans*, “I am a thing that thinks,” a thing that “has” thinking as its essential attribute, but a passage from one state to another. If the world is an infinite series of events, it is also included in the dark fond of the monad, and its individuality, the *how* of its being, lies in the “manners” (*les manières*, Leibniz says) in which passes from one state to another, concatenates its event and brings what is enveloped in the dark fond to clarity—unlike the Cartesian geometric clarity, Deleuze proposes that we must see Leibniz’ philosophy as a

theory of gradual ascents and descents, a profound *Mannerism*, a constant modulation and variation instead of an essentialism where the subject “has” its predicates.

One of the important concepts created by Leibniz in order to think the “world,” and where the theological dimension of his thought becomes clear, is the idea of a relation of “compossibility” that holds between the different monads and their respective series of perceptions. If God has created the best of all possible worlds, it is because it contains the maximum variation in the maximum unity, and the monads must fit together. How compossibility should be understood is for Leibniz in the final instance a “mystery buried deep in the understanding of God,” which at least tells us that it should not be identified with logical contradiction (Deleuze proposes the neologism “vice-diction”). The other possible worlds have a degree of existence or a “tendency” towards existence, but our world repels them all, since God is “sieve,” and act of *criblatio*. Virtually there exist singularities of all kinds, nouns as well as verbs: an Adam, a garden, to sin, not to sin, etc., but God chooses to allow one particular world to pass into existence, which is the world where Adam sins (and Jesus is born, Caesar passes over the Rubicon, Arnauld takes a trip to Paris, etc.). This is why the individual can be understood as composes of pre-individual singularities, as the local effect of an ontological sieve.

This world centered around God and the Sieve is no longer ours, and after the death of God and of a certain infinitist metaphysics we must allow for the series to be divergent. Nietzsche and Mallarmé, but also Borges and Maurice Leblanc’s Professor Balthazar, Deleuze suggests, have reinvented the idea of the world as game, a dice-throw capable of affirming chance in its integrality: not only the singular result, but also the principles themselves, are at stake. The events that for Leibniz still were the explication in time of an infinite series immanent in each monad with its respective “differentials” (but where the law of the series of all series was located outside, in the mind of God), now become a variable “prehension”—“beings have been torn apart,” Deleuze writes, “they are pried open by divergent series and impossible wholes that draw them outward instead of closing them off within a compossible and convergent world that they would express from the

inside.” (*P*, 111). The entity is an event, something that must be understood as a phase or a mobile cut, a local subjectivation, and here we can recognize the theme that links back to the study of Hume.<sup>32</sup>

Deleuze inserts Leibniz in this long tradition, beginning with the Stoics, and in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy represented by someone like Whitehead, for whom the question of an ontology of the event had a crucial link to this idea of divergence; how can we think the production of the new, how can we disengage the event from the Model? The concept “prehension” used above comes from Whitehead, and it indicates his profound Leibnizian inspiration, while also going beyond the theocentric model. Prehension for Whitehead is the grasping of a “datum,” and the individual is growing-together of such data—each entity is a composite of prehending and prehended, but that which prehends is not an already given subject, but a “superject,” something “thrown over” (in a reversal of the Aristotelian and Cartesian model), an element that results from another act of prehension. The event is a “nexus” of such prehensions, and as such it is a not like the Leibnizian point of individuation a closing-off, but a fundamental openness: each prehension is already the prehension of another prehension, so that the resulting entities attain a state of pure variability. The object becomes an “objectile,” as Deleuze says in another context, drawing on the work of Bernard Cache.<sup>33</sup>

The subject must then be understood as an envelope, a folding-together on the basis of a transcendental field that precedes it. And this field or “plane” must be thought of as fundamental dispersion, it is not an effect of some prior event, it is not a ground, but a kind of milieu for the entity: it is a way to think subjectivation on the basis of immanence.

32. For an interpretation of Deleuze based on this concept of event, cf. François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze. Une philosophie de l'événement* (Paris: PUF, 1999), and the discussion in Pierre Causat, *L'événement* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1992).
33. Cf. Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1995).

In his very last text, the short essay “L’immanence: une vie...,”<sup>34</sup> Deleuze once more picks up this thread and connects it to his conception of an “immanent” philosophizing in the tradition of Spinoza and Nietzsche: the plane of immanence is not immanent in something else, as an attribute to a One or a Transcendent, rather it is a One as *plane*, the indefinite milieu of dispersion of all concepts. To think, he says, means to *return* to this plane, to *inscribe* new concepts onto it, and thereby also to *reinvent* it. If thought is always a singularity, an event, it nevertheless both requires and produces such a plane of immanence.

The problem arises as to whether we should talk about this plane as singular or plural: sometimes Deleuze seems to imply that all conceptual creation creates its own plane of immanence, which would imply plurality (even though the planes may be non-communicating), sometimes that all concepts are inscribed on a general plane, which then would be like a withdrawn and unthematizable background, a “horizon” for all conceptual creation. This ontological ambiguity is connected to Deleuze’s conception of beings as “univocity” (which he borrows from Duns Scotus and Spinoza): being is the same for each existent, it is expressed to an equal degree in all of them without separation, yet being is also one, one *voice* (uni-vocal), though saying itself differently in each being. Heidegger (or, for that matter, Aristotle) is at once close and far away: being is not a being, yet it is not something other than beings, since the “is” of being means that it is the being *of* beings. We should remember that Heidegger, when he in the *Letter on Humanism* comments on Sartre’s statement that “**précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a seulement des hommes,**” twists the phrase around and says: “**précisément nous sommes sur un plan où il y a principalement l’être.**” Then he adds: “**But whence comes and what is le plan? L’Etre and le plan are the same (*sind dasselbe*).**”<sup>35</sup>

What I am referring to here is not the use of the word *plan*, which

34. “L’immanence: une vie...”. *Philosophie* 47, 1995.

35. “Brief über den Humanismus,” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), 133.

is surely accidental in the case of Heidegger, but the presence of an aporia that Heidegger and Deleuze both face, although from opposite sides. For Deleuze, the *plan* is at once one and multiple, it is the element or milieu of all concepts, *as well as* that which concepts bring forth and construct. For Heidegger, being is that which remains *unthought* in each philosophical construction, their common element that none of them can exhaust, and yet also that which is projected and brought forth in each of them.

In both Heidegger and Deleuze, at least if we refer to Heidegger after he abandoned the project of fundamental ontology, philosophy has little to do with founding or giving grounds to other theories. Neither of them provide us with any kind of foundational theory, but rather with an experience of the *Ab-grund*, the absence of foundation, a de-founding movement. The important difference between them lies in how this absence is conceived: for Heidegger it is essentially conceived of as historical—the Greek origin begins by being erased, forgotten, and so profound is this oblivion, that to wake up from it can only mean to awaken into it, to experience the forgetting (*Lethe*) of being as a necessary forgetting; for Deleuze, history and historicity in this heavy sense means little, and for him it is rather a question of *becoming*, of what philosophy may become once it sheds its false feathers (just as the philosopher in Nietzsche’s reading had to hide for a long time in the coat of the priest, he here has to talk the language of transcendental foundations). For Heidegger, the absence of foundation opens for a becoming of thought through *recollection* (*Andenken*) as a response to the sending (*Geschick*) of being, whose final outcome may be the “event” (*Ereignis*) that will allow man and being to belong together in an identity which does not sublimate their difference. And it is perhaps in this thought of the event that the difference between Heidegger and Deleuze becomes most pointed, but it also where Deleuze enters into his deepest difficulties, especially in the period when the state of “imagelessness” seemed like the only viable option.

For the Deleuze of the late ‘60s becoming and event need no movement of recollection, since the event affirms the different and the difference as such. For Deleuze too “being is the unique event in which all events communicate” (*LS*, 211), but it is a question of the



“impossible as means of communication” (203), a “resonance of dispartes” that subjects the Ego, the World, and God to a “common death, in favor of divergent series as such” (205). Nothing subsists but “the Event, the Event itself, *Eventum tantum* for all the contraries, which communicates with itself through its own distance and its resonance through all of its disjunctions” (207). Thinking would amount to an acknowledging of this dispersal, the breaking up of the intimate relation between man and being that the Heideggerian event wants to safeguard. But does this still amount to a world that we could have “faith” in, as he will later say in *L’image-temps*? Is this precisely not the absence of world, the pure divergence that does not leave us with anything but the void? In short, do we not need to return to a certain interiority, to the fold of a subject?

I believe this is what the later Deleuze does, and from the book on Foucault up to the reflections on Leibniz and the fold, the idea of a relative and variable interiority—unstable and precarious, yet not simply an *illusion* that thought needs to dispel—imposes itself. In his comments on Foucault’s theory of subjectivation, he remarks that an analysis of the subject as merely an effect of assemblages of power and discourse would be like an attempt to derive the ship from the ocean, as if it were but a momentary fold of the surface, and maybe this could be applied to Deleuze himself. The thought of a pure divergence comes close to a thought of *death*, not of *life*; it breaks open a form of interiority predicated upon the One, but leaves us with a pure un-fold, an event of pure dispersal whose resonance does not allow for any responses. There is a passage from Leibniz that Deleuze often quotes, from *Système nouveau de la nature et de la communication des substances* (§ 12), where Leibniz first describes the ascending levels of substantial unity (the physical, mathematical, and metaphysical point), but when he comes to the question of how this interiority relates to the body, he then exclaims: “I thought I had returned to harbor, but found myself thrown out on the open sea.” There is a similar vertiginous movement in Deleuze, an irresistible desire to *let go*; and yet the smooth space of the open sea is not a sufficient answer. In this he comes back to the beginning of this path, and to the question of the genesis of interiority, which perhaps had been present all along. Would this, then, be something like a final encounter with

Heidegger? It is true that the thought of the fold and the event, the super-ject and the objectile, and the process of prehension as a form of pre-subjective individuation, do not lead us back to something like the belonging-together of man and being in Heidegger's sense, but still it points to a certain intersection at which the thinking of being as *event* and the thinking of event as *dispersal* must necessarily communicate and enter into contact, even if only as the two sides of a folded surface: close, yet separated by a vast distance.





# Modernism and Technology

Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. *Such a realm is art.*

Martin Heidegger, “Die Frage nach der Technik”

## *1. Reactionary and progressive modernisms*

Since the beginnings of modernism, art and technology have enjoyed a shifting and ambivalent relationship. Sometimes understood as a concordant, even as the foundation of an imminent utopia, sometimes as violently discordant, as the cause of a catastrophic loss of sense, their interplay has been one of the essential features of a certain experience of modernity. The impact of technological change on politics and the arts, on the notions of space and time, on experience in the widest sense of the term, has been investigated by an almost infinite number of historians and philosophers, and it has produced a wide spectrum of artistic responses in literature, cinema, painting, sculpture, music, etc. Assessing the historical complexity of this interchange is even more important today, especially given our current fantasies and projections, and the way in which the promise or threat of violent transformations of the life-world, of our bodily sensorium, of our experience of space and time, continue to haunt us. In many ways the present constitutes a kind of “repetition” of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—on the one hand a step to a wholly new technological plateau (perhaps even the “thousand plateaus” of Deleuze and Guattari, whose obverse however would be the “societies of control” that such a shift makes possible) where an infinity of new modes of experience

and consciousness remain to be explored, on the other hand a process that unleashes similar anxieties and fantasies that beset early modernist consciousness: a loss of self, identity, and stability, and a disconnect between the increasing singularity of *Erlebnis* (as opposed to the continuity of *Erfahrung*) and its anchoring point in time and space.

The initial experiences of modernity—its disasters and utopias, its visions of explosive crises and subsequent violent transformations—were fundamentally conditioned by a sense of loss of traditional values. Nietzsche’s “death of God” and Baudelaire’s “La modernité, c’est la mode” could be taken as two paradigmatic responses, precisely in their ambivalence. Nietzsche interprets the loss of the supersensible world as equivalent to the challenge of nihilism: can we bear the burden of assuming responsibility for positing our own values (but why should it be a burden? Perhaps we should think of it more in the sense of a different type of lightness, a dance...), can we affirm our will to power over the earth, or are we doomed to remain in a state of mourning over the lost ideal, in the passive and reactive nihilism of the “last man,” which for Nietzsche was the quintessentially modern experience? Baudelaire points to something similar when he understands *fashion*, the acceleration of the ephemeral and the contingent, as modernity’s founding structure, whose flip side is the eternal and immutable quality of beauty, both of which are needed for the perfection of art. It is only by going to the extremes of contemporaneity, to that point of evanescence where the vicissitudes of fashion devour anything that might aspire to stability and reject it as the “immediate past”—in short, it is only by going to the *limit* of nihilism that we can attain eternal and ideal beauty, since eternity requires precisely the ever-changing and fugitive if it is to be infused with life and be able to move us.

In view of the encounter with technology, both Baudelaire and Nietzsche however remain only a first and as such incomplete step. Baudelaire’s diatribes against photography are well known (I will come back to them in the next section), and for Nietzsche the whole urban and metropolitan condition that was the necessary condition for Baudelaire’s experience of fashion was nothing short of a state of disgrace (cf. *Zarathustra*, “Vom Vorübergehen”). Both of them remained poised between the affirmation of the downfall of the “highest values”

and the hope of a rebirth of classical values, of Greek drama (which both of they imagined present in Wagner), the “grand style,” etc. In this their appreciation of modernity was profoundly ambivalent, often shifting quickly inside one and the same context from affirmation to utter disgust and rejection, which is also one of the reasons why their responses are so difficult to locate on the political scale. In this phase reaction and revolution belong together in the same complex, as if we could only move forward by retrieving a certain past that promises another “untimely” time (which in its turn can be understood in wholly opposed ways, as for instance in the adversarial interpretations of Nietzsche in Deleuze and Heidegger), or by thinking a kind of interstitial time that takes us out of history, as Benjamin attempted to do in the “dialectical images” that he located in Baudelaire.

In the next step, occurring around the turn of the century, technology was introjected into the very substance of art, and it no longer appeared in the mode of a threatening Other. This breaks open a horizon of the radically new, an indeterminate and as such also fundamentally dangerous future, which was already predicted by Nietzsche. Rimbaud’s poetic formula for a “dérèglement de tous les sens” attains a different dimension when the senses and faculties cease to refer back to a subject and enter into untried constellations based on technological prosthetics and artificial extensions, when other logics for structuring texts and images, and seemingly irrational techniques for cutting and editing the spatio-temporal “flow” of consciousness begin to impose themselves. In relation to this “futurist moment,”<sup>1</sup> which

1. I borrow this expression from Marjorie Perloff’s *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Perloff charts a wide variety of Futurist influences in contemporary art and theory, especially concerning the interpenetration of image and text in various brands of Conceptual and Post-conceptual art. The literature on the topic is of course nothing short of inexhaustible; one recent discussion of the impact of technology on the conditions of sensibility, is Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modern-*

intensifies the split between the experience of an accelerating nihilism and a possible reevaluation of inherited values, the postmodern turn, if such a concept can still be used, in no way constitutes an unambiguously new phase, but rather prolongs and intensifies many tendencies in early modernism, while also leaving others behind. Research into new image technologies, new ways of conceiving the body and the organism continue to displace and reshape old and traditional humanist conceptions based on a phenomenology of interiority, and they contribute to a gradually unfolding blurring of the border between the organic and the technological. Life, language, consciousness, experience, are all concepts whose significance seems less sure today than ever before, given the gradual displacement of Man as the *zoon logon echon*, the *animal rationale*, by a whole set of concepts derived from informatics, the life sciences, and a host of other disciplines that contribute to a gradual decentering of the subject of humanism.<sup>2</sup>

*ism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

2. The classic statement remains Foucault's apocalyptic prognostic of the imminent disappearance of Man, at the end of his *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). Foucault follows three discursive fields, *speaking*, *living*, and *working*, from the Renaissance to today, and locates a certain "empirical-transcendental" duplication appearing around the time of Kant's Copernican Revolution, displacing a classical knowledge which remained centered around infinity in the form of "God." This doubling, Foucault suggests, has been able to organize the space of knowledge (the *episteme*) throughout the modern age. Recently a new epistemic formations however begins to emerge, in which Man is dispersed in forms of speaking, living, and working that emanate from other sources. Foucault's claim has been heavily criticized for its sweeping generality, but it should no doubt be seen as a *question posed to philosophical thinking* rather than as an empirical-sociological statement (and in this sense it no different than Heidegger's equally "sweeping" statements about the essence of technology, the end of metaphysics, etc.). For a discussion of



In this and the following two chapters some responses to this situation will be investigated. I make no claim to draw an exhaustive map of the terrain, merely to point to a few essential points of articulation, the most important one being Heidegger's meditations on technology, that will be investigated from several different angles, together with similar responses to the modern condition formulated by Walter Benjamin and Ernst Jünger. These responses come from highly divergent political positions: Benjamin, a Jewish intellectual exiled in Paris, the very prototype of a 20<sup>th</sup> century urban intellectual, whose work combines influences from Marxism, Jewish mysticism, and the artistic avant-gardes of the time, and whose life tragically ended during his attempts to escape the Nazis; Jünger, a decorated soldier from the trenches of the first world war, equally influenced by the various modernism of the 1910s and '20s but whose political agenda belonged to the right-wing side of politics (although he considered himself to be outside of such classifications, and aspired to the position of an "anarch"); and finally Heidegger, undoubtedly one of this century's most important thinkers, but whose relation to modernism and modernity at least on the surface seems to amount to an outright rejection, and whose political stance in favor of Nazism constitutes one of the biggest historico-philosophical scandals of our time.

The thread connecting these three thinkers, which I will follow in the next chapter, is precisely the question of technology: its impact on the arts, on the life-word, and on the very structure of experience, which they all perceive in revolutionary terms, as the beginning of

Foucault's thesis, see Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), 131-141. The story of the gradual decentering of "Man" can of course be told in many ways, as in Lévi-Strauss and the structuralist analysis of myth, Lacanian psychoanalysis and its discovery of the Symbolic, etc.; for a recent "narrative" that combines certain strands in literature and the development of cybernetics and information theory, see N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

a fundamental displacement of all our categories. For none of them can technology be understood anthropologically, i.e. as an instrument that would merely extend and amplify our domination over our inner and outer nature, while still allowing the structures of subjectivity, intentionality, consciousness etc., as well as the corporeal and affective dimension, to remain intact. To a large extent such an instrumental view remains the horizon of the Marxist theory of labor, production, and the tool as “inorganic” nature, and it also commands Husserl’s phenomenology in its attempts to unravel the “crisis of the European sciences” as a forgetting and covering over of those transcendental acts of consciousness that constitute the ideal objects of science, of which technological artifacts are mere materializations.<sup>3</sup> Benjamin, Jünger, and Heidegger all perceive the danger of technology in a more *dangerous* way, as it were, and for all of them the “saving power”—to use Hölderlin’s famous expression from the hymn *Patmos* (“**Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch**”), which only Heidegger makes use of, but that could be applied to all three—can only reside in an affirmation and a passage through nihilism, the zero of form and value, and never in any simple return to a more ordinary state, even though this “passing through” will be determined differently in each case.

In his influential study, *Reactionary Modernism*,<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Herf locates

3. These statements no doubt require further elaboration, and much more remains to be said about Marx and Husserl; for a discussion of Marx and technology that brings him close to Heidegger’s line of questioning, see Kostas Axelos, *Marx, penseur de la technique. De l’aliénation de l’homme à la conquête du monde* (Paris; Seuil, 1961) and *Einführung in ein künftiges Denken* (Tübingen; Niemeyer, 1966); the relation between scientific theory and technology receives only scant attention in Husserl, and a Heideggerian-type question of the “essence” of technology would be alien to his thought; cf. François de Gandt, *Husserl et Galilée. Sur la crise des sciences européennes* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), 47 ff.
4. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Herf’s book

both Heidegger and Jünger within a more general trend in German Culture, i.e. the attempt to counter the impact of technology, perceived as a soulless, mechanical, rationalist, and Enlightenment invention, and as such fundamentally alien to the German *Geist*, by spiritualizing it in different ways. For Herf this aspect of “**Streit um die Technik**” is indeed a modernism, although a *reactionary* one, since it refuses to acknowledge the emancipatory qualities in technical development, and it accepts change only as long as the underlying property relations remain unaltered, which ultimately makes it mystifying on the political level. Although there are a number of reasons for labeling both Heidegger and Jünger “reactionary” modernists from the point of view of cultural and political history, and for contextualizing their respective claims in terms of a more general ideological landscape, I still believe that the concept “reactionary” is too diffuse to capture what is at stake on the philosophical level in their work, and especially since the *opposite* concept—“progressive,” one assumes—is left more or less undetermined. And this is even more the case when we attempt to confront both of them with Benjamin, who within such a division no doubt would automatically be situated on the “progressive” side, as is the case in Herf’s book (he duly notes Benjamin’s critical review of the aestheticizing aspect of Jünger’s writings on war and their tendency to ascribe a superhuman objectiv-

remains the classic work on this topic, and although I tend to disagree with certain of his interpretations of the texts, it is still an indispensable starting-point for the discussion, especially in its detailed and groundbreaking analysis of German engineering culture. Michael E Zimmerman, in his *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), adopts Herf’s perspective (although Herf in fact says that “we would be straining the phrase beyond its limits to label Heidegger a reactionary modernist” [108], and the rather cursory reading he proposes of Heidegger never really touches on the crucial texts on technology), and develops a critical yet sympathetic reading to which I am indebted, and many of the points I make in chap 6 below should be seen in the light of a dialogue with Zimmerman’s work.

ity to technology at the cost of social analysis, but only in order to the dismiss Benjamin's own texts on the radical and unsettling quality of technology, which constitute the substantial part of his writings, as mere "literary speculations" [34]). Without denying the necessity of making such distinctions on the political and practical level, I do not think that they are sufficient for articulating the philosophical issues, where labels such as "progressive" and "reactionary" are far too blunt as analytical instruments, and the same goes for issues of art and aesthetics, where the division tended to be even more fluid).<sup>5</sup>

Herf points out that for many of those involved in this *Streit*, technology itself constitutes the primordial *spiritual* value, and if there is an impending "crisis," it must be solved on the level of a spiritual reflection. It would however be rather simplistic to see this spiritualism as just a "reactionary" trait—the discourse on the meaning of spirit in fact permeates the whole epoch and its cultural diagnoses, and is equally strong in philosophers like Husserl and Heidegger, and writers from Spengler and Valéry to Simmel, Scheler, Sombart and Rathenau, who all theorize the encounter with technology within a spiritualist paradigm.<sup>6</sup> In

5. Here I side more with Willem van Reijen, even though the distinction he makes between "practical" and "metaphysical" issues, and his claim that the latter have their value in being wholly disconnected from praxis, appears exaggerated, and as I see it also misrepresents the actual positions of both Heidegger and Benjamin. Cf *Der Schwarzwald und Paris. Benjamin und Heidegger* (Munich: Willhelm Fink Verlag, 1998), 21 f.
6. The presence of such a "spiritual" paradigm in Husserl, Heidegger and Valéry has been discussed by Jacques Derrida, *De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question* (Paris: Galilée, 1987). Massimo Cacciari similarly emphasizes the "non-technological" dimension of technology for these thinkers, and the role played by Nietzsche's idea of a will to power, although he also notes the important modifications introduced by Simmel, who rejects the idea of domination of nature as immature and primitive; see "Salvezza che cade," in Massimo Cacciari and Massimo Donà, *Arte, tragedia, tecnica* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2000), 25-38. For a survey of

fact, common to all of these discussions, from Spengler's *Der Mensch und die Technik* and Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* to Benjamin's essays and Heidegger's later work, is the following formula: *the essence of technology is not itself technological*, but has to do with more fundamental structures. These structures can then be conceived in terms of a history of metaphysics, as in Heidegger, where the essence of technology as *Ge-Stell* only emerges in the final phase of the historical unfolding of being as presence, as its ultimate "sending" (*Geschick*), or when Jünger claims that technology is only the "clothing" (*Gewand*) of the Worker, an outward shell which is itself mobilized by the will to power in its eternal quest for a planetary domination, or a twist inside our domination of nature that takes us from an attitude of "magic" to one of "play," as in Benjamin.

What will follow in this chapter is an aerial view of the discussions of art and technology, as they unfold from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to the high moment of avant-garde culture in the 1920s and '30s, within which Benjamin, Jünger, and Heidegger will be situated. I have chosen three points of intersection where the encounter between a traditional notion of art and aesthetics becomes particularly intense and multi-faceted: the crisis of painting in the face of photographic reproduction, where the idea of the subjective and expressive quality of image-making (and implicitly the hierarchy between the *artes liberales* and *artes mechanicae* that still informs the concept of "fine art") is fundamentally shaken; the discussion of the analytic and rational character of art, from Futurism to Constructivism and Productivism, which radicalized the earlier debates on painting but also attempted to rethink the whole concept of art on the basis of industrial production; and finally the discussion of space and time in architectural theory, where a concept like "interpenetration" points to an alloy of the organic and the technical, and to the possibility of producing the space-time of experience in way that unhinges it from the subject as a form of interiority.

this discussion within architectural theory, with many bearings on Heidegger, see Francesco Dal Co, *Figures of Architecture and Thought. German Architecture Culture 1880-1920* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).

*II. The mechanization of the image and the crisis of painting*

One of the most fateful and symbolical beginnings of the at once adversarial yet mutually informing relation of art and technology can be traced back to the clash between painting and photography in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The indexical nature of photography gave rise to the idea of a scientific image culture, which was meant not only to supersede painting—and in the process do away with painting’s subjectivity, the tracing of the hand and the whole dimension of symbolic mediation—but was also put to use in the vast colonialist projects of ethnological classification and in the emerging social sciences. Due to its indexical quality, photography in many respects also became the very index of modernity, and its effects on the other arts were momentous. One way to read the development of modernist painting from Manet, through Impressionism and Symbolism, up to the first abstract artists (an analysis carried out with different nuances by, to cite but a few influential historians and critics, Meyer Schapiro, Yve-Alain Bois, and Thierry de Duve), is as a flight from technological objectivity, where the discovery of the purely formal dimensions of painting was the result of a turning away from the photographic redefinition of reality, as well as from the division of labor and commodification for which the new image technology could be taken as a powerful symbol. In relation to both of these attacks painting could then appear as a *resistance*, an attempt to save human expressiveness and the eye-hand system from the invasion of technology. Modernism as a quest for the self-definition of art would in this case, at least in one aspect, constitute a *negative* result of the technological annexing of the life-world.

These violent and seemingly contradictory responses inside the discourse of painting, which were significantly different from similar debates in sculpture,<sup>7</sup> indicate the extent to which painters were the

7. Which of course does not mean that such debates did not exist, only that were never based on a vision of the “end of sculpture,” and the industrial paradigm could be integrated with much lesser anxiety. This probably has to do with sculpture’s historical link to the *artes mechanicae* and pro-

first artists to experience the modern forms of reproduction as particularly threatening, and the counter-reaction they initiated, has had repercussions throughout the whole history of modernist art. Photography was however not born overnight, and it was not the sole reason for the new anxiety. On the contrary, Niepce's and Daguerre's inventions constitute the apex of a long process where the production of images was gradually rationalized, from "silhouette cutting" during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the "physionotrace" and many other instruments that attempted to mechanize image-making. Even though none of these devices can be understood as a forerunner of photography on a strictly technical plane, they contributed to a new way of thinking the image, in subjecting it to an increasingly technological mode of production that tended to reduce the subjective and expressive elements.<sup>8</sup> This can be seen in another important transitional form, the panorama, which became immensely popular and exerted a direct influence on painting.<sup>9</sup> Daguerre began his

processes of technical manufacturing, which was theorized already in the *paragone* debates in the 15th and 16th centuries, and formed the basis of the idea of painting as a *cose mentale* and a "higher analysis," as Leonardo says in the first section of his *Trattato della pittura*. For a collection of source texts, see Lauriane Fallay D'Este (ed.), *Paragone. Le parallèle des arts* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992). For a discussion of the impact of technology on early modernist sculpture from Rodin and onwards, see Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

8. Cf. Gisèle Freund, *Photographie et société* (Paris: Seuil, 1977). For an classic analysis of techniques of vision in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cf. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1992), and *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1999).
9. A famous example of this would be when David encourages his students to study nature by using the panoramas, as Benjamin notes; see *Das Passagen-Werk, Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), V, 658. Henceforth: *GS*. For a discussion of the development of

career as a panorama painter, and the fact that he created the first daguerreotype immediately after a fire that destroyed his studio together with all of his paintings can be taken as highly symbolical. The panorama was a synthesis of the most updated visual technologies, and the daguerreotype would continue this line of development into a new mass medium. This is highlighted at the Exposition Universelle in Paris 1855, where photography has a whole section of its own, and the new spectacular culture appears in all its radiance. The commodity, the image, and technology here merge into a new technological landscape, in which the work of art has to locate itself by on the one hand violently *negating* the structure of the commodity and asserting its autonomy as art (Courbet's first gesture when he refuses to take part in the 1855 exhibition), on the other hand by *interiorizing* it, implicitly showing that this new-found autonomy from traditional moral and religious values not only depends on its status as a commodity (Courbet's second gesture when he sets up his own pavilion immediately outside of the official space in the Grand Palais), but in fact even dramatizes it to the point of letting *exchange value as such*, in all of its radiance and fetish power, shine forth.

But even though there is a long historical development that leads up to photography, and even though we in retrospect can perceive its embeddedness in an emerging technology of visibility, its first appearance was still a shattering event. "What makes the first photographs so incomparable," Benjamin writes, "is maybe precisely this: that they present the first image of the encounter between machine and man."<sup>10</sup> Exaggerated as this may be, the statement captures something of the emotional tonality of many of the first responses from the artists. "From today, painting is dead," is the cry—maybe, even probably, apocryphal—from the French history painter and Academy member Paul Delaroche when he was confronted with the

the panorama, see Stephen Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium* (New York: Zone Books, 1997).

10. *Das Passagen-Werk*, GSV, 832.



first daguerreotypes.<sup>11</sup> But when the politician and scientist Arago presents Niepce's and Daguerre's work in the Chambre des Députés, July 3, 1839, in view of the state's acquisition of the recent discovery, he in fact includes a public reading of a letter from Delaroche, who praises the accuracy, precision, and truthfulness of the new medium. For a history painter like Delaroche photography is indeed a threat, but also an ideal tool, and he and his students were among the first to systematically use photographs as resources for painting.<sup>12</sup> Apocryphal or not, the painter's outcry, reflecting both anxiety and enthusiasm, has nevertheless resounded throughout the whole history of modern painting. Whoever has experienced the marvels of photography, the painter Walter Crane writes, must have asked himself what will happen to our modern painting when the photographer has succeeded in rendering "not only the forms, but also the colors, in their true place."<sup>13</sup> For others, like the painter and philosopher Antonis-Joseph Wiertz, painting had already been made obsolete since it was subjected to inescapable conventions from which the new technique had liberated itself: "Within the frame of the painting's presuppositions all attempts have been tried. The biggest problem was the perfect relief, the profound per-

11. This statement recurs throughout the literature, although the original source seems impossible to locate: cf. Gisèle Freund, *Photographie et société*, 94 (without source); Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1995), 92 (without source); Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1990), 231 (citing Crimp as source), etc.
12. An English translation of Arago's presentation can be found in Alan Trachtenberg (ed.): *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, 1980). The most comprehensive collection of documents relating to the first decades of photography is André Rouillé, *La Photographie en France. Textes & Controverses: une anthologie, 1816-1871* (Paris: Macula, 1989). For Delaroche's use of photography, cf. Stephen Bann, *Paul Delaroche* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
13. "Imitation and Expression in Art," cited in *Das Passagen-Werk*, GSV, 828.

spectives that provide the most perfect illusion. The stereoscope has solved this problem.”<sup>14</sup>

But another twist of the argument is equally possible, as in Francis Wey, who takes a step back from Wiertz’s technological progressivism in 1851 when he claims that photography in fact *restores* the proper dignity of painting by summoning it back to its sources: “By reducing that which is inferior to art to nothing, the heliograph sets art on a course towards new achievements, and by summoning the artist back to nature it draws him closer to an infinitely rich source of inspiration.”<sup>15</sup> Delacroix observes this dialectic from a cautious distance, and he warns us against judging the image with the photograph as a model, even though it may serve as a useful aid, a kind of instrument of translation: “In painting the spirit speaks to the spirit, not science to science,” and an artist who sides with science turns his work into “ice-cold copies of this copy, so imperfect in other respects. In short, the artist becomes a machine connected to another machine.”<sup>16</sup> The realist movement could in some cases lay claim to an almost mechanical attitude that combined a photographic rhetoric with a new positivistic cult of facts—“to paint like a machine, independently of consciousness,” was for a while Courbet’s motto, even though most realists in

14. *Oeuvres littéraires*, 364, cited in *Das Passagen-Werk*, GS V, 658. See also his “Une bonne nouvelle pour l’avenir de la peinture” (1855), where Wiertz opposes the intelligence and speed of the photographer and the architect to the slowness and patience of the traditional painter and the mason: “In a century, there will be no more masons in painting: there will be only architects, painters in the full sense of the word, One should not think that the daguerreotype kills art. No, it kills the work of patience, and gives homage to the man of thought.” (in Rouillé, 245).
15. “Du naturalisme dans l’art,” published in *La lumière*, April 6, 1851, in Rouillé, 116. Cf. also his article from the same year, “De l’influence de l’héliographie sur les Beaux-Arts,” in *ibid*, 108 ff.,
16. Eugène Delacroix, “Revue des arts,” in *Revue des deux mondes*, Sept 15, 1850, in Rouillé, 406.

fact followed Delacroix in repudiating the artistic claims of photography.<sup>17</sup> In some cases painting even finds itself judged on the basis of photography as the model for a truth that captures the most minute detail—Meissonier’s painting, one critic writes, “can match the daguerreotypes in its subtlety.”<sup>18</sup> At the opposite end of the spectrum, the early photographers (many of whom were painters whose market collapsed due to the rise of portrait photography, with Nadar as the most famous case) would spare no efforts to emulate highly traditional pictorial conventions since long discarded in painting, in order to attain that artistic status which their own work was implicitly calling into question.<sup>19</sup>

Common to all these reactions, which extend from admiration of photography’s truthfulness and accuracy, even its superior artistic

17. Cf. Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin, 1990), 44. Michael Fried proposes a more complex argument (the reference is Courbet’s *Quarry*) and claims that if Courbet introduces “photographic” elements into his painting—“a fantasy of the act of painting as wholly automatic and therefore very close to the taking (or shooting) of a photograph”—it is only in order to even this out through painterly forms and figures, and to establish “affinities” between those two modes, thus “calling into question the absoluteness of the distinction between automatism and volition.” “In short,” Fried concludes, “a painting that in its original form could be read as imagining a purely automatic mode of representation and its expanded form as positing a strict separation of automatism and will turned out in the end to allegorize their necessary interpenetration.” (*Courbet’s Realism* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990], 280).
18. Auguste Gallimard, “Examen du Salon de 1849,” cited in *Das Passagen-Werk*, GSV, 838.
19. Benjamin notes this en passant in his “Kleine Geschichte der Photographie,” GSVII. For a more detailed study of the influences the academic tradition on the early photographers in their choice of motif, composition, lighting, etc., cf. Michel Thévoz, *L’académisme et ses fantasmes* (Paris: Minit, 1980).

quality, to vehement rejections, is the fundamental rivalry caused by the identification of painting with a mimetic activity. Should painting compete with photography on the terms set by the adversary, and if so, what prospects could there be for victory? Or should it inversely see the new technology as a challenge to discover its own essential conditions as an art form, in a kind of inward-looking and reflexive turn? In the second option, however, it is paradoxically enough precisely *through photography* that painting is liberated from its mimetic subjection and becomes able to develop as a fully autonomous art form, as if the terrain proper to painting could only be cleared through an encounter with the technological other that will always haunt it as a figure of the Same. Or, put in terms of the kind of supplementary logic that we will meet in later philosophies of technology: on the one hand, the essence of painting is not photographic, but photography was *required* for this essence to appear; on the other hand, the domain of the visible and of the gaze that belongs to both of them can only be properly understood through a new form of painting that emancipates itself from technology.

A consequence of this, just as unwanted as it was ineluctable, was however that the development and modernization process of painting would be constantly accompanied by the insistent anxiety that this liberation and this conquering of an essential domain was only an illusion, and that it in the long run in fact would undermine the historically inherited legitimacy and authority of painting as a representation with its own truth-claims. The emancipation from depiction and “naturalism” brings about an erosion of the handed-down authority—although this is precisely what in the next dialectical turn of this contorted story, in the retroactive interpretation of the process that begins around the turn of the century, will be reconstructed as a series of steps toward the advent of *abstraction*, now understood as the proper teleological sense of modernist painting that in fact had guided its development all along, although it for a long time had been obscured by apparently conflicting and confusing doctrines.

This is also the birthplace of a related argument that articulates the divide between painting and photography in another manner: the second is understood as a direct representation, linked to its ori-

gin as an effect to a cause (it is an “index,” to use Peirce’s terminology, a trace of the pure writing of light itself), and as such it points to the role of science and calculability, whereas painting is a symbolical and mediated representation, it points to the role of expression and subjectivity, and the light here belongs to the mind and to consciousness. Painting can thus be seen as a kind of *retreat* from an emerging technological culture, but in this it can also project itself as a strategy for *resistance*: the step back surrenders a certain terrain to the adversary, but it also uncovers a new and more genuine territory, the space and time of a different sensibility, Cézanne’s “*vérité en peinture*” that presents us with the genesis and formation of visibility as sensation (*les sensations colorantes*, Cézanne says, or as Klee later will put it: the task of the modern artist is not to “render the visible,” but to “render visible,” “sichtbar machen”) before it has hardened into the perceptions and objects of science and common recognition.<sup>20</sup> Painting saves us

20. A certain phenomenological aesthetic will often attempt to return to an originary sensibility prior to the technological objectification and mathematization of the world, and it finds its resource in the early history of modern painting. The most famous case is of course Merleau-Ponty’s meditations on the truth of Cézanne, promised and yet held back in his attempts to articulate a “first word” that brings painting back to a pre-historic, pre-discursive level of a *natura naturans*; cf. his “Le doute de Cézanne” (1945) in *Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1948). Throughout the subsequent development of postwar abstraction French phenomenology has always served as a faithful dialogue partner; see for instance the essays of Henri Maldiney from the early 1950s and after, collected in his *Regard Parole Espace* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1973), and, just to mention two more recent examples, Jean-Luc Marion, *La croisée du visible* (Paris: PUF, 1996), and Eliane Escoubas, *L’espace pictural* (La Versanne: Encre Marine, 1995). For a somewhat skeptic assessment of this development and its links to a *École de Paris*-style modernism, see Robert Klein’s essay “Phénoménologie et peinture abstraite,” in *La forme et l’intelligible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970). Cézanne himself should of course not be identified ex-

from the tyranny of the object in disclosing a domain prior to formed subjects and objects—that which is “common to our mind and to things,” once more with Cézanne’s words—by liberating the Gaze from preformed models and opening a new Visibility.

As we have noted, the triumphal discovery however always goes hand in hand with the suspicion that the self-reflection of the different art forms, as they were developed for instance in the poetics of Symbolism, in fact amounts to a negative result of technology’s annexing of the life-world. In this perspective the various attempts of Impressionism, Divisionism, and all the other “-isms” to establish a foundation in optics and/or a physiology of perception would be only so many attempts to arrest an inevitable development by withdrawing a space of vision from the onset of technological objectivity. The doctrines of the strictly optical, pictorial, visual, etc. emerge as attempts to move away from the claims of photography, but thereby also as an adjustment to an image culture increasingly determined by photography, science, and positivism, as if photography and everything connected to it could only be overcome by being *interiorized*.

In a larger perspective, it is obvious how the emerging modernism, and then the various avant-gardes, stage a series of reactions both to the techniques of reproduction in a more limited sense, and to the process of industrialization and division of labor in the general sense, where the significance of the human hand and the presence of the body as the agent of manual labor tend to be reduced. As Meyer Shapiro remarks, these reactions tend to follow two main lines: either the work of the hand becomes even more highlighted, and we descend

clusively with a phenomenological paradigm; for a philosophical reading of his work that mobilizes different tools, see Jean-François Lyotard, “Freud selon Cézanne,” in *Les dispositifs pulsionels* (Paris: Bourgeois, 1980), which opposes the moment of *destruction* of sense and the *muteness* and *opacity* in Cézanne’s last paintings, read in terms of the disruptive “figuralité” of libidinal economy, both to the representational structure of Freudian analysis and to the “gullibility of the phenomenologist.”

into a sensuous practice that takes leave of all mimetic claims and opt for the dimension of gesture, brushwork, touch, etc., or mechanical and industrial techniques and tools are introduced into painting itself, as if to conjure the threat away by absorbing it and becoming its master.<sup>21</sup> The dialectic between these two forms will become the driving force of modernist painting, and closer to our present it will inform the tension between the conceptual and the visual, and most attempts to revive the gestural, either as physical presence or as mere rhetoric (and this conflict need to be limited to the medium of painting, as is obvious today, where this drama is enacted beyond the logic of mediums and their specificity).

It would of course be simplistic to claim that modernist painting would directly *result* from any particular technological change, such as photography. The shift occurs within a whole theoretical and practical juncture, determined by a whole set of parameters—the displacement of speculative aesthetics of the Hegelian kind by a positivistic philosophy, the emptying out of the Academic discourse of painting from within, the emergence of new markets, the transformation of the *salon* system etc.—within which a particular technological component could be taken up and interpreted as an injunction to rethink the meaning of artistic practice. The invention of photography and the intrusion of technological reproduction was a necessary although not sufficient reason for what was to come.

One of the paradigmatic moments in this battle between photography and painting is when Baudelaire, in his Salon from 1859, “*Le public moderne et la photographie*,” launches a violent attack against photography because of its alleged naturalism and technological progressivism, which he understands to be in alliance with a mass culture that degrades the freedom of art. The idea of art as a faithful mirror, which Baudelaire sees as the message of photography, leads the masses to believe that “if an industrial process could give us a result

21. See “Recent Abstract Painting” (1957), in *Modern Art: 19th and 20th Century (Collected Papers)* ((New York: Brazillier, 1978).

identical to nature, that would be absolute art.” For Baudelaire this is a negation of art, and he is convinced that “the badly applied advances of photography, like all purely material progress for that matter, have greatly contributed to the impoverishment of the French artistic genius, rare enough in all conscience.” “Poetry and progress,” he continues, “are two ambitious men that hate each other, with an instinctive hatred,” and if “photography is allowed to deputize for art in some of art’s activities, it will not be long before it has supplanted or corrupted art altogether, thanks to the stupidity of the masses, its natural ally.” Photography can surely be useful when it comes preservation, mnemotechnics, education, etc., “but once it be allowed to impinge on the sphere of the intangible and the imaginary, on anything that has value solely because man adds something to it from his soul, then woe betide us!”<sup>22</sup>

The complexity of Baudelaire’s reaction and the double structure of introjection is indicated by the fact that when he himself attempts to describe the activities of the modern painter, in his programmatic 1859 essay *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, the text seems wholly impregnated by precisely that kind of photographic experience that his aesthetic program so emphatically rejects. Baudelaire conjures up the “painter of modern life” in the guise of the today rather unknown illustrator Constantin Guys, and one of the decisive qualities that he sees in Guys’ work is the very suddenness and immediacy by which he throws himself into the crowd and immerses himself in the spectacle:

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up the house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb

22. “Salon de 1859, II: Le public moderne et la photographie,” in *Curiosités esthétiques* (Lausanne: La Guilde du Livre, 1949), 267-69; English translation in Trachtenberg, *Classic Essays on Photography*, 86-88.



and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. [...] Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we may liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and flickering grace of all the elements of life. He is an “I” with an insatiable appetite for the “non-I,” at every instant rendering and explaining it as a picture, which is always unstable and fugitive.<sup>23</sup>

The painter is devoted to the world, and the limit between subject and object is blurred in this movement of absorption into the crowd. Only later does the artist recreate and reflect on his impressions in a process that shifts between the photographic mode (as if in the act of mechanically “developing” those traces that have been imprinted on his mind’s plate) and the painterly (the act of reflexive and idealizing working-through that extracts an Image from the imprints). The scene shifts abruptly: “now it is evening,” and “at a time when others are asleep, Monsieur G. is bending over his table, darting on to a sheet of paper the same glance that a moment ago was directing towards external things.” In this reclusive and nocturnal space “the external world is reborn upon his paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful,” the “phantasmagoria has been distilled from nature,” and “all the raw materials with which the memory has loaded itself are put in order, ranged and harmonized, and undergo that forced idealization which is the result of a childlike perceptiveness.”<sup>24</sup> These two movements, abandon and withdrawal, relate to each other

23. *Le peintre de la vie moderne* III (“Homme du monde, homme des foules et enfant”), in *L’art romantique*, 86 f; English translation by Jonathan Mayne in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 9 f.

24. *Ibid.*, 88 f; 11

as the “fugitive” and the “eternal” element in modernity, which together make up perfect beauty: the fugitive and ephemeral, just as the immersion in the spectacle, is the outer shell without which the inner and eternal essence would remain abstract and lifeless, incapable of moving us. On the one hand we can say that Baudelaire’s aesthetic is *already photographic*, and his city is already a mediated image on the way to the “society of the spectacle” (which is an important feature in T. J. Clark’s interpretation),<sup>25</sup> on the other hand that what he attempts to extract out of this chaos of impressions is the eternal Image, which is wholly dependent on the subjective reflection of the artist, and that nothing which has not passed through the imagination, “the queen of the faculties,” can make any sense to us as art. This is no doubt a most precarious balance, not least because all those techniques and procedures that had hitherto defined painting—the presence of the model, the concentration and meditation on the motif, the whole institution of the painterly gaze that gradually transfigures the object and resuscitates it on the canvas—are broken down and recreated on the basis of fleeting memory images. Attention and the focused gaze only become possible afterwards, after a first distraction where the sensory impressions are received in a disorderly manner.

Benjamin’s reading of Baudelaire will explicitly emphasize the first option, where the unexpected encounter, the *shock*, breaks through the

25. Cf. *The Painter of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). Clark points to the role of Impressionism and Postimpressionism in the social change initiated by Haussmann’s violent restructuring of the Parisian cityscape, not just in terms of a passive reflection, but as an active contribution to the production of this urban space. In Manet, Degas, Monet, and other Impressionists we find an aesthetic counterpart to the social and spatial transformations, and the Paris of the boulevards, the cafes and the glowing light is to a large extent a vision first projected by painting. In this way, Clark argues, Impressionism seduces us into a landscape that it itself produces as a visual spectacle, but also gives us the critical tools to reflect on it.

subject's defensive shields, and it privileges the photographic moment, the confusing presence and power of the image, over reflection and distance. Johanna Drucker formulates this in a precise way: "Guys' images inscribe the artistic subject in the image as part of the process of editing, eliminating, reducing, transforming. For Benjamin, the subjective function is inverted—the subject does not merely or simply produce the image, but is produced by it. The image is an instrument to create consciousness, rather than being its result."<sup>26</sup> Baudelaire's painter wants to retain his traditional position, but the pressure exerted by the new experience of urban space and its visual phenomena creates a conflict between the demand for storytelling and rendering, and the traditional means for doing it. In this sense, the paths toward abstraction (in painting) and journalism (in photography) are equally prefigured in Baudelaire, even though the solution the poet himself formulates attempts to keep both at bay.

In Benjamin's optic Baudelaire is a figure of transition (and his work is indeed in this sense too a "Passagen-Werk"), where an older image of the poet and the artist collide with new realist claims, and the Symbolist doctrine he creates attempts to fuse both of them into a contradictory whole. For Benjamin these contradictions can be traced back to the poet's ambivalent position as the first involuntary analyst of capital, as an extraordinary witness to the intrusion of the commodity form into the very substance of artistic expression. The Parisian arcades become a concrete architectonic expression for the intermingling of old and new, and as the "Capital of the 19th century" Paris is a focal point of modernity in its non-synchronicity and overlay of different times, a bustling city full of dreams, where the ghost attacks the passers-by in broad daylight ("fourmillante cité, cité plein des rêves / Ou le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant," as Baudelaire says in the poem "A une passante"). This allows Benjamin to interpret Baudelaire's *flâneur* not only as a belated romantic echo, but also as an image of the new

26. Johanna Drucker, *Theorizing Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 194), 23.

social position of the artist, caught between aristocratic self-affirmation and a desire to be absorbed into the new urban masses. Baudelaire becomes a modernist against his own will, and in this, he is not altogether different from Balzac as portrayed by Lukács: the choice of these two models, the objective reactionary turned realist and the recalcitrant modernist who wants to uphold a lost poetic stance against the onset of a new journalistic writing culture, reflects the split in the Marxist interpretation of modernism that opened up in the '30s.

The gaze of Baudelaire's *flâneur* is an estranged one, he stands at the threshold of the Metropolis and bourgeois life—he sides with “asocial,” Benjamin says, and his poetry draws its energy from the rebel pathos of the underworld. The struggle he stages in his texts was a hopeless one, but also a kind of puzzle picture where can see the interpenetration of old and new, a disjunctive experience of history that had to be overcome for the next phase to appear. The initial shock of urbanity that Baudelaire registers, Manfredo Tafuri writes, had to be interiorized so as to appear as an expression of our own freedom and inner spontaneity, and the “blasé” attitude of the *flâneur* had to be transformed to an active participation in commodity culture. The task of the avant-garde became to “free the experience of shock from any automatism,” to create “visual codes and codes for action,” to “reduce artistic experience to a pure object,” and to “involve the audience” and organize a new spectacle of consumption.<sup>27</sup> The technological culture initiated by the photography and the spectacularization of urban space was a first step in this process, but it would soon be followed by other transformations that penetrate even deeper into the substance of art.

## II. From Futurism to Constructivism

In Italian and Russian Futurism, and even more so in Russian Con-

27. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, transl. Barbara Luigi La Penta (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1976), 84.

structivism and Productivism, the question of art, technology, and the status of human subjectivity and embodiment reaches its first point of culmination within modernist discourse. Here the path toward abstraction was not interpreted as leading toward a different and transcendent world, to the “absolute,” as in the line extending from Kandinsky to Mondrian, but was rather seen as an immediate consequence of the development of technology, as a way of achieving mastery of *this* world and its productive processes (even though this is not a clear divide, as is shown by the fact that a key figure like Malevich can be located at either side).

The reduction of the formal language of art to modular unities is the other side of the destruction of traditional values, as well as the basis for a promise of a new universal design. In this way, Francesco Dal Co and Manfredo Tafuri could claim to discern a direct and for traditionally-minded historians no doubt somewhat surprising connection between the disruptive gestures in the wake of Dadaism and the rational form-grammars developed in the Bauhaus and in *Esprit Nouveau*: “In the early 1920s, the avantgarde was moving toward a common language” where “destruction and construction were proving complementary,”<sup>28</sup> and an institution like the Bauhaus could function as the “decantation chamber of the avantgarde,”<sup>29</sup> by systematically testing all its strategies against the demands of reality and production, and absorbing the utopian impulse as an immanent moment in activity. Abstraction no longer pointed towards a realm of Platonic essences, but became the basic tenet of a technological modernity that conceived of production without any basis in a pre-given nature of hierarchy of forms. In the first step this could be perceived as a movement toward a purification of the different art forms—a pure language for a pure poetry, pure visibility for pure painting—that subsequently could be interpreted as the “medium specificity” of post-war formalist

28. Francesco Dal Co and Manfredo Tafuri, *Modern Architecture*, transl. Robert Erich Wolff (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 112.

29. *Architecture and Utopia*, 98.

criticism, which was projected back onto the early avant-garde in a somewhat one-sided fashion, as in Clement Greenberg and a whole tradition of post-war art criticism and art historical writing. The actual movement rather lead toward the surpassing of traditional genres and mediums, where the reduction to a general “surface” constituted one intermediary step.<sup>30</sup> This was no doubt a process whose historical roots lay in the development in 19th century painting, although it was soon discovered to have a much wider scope of application, and the inherited artistic means of production (the canvas, the stretcher, tools for drawing, color and pigment, etc.) were seen to constitute historically produced limitations that needed to be analyzed, worked through, and superseded, instead of being assumed as eternally given and “essential” conditions to which an art form could be reduced through self-reflection.

As an intermediary stage certain artists like Malevich and Kandinsky could claim a sustained authority for painting, because it was understood as a necessary *passage* toward the other forms of design and *Gestaltung*. The role played by Kandinsky at the Bauhaus from 1921 and onwards shows the extent to which abstract painting could serve as a paradigm for the other arts also on the level of pedagogy. In his preface to a posthumous collection of Kandinsky’s essays his former pupil Max Bill notes the surprising amount of painters at the school upon his arrival in 1927. What could they be doing there, he remember asking himself, since “at the Bauhaus, one did not ‘officially’ paint?”<sup>31</sup> Bill

30. The historical connection between pure poetry and pure painting lies in the invention of an idea of a *pure surface* onto which signifiers of different orders can be inscribed, but which itself is not yet differentiated. Cf. Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1996), 251, 264 ff; Jacques Rancière, “La surface du *design*,” in *Le destin des images* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2003), and my discussion in “Mallarmé, Greenberg, and the Unity of the Medium,” *Site* 9, 2004.
31. Max Bill, “Einführung,” in Kandinsky, *Essays über Kunst und Künstler* (Bern: Benteli-Verlag, 1955), 10.

calls this syndrome a *maladie de la peinture*, a nostalgia for the past, but in fact the opposite is equally true: it was the movement of modernist painting towards abstraction that allowed it to step outside of its frame, both metaphorically and literally, and claim to be the foundation for the universal design theory proper to the machine age. Something similar could be said of the “arrière-gardist” position assumed by Malevich in the debates about Constructivism in the mid 1910s, which pitted him against Tatlin and then also Rodchenko, and eventually led to his marginalization in the Russian avant-garde. Malevich’s Suprematism and his “gegenstandslose Welt” did not simply negate painting, in fact his invention of a Suprematist grammar of elementary forms attempted to raise it to its highest potency and to install it as the foundation of all the other arts. Constructivism, first in its “laboratory phase” and then even more so as it entered the stage of Productivism, attempted a different analytical decomposition of the image that would reduce its grammar to strictly material procedures, for which painting was a contingent and ultimately obsolete surface. This was unacceptable for Malevich, and when he in 1924 looks back on these heated debates, he responds to his adversaries that “Constructivism on the one hand wants to be art, although not in any non-material sense, but only as physical work,” whereas the “objectless artist” has to produce something that cannot be reduced to work, but must remain *art*.<sup>32</sup> Unlike Constructivism, Suprematism wanted to retain the concept of aesthetics, not in the sense of a Kantian contemplative disinterestedness, but in the sense of a beauty that would unite art and technology in their capacity to generate new worlds—what we strive for, Malevich says is *pure beauty*, and only this is what we worship.<sup>33</sup>

On a general level this second phase of the art-technology complex is characterized by an almost ecstatic appreciation of the possibilities

32. “Economic Laws,” cited in Margareta Tillberg, “Konstruktivismens teori och begrepp,” *Material* 37-38, 1999: xvi, col. 3.

33. Cf. “On New Systems in Art” (1919), in *Essays on Art*, ed. Troels Andersen (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1969), vol 1, 84.

opened up by the dissolution of the values inherited from bourgeois 19<sup>th</sup> century culture. Italian Futurism in all of its guises enacts this drama in its most hysterical form, from Marinetti's comparison between a roaring racing car and the Nike of Samothrace, to Boccioni's "technical manifesto" for Futurist sculpture, and Sant'Elia's visions of an architecture that would be solely based on speed, consumption, and change, and that would prevent the city from ever becoming petrified in a stable form. In spite of this most Futurists tended to display a rather conventional view of the different art forms, and they only liberated themselves half-heartedly from their Symbolist and Neo-Classical background, which is reflected in the fact that many of them would later return to traditional values, the *valori plastici* of a reinvented classical culture, which in some cases could turn into a pure Fascist aesthetic, as in Marinetti's own brand of "Catholic-Christian" Futurism.<sup>34</sup> The relation to the tradition is initially violently subversive and destructive—with Marinetti once more setting the tone in his proposal for the immediate destruction of Venice ("Contro Venezia passatista," 1910) in order to once and for all free Italy from its oppressive heritage—but with few exceptions it lacks constructive dimensions and positive proposals, and the pendulum could easily swing back to the opposite position. In short, Futurism's view of technology remained *mimetic* and *representational*, and it did not allow technology to enter into the very substance of artistic practice.<sup>35</sup> The model of the

34. The case of Marinetti is undoubtedly more complex than can be shown here. For a discussion of the way in which he in his later phase in fact comes back to unsolved contradictions in the Symbolist period, and the surprisingly complex role that gender plays in his writings, see Cinzia Sartini Blum, *The Other Side of Modernism: F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For a similar analysis of the link between Vorticism and Fascism, see Fredric Jameson's pioneering study of Wyndham Lewis, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

35. This is in a certain way the "official" story as told by many of those who



artist was still the *genius* who broke away from the tradition, not the *worker* producing his art out of a set of raw materials, and aiming for the production of objects that would become the backbone of a new collective material culture.

This decisive shift into not just a *cult* of technological modernity—which is fully in place in Futurism, and in fact is what prevents it from moving ahead—but into an full-scale *incorporation* (into the body of the work, but also into that of the artist as well as that of the spectator, and finally into the whole body politic) was first enacted in Russian Constructivism. The project of Constructivism, which too grew out of an initial “aesthetic” phase, soon turned into a vast synthesis of art with the design of living and working spaces, and with the regimentation of everyday life. The themes of the end of painting, the displacement of the artistic genres inherited from the past, and the synthesis of fine arts and graphic design for commercial ends, etc., were here employed with full power. Constructivism too promoted a utopian view of technology as fantasy, but it was also connected to a pervasive analytic-constructive element that was to prepare the ground for the transformation of art into a generalized theory of design, and it reached much further into the structures of subjectivity and desire than any of the rhetorical *Gesamtkunstwerk*-conceptions that grew out of the soil of Symbolism and the *Jugendstil*.

wanted to supersede the initial impasses of Futurism; it is for instance how Malevich views the historical connection at the time of his first *Black Square*; cf. “From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism” (1915), in *Essays on Art*, vol. 1. For Malevich, only Suprematism passes through “the zero of form,” i.e., a *completed nihilism*, and through this becomes capable of creating new forms in an “objectless” world, because it does not *imitate* technology, but *produces*, in a fundamental analogy with technology’s own operations. For an opposite reading that attempts to show the intimate connection to technology and science already in Boccioni and Sant’Elia, see Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2001), chap. 3.

The work of Rodchenko, from his early experiments in painting and drawing to his collaborative efforts with Mayakovsky in the hope of creating not only a new type of advertising, but a whole new visual culture, will here be taken as a paradigm case of this shift. When the artist showed his three monochrome canvases in the autumn of 1921 at the exhibition “ $5 \times 5 = 25$ ” in Moscow, and his allied theorist Tarabukin suggested that henceforth painting was over and done with (“The last painting has been painted,” he exclaimed, as an echo of Delaroche’s reaction to the daguerreotype), we must understand the dual quality of this gesture: it was not only meant as a programmatic farewell to painting, but *also*, and more importantly, as the endpoint of the laboratory phase of Constructivism, which was now to be superseded by a new idea of the “artist-constructor,” for whom traditional forms had become obsolete, and for whom “production” must imply a thorough-going industrialization and rationalization. At least as far as the artist’s self-understanding goes, this meant an adaptation to an industrial logic that that would bypass the priority of the individual artifact, as becomes clear in the manifesto of the “First Constructivist Working Group,” signed by Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, and Aleksei Gan the following fall in 1922.<sup>36</sup>

36. Translated in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds.): *Art In Theory 1900-1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 317 f. The originality of such claims should of course not be exaggerated. Similar arguments were used in the German *Werkbund* debates five years earlier, although the proponents of handicraft eventually gained the upper hand. These debates focused on the concept of “typification” (*Typisierung*), which became an issue on the occasion of the Cologne exhibition in 1914 when Hermann Muthesius against a conservative fraction heralded by Henry van der Velde, who wanted to preserve craft and the unique and expressive object, claimed that the future belongs to the mass-produced object, which is the only one that can be economically viable. For Muthesius’s and van der Velde’s “theses and anti-theses,” cf. Ulrich Conrads (ed.): *Programs and Manifestoes on 20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture* (Cam-

If we look a bit closer at Rodchenko's development from 1915 and onwards, we can observe most of those strategies at work by which technology and reproduction were interiorized in art, gradually pushing it against its outer limit. In this process the formal elements of painting were subjected to a thorough analysis, starting with the relation between drawing and color, isolating them from each other and turning them into two specific systems, each with its own laws. In the first year of this process Rodchenko executes a series of drawings using rulers and compasses, as if to reduce the role of the hand in an investigation of the precise interrelation between the subjective and the objective; gesture, signature, and the expressive quality of the line start to give way to forms that seem to emanate from the tools themselves. In 1917 the artist looks back at those experiments and claims that the image

Thenceforth the picture ceased being a picture and became a painting or an object. The brush gave way to new instruments with which it was convenient and easy and more expedient to work the surface. The brush which had been so indispensable in painting which transmitted and its subtleties became an inadequate and imprecise instrument in the new non-objective

bridge, Mass.: MIT, 1964); see also Dal Co och Tafuri, *Modern Architecture*, 81-90. This milieu would give rise to a different trajectory leading from modernist painting to industrial design, as in the case of the painter Peter Behrens, who quickly transformed himself from an artist rooted in Symbolism to an architect and the head designer at the AEG, one of the very symbols of German industrial modernity; for Behrens's development, see Stanford Anderson, *Peter Behrens and a New Architecture for the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2000); for a general discussion of Werkbund, cf. Frederic J. Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture Before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

painting and the press, the roller, the drawing pen, the compass replaced it.<sup>37</sup>

After his arrival in Moscow 1916 Rodchenko found himself in the midst of a violent debate on the nature of non-representational art, whose two major adversaries were Malevich and Tatlin. We have already noted how Malevich's Suprematism and its objectless world constituted a kind or primordial void from out of which new forms could be gener-

37. Pamphlet for the Leftist Federation's exhibition in Moscow 1917, cited in German Karginov, *Rodchenko* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 64. Cf. also Benjamin Buchloh's commentary to this quote in "From Faktura to Factography," *October* 30, 1984: 89. Rodchenko's opposition between "image" and "painting" here indicates the extent to which his conception of painting has distanced itself from representation and approaches the idea of a *rationaly constructed physical object*. His analysis of the nexus hand-instrument also forms a counterpoint to Kandinsky's emphasis on the curved line, which is supposed to liberate us from technology. In the first step, the line for Kandinsky no longer circumscribes a body but becomes an autonomous reality; in the second step this also implies the emancipation from the ruler, from geometry, and the straight angle, all of which he sees a residues of a primitive stage—the curved line anticipates a new freedom, a "total revolution" that liberates us from the "tyranny of instruments" ("On the line," 1919, cited in Moshe Barasch, *Modern Theories of Art, 2: From Impressionism to Kandinsky* [New York: New York University Press, 1998], 346). The same thing applies to *composition*, which for Kandinsky signals the final step in the liberation of art: after a period of "realist painting" comes "naturalism," and finally the "third period that begins today: compositional painting (*kompositionelle Malerei*)," the "highest level of pure art," where we enter into "a kingdom of painterly-spiritual essences (subject)." ("Malerie als reine Kunst," 1918, in *Essays über Kunst und Künstler*, 68). For Rodchenko composition appears as a hopelessly passive and contemplative element that he systematically opposes to *construction* as the active moment in art.

ated, and the extent to which this still remains an idealized and spiritual interpretation that accords a priority to painting as a traditional medium. For Tatlin colors and shapes are nothing but physical facts, they are part of a “culture of materials” that no longer needs a supersensuous dimension but acts directly in real space, as in the case of this own “counter-reliefs.”<sup>38</sup> Rodchenko would soon follow Tatlin’s lead, and when he 1919 at the 10th State Exhibition shows a series of paintings entitled “Black on Black” he positions them in a stark opposition to Malevich, who simultaneously shows his “White on White”-series. In the latter the image is a dematerialized entity endowed with an imaginary depth, in the former it is a technical artifact, produced through a set of strictly defined rules, and it does not point beyond itself to any meaning apart from its own immanent rules of production.

These pictures are however only one stage in a long series of variations and tests of the norms and conventions of painting. 1917 Rodchenko launches a sequence of works that investigate the grammar of the picture, and together with similar projects by artists like Vassily Ermilov, Aleksandra Ekster, Gustav Klucis, El Lissitzky, Lyubov Popova and Aleksandr Vesnin they have come to define what is known as the “laboratory phase” of Constructivism. 1918 he embarks on the series “Isolation of Color from Form,” and the same year he also executes the first spatial constructions, which transfer the problems of painting to sculpture; the year after, “Lineism” begins once more to explore the line in its various dimensions, and in 1920 follows the series “Dissolution of the Surface” that once more opens the question of the nature of the picture plane. In all of these open-ended inquiries it is less a question of producing aesthetically finished objects than of following a serial logic that examines gradual shifts and displacements, and the *method* is the real subject of the work rather than a defined artistic result (the first phases of this strategy can be found already in Impressionism, for instance in Monet). The critical dialog with Malevich and Kandinsky is

38. See Christina Lodder’s discussion of the counter-reliefs in *Russian Constructivism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 12 ff.

still decisive, and Rodchenko retraces all the steps in the logic of painting, emptying out the supersensible claims of abstraction from within until he finally arrives at his strictly materialist definition of the image,

Some of the twists in this debate can be followed in the shifting nuances of the term *faktura*, which is present in most of the debates on the nature of abstraction during the 1910s. The term is derived from the Latin *facere*, “to do,” and has a long ascendance in the Italian and French terms *fattura* and *facture* in Academic discourse from the Renaissance and onwards. When it returns in the Russian debate, in Laryonov’s “Rayonist Manifesto” (1912), the term is first defined quite simply as the “essence of painting”; the year after, in the manifesto “Luchism,” more technically as the “state of the colored surface.” The same year as Laryonov’s first text David Burliuk writes the text “Faktura,” which introduces a distinction between a “unitary” and a “differentiated” surface, and the terms is proposed a classificatory tool. In 1914 Vladimir Markov retorts by emphasizing the spiritual dimension, and claims that the origin of *faktura* must be sought in icon painting and in the “battle between two worlds, the interior and the exterior,” which comes closer to how Malevich understands the term. Without being able here to trace this discussion in detail, we can see two main lines gradually crystallizing: one that emphasizes *faktura* as a quality of the craft and the hand, as the specific sensuous element of painting, and another that underscores the dimension of a neutral structural-tectonic order, and how the picture is “made” using a series of elements that can be defined in isolation from each other. Benjamin Buchloh sees the second as the decisive one and claims that “Quite unlike the traditional idea of *fattura* or *facture* in painting, where the masterful *facture* of the painter’s hand spiritualizes the *mere* materiality of the pictorial production [...] the new concern for *faktura* in the Soviet avant-garde emphasizes precisely the mechanical quality, the materiality, and the anonymity of the painterly procedure from a a perspective of empirico-critical positivism.”<sup>39</sup> In this slide of

39. “From Faktura to Factography,” *October* 30, 1984, 87, note 6. For further

the term we can detect a shift in the conjuncture of modernist painting, and how it gradually approaches the end of its first cycle, where the intrusion of the industrial aspect comes to appear as the essential factor. As we have noted, this was initiated by the advent of photography, where the question was posed whether *representation* could be mechanized; at the other end of the first phase, the question is posed in relation to a more profound reorganization of the very texture of the picture as a pure material object, beyond the problem of representation and mimesis.

It is one such (but by no means *the*) ending-point of Rodchenko's serial investigations, which negate *faktura* understood as an expressive gesture in order to reassess it as structural-tectonic order, that we find in his pictures of "pure color," the three legendary monochromes at display at the "5 x 5 = 25" exhibition in Moscow in the autumn of 1921. They have often been interpreted as the radical ending point, not only for a set of laboratory exercises but also for painting *as such*, and when Rodchenko two decades later in his autobiographical manuscript "Working with Mayakovsky" looks back on this event he seems to concur with such a reading: "I reduced painting to its logical conclusion and exhibited three canvases: red, blue and yellow. I affirmed: It's all over. Basic colors. Every plane is a plane, and there is to be no more representation."<sup>40</sup> This interpretation is however to

discussions of the term, cf. Yve-Alain Bois, "Malévich, le carré, le degré zéro," *Macula* 1, 1976, Margit Rowell, "Vladimir Tatlin: Form/Faktura," *October* 7, 1978, and Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism*, 13 ff, 94 ff.

40. "Working with Mayakovsky" (1939-40), cited in Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1990), 238. Cf. also the slightly different French translation in Alexandre Rodchenko, *Écrits complets sur l'art, l'architecture et la révolution* (Paris: Philippe Sers, 1988), which dates the text to 1939 and places it under the rubric "Réflexions à part": "Je menai ma peinture à son aboutissement logique et j'exposai trois toiles: une rouge, une bleue et une jaune, en affirmant: Tout est achevé. Couleurs fondamentales. Chaque plan est un plan et il ne doit pas y avoir de

a large extent retroactive, and this ending point could just as well be seen in terms of an inquiry into the power of pure color, which has to be distinguished from the inquiry into the function of the “line” that is pursued in Rodchenko’s subsequent investigations in design theory during the ‘20s.<sup>41</sup> In the autobiographical sketch the artist seems to embrace the interpretation proposed by the critic and theorist Nikolai Tarabukin, in the famous lecture presented at the INKhUK (Institute for Artistic Culture) in August 1921, one month before the exhibition of the three monochromes:

Each time that a painter really wanted to emancipate himself from representation, he achieved this at the price of destroying painting and committing suicide as a painter. I am thinking of the canvas that Rodchenko recently presented to the audience [at the exhibition “5 x 5 = 25” in 1921]. It was a small, almost square canvas, entirely covered with red paint. In the evolution of artistic language that has occurred during the last decade, this canvas is extremely significant. It is not a step in a process that could be completed by others, but the last step, the final step of a long way, the last word after which the painter has to remain silent, the “last painting” created by a painter. This canvas shows eloquently that painting, as the art of representation it has always been, has

figurations.” (89) The claim here seems to relate more to Rodchenko’s own development (“I brought *my* painting to *its* logical conclusion...” rather than to painting as such (“I brought *painting*...”).

41. For the constructive role of the line, which indeed begins in painting but soon moves beyond any medium-specific confines, see Rodchenko, “La ligne,” in *Écrits complets sur l’art*, 121-23. For a discussion of Rodchenko’s work with design during the 20s, cf. Victor Margolin, *The Struggle For Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917-1946* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), chap. 3.



come to an end. If Malevich's black square in spite of its meager artistic expression still can lay claim to a certain pictorial idea, which the artist calls "economy" and the "fifth dimension," then Rodchenko's canvas lacks any form of content: it is an empty and silent blind wall.<sup>42</sup>

Tarabukin would later develop this argument into a consistent theory of the evolutionary path of modernist painting, and in 1923 he presents his results in a volume with the telling title *From the Easel to the Machine*. The book formulates a comprehensive theory of the various

42. I translate from the French in Tarabukin, *Le dernier tableau* ((Paris: Champ Libre, 1972), 41 f. Further quotes in the next two paragraphs with pagination are from the same source. The paradoxical quality of Tarabukin's rhetoric should be acknowledged—the artist-painter can “do no more than remain silent,” at the same time as his paintings “eloquently” demonstrate the obsolescence of painting. In fact, most of the theories in early modernism that want to demonstrate the extra-linguistic character of pictures attempt this by extremely complex verbal discourses, manifestoes, and treatises. In this sense the quarrel is not between the linguistic and the non-linguistic, but bears on how the relation between these two elements should be understood, and the avant-garde will offer a wide panorama of such possibilities. So, for instance, Duchamp's highly complex and ironic treatment of this divide differs fundamentally from Constructivism, which articulates itself through the theoretical treatise, and from Cubism and its strategies for incorporating textual elements into the very substance of the collages. The idea of postmodern as “the eruption of language in the field of the visual arts,” to use Craig Owens famous phrase from his review of Robert Smithson's *Writings* (“Earthwords,” rpr. in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992]) has an obvious validity with respect to certain late modernist dogmas of the Greenbergian kind, but distorts the view of the earlier period under scrutiny here: language could not “erupt,” since it was always there.

radical attempts of his time, and already the introductory “diagnostic” establishes that the basic contemporary experience is of a *crisis*: “The whole development [since Manet], which we earlier interpreted as a constant process of perfection, now appears to us, in the light of the development of the last years, on the one hand as an irreversible dissolution of painting into its constitutive moments, on the other hand as a demise of painting as a typical art form.” (33)

Beginning with Impressionism, Tarabukin sees an accelerating emptying out of the motif and the “literary story,” which also characterizes literature itself in its passage from “world-sense” to “world-sound,” and theater in its gradual abandoning of realism. What is important in this process is however not the dissolution of the motif, but the focus on the “material elements that are specific to each art form” (34), which for the painter means a struggle against illusion through the use of *planar construction*. Cézanne was the first to attempt this systematically, and for Tarabukin it leads to what he calls the “path of realism”—which does not mean a depictive naturalism, but that the *work itself* becomes understood as something real, and no longer as simply imaginary or “projective.” *The work is a real object in our world*, and the passage from the planes of painting to Tatlin’s counter-reliefs and Rodchenko’s spatial constructions is a “completely logical expression” for this development, whereas the collages of Braque and Picasso stopped half-way in clinging on to spatial illusion. The new and “authentically real object” (38) synthesizes painting, sculpture, and architecture, it brings together mass, volume, and texture in a fully three-dimensional and demystified object whose aesthetic meaning is exhausted in its laying bare of its own production process.

This leads Tarabukin to his central statement, which attempts to take us out of the space of the canvas and into the new technological environment: we can no longer remain satisfied with an “absurd *Black Square on White Canvas*” (39), or similar investigations of an object-less “texture” (*faktura*). “The crisis of pure form” occurs when the aesthetic content, the *raison d’être* of traditional art, has been driven out of the work without being replaced by something else that would have the same position and structure. Thus the step from formal investigations into utilitarian production—from the easel to the machine—be-

comes necessary just as much because of the immanent development of painting (which is Tarabukin's exclusive topic here) as of external social conditions. The step "into production" can preserve all the lessons learned from the analytical de-composition of painting (the line, *faktura*, construction, tectonics, etc.), but they have to be applied in a much larger field that extends beyond the aesthetic and institutional frames imposed by the idea of "fine art."

Tarabukin's theory should of course be seen in the light of all the various types of formalist art theories that were developed in parallel to practice both in literature and the visual art, most of which engage in a similar analysis of the limits of traditional aesthetic appreciation, although not all of them embraced a wholesale rejection of the fine arts as such. "Formalism" should on the whole neither be understood as a way to sever the connections between work and world nor as a theory of art as a "reflection" of some external objective fact: Russian formalism was a profound attempt to open the work by investigating its grammar, and to show the multiplicity of ways in which it can act, react, interact, counteract, etc., in relation to a surrounding material culture. The work is neither self-referential nor a mirror reflection, quite simply because it is itself *part of reality*, twisted out of it, reacting on it, and thus transforming it—it steps out of the everyday and yet it is never located somewhere else. An often recurring statement is that artworks should no longer be understood as expressions of a privileged subject or ego, and that art history must disavow its basis itself in individuals and singular achievements in favor of an analysis of the gradual displacements of language, of art as a collective historical process.

In what has often been seen as the founding text of the Formalist movement Viktor Shklovsky's "Art as Device" ("Isskustvo kak priem," 1917),<sup>43</sup> the claim is made that artistic creation must be seen in terms of a "device" applied to a historically changing raw material (words, im-

43. "Art as Device" (1917), rpr. as chap. 1 in *O teorii prozy* (1925), translated by Benjamin Sher as *Theory of Prose* (Elmwood Park, Ill., Dalkey Archive Press, 1990).

ages, and their inherited grammar), and that the work performed by art should be an “enstrangement” (*ostranenie*) of our automated perception. Artistic form must allow us to *feel* the thing once more, it should “make the stone stony” by removing the “algebraization” of knowledge, i.e. the kind of conventionalism and abbreviated experience that reduces the fullness of things to a mere sign of recognition. Even though there is a phenomenological and/or psychological touch to some of these concepts—in fact a whole series of influences that lead us back through Bergson to Novalis and German Romanticism—the device of form does not translate or externalize something that first would be interior (thoughts, emotional states, or the Kantian “nature” into which the genius descends) into an outer objective form, instead it moves from one exterior to another by way of a violent connectivity that breaks through the veil over the objects and returns us to the things themselves. Husserl’s return “zu den Sachen selbst” is at once close and far away, since the originary form of experience is not only about an openness to the “given,” but always also a question of *production*.

The “device” is essentially transparent, it can be analyzed in a rational manner, and should be understood in terms of work and “doing.” Seen from the vantage point of later developments Shklovsky’s attitude is still somewhat ambivalent in its appreciation of the psychological dimension; this type of analysis of consciousness would however soon become the enemy, and the emphasis comes to lie on technical fashioning rather than on the moment of “feeling” the stone. Osip Brik writes, in a programmatic statement from 1923 that deals specifically with poetry but can easily be extended to cover the whole artistic field: “*Poets do not invent themes, they take them from their surrounding milieu.* The work of the poet starts with the processing of the theme, with finding a corresponding linguistic form for it. Studying poetry means studying the laws of this linguistic processing. *The history of poetry is the history of the development of the devices of linguistic fashioning.*”<sup>44</sup> Or as Boris

44. Osip Brik, “The So-called ‘Formal Method,’” in Harrison and Wood, *Art In Theory 1900-1990*, 323 f (Brik’s italics).

Eichenbaum claims one year after Shklovsky's initial essay: when we read Gogol's short story "The Overcoat," what is important to see is how it has been *made*,<sup>45</sup> i.e. produced by a working over of a linguistic raw material that can be reconstructed analytically.

The same year as Tarabukin's *From the Easel to Machine* Brik publishes a another programmatic essay, "Into Production," whose title similarly launches the new industrial imperative, although on a larger social scale: the task of the artist is to create prototypes that can be used by others, instead of unique and precious objects circulating in a closed system of galleries, museums, and private collectors.<sup>46</sup> Productivism has its roots in a debate with the theorists of the *Proletkult* (above all Aleksander Bogdanov) and its major proponent Boris Arvatov was also part of the opposing camp during its first years.<sup>47</sup> Here we find two opposing versions of a new proletarian culture, one "populist" and one "avantgardist," both of which want

45. Boris Eichenbaum, "Wie Gogols *Mantel* gemacht ist" (1918), in *Aufsätze zur Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965).
46. For Brik's rather scathing comments on painting, cf. "From Picture to Calico-Print" (1924), in Harrison and Wood, *Art In Theory*. The essay launches a fundamental attack on the hierarchy of academic training, and Brik emphasizes that the painterly techniques can lay no claim to universality, since no specific practice can generate universal rules, and that they in fact form an obstacle to the development of a socially useful art. "The sad fate of artists who have passed through the easel-art school, and then try to apply their knowledge and skills in production, is well known. Nothing comes out of it." (327)
47. For a general discussion of Arvatov's role in Productivism and the connection to the Proletkult, see Maria Zalambani, "Boris Arvatov, théoricien du productivisme," *Cahiers du monde russe*, 40/3, 1999; for the notion of everyday life and the status of the object, see Christina Kiaer, "Boris Arvatov's Socialist Objects," *October* 81 (Summer 1997), as well as the more detailed discussion in *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2005).

to draw on the technological development and break with the past. Both of them also end up in opposition to Lenin's strategic conception of how bourgeois 19<sup>th</sup> century culture should be reused and reinterpreted (in a certain sense Lenin got the final word when Socialist Realism was proclaimed in 1932). Arvatov's Productivism starts off in the development from Futurism through Constructivism, and much of the theoretical groundwork done by him and his colleagues came out of the discussions around the journal *LEF* (Leftist Front for the Arts, 1923-25), then followed by the *Novyi LEF* (1927-28). The contributors came from a wide spectrum, although a radical politicizing gradually came to prevail, especially in the second version of the journal, and Arvatov was one of those who drew the social and political conclusions that would seem to follow from the step beyond the formal-structural analysis of the closure of traditional art forms as proposed by Tarabukin. The task of art, Arvatov claims, must be to restructure the whole of experience, it has to leave its phase of formal experimentation behind in order to merge with life and work, enter into schools and factories, which also means to reject the sphere of the commodity. Unlike Bogdanov's Proletkult, however, Arvatov's vision is not of an organic and "pure" Proletarian culture in no need of assistance from the intellectuals, instead it is a project that attempts to gradually dissolve the intellectuals into the working class while also, in a certain sense, retaining the prerogative of the artist. Productivism is born, Arvatov insists, out of the avant-garde, which forms "the historical bridge over which the working class must necessarily pass in order to reach the shore of autonomous creativity,"<sup>48</sup> since it was here that artist first learned to work with pure materials with their own laws and prepared themselves for the step into industry, but this historical birth certificate is also what indicates that art cannot remain in that position.

In his collection of essays from 1926, *Isskustvo i proizvodstvo* (*Art and*

48. Arvatov, "Proletariat i levoe isskustvo" ("The Proletariat and Art of the Left"), *Vestnik isskustv*, 1, 1922: 10; cited in Zalambani, 431.

*Production*),<sup>49</sup> Arvatov outlines four essential parts of Productivism. The first is artistic *technique*, which now must go beyond the fine arts, break away from the idea of privileged methods, materials, and instruments (as for instance in easel painting), and move towards a “particular ‘electrification’ of art, and the use of engineering in artistic work” (99), so as to achieve a new “functionalism” (*tselesoobranost’*). The second part is the need for *collaboration*: in order to transcend the bourgeois division of labor, artistic collectives that merge with other professions, technicians, engineers, etc., have to be created, since only they will be able to respond to “objective demands of social production” (104). The third is a transformation of the *ideology of the artist*: the capricious subjectivity and spontaneity (*stikhiinost’*) of bourgeois art have to be abolished and production must be subjected to a rational and scientific organization of labor that demystifies the idea of creation. “The artistic politics of the proletariat consists,” Arvatov proposes, “in *normalizing* the processes of artistic creation, in *rationalizing* them, and in consciously imposing tasks and methods for the development of art” (107, my italics). This of course puts severe demands on education and the “preparation of a human material that above all has to be capable of always going further in the desired direction” (109), and Arvatov particularly points to an expanded notion of *theater* as a sphere as a means to achieve this (111).<sup>50</sup> “Composition” in the old sense of intuitive aesthetic creation must be replaced by “construction,” since every object must be understood as a “living and finalized organism” (113), which points ahead to the fourth and final aspect, where all the problems come together: the *organization of everyday life (byt)*.

49. I here follow the analysis proposed by Maria Zalambini, “Boris Arvatov,” and my quotes from Arvatov are translated from the French. The pagination refers to the Russian original (Moscow, 1926).

50. For a discussion of Arvatov and productivist aesthetics that focuses on the role of theater, cf. Lars Kleberg, *Theatre as Action: Soviet Russian Avant-Garde Aesthetics*, transl. Charles Rougle (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993).

In capitalist society *byt* evolves in an unconscious and anarchical fashion, but in Socialism we can move towards rational planning and construction, although not in the sense of a rigid structuring, but in terms of a fluid organization that follows the organic rhythm of society—all of which paradoxically enough eventually will dissolve the very concept of *byt*: “This concept in fact implies something static,” Arvatov suggests, “something rigid, which will disappear given that the forms of existence, what we currently call *byt*, will continually transform themselves according to changes in the forces of production.” (117)

At present we are however still in a phase of transition towards this society of perpetual movement, and one of the most important tasks of the proletarian artist is to make the passage possible and desirable by intervening into production so as to assure the “quality” of the products, their capacity to answer to a demand. Production and consumption need to be integrated in one continuous cycle, which implies that the supply of commodities should no longer respond to a demand that would be simply there in advance as a natural given. Production and demand are moments in and result from a “struggle for the revolution of material culture,” and the artist-engineer (*khudozhnik-inzhener*) should make such an immediate connection possible by creating a spontaneous synthesis, a self-organizing rationality that is not imposed from without, but grows out of the masses themselves. This new figure must transcend both the artist and the engineer in their traditional sense, since both of them are results of a division of labor that separates hand and intellect, art and science, subjectivity and rational planning, etc. The initiative for Arvatov however still remains with the *artist*, since he is the one who has un-learned all of his traditional skills and opened up his art to technology and science, whereas for the engineer, the machine remains a “pure mathematical problem,” and art a “creation of an inconceivable inspiration” (91). In relation to the engineer the artist is even assumed to have capacity of his own to enhance the immanent technological development by liberating it from “the power of the model” (118) (and also, in a somewhat more down-to earth argument, to increase interna-



tional competitiveness by “saving Soviet production from the bad taste of our engineers”).<sup>51</sup>

Only then can the new culture be constructed, a culture which in the end knows no difference between the producer and the consumer, and where everything is subsumed under the category “work” or “production.” And given the role of the artist, it is perhaps not a coincidence that the chef theorist behind the introduction of Taylorism in the Soviet Union was a poet, Aleksej Gastev, who was one of the founders of NOT (Institute for the Scientific Organization of Work) and the author of an influential book on “How To Work” (*Kak nado rabotat*, 1922). The organizer-engineer, one of the key figures in Taylor’s and then also Gastev’s theory, is not far from Arvatov’s artist-engineer, but for Gastev he is in a much more explicit sense the heir of a whole series of classical disciplinary functions (the army, the prison, the church, etc.) that need to be resuscitated as conscious instruments for the shaping of the population. For Arvatov the accent rather lies on the fusion of different roles in a new organic unity: “the organizer-engineer should merge with the one who executes, and the process of production—as well as the process of artistic work—should be subjected to the free conscious will of the collective: through this it will be possible to escape from the chaos and blind anarchy of Western individualism.”<sup>52</sup> Organizer, engineer, and artist, producer and consumer, become one in collective social cycle—a theory that should not, Arvatov stresses, be seen as just a Utopian vision, but as a set of concrete proposals for experimentation during the phase of transition. It is not something that perhaps will be implemented at some remote point in the future (such a “no-place” is the exact location of classical bourgeois art, as he underlines), but a guide for action in the present. Art addresses our everyday behavior

51. Arvatov, “Isskustvo i kachestvo promyshlennoi produktsii” (“Art and the Quality of Industrial Production”), *Sovetskoe Iskusstvo* 7, 1925: 40; cited in Zalambani, 440.

52. Arvatov, “Proletariat i levoe isskustvo,” cited in Zalambani, 441.

and our bodies, and should “set as its task to give rise to precise and concrete actions” (127).

It is true, as Boris Groys has pointed out, that important parts of the Russian avant-garde locates itself in the wake of the death of God, where the loss of tradition and the supersensible sphere could provide space for the idea of the artist as a demiurgic creator.<sup>53</sup> But it is also true that this demiurgic activity, at least within the confines of Constructivist art theory (Groys’s interpretation in fact more points toward the figure of Stalin and “Stalinism as a total work of art,” for which the debates in the avant-garde form a prelude), must be understood as a collective project that no longer refers back to the hidden recesses of the subject-genius obeying the laws of divine nature. As a program for artistic practice this of course contains a formidable contradiction, which we can find already in Arvatov’s theoretical formulas, since it explicitly attempts to reduce the role of the traditional artist, while the kind of cultural and technological synthesis it aspires to is still supposed to come out of the space of artistic production, and originate in another kind of artist, an art of organizing, programming, and ordering that still bears a family resemblance to the earlier art. This move cannot be adequately analyzed just in terms of an “aestheticization of politics” (which is too simple a formula that will also guide Benjamin), above all since this program understands itself as a head-on attack on the *very idea of the aesthetic*, it is rather a “becoming-art” of politics, a subsumption of politics under poiesis, i.e. a “fiction of the political” in the sense of a *fabrication*.<sup>54</sup>

We can see this in the idea of a constructive organization as a process that does not emanate from a superior will to power, but follows the rhythm of the collective. In this it is supposed to give rise to a new mode of transparency that restructures subjective desires and over-

53. Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1988), 19 f.

54. I borrow this understanding of fiction from Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La fiction du politique: Heidegger, l’art et la politique* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1988).

comes their latent conflicts, so as to become the foundation for a different relation to things and objects of consumption. Such a space of desire would not simply rule out subjective fantasy, but prevent it from hardening into fetishistic structures—it would be *a conscious and controlled repression of repression*, as it were, a fantasy of being able to contain the subject by *designing* a space of freedom.<sup>55</sup> Like all repressions this one too remains unsuccessful, and what it does, is to hollow out an interior space for the return of the repressed, which is what gives Constructivism its peculiar, at once sober and fantasmatic relation to technology.<sup>56</sup> This relation has often been understood as a pure rationalization, but as we have seen it should perhaps be interpreted as a way to reinscribe desire, and to turn the things into “comrades,” as Arvatov suggests. Reality did however set a definite limit to these attempts, and not only because of the Stalinist repression of the avant-garde. Constructivism in fact had little or no impact on the actual development of Russian design culture even during the period when

55. Similar ideas can be found in Mondrian, where their status as simple wishful thinking becomes all too obvious, as in a diary entry where the artist states: “Human consciousness constantly *pushes back the unconscious*, and expresses itself in a way that creates equilibrium and excludes all ambiguity. The tyranny of tragedy is over.” (Cited in Italo Tomassoni, *Piet Mondrian* [Florence: Sadea/Sansoni, 1969], 37, my italics).
56. For a psychoanalytical reading of the Constructivist relation to the body and to fantasy, cf. Christina Kiaer, “Rodchenko in Paris,” *October* 75 (Winter 1996). Kiaer polemicizes against the more unambiguously negative interpretations of Hubertus Gassner (see his “The Constructivists: Modernism on the Way to Modernization,” in *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde, 1915-1932* [New York: Guggenheim, 1992], and Manfredo Tafuri, “U.S.S.R.-Berlin, 1922: From Populism to “Constructivism,” in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, transl. by Pellegrino d’Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1990) and shows the extent to which it is never a question of simply eradicating desire, but of transforming it.

it enjoyed political support, and its results were mostly limited to film, scenography, graphic design, etc.—to the production of objects that, as Victor Margolin has shown, were handcrafted, unique items of display, and functioned as “rhetorical” objects for the promotion of a new way of life on the imaginary level rather than as prototypes intended for real mass production.<sup>57</sup>

One of most publicized of these “rhetorical” objects was no doubt the Workers Club that Rodchenko designed for the Russian Pavilion at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels in Paris 1925. In its ascetic purity Rodchenko’s design may appear as little more than a low-tech Soviet version of a functionalist modernism; but as Christina Kiaer argues, the motivating force underlying this work is in fact much more complex and perhaps not even transparent to the artist himself.<sup>58</sup> The shocking encounter with a fully developed Parisian modernity and its commodity fetishism (reflected in Rodchenko’s letters to his family, which oscillate between disgust and erotic fascination) forces him to develop a new strategy for introducing a bodily dimension into the seemingly rational designs of Constructivism, and to allow for a different type of dialog between subject and object. i.e. something that provides, gives space to, even encourages an erotic investment in objects, although without giving in to fetishism. In this sense we should not understand these developments as merely a *negation* of subjectivity, corporeality, desire, etc., but as a way to *rethink* such notions on the basis of a new assemblage of man and machine—perhaps as a distinctly Communist version of a “posthuman” sensibility that does not so much do away with Man as to attempt to think his essence as resulting from a certain interplay with historically determined and changing technologies, as something always open-ended and mutable. Man, as Nietzsche once said, can be taken as “the as yet not determined animal” (*das noch nicht festgestellte Tier*), and his animality may well be understandable only in relation to a historically shifting technological assemblage.

57. See the interpretation proposed in Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia*.

58. Christina Kiaer, “Rodchenko in Paris,” as in note 51.

As we have seen in the case of Productivism, on the level of a politics of art this program entails a far-reaching critique of all ideas of artistic “alienation,” individualism and bourgeois aestheticism, and it could become one of the basic tenets of the Soviet state in its visions of a “New Man.”<sup>59</sup> Significantly enough this project also entailed pedagogic programs and the creation of new institutions and research milieus, such as the INKhUK (The Institute for Artistic Culture), formed as the spearhead of revolutionary politics in art, and counting among its members artists such as Rodchenko, Stepanova, and Popova, and theorists like Arvatov, Tarabukin, and Brik, as well as a school like the VKhUTEMAS, where many of the educational programs were tried out. The dream of the avant-garde to unify art and politics under the aegis of a wholly new type of “artist-engineer” came across just as much in the emphatic rejection of old forms of art as in the demand for new institutions, and the extent to which a bureaucratic *eros* seems to have gotten hold of the emerging Soviet society can be discerned in the almost infinite proliferation of new abbreviations.

On the formal level we can trace a further development of this rhetorical dimension in Constructivism in the 20s, in the turn from disruptive montage techniques to more unitary and “realist” techniques both in photography and literature. In literature the short-lived conception of a “literature of fact,” i.e. the recording, writing, and presentation of *facts* as artistic products, a writing without “plot” drawing directly on the movement of life, was developed inside the LEF and culminates in 1929 with the anthology *Literatura fakta. Pervyj sbornik materialov rabotnikov Lefa* (*The Literature of Fact. The First Collection of Material From the Workers*

59. On the idea of a “New Man” and its connections to the avantgarde conception of technology, cf. the massive documentation assembled by Boris Groys et al (eds.): *Am Nullpunkt. Positionen der russischen Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), and *Die neue Menschheit. Biopolitische Utopien in Russland zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005). For more on Foucault and biopower, see “Foucault and the Genesis of Modern Architecture,” below.

of *LEF*) and Sergei Tretyakov's novel *Den Shi-hua, bio-interv'iu*.<sup>60</sup> As Benjamin Buchloh has argued in the case of the visual arts, this step from "faktura" to "factography" is the last consequence of the preceding deconstruction of inherited artistic forms. Passing through a middle phase focused on formal experimentation, artists now devoted themselves to finding new forms of distribution and reproduction, and to setting the conditions for a "simultaneous collective reception." In this conception of the political and communicative function of art there is an unmistakable totalitarian temptation, and Buchloh points to the later development of both Rodchenko and an artist like El Lissitzky, who during the 30s were able to produce obedient propaganda while still using many of the formal devices that they had developed in their earlier and more experimental work. The destruction or dismantling of the aesthetic frame thus allowed politics to become the subject of the work, in all senses of the word, unleashing a force that the artists themselves were incapable of containing, and in this sense the demise and eventual condemnation of Constructivism as "formalism" was inherent in the movement's own logic from the beginning.

#### *IV. Rethinking space, time, and architecture*

In 1928, Sigfried Giedion, who was to become the great propagandist, historian, and interpreter of the modern movement in architecture, publishes his first book, *Bauen in Frankreich, Baue in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton*. The book projects a dazzling view of new industrial architecture, and it is itself one of the period's most effective visual-rhetorical constructions, where the graphic design of Moholy-Nagy juxtaposes Giedion's forceful and prophetic statements to images of the new machine technology in order to convey a sense of an irresistible moder-

60. English transl. as *Chinese Testament: The Autobiography of Tan Shih-Hua, as told to S. Tretyakov* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1978). On Tretyakov as "operative writer," cf. *October* 118, special issue on Soviet factography, ed. Devin Fore

nity. But, and this is more decisive for us here, it also takes us right into the heart of the philosophical claims of the modern movement by proposing a radical interpretation of space that welds together motifs from a discussion underway since the latter third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by projecting a new view of the organic and the technological. In this it also draws out a set of consequences for social space from which Giedion's subsequent and more "official" work, *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), to some extent will step back in order to mitigate any "avantgardist" conclusions, above concerning the very existence of "architecture" itself.

The contribution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Giedion claims, was the grand scale glass and iron constructions and the use of reinforced concrete that was revolutionize the building trade. Using the vocabulary of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which expresses the period's unease and its sense of an impending crisis of form, these innovations were still seen as part of the "core-form," whereas their consequences for the "art-form" were still in the balance.<sup>61</sup> The new forms were, as

61. Karl Bötticher proposes this distinction in his "Das Prinzip der hellenischen und germanischen Bauweise hinsichtlich der Übertragung in die Bauweise unserer Tage" (1846; translated in Wolfgang Herrman (ed.): *In What Style Should We Build? The German Debate on Architectural Style* [Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1992]). The *Kernform* (technology) and the *Kunstform* (tradition) have for us, after the demise of the classical tradition, entered into a conflict, and a new synthesis is required, for which iron constructions will provide the structural basis, even though the aesthetic moment still has to remain Greek. In Bötticher's man work, *Die Tektonik der Hellenen* (1844-52) he investigates the statics of Greek temples, and understands form basically as a language that is able to express the laws of mechanics: the forms *signify* that which in itself is only a function (the column signifies the bearing of a load), and thus makes it into a self-reflexive structure (an interpretation that can already be found in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, which is the hidden source for many of these debates). Bötticher's aim is however not only historical,

Giedion says, part of architecture's "subconsciousness": "Construction in the nineteenth century plays the role of the subconscious (*des Unterbewusstseins*). Outwardly, construction still boasts the old pa-

but also to overcome the current conflict between style and construction. For the Greeks, he claims, there was an inner bond, a "juncture" (*Junktur*) between envelope (*Hülle*) and core, and style was a *necessary* moment. In the wake of Winckelmann (above all the *Anmerkungen über die Baukunst der Alten*, 1762), but also a whole aesthetic tradition going back to Vitruvius, he sees architectonic form as based on a "body image" (*Körperbild*) that fuses inside and outside in an organic unity of nature and technology. But this body image has two aspects, which already opens the possibility of an inner disjunction. Opposed to the inner and constructive *Kernform*, which as a "naked body, divested of its decorative attributes, is fully capable of expressing all architectonic functions," there is a "dressed" *Kunstform*, an aesthetic and as such superfluous expression whose role is to "explain" the core. Tectonics, Bötticher concludes, can thus be determined as *that which elevates construction to art*, and this is precisely what our contemporary age is lacking: the mediation, the con-juncture that would fuse inside and outside into one, and modern technology is at once the source of this crisis and the basis for its overcoming. For a discussion of Bötticher, see Manfred Klinkott, "Die Tektonik der Hellenen als Sprachlehre und Fessel der klassizistischen Baukunst," in Hans Kollhoff (ed.): *Über Tektonik in der Baukunst* (Braunschweig: Vieweg & Sohn 1993). For a survey of the 19th century debate of art-form and core-form, which passes through several stages and constitutes one of the essential foundations of architectural modernism, cf. Oechslin, Werner, *Stilhülle und Kern*. *Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos und der evolutionäre Weg zur modernen Architektur* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1994); for a discussion of the particular aesthetic problems posed by the introduction of iron in architecture, see the analysis in Sokratis Georgiadis' preface in Sigfried Giedion, *Building in France* (as in next footnote). I will return to some aspects of the contemporary use of tectonics in "Towards the Essence of Technology," below.



thos; underneath, concealed behind facades, the basis of our present existence is taking shape.”<sup>62</sup> Giedion draws on a long morphological development going back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, which for him had been blocked by a traditionalist and eclectic interpretation of architecture—thus pushing the progressive moment down into the “subconscious”—and covered over by a discourse on the “styles.” This tradition, he proposes, can now regain momentum, first because of the breakthroughs in architects like Auguste Perrier and Tony Garnier, which achieved a first degree of perfection in Le Corbusier. The “constructive subconscious” that secretly guided the 19<sup>th</sup> century through its confused dialectics of style can now become *rational construction* and attain the state of a transparent discourse where the opposites come to form a new fluid whole. Giedion speaks of how things enter into a state of mutual “interpenetration,” a *Durchdringung* that dissolves them in their individuality and creates one single, intense, and malleable space with only floating and osmotic borders between subjects and objects. He sees examples of this in modern engineering, the Eiffel Tower and the Pont Transbordeur in the harbor of Marseille, one of the technological icons of the time and the subject of photographs by Germaine Krull as well as a film by Moholo-Nagy, *Marseille, Vieux Port* (1929). The most central example is Corbusier’s architecture, which becomes the object of lyrical descriptions. In Corbusier’s apartment buildings in Pessac, Giedion writes, “neither space nor plastic form counts, only RELATION and INTERPENETRATION. There is only a single and indivisible space.” The light-weight and slender wall elements that had been criticized for resembling sheets of paper to Giedion rather appear like “Cubist paintings, in which things are seen in a floating transparency,” and they produce a “dematerialization of solid demarca-

62. Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich: Eisen, Eisenbeton* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann Verlag, 1928); *Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferroconcrete*, transl. J. Duncan Berry (Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1995), 87. Henceforth cited as *BF*.

tion that distinguishes neither rise nor fall and that gradually produces the feeling of walking in the clouds.” (BF, 169)

For Giedion, “interpenetration” in fact means several things, and only some of them are strictly architectonic: spatial volumes that penetrate into each other, levels that are brought to intersect by the partial removal of floors, a new type of floating relation between interior and exterior, buildings composed of several volumes that are not clearly delimited (most of which can be seen in Gropius’s Bauhaus building in Dessau). But there are also more general implications for the social domain as a whole: a general breaking down of hierarchies extending from the building to the city space, and then to the social divisions between labor and classes, which now begin to perceive a common task. All of this will in the last instance strike back at the very concept of architecture, and it can no longer be understood in terms of an art that produces autonomous and free-standing objects to be judged according to inherited aesthetic and morphological criteria, but has to be thought of as parts of a larger organizational process, a “stream of movement” (*Bewegungsstrom*). “It seems doubtful,” Giedion notes already in the beginning of his book, “whether the limited concept of ‘architecture’ will indeed endure. We can hardly answer the question: What belongs to architecture? Where does it begin, where does it end? Fields overlap: walls no longer rigidly define streets. The street has been transformed into a stream of movement. Rail lines and trains, together with the railroad station, form a single whole.” (BF, 90). In *Bauen in Frankreich* Giedion’s radical proposals make a halt in front of the domicile, and he emphasizes that we should not attempt to “carry over into housing this absolute experience that no previous age has known” (91). In the following book, *Befreites Wohnen* (1929), he takes this further daring step that also dissolves the limit between private and public, and now he rejects the idea that the domicile and the sheltering aspect of domestic space could have a universal value, instead endows it with only a conditional “use value”—“Today we need a house that corresponds in its entire structure to our bodily feeling as it is influenced and liberated through sports, gymnastics, and a sensuous way of life: light, transparent, movable. Consequently, this open

house also signifies a reflection of the contemporary mental condition: there are no longer separate affairs. Things interpenetrate (*Die Dinge durchdringen sich*).<sup>63</sup>

One of Giedion's first and most enthusiastic readers was Walter Benjamin, for whom the social and political implications of the modern architectonic constructions was the most important aspect. *Bauen in Frankreich* in fact became one of the most important sources for Benjamin's work on the Parisian arcades, and not only for the sections on architecture, but also as a general theoretical model. Upon receiving the book Benjamin writes to Giedion: "When I received your book, the few passages that I read electrified me in such a way that I decided not to continue with my reading until I could get more in touch with my own related investigations."<sup>64</sup> For Benjamin, Giedion's analysis of the new constructive formal language becomes an anticipation of a different society, at the same time as it makes possible another reading of the pre-his-

63. *Befreites Wohnen* (Zürich: Orell Füssli, 1929), 8. For a discussion of the above quotes and Giedion's various uses of "interpenetration," cf. Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1999), 30 ff.
64. Benjamin, letter to Giedion February 15, 1929, cited in Sokratis Georgiadis' preface, *Building in France*, 53. Benjamin excerpts several passages from *Bauen in Frankreich* in his studies for the Arcades project, not only in the section on "iron constructions," but also in the important "epistemological" notes; cf. *Das Passagen-Werk*, GS V, 215 f och 572. In his essay "Bücher, die lebendig geblieben sind," written four months after the letter to Giedion, he also praises A G Meyers *Eisenbauten* (1907), and claims that these two books constitute the "prolegomena to any future historical-materialist theory of architecture" (GS3, 170). Two extremely useful essays that I have drawn on for the relation between Benjamin and Giedion, are Detlef Mertins, "Walter Benjamin's Tectonic Unconscious," *Any* 14, and "The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory: Walter Benjamin and the Utopia of Glass," *Assemblage* 29, 1996.

tory of modernity and of the recent past as a cipher for a “revolutionary nihilism.”<sup>65</sup>

These ideas of openness and interpenetration eventually also inspire him to develop an interpretation of *glass* as the image of a new social transparency, or a new “poverty” or even “barbarism,” as he will call it in the essay “Erfahrung und Armut” (1933).<sup>66</sup> Benjamin’s direct reference when it comes to the use of glass is however less Giedion than the poet Paul Scheerbart, whose visions in *Glasarchitektur* (1914) of a world based on transparency acted as a catalyst for many in the early avant-garde. Scheerbart’s book was aiming at a moral change of man, it was a program for a whole new style of civilization, but it was also a poetic sketch that resists any unambiguous and programmatic readings—the 111 short fragments form a kind of “smooth writing,” as one commentator says, “as if the text itself would be made of glass.”<sup>67</sup> Scheerbart imagines how glass architecture would evolve

65. There is here also a decisive influence from Surrealism. Breton, Benjamin claims, “was the first to understand the revolutionary potential in the ‘dated,’ the first iron constructions, the first factories, the first photographs, all those objects that are now on the verge of distinction,” and he anticipated their capacity to “suddenly transform into a revolutionary nihilism” (“Der Surrealismus: Die letzten Momentaufnahmen der europäischen Intelligenz,” *GS* 2/1, 299). For the connection to surrealism, cf. also Anthony Vidler’s discussion of Benjamin’s views on Breton’s *Nadja*, in “Transparency,” in *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1992).
66. *GS*, 2/1, 213-19. Cf. *Das Passagen-Werk*: “It belongs to the technical forms of *Gestaltung* that their progress and success are proportional to the transparency of their social content (glass architecture comes from this)” (*GSV*, 581). For a philosophical discussion of the idea of a “transparent society,” although without any specific references to architecture, cf. Gianni Vattimo, *La società trasparente* (Milan: Garzanti, 2000).
67. Daniel Payot, “La sobriété ‘barbare’ de Paul Scheerbart,” preface to the French translation of Scheerbart, *L’architecture de verre* (Paris: Circé,

from a singular building until it covered the whole face of the earth, providing a complete enlightenment, an infinite luminosity. This could easily be read as a threatening Panopticism in a Foucauldian sense, a vision of a controlled and completely X-rayed society where no one any longer has any secrets and private life has been turned inside out under the gaze of an ubiquitous surveillance. There is arguably a dimension of a mystique of purity, of a severe strictness and poverty in Benjamin's fascination with transparency, and it provides the link between his religious intuitions and a harsh Communist politics: the poverty enforced upon us by modern experience is necessary for the new world to emerge, precisely because it reduces the world of bourgeois interiority and its psychological depth. Scheerbart's creations, Benjamin claims, speak "a wholly new langue. And what is decisive in them is the drive towards the willfully constructive; namely as an opposition to the organic. This is the unmistakable in Scheerbart's humans, or rather people (*Leuten*): for they reject the similarity to humans, which is a founding principle of humanism." (II/1, 216) The fact is however that Scheerbart underlines that his visions are practical solutions, and he stresses the sensuous and voluptuous aspects of glass—what attracts him is not so much transparency, and definitely not any kind of austerity (and on this point he seems to have been fatally misread by many avantgardists) as the possibility of modulating light and shade, heat and cold, and to achieve a state of maximum comfort and luxury, where interior and exterior blend together in a delightful continuity and our homes become "cathedrals" for the fulfilling of desires. We have to get rid of our nostalgia for the heavenly paradise, Scheerbart suggests, so that we may realize it here and now in terms of a hedonist culture based on luminosity.

As Daniel Payot points out, Scheerbart's vision of a renewal of

1995), 8. For the relation between Benjamin and Scheerbart, cf. Pierre Missac, *Passage de Walter Benjamin* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), chap. 6, and John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), chap. 4.

mankind's ethos through an aesthetic program is one a general level an heir to the systems of German Idealism (above all the "Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus" and its vision of a culture that makes ideas of reason sensible and aesthetic), but it can more directly be understood as an attempt within early modernism to retrieve the romantic project inside the world of technology, to achieve a expressive synthesis of the organic and the technological. Scheerbar's visions should be seen in connection with the work of Bruno Taut (to whom *Glasarchitektur* is dedicated), more precisely the expressionist theory developed in the "Crystal Chain" (*die gläserne Kette*) and in the review *Frühlicht*, with their utopian visions of urban renewal and a return to pre-modern *Gemeinschaft*.<sup>68</sup> Scheerbar's prospect is to create a space for desire, a transparent space and a transparent desire, not because they would always open to a social demand and the inspection of a surveying Panoptic gaze, but because the metaphysics of glass allows for an infinite chiaroscuro, and to this extent he shares at least some of the premises we saw at work in Rodchenko's Workers Club: to fuse the organic and the technological without privileging one over the other, and to provide for the emergence of subjective fantasy.

For Benjamin however it is not the organic and expressive moment that is attractive, but rather a hard and ascetic interpretation that cherishes a visual and sensory "poverty," for which he also finds support in an equally myopic reading of the architecture of Corbusier and Oud. Here, Benjamin suggests, the organic synthesis gives way to the rationalism of the engineer that releases us from a false

68. Payot, *ibid.* The letters exchanged between the members of the Crystal Chain (whose members included Bruno Taut and his brother Max, Herman Finsterlin, and Hans Scharoun) are translated and commented in Iain Boyd Whyte, *The Chrystal Chain Letters* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1985); for a discussion of Taut's further career, see Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and also Angelika Thiekötter (ed.): *Kristallisationen. Splitterungen. Brunto Tauts Glashaus* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1993).

culture, and makes possible an existence beyond the subjectivism and emotional depth of the bourgeois interior, a life that can be lived without “leaving traces”: “This was something to which Scheerbart with glass and Bauhaus with steel had opened a path: they have created rooms where it is difficult to leave traces.”<sup>69</sup> Experience (*Erfahrung*), defined as a dialectical unity of past and present, a constantly self-enriching historical consciousness, has been lost in the wake of the war, Benjamin claims, but in its place we find a new type of “Erlebnis” of poverty, stark simplicity, and a loss of tradition that is not only, and not even primarily, negative. Such a poverty, he proceeds,

69. GS 2/1, 217. To “erase the traces” is also the theme for Benjamin’s commentary to a poem by Brecht, from the latter’s *Lesenuch für Stadtbewohner*, cf. the comments on Brecht in, *GS II/2*). As Detlef Mertins points out (“The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory,” 13 f), this reading of Scheerbart is more associated to the group around the journal *G* (1923-26, led by Hans Richter and Mies van der Rohe), where Benjamin in fact also published translations of Tristan Tzara. Mertins cites other important sources for this discussion on the potential of glass, for instance Gropius’ “Glasbau” (1926) and several texts by van Doesburg och Moholy-Nagy. The latter concludes his *Von Material zu Architektur* (1929) by praising Gropius’ Bauhaus building in Dessau, and the Van Nelle factory in Rotterdam by Brinkmann and van der Flugt, both of which he describes as predecessors to a “spatial interpenetration (*Durchdringung*) of a kind that only the next generation will be able to experience in real life—in the form of glass architecture.” (*Von Material zu Architektur* [Berlin: rpr. Gebr. Mann, 2001], 236). Already in 1919 Ludwig Hilberseimer publishes a polemical article against the Expressionist fantasies on glass, “Paul Scheerbart und die Architekten,” and he will stick to this view after his conversion to a strict rationalist; for a discussion of Hilberseimer’s polemic against Expressionism (however without reference to Scheerbart), cf. K Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridg, Mass.: MIT, 1992), 215-221.

might indeed appear as a kind of barbarism, but this is only as long as we measure it by the standards of the past—instead we should see it as a *tabula rasa*, the birthplace of a new subjectivity that no longer depends on organic totalities, but is capable of “experiencing” (*erleben*) the waste land as a positive condition, just as the new non-auratic forms of art will have to be understood outside of the traditional aesthetic modes of production and reception that used to be organized around the classical fine arts, if their historical role is to be correctly assessed. “Things made of glass have no ‘aura,’” Benjamin suggests, and “glass is generally speaking the enemy of the secret. It is also the enemy of possessions.” (II/1, 217).

Similarly to Giedion, Benjamin imagines that the new technology will fundamentally change our capacity for perception, even remodel the very categories of space and time, as when he in the essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction (to which I will return in the following chapter) argues that cinema functions as a kind of psychoanalysis of the “optical unconscious” that will allow us to see and take possession of space in a different way. When Giedion and Benjamin meditate on the Pont Transbordeur, both of them see, expressed in a concentrated way, the same kind of technological sensibility as in the microscope, the telescope, the X-ray image, the aerial photograph, and this transformed experiential space is based on a different interpenetration of the organic and the technological that fuses them in a transformed concept of nature. It is true that Benjamin, when commenting on the bridge, much more than Giedion stresses how the photographs allow us to see the city and the relations of labor in a changed perspective, and he underlines that it is not technology in itself that will produce the transformation of the world, since the world is always a creation of humans and their social relations, even though it is still only workers and engineers who are able to glimpse the outlines of this experience. And yet there a kind of technological *nature*, an alliance between *physis* and *techné* that has to be forged if the opportunity is not to be lost. Benjamin writes: “One could formulate the problem of the new art in the following way: when and how will the worlds of mechanical forms, in cinema, in the construction of machines, in the new phys-



ics, etc., appear without our help and overwhelm us, *make us conscious of what is natural in them?*<sup>70</sup>

If *Bauen in Frankreich* in spite of its revolutionary claims still remains a case study focusing on a few selected works, a decade later the main work of Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, would provide a synoptic view of the historical roots and development of modernism as one coherent evolutionary line that extends back into ancient history. It is probably true that no book has exerted a bigger influence on the interpretation of modern architecture—although it also, as we will see, in several important aspects represents a *retreat* from the radicality of the first work, and can be located at the threshold of a second and self-critical phase after the second world war. Originally presented in the form of lectures at Harvard 1938-39, and first published as a book in 1941, it has passed through numerous reprints and revisions, and has provided the authoritative image of modern architecture for generations for architects. This book by the “eminent Swiss critic,” Philip Johnson writes just after its publication, is the “most important work on general architecture to appear” in recent times, and Henry Russell Hitchcock stated that “every scholar and student should own and master [it] in detail.”<sup>71</sup>

Giedion provides us with a step by step account of the triumph of modernism, which in the end succeeds to become not just a break with the past, but, as the subtitle of the book reads, “the growth of a new tradition.” At the same time, however, the author also voices a concern: this tradition is now under threat, it has to be recreated from within. The threat does not come from the impending political cri-

70. *Das Passagen-Werk*, GSV, 500 (my italics),

71. Philip Johnson, “Architecture in 1941,” and Henry Russell Hitchcock, “Review of Space, Time and Architecture,” cited in Detlef Mertins, “System and Freedom: Sigfried Giedion, Emil Kaufmann, and the Constitution of Architectural Modernity,” in Robert E Somol (ed.): *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America* (New York: Monacelli, 1997), 215.

sis, which strangely enough receives no attention in the book, rather it is the modern separation between emotion and intellect, between “rational construction” and man’s emotional needs, that worries the author, and that has produced the crisis—but “in spite of the seeming confusion,” he writes in the first preface dated 1940, “there is nevertheless a true, if hidden, unity, a secret synthesis, in our present civilization.”<sup>72</sup> This synthesis is however neither of a political nor a moral nature, but comes straight out of architectural theory, and it is rooted in the new conception of space and time that we saw at work already in the book from 1928, but which now receives a thematic treatment. “Space-time” becomes Giedion’s founding category, whereas the idea of “interpenetration” together with its radical implications for the very autonomy and existence of architecture as well as for social and political space symptomatically enough recedes into the background. Space-time becomes a primordially *aesthetic* category, and it assumes the same organizing function as once central perspective had in the Renaissance (*STA* 30-41, and 429 ff).

The emergence of the category “space” as such is in fact one the most important results of decades of intense critical and theoretical debates, and Giedion in a certain way only summarizes and synthesizes this development, although without to any greater extent recognizing his predecessors. The discourse of space as an explicit aesthetic category has a surprisingly short history, and it can be traced back to the discussions of “empathy” (*Empfindung*) from the 1870s, as they developed from the pioneering work of Robert Vischer through Adolf Hildebrand and Heinrich Wölfflin, up to the first full-blown theoretical formulation by August Schmarsow in 1893.<sup>73</sup> Vischer’s “On the Optical Sense of

72. *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, thirteenth printing 1997), vi. Henceforth cited as *STA*.

73. For a collection of source documents, with a detailed historical introduction, see Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou (eds.): *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* (Santa Monica: Getty, 1994).

Form" (1873) proposes an analysis of the dependence of meaning in spatial forms on a projection of our bodies, in a movement of transferal between subject and object, or a "feeling-into" that ultimately blurs the boundaries between them. This theme is then developed further in Heinrich Wölfflin's "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture" (1886), where Wölfflin asks the question how pure tectonic forms can be understood as expressive. Here too the human body is understood as the source, but now in the physiological sense, whereas Vischer remained within an exclusively optical dimension: it is because of our body that we can understand weight, contraction, pressure, the bearing of loads, etc. For Wölfflin this ultimately stems from of a dynamic inherent in nature itself, and it is matter that wants to descend, to attain a state of formlessness, whereas the "formative force" strives to gather together, elevate, and achieve a higher unity. Forms develop organically out of matter because of an "immanent will" that wants to "break free," and Wölfflin perceives himself as Aristotelian, although there seems to be more of a profoundly Baroque and especially Leibnizian inspiration in this idea of "plastic forces" (*vis plastica*, as Leibniz called it).<sup>74</sup> In Wölfflin the concept of "space" as such however tends to recede into the background in favor of the biomorphic motive, and it comes to be understood more in the sense of environment, an "Umwelt."

Seven years later the theme is brought to its conclusion in the decisive works of Adolf Hildebrand and August Schmarsow. Hildebrand's "The Problem of Form in the Fine Arts" analyses the perception of sculpture, and for him space is a "continuum," like a basin of water where individual bodies form separate volumes. In architecture our relation to space is expressed directly, and "space itself" becomes present in terms of a "total spatial image" within which all tectonic relations acquire their significance. This conceptual development culminates in Schmarsow's "The Essence of Architectural Creation" (1893), where

74. For an analysis of Leibniz' conception of matter that makes use of Wölfflin's art-historical model of the Baroque, cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pl. Leibniz et la baroque* (Paris: Minuit, 1988), chap. 1.

the autonomy of the single architectonic elements is even further reduced in favor of a total experience. The architectonic work does not consist of stones and vaults, Schmarsow claims, but has to do with a total sense of space originating from our body as a zero-point, where the spatial coordinates intersect: architecture fundamentally has to do with a “feeling of space (*Raumgefühl*), it is a “creatress of space” (*Raumgestalterin*), and only on this basis can its parts and tectonic details be expressive and bestow meaning. The body is not only, primordially speaking *even not at all*, in space as if in a container: the objectivity of space is fundamentally a projection, something arising from or woven out of the subjectivity of the subject. In this sense Schmarsow anticipates many of the themes that will be central in the phenomenological tradition from Husserl to Heidegger—the reduction of objective Cartesian extension, the analysis of the “kinesthetic” sphere through which the ego organizes a system of motility and tactility, the difference between the objective-physiological *Körper* and the living *Leib*, the idea of the earth as an ontological “ground” of the tectonic categories, etc.—but he also opens for a certain *historicizing* of the ground, where this foundational space itself is pried open and turned into a techno-corporeal assemblage. The history of architecture, Schmarsow proposes, should be written as the history of the “senses of space,” which also means to write a history of the *body*, and of the changing character of all intimacy and self-relation. Architecture is rooted in an experience of space, which in its turn is founded upon the body, but this body is itself subjected to change, it is inscribed in all those technological assemblages that induce and produce our experience of space. The project of the avant-garde as we find it in *Bauen in Frankreich* is indeed one possible outcome of this, even though it in the end probably would run counter to Schmarsow’s own ideas: to actively produce a new space, to break down the barriers between subjects and objects, people and things, in order to allow for a new structuring of everyday life from the bottom and up, based on “interpenetration.”

In *Space, Time and Architecture* this more recent and radical historical background is however brushed aside, and Giedion instead establishes a grand historical narrative covering all of the history of culture in a vast sweeping gesture. Just as the geometric construction of the visual

pyramid in the Renaissance, the modern space-time concept welds together elements from contemporary physics, contemporary art, and the new engineering sciences,<sup>75</sup> and the “modern spirit” revives and fulfills a promise at least five hundred years old rather than initiating a break in modern culture. Giedion provides us with a vision of the history of space (where we can hear distinct echoes from his teacher Wölfflin), moving from an external combination of spaces (Egypt, Greece), through a second phase that focuses on interior space (from the Roman period to the demise of the Baroque at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century), a phase of transition (the 19<sup>th</sup> century) where all the historical styles are cut loose from their anchoring points and we end up in promiscuity and moral depravity, until we finally, due to a new moral demand and standard, reach the modern period, that synthesizes the first and second period, outer and inner space, into a new continuity.

This final phase is for Giedion characterized by a new openness, a dynamism, and a capacity to fuse subject and object in the “fourth dimension,” which now assumes the role previously ascribed to “interpenetration,” and we can see how the theory of *Raum* in Schmarsow, mediated through van Doesburg and Moholy-Nagy, comes to form the basis for a speculative overall interpretation of modern science and technology. Giedion refers to Futurist and above all Cubist painting, which he sees in the lineage of Brunelleschi’s experiments with perspective in the Renaissance, and he proposes that the contemporary object has to be understood in terms of a simultaneity of perspectives, as resulting from a field of modulations and thus as a kind of temporal cut, which leads into a dematerialization and virtualization of the materiality of architecture, as is evidenced by the contemporary fascination for glass.

75. For a detailed analysis of the different sources here fused together, see Sokratis Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography*, transl. Colin Hall (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 97-150. The two most important sources close to Giedion are undoubtedly Theo van Doesburg, *Grundbegriffe der neuen gestaltenden Kunst* (1925), and Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur* (1928).

The cataclysmic political events that accompanied the writing of *Space, Time and Architecture* are however strangely absent from the book, and it seems to aspire to an understanding of architecture solely as form. As we have noted, this is a retreat from the more radical positions in *Bauen in Frankreich*—if the earlier book hinted at analogies between architectural and social transformations, the perspective adopted in the later book remains firmly within a kind of “professional” discourse.<sup>76</sup> This also means that the questioning of the very term “architecture” that opened up the text from 1928 has disappeared, and the problem now seems to be how to consolidate the results of the earlier phase, and to remedy the split between the rational and the emotional in the name of the “hidden unity” of our present civilization. *Space, Time and Architecture* is less a manifesto than an attempt to establish a fixed image of modern architecture, to mediate between rational construction and poetic intuition, in order to retrieve the “whole human being” of a humanism that his earlier theories had been instrumental in dislocating. In this sense, the book is about cooling down, taking a step back from the aspirations of the avant-garde with the intention of healing the wounds it has produced. The great synthetic work of Modernism that is *Space, Time and Architecture* is indeed beset by a doubt, and in this it opens another phase, another questioning, which attempt to once more come to terms with the *danger* of technology.

76. Hilde Heynen (*Architecture and Modernity*, 42 ff) gives a good analysis of this shift, although in terms of a difference between a “transitory” and “programmatically” modernism that she borrows from Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987). The transitory aspect is associated to the destructive and iconoclastic attitude of the “avant-garde,” whereas the programmatic aspect understands modernism as a continuation of the tradition. This model is more relevant for the visual arts, but less so for architecture (which is not treated at all by Calinescu), where we have seen that there is a close proximity between destructive and constructive tendencies.







# The Destruction of Aesthetics: Benjamin, Jünger, Heidegger

## *I. The avant-garde and the task of a destruction of aesthetics*

What is the sense of aesthetic experience in modern technological societies, dominated by commodity production, by an increasing loss of traditional values, and by the withdrawal of the very ontological meaning of the fine arts? Is the task of art to restore an experience or a set of values that seem more and more remote to us, or should it willingly assume its dissolution in the culture industry, entertainment, and the media sphere, as a new and inevitable figure of its finitude? Or is there some third option, a vantage point from *within* the concept of art that yet goes beyond its inherited meaning, and would allow us to rethink its essence, to reconnect its *membra disiecta* from an affirmative point of view—to pass through nihilism to another side, another experience of what lies dormant inside the all-too traditional notion of art?

The response of the avant-garde to this situation, certain outlines of which I have sketched in the previous chapter, was a *destruction* of aesthetics—a term that is explicitly used both by Heidegger and Benjamin—i.e., an undoing, working-through, and restructuring of those parameters within which works of art have been appreciated at least since Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and the Enlightenment invention of aesthetic autonomy. Destruction in this sense does not mean destroying or just tearing down, but repeating, retrieving, and allowing for a return of that which has been there all along, albeit hidden under sedimented layers of historical interpretation. In order to give back a certain power to the artwork, the modern idea of art as providing a disinterested, non-conceptual, and non-utili-

tarian pleasure, subsumed under an indeterminate Kantian “sensus communis,” must be dismantled, so that art once more could be connected to life, politics, revolution, desire, etc. Overcoming the “aesthetic alienation,” attaining a “sovereignty” in relation to other forms of social exchange, creating a work of art that would be infinite and as such also “total,” was already a goal at the outset of German Idealism. The first draft of this idea is perhaps the small fragment, presumably written by Hegel, and which has come to bear the name “The Oldest System Program of German Idealism.” All of society must be rethought on the basis of art, and our “Buchstabenphilosophen” must be transformed through a new aesthetic sensibility, which also means that the discourse of philosophy must overcome its own limitations as a rational-discursive genre. Through Romanticism, Nietzsche, Wagner, and Baudelaire, this motif was transmitted to early modernism.<sup>1</sup> In this sense the disruptive gestures of Modernism were already dormant in the Romantic attempt to transgress the limits established by Kant, an attempt that could be said to perform a kind of “destructive” operation in relation to the third Critique, and from a certain historical distance they inform the avant-garde and provide it with much of its philosophical energy, even though these roots in the philosophy of Romanticism were misunderstood and often violently rejected by the early modernists themselves.

In the context of the avant-garde in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this insurrection has its particular background in the de-

1. On “aesthetic alienation” as a figure of thought originating in Kant’s third Critique, where autonomy is attained at the expense of the connection to the true and the good, and the experience of art comes to stand in for a lost community, cf. Jay M Bernstein, *The Fate of Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), chap. 1; on aesthetic “sovereignty,” see Christoph Menke, *Die Souveränität der Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991); on the legacy of the *Systemprogramm*, see Otto Pöggeler, *Die Frage nach der Kunst. Von Hegel zu Heidegger* (München: Alber, 1984), 39-111.

velopment of aesthetics as a kind of institution—both in a material sense and in terms of more abstract networks of discourse—that was perceived as disconnecting art from life. This is the basic trait of the interpretation of the “historical avant-garde” proposed by Peter Bürger in his *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974), which locates the artistic revolutions against the backdrop of a completed development of aesthetic autonomy in Symbolism and the doctrines of *l’art pour l’art* of the 1890s. In this period we find a full realization of a type of thinking about art that was prefigured in Kant, and aesthetic experience becomes fully severed from moral and political concerns, from the “praxis of life”—it becomes autonomous precisely because it can no longer influence the course of action of everyday life. The historical avant-garde responds to this splendid isolation by attempting to tear down the very institution of art, Bürger suggests, not just in order to criticize particular forms of art or artistic techniques, but to restructure the whole of society on an artistic basis, all of which must entail a thoroughgoing dismantling of the whole system of taste, aesthetic judgment, disinterest, etc., that had been used to circumscribe the potential of art. But although this attempt to reunite art with life failed, it succeeded in another sense that would have profound consequences for posterity, above all in forcing all subsequent art to locate itself in the wake of this experiment, repeating, analyzing, and re-enacting it in a kind of forever deferred present.

For Bürger, Duchamp’s readymade, the *parole in libertà* and *Wörter-salat* of Futurism and Dada, the posters and photo-montages of the Constructivists as well as the dream-protocols and automatic writing of Surrealism, all lead to nothing more (or less) than the limitless expansion and perpetuation of art as an aesthetic institution. Drawing on the historical model proposed by Marx in *The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, he describes the failure of the historical avant-garde as heroic and tragic, whereas the neo-avantgarde of his own present (somewhat erratically exemplified mainly by different forms of Pop) is nothing less than a parody. The contemporary revolts no longer occur *outside* of and *against* the institution, but *inside* the reassuring framework of these very same institutions, which now are fully developed and able not only to absorb disruptive gestures, but in fact thrives on

them as the very element of their *raison d'être*.<sup>2</sup> In Bürger's version the neo-avantgarde is at best naive, at worst cynical, in its recycling of already recuperated revolutionary gestures. There is no doubt a kind of Hegelian-style quietism in his theory: the task of the future is less the production of new works than a reflection on what has already been done, since the historical break enacted by the avant-garde deprives theoretical work and artistic practice of any productive relation. Neither art nor aesthetic theory seem have any options left but to contemplate their own demise in the increasing leveling and repressive desublimation of late capitalist culture, as when Bürger at the end of his book speaks of the present as a situation characterized by a "limitless availability of means" that places us in a post-historical situation, and asks the alarming question whether "this condition of the availability of all traditions still permits an aesthetic theory at all, in the sense in which aesthetic theory existed from Kant to Adorno [...] Where the formal possibilities have become infinite, not only authentic creation but also its scholarly analysis become correspondingly different. Adorno's notion that late-capitalist society has become so irrational that it may well be that no theory can any longer plumb it applies perhaps with even greater force to post-avant-gardiste art."<sup>3</sup>

In a polemic against these rather pessimistic conclusions, Hal Foster argues that it is because Bürger hypostatizes the historical avant-

2. The theoretical and practical work that has laid claim to the title of "Institutional Theory" is highly divergent, from analytic aesthetics in the wake of George Dickie and Arthur Danto to the radical artistic practices of the 1960s and early '70s, and the analysis of desire and transversality in Félix Guattari; for a recent collection of essays that look into the structure of institutions from a contemporary perspective, see Nina Möntmann (ed.): *Art and Its Institutions. Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006).
3. Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 130 f; English translation by Michael Shaw as *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 94.

garde as a unique and absolute moment that he can situate the present as a merely derivative repetition of one *particular* past attempt to dismantle the autonomy of art, and reduce the posterity of this absolute origin to a mere effect of the omnipotence of institutions that this origin has made possible. If we look more closely at the way in which the history of modernism unfolds, Foster argues, it becomes clear that many of the revolutionary breaks in fact became readable as such, as *origins of the present*, only in retrospect. And Bürger's hypostasis of the historical avant-garde, which mistakes the sequence before-after for the nexus cause-effect, also blinds him, Foster claims, to the way in which the institution "art" was itself rethought and deconstructed within the second avant-garde in the work of artists like Broodthaers, Buren, and Haacke, who in fact developed precisely the kind of radical institutional analysis that Bürger claimed was absent, indeed not even possible, in late modernity.<sup>4</sup> Foster's main piece of evidence is of course Marcel Duchamp (one of whose chief works, *The Large Glass*, suitably bears the subtitle "A Delay in Glass," *un retard en verre*), who becomes the kind of historically decisive "Duchamp" that he is for us through a series of rereadings and reappraisals that took off in the late 1950s and extend up to the present. In this sense nothing is ever fully "there," nothing is given at once together with all of its sense; the law of history is the law of a deferred story where the main protagonists keep changing their position due to the need of the present.

Foster paints this more complex picture by drawing of Freud's conception of "deferred action" (*Nachträglichkeit*), especially as this is (re)interpreted in Lacan's 1964 seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. The traumatic encounter with the Real, Lacan argues, can only be a *missed* encounter; we always arrive too late or too early, and the Real can only be that which returns through repetition. In the same way the trauma caused by the irruption of the avant-garde in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century can only be understood and its sense fully unfolded within the neo-avantgarde. Faced with the objec-

4. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1996), chap. 1.

tion that the modeling of history on consciousness is but all too classic, Foster turns the tables and proposes that we should use this objection as a springboard, and rather conceive of history on the basis of the most radical and sophisticated model of consciousness available, and thus we find Freud and Lacan usurping the place of Hegel.

One may ask just how radical this displacement is, especially given Lacan's dependence on Hegel. In fact, we might find ourselves locked into an inverted dialectic (which of course is Hegel once more), where each new moment is understood as a delayed proxy of another moment, a past reconstructed and "comprehended" (one senses the closeness to Hegel's *Aufhebung* in this word) in repetition. Perhaps we should attempt, *especially* when the idea of the avant-garde is at stake, to experiment with other ideas of time and experience, more radically dissociated from dialectics. If Foster's analysis delivers us from one kind of historicism, it may lead us into another, namely a kind of infinite analysis—which threatened Freud, and was subsequently turned into the very condition of possibility of analysis by Lacan—where we will live in an always displaced present. When we ask the question of the avant-garde in historical retrospective, the answer seems pre-programmed: the "historical" avant-garde is by definition always on its way to exhaustion, even though it may be repeated and resituated, and give rise to diabolically complex forms of reception, "infinite analyses" where the transfer between analyst and patient gives rise to ever new problems. Put in this way, the question opens onto an abyssal complexity—repetitions of repetitions, an originary scene that recedes ever further back while also insisting to be reproduced in the historian's own discourse as the mirage of the origin—but never onto the question of the present, let alone the question of the future.

What could be the avant-garde's relation to time, if we abandon the cumulative time of Bürger, as well as the negative dialectical time of Foster? Other conceivable temporalities could be the time of deprivation and withdrawal, which Jean-François Lyotard has attempted to discern in Kant's theory of the sublime, or something that could be called the time of the *virtual*. This idea was first developed by Gilles Deleuze, partly on the basis of readings of Bergson and Nietzsche, but also going far beyond this original context, and

it has been picked up today as a way of circumventing a *certain type* of historical reflection. The time of the virtual would be that which doubles the present with another untimely time, creating as it were a swarm of divergent microscopic worlds at the fringe of our own, or as John Rajchman puts it: “quite small ‘virtual futures,’ which deviate from things known, inserting the chance of indetermination where there once existed only definite probabilities.”<sup>5</sup> The question of the virtual would bear upon what is set free in a present dissociated from itself, on new modes of thought becoming possible in the blank interstices of the present as it is wrested open not just toward an art historical past, but towards a much more indeterminate field of forces, technologies, and social movements. Thought within the time of such a virtuality, the question of the avant-garde need not be posed within the history of forms or styles, since this is what immediately makes it old and awakens the demon of precursors, or, which amounts to the same, turns it into a quest for the “new” that today belongs to advertising.

A problem with such a re-definition is that the military origin of the very word “avant-garde” has always tended to imply linear conceptions: a troop advancing ahead, going beyond a front line stretched out before us in a terrain that is essentially already known, programming a certain heroic and hysteric idea of sacrifice. As early as in the first century AD, Frontinus in his *Strategemata* established a close connection between warfare and Euclidean geometry that has remained in our imagination.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps we need to think in a different vein, since the logic of war has undergone tremendous changes and no longer relates to surface battles with perceptible front lines, spatially distinct fragments, and accumulations of force—perhaps we should rethink the issue of the avant-garde in terms of the “war in the age of intelligent machine,” as Manuel De

5. John Rajchman, *Constructions* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1998), 9.
6. Frontinus, *Strategemata* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1925). For discussions of the role of spatial systems in Greek warfare, see Jean-Pierre Vernant (ed.): *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Mouton, 1968).

Landa would have it.<sup>7</sup> This would mean to make use of other current models of conflict, where the battlefield is a function of global connections and much of the actual contact takes place over immense distances, dislocalizing the space-time of the experiencing body (as we will see, the writings of Ernst Jünger provide a violent and provocative example of this). Such a space would be a multidimensional one, with other and highly variable geometries, differently organized surfaces, times, and velocities, all overlaid in a new way. It would know no obvious “ahead,” no clear *avant* or *arrière*, since what counts as the terrain is itself a function of strategy.<sup>8</sup> The question would then be whether the very concept “avant-garde” here loses all pertinence, or if something else could be thought in this concept—and on what grounds could we be denied this right? If we suppose that such conceptual connections can be forged, then the sense of directionality would here be very different, just as the connection to the surrounding milieu would require a different permeability and topology. No matter how difficult this is to think, the avant-garde would no longer be thought of as advancing into a terrain ahead of us, abandoning what lies behind it, but as the actualization of a different type of space, perhaps the kind of “smooth” space defined by Deleuze and Guattari in relation to the nomadic war machine, irreducible to the “striated” and sedentary space of the machine of the State.<sup>9</sup>

7. Cf. Manuel de Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), and *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997). Other relevant sources for this discussion would be Paul Virilio, *Vitesse et politique* (Paris: Galilée, 1977), and *Guerre et cinéma: logistique de la perception* (Paris: Ed. de l’Etoile, 1984).
8. For a discussion of contemporary military strategies in these terms, see Eyal Weizman, “Builders and Warriors,” part I and II, in *Site* 11, 2004, and 13-14, 2005.
9. See the discussion in *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), chap. 9 (the nomadic war machine) and 11 (smooth vs. striated space). For discussions of spatiality in Deleuze, cf. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (eds): *Deleuze and Space* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press, 2005).



This reference to the concept of war does not mean that we should give in to some kind of “bellicose” rhetoric, but merely is an attempt to indicate the extent to which the perspective adopted here differs from the one that dominates the debate between Bürger and Foster, and that the question to be pursued here comes *back* to art historical issues only from a certain *outside*. To think the philosophical question of the avant-garde and technology would then imply to see the development of art in its different historical constellations as a way of acting on extra-artistic materials (technologies, social structures), which themselves are in constant mutation. The irruption of the “historical” avant-garde would in this sense not be exhausted by a reading of it as a negative response to the autonomization and solidification of the institution “art” (as Bürger would have it), nor as something that can only come back us from a structure of historical deferral (as in Foster)—two interpretations which in a certain sense already presuppose the meaning of art and of aesthetics as a self-enclosed domain—but rather it must be understood as a way to capture, reconfigure, and prolong *other* movements in society and in thought. Perhaps the autonomy of art lies precisely in its capacity to capture its outside as an *inside*, and inversely. The avant-garde is the name of this transformation, this capture whereby the respective values of the inside (the aesthetic) and the outside (that which is acted upon) both change their meaning. On the basis of such notions, which no doubt need to be defined much more clearly, perhaps another formula ought to be tested: the question is not “what is” or “what was” the avant-garde, but: *what could it become?* If this still involves historical repetition, re-actualization, etc., then we need to think this as a repetition coming from a still undetermined future. As Foster says, we may repeat in order to free us from a present felt to be stagnant, but it should also be added: to free us from both past and present by confronting those unknown power that approach us from the future—as Deleuze would say, the future is not of the order of the *possible*, where actualization takes place in the likeness of the idea or of an already established model, but of the *virtual*, a becoming which doubles history with a stratum of the counter-historical or the untimely.

In the following sections of his chapter I will look more closely

at three such responses, all of which attempt to think the essence of technology in relation to art, but also to politics: Walter Benjamin, Ernst Jünger, and Martin Heidegger. Even though they are worlds apart, especially on the level of explicit political stances, they share some common assumptions, and unearthing these conceptual roots will shed a somewhat different light on this constellation of thoughts. In all of them the project of “destruction” becomes a way to clear a new space and time, to provide the basis for a different experience in which the subject must be rethought in relation to technology, and where another form of collectivity becomes the agency for a transformed conception of politics; and in all of them, this destruction of aesthetic autonomy runs the risk, admittedly in different degrees and conflicting ways, of transforming the space of politics into an aesthetic phenomenon. In this they provide counterpoints to the present, both in a negative and a positive sense, and their capacity as models for reflection is far from exhausted.

Benjamin approaches this problem on the basis of a direct dialog with the artistic avantgarde, and attempts to formulate a positive and affirmative relation to technology, especially photography and cinema, which he sees as emancipatory forces that will deliver humanity from its dependency of myth and magic. On the one hand, this is for Benjamin a decisive and irrevocable step forward that will show us that reality is always something constructed, on the other hand it is a loss of tradition and a flattening of depth that comes to haunt his writings and provide them with a melancholy tone. The new technological media penetrate into the body, restructure its sensory fields, and prepare us for a collective mode of feeling and perceiving that will allow for a direct relation between art and politics, no longer mediated through the deflecting circuit of the “aesthetic.”

Jünger starts from the same problem and reaches similar conclusions, although with completely different political consequences and seemingly without any melancholy dimension. Precisely because of its impact on the very ontology of the subject, technology will indeed not liberate humanity, but rather transform it into a new “type” for which the question of freedom versus subjection makes little sense. For the Worker, a new figure of the will to power situated beyond good and

evil, everything becomes raw material, and all the oppositions that have structured a certain humanist culture—man and machine, organic and technical, but also war and peace, freedom and servitude—are absorbed in a structure of planetary domination, where the individual subject is reduced to, or more accurately, *mobilized* as a cog in a new machine that is at once technical and social. In what might seem like a complete reversal of Benjamin's ideas, but that also prolongs some of them, intensifies them, and draws out things that were merely latent, technical means such as film and photography, instead of being cherished as the tools of disenchantment and liberation, will play a pivotal role in the *subjection of subjectivity*. Art and the aesthetic seems at first hand to play a small part here, but in fact Jünger's technological dystopia not only draws on aesthetic principle in the simple sense, but constitutes and expanded aesthetic that extends over the whole world. The destruction of the aesthetic opens onto an aestheticizing of the world in its totality, in a way similar to many of Nietzsche's proposals from *The Birth of Tragedy* and onwards.

The response given by Heidegger in *The Origin of the Work of Art* seems first to be at odds with both Benjamin and Jünger. When asking the question whether there can be such a thing as "great art" today, Heidegger appears to reject any answer that would involve a productive relation to modernity, not to speak of modernism, and instead return to a fantasy of the bygone days of the ancient Greek temple. On another level he however shares the same starting point as Benjamin of Jünger: it is only through a "destruction" of aesthetics that we can approach the truth of the work of art, which is to establish the space and order of a *world*. In this sense Heidegger fully participates—perhaps against his own will—in the discourse of modernism and the avant-garde: the work, he claims, must be understood as a "thrust" (*Stoss*) that cannot be calculated on the basis of pre-existing canons; it does not depict anything previously existing but makes something new visible (in accordance with Klee's famous formula: to *render visible*, instead of *rendering the visible*); it does not conform to any inherited standards of taste, but in opening the space for its own "preservers" it creates its own tradition and the ground for a "historical humanity" that locates itself as a response to the truth opened up by the work.

*II. Benjamin and the impact of reproduction technology.*

As we noted in the previous chapter, the dialectical tension between the old and the new is at the center of Benjamin's interpretation of Baudelaire, as one of the first to experience the full intrusion of the commodity into the inner space of poetic language. In one of the drafts for the Arcades project, "Paris, Capitol of the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (1935), Benjamin points to the intermingling and interpenetration of old and new, but also to the gap and disjunction that exists inside the new forms, their necessary non-contemporaneity or non-synchronicity. In his excursions through the architectural space of the arcades, the world of the panoramas, the imagery of the world fairs, the bourgeois interiors where the collector creates his home, Baudelaire's depictions of the streets of Paris, and the use of barricades in Haussmann's urbanist project (to cite the general topics outlined in the draft), it is as if time would be separated from itself, be out of joint, although in a *positive* way that frees a new avenue for thought. The gap opened up in the texture of history liberates a retroactive possibility and gives us a distance to the present; it relays a spark from the past to a virtual future by breaking the solidity of the now. In the fantasy aroused by such images of the new, where each epoch sees the images of the following appear before its eyes, "the latter appear as fused together with elements of archaic history (*Urgeschichte*), i.e. of a classless society."<sup>10</sup> The utopian fantasy that Benjamin here sees at work, for instance in Fourier's "phalanstères" (Fourier's most profound motif is the appearance of the *machine*, Benjamin claims, but this is displaced onto a machine-like organization of men, "primitive forms of analogy to the machine in

10. "Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX. Jahrhunderts," in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), V/1, 47. Henceforth cited as *GS*. Benjamin situates these elements in a mythical collective unconscious, which was heavily criticized by Adorno; cf. Adorno's letter from August 2-4, 1935, translated in Adorno and Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, ed. Henri Loniz, transl. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 104-114.

the material of psychology," *ibid*) is precisely this: a reactivation of the archaic in the gaps of the present, a liberation of a hidden energy that can only appear in an interstitial time. History is fundamentally not a temporal *continuum*, but the event of a *fracture*, where each moment opens up both toward the archaic dimension and the messianic promise of redemption, so that the beginning and end come to touch each other outside of the normal course of events. In this sense Benjamin's description of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris becomes an image of the present, a history of the present that attempts to liberate its dormant untimely possibilities, rather than an objective rendering of the past.

As a "disenchantment of the world" the process of rationalization brought about by capitalism delivers us from old myths, but it also breeds new ones, above all a commodity fetishism that underlies the "theological" structure of the commodity analyzed in Marx' *Capital*. Benjamin becomes its sharpest analyst and critic, but in a sense also its epic poet and theologian, and the material magic that he unravels in the world of commodities returns in his own magical materialism, which attempts to read the essence out of the singular fact. It is by descending into the monadic detail of the social universe that we can detect its dialectical contradictions and draw out those lines of force that open its seemingly smooth and unbroken surface. For Benjamin, the fate of art, caught between the demise of an outworn metaphysics of the solitary creator and a new role in the emerging mass societies, is highly symptomatic, and his project is to release the energy hidden inside this transformation and channel it for social and political purposes.

The world of commodities heralded by the arcades, which eventually will find its proper place in the department stores, signals that art enters into the service of the merchant, and this process must be seen as a dialectical step toward a certain *liberation of art from itself*, as it were. The preconditions for the production of these spatial assemblages, Benjamin notes, is the boom of the textile trade, but also the new type of iron construction in which the Empire style saw a renewal of the art of building, although symptomatically enough in terms of a revival in the *ancient Greek* spirit. He points to Bötticher's "The principles of the Hellenic and Germanic ways of building," with its analysis of the conflict between "art-form" (*Kunstform*) and "core-form" (*Kernform*),

and notes that in the arcades we are caught precisely in such a passage between the classical tradition and modern industrial technology. For Bötticher the question of a true modern style can only be answered by a synthesis of the classical and the modern, and there is a definite hope for the restoration of historical continuity, whereas for Benjamin the gap between the two forms points to a situation where the new attempts to break free while the old still holds us in its grip: the present refuses to be born, which gives rise to all these intermediary, dream-like forms that become the starting point for the *Passagen-Werk*. These forms are contradictory, multi-layered historical puzzle pictures (*Vexierbilde*), the “dialectical images” out which Benjamin will weave his powerful account of Paris as the focal point of modernity.<sup>11</sup> But if these images are epistemological models, “monadic” condensations of the historical dialectic, they are also like dreams—dreams from which Benjamin wants us to awaken, and this is at another level what the “passage work,” his *Passagen-Werk* is all about, in a sense akin to the Freudian “working-through (*Durcharbeiten*): to wake up from the past and its phantasmagoric forms, and to take the step into the light of modernity once and for all, to finally become transparent to ourselves (for which the use of glass in architecture could become a powerful symbol, heralding a new kind of “poverty”).

The moment of release from history can be understood in terms of the “destruction” that Benjamin sometimes proposes, for instance in the important “epistemological notes” in the N-section of the *Passagen-Werk*, and which has important affinities to Jünger, and above all to Heidegger. Unlike the historicist quest for continuity and empathy with the past, destruction explodes the continuity (“Aufsprengung der historischen Kontinuität,” I/3, 1242), and is the presupposition

11. The idea of “dialectical image” is itself far from simple, and the above comments only point to one aspect. For a discussion of the different senses of the term, see Ansgar Hillach, “Dialektisches Bild,” in Michael Opitz and Erdmut Wizisla (eds.): *Benjamins Begriffe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), 186-229.

not only for a future “construction” (cf. V/1, 587), but also for the possibility of a genuine “experience.”<sup>12</sup> The concept of destruction is rooted in a philosophy of history that wants to locate a “Messianic” moment, which unlike its *explicit* Heideggerian counterpart is not a liberation *in* but *from* history, in the same way that it violently wrests things and words out of their ordinary contexts in order to “save” them from the immersion in an already constituted signification, so that they once more will be able to speak on their own.<sup>13</sup> Destruction

12. For a discussion of the relation between destruction and experience, see the contributions in Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (eds.): *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (London: Routledge, 1994), and Dag T Andersson's overview, “Destruktion/Konstruktion,” in *Benjamins Begriffe*, 147-183, which traces this idea back to Benjamin's early writings, and especially highlights the fragmenting and redemptive aspect of allegory, and the strategic use of citations in Benjamin's texts; for the idea of salvation, see also Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982). Bernd Stiegler sees the emphasis on destruction/construction in various philosophies of the '20s and '30s as resulting from a reflection on the war and the sense of an emptying out of traditional values: “Benjamin and Jünger are not only united in a struggle against the bourgeoisie. Destruction (*Zerstörung*) is rather a figure for thinking integration. It is an operation and at the same time an object, which allows for the interlinking and connecting of heterogeneous elements. Destruction is a neutral space of transformation and meditation. It always appears in the horizon of a quest for an originarity to be discovered anew.” (Bernd Stiegler, *Die Aufgabe des Namens* [Munich: Fink, 1994], 262).
13. For this argument, see Howard Caygill, “Benjamin, Heidegger and the Destruction of Tradition,” in Benjamin and Osborne, *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy*. This is true as what concerns the idea of *Destruktion* (and its cognate *Abbau*) in Heidegger's work during the '20s, which in fact bears a strong resemblance to Husserl's idea of *Reaktivierung*, i.e., the resuscitating of possibilities buried under traditional interpretations. De-struction

is an essential moment in the “barbaric” quality that Benjamin speaks of in “Erfahrung und Armut,” the new “poverty” that must be understood a positive moment of experience, since it allows us to begin anew from scratch, and forces us to *construct*: “The experience of the poverty leads to barbarians who begin anew; to begin from the new; to construct out of less, and in this neither look right nor left. Among the great creators there has always been the relentless ones that want to clear the table. For they wanted a drawing table, they were constructors.” (II/1, 215) This is for the Benjamin the attitude of Descartes, but also of artists like Klee, Brecht, and Loos who take their cues from the engineer, and always will take the part of the present precisely in its seeming nihilism: “Complete disillusionment with the times, and yet a relentless dedication to it, is their distinguishing mark.” (216) Destruction breaks up the interior, which in itself is a false substitute for what Benjamin sees as an authentic relation between man and things (in some respects similar to the structure of *byt* developed at the same time by Boris Arvatov): the “case-man” (*Etui-Menschen*, IV/1, 398) withdraws into the bourgeois 19<sup>th</sup> century interior and attempts to secure an inner space where everything becomes private and intimate. The “traces” left behind no longer point to a collective, instead they have become reified markers of a sealed-off individuality. Against this false interiority of traces Benjamin opposes the Brechtian

removes the sediments and debris in order to reach the solid ground upon which a fundamental ontology can be constructed, in this sense it partakes of the same logic as the Cartesian and Kantian quest for a foundation for a philosophical architectonic. After the Turn, however, concepts like *Überwindung*, and then *Verwindung*, point to a certain *release* from history (now conceived of as a history of being) in terms of that which “gives” epochality, i.e., the Event of appropriation (*Ereignis*) that appropriates, grants (*ereignet, vereignet, überereignet*) the relation between being and man, and at least in some respects Heidegger here comes close to Benjamin; cf Willem van Reijen *Der Schwarzwald und Paris*, chap. 3-4.



*erasure* (“Verwisch die Spuren!”),<sup>14</sup> a dwelling that does not abide, but cherishes the temporary “housing” (*Hausen*). This is a “destructive living (*zerstörendes Wohnen*), a living that certainly does not let any habits (*Gewohnheiten*) arise, because it continually clears away the things and their supports” (VI, 435 f). To erase the false traces becomes a way to prepare for a new dwelling that is attuned to technology, and enables a different sensory and bodily relation to the world.

In the previous chapter we saw how the element of technical construction for an architectural historian and critic like Sigfried Giedion assumes the role of the “subconscious,” and in his draft Benjamin cites this phrase approvingly, although without mentioning the source (VI/2, 46). This “subconscious” inscription is a result of the encounter between the (classical) architect and the (modern) engineer, where the *École des Beaux-Arts* finds itself displaced by the *École Polytechnique*.<sup>15</sup> For Benjamin this is a highly significant clash

14. The destructive character, removed from psychology, seems to some extent to have been modeled on Brecht’s personality, as when Benjamin speaks of his “destructive character” that immediately “puts into question that which is only just barely attained” (VI, 538).
15. On the Polytechnique, cf. the material assembled in *Das Passagen-Werk*, GS V, 973 ff; for a modern history of the origin of the engineer in Enlightenment architectural theory, see Antoine Picon, *Architectes et ingénieurs au Siècle des lumières* (Paris: Parenthèse, 1988). In the previous chapter we saw how Arvatov fantasized about a future engineer that would become a supreme organizer; the same motif can be found at the beginning of Le Corbusier’s *Vers une architecture* (1923), where he proclaims the “Aesthetic of the Engineer,” which no doubt belongs to a different ideological constellation than Constructivism, and yet shares many of its basic assumptions. Like its Soviet counterparts *Vers une architecture* heralds a new world, where the universal engineer, superseding the historicist architect rooted in the previous century, works in accordance with universal laws (among them “the laws of Economy,” which for Corbusier appear as laws of nature, outside of human

of worlds, since it will be the historical mission of the engineer to liberate us from (traditional, aesthetic) art, just as the sciences once emancipated themselves from philosophy. As we will see, this basic idea also underlies the argument in the 1935 Artwork essay that the new productive forces like photography and film will prove impossible to contain within the relations of production inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e., the collusion between autonomy and commodity form, the reified conception of artistic genius and its profound creative powers, and the whole idea of aesthetic enjoyment as belonging to a private sphere of subjective reflection. A similar argument is clearly staked out the year before in “The Author as Producer,” where Benjamin intervenes in the debate on form vs. content in politically engaged literature. Against a revolutionary-minded literature focusing on a didactic content dressed up in classical forms (as in the *Neue Sachlichkeit* and “Actionism”) as well as the idea that a mere for-

control) and thereby achieves a new harmony. Guided by modernist painting, especially Cubism, which according to Le Corbusier incorporates technology into its inner logic instead of using it as a merely literary representation (the same claim that we earlier saw was made by the Constructivists in relation to the Futurists), the Architect-Engineer deploys basic geometric forms and creates on the basis of a *plan*. The priority of the plan, projected from the inside out both in relation to the individual building and to its founding subjectivity, expresses a necessity of modern life and its demand for mass production, but it also revives the architectonic scheme once formulated by Descartes at the outset of the modern epoch in his *Discours de la méthode* (there are indeed many echoes of a certain “Classical Reason” in Corbusier), where an urban fabric rooted in successive historical overlays is rejected in favor of an absolute projective founding emanating from the zero-point of subjectivity of the Master Planner. Corbusier’s work is no doubt infinitely more complex than this, although on one level it is undeniable that the essence of technology as *Ge-Stell*, in Heidegger’s sense, permeates these statements in an almost abundantly clear way.

mal experimentation in itself will enhance consciousness, Benjamin emphasizes that a truly political literature must take its lead from new technology and its mass-medialized forms, and revolutionize both the forms of production and distribution—it must restructure the whole literary apparatus as such, with all of its subject and object poles.<sup>16</sup> The example he gives is Sergey Tretyakov’s “factographic” writing, the *literatura fakta* that re-functions the literary forms and their mode of circulation in a seemingly non-artistic way—the tragic irony of this (which also, it is true, shows a certain blindness to the vicissitudes of empirical political history on Benjamin’s part, and a predilection for wishful thinking) of course being that Tretyakov and the whole artistic avant-garde with him at the same time were in the process of being banned from any participation in the construction of the new state by the Socialist Realist program recently decreed, and Tretyakov himself would three years later be arrested and executed for espionage.

But it was above all in those art forms that had a more direct relation to technology—photography, cinema, and architecture—that Benjamin located paradigms of new social relations as well as the outlines of a new ontology of the art object as such. If the retrospective descriptions of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris trace the genesis and crisis of a certain bourgeois subjectivity in the newly formed interaction of private and public spaces, and how this was reflected in poetry, Impressionist painting, and in the depths of the bourgeois interior whose privacy forms the

16. Benjamin’s essay can be said to form a kind of involuntary prologue to the debate over realism that started the same year with Lukács’ violent attack on Expressionism (which for him functioned like a shorthand for Modernism in general) in the Moscow exile review *Das Wort*, “Grösse und Verfall’ des Expressionsmus,” and spawned an important exchange with Ernst Bloch. Some of the key texts by Lukacs and Bloch in this debate are translated in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977); for an discussion, see the introduction and Fredric Jameson’s postface in *Aesthetics and Politics*, and Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), chap. 3.

opposite side of commodity fetishism, then the writings on technology and the arts propose something different. In the essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, as Benjamin writes in one of the notes in the *Passagen-Werk*, he attempted “to indicate the precise historical position in the present towards which his historical construction related as if to its vanishing point.” (V/2, 1149). On the one hand, just as his Constructivist predecessors Benjamin imagines a future form of objects attuned to our life, open to new social relations, and which would be produced by a technology that penetrates into the body and restructures its sensory fields. On the other hand, many texts appear to mourn the loss of the depth of experience, the transformation of language into a tool of communication, the fragmentation of historical consciousness, etc. These two sides of Benjamin must be seen as part of a *contradictory whole*, rather than as just two opposing and conflicting psychological tendencies. His scattered notes and essays in this way sketch one of the essential lines of force that leads from the beginnings of Modernism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where art and industrial technology first clashed as two antagonistic forces, to the next phase when their integration seemed to form the basis for a new social order, but they also constitute an attempt to excavate the hidden foundations of this process in all of its ambiguity. The phantasmagoric quality of a split present, disengaging from its past while yet resisting the future, in this sense first of all characterizes Benjamin’s own writings, which become precisely the kind of *Vexierbilde* that he wanted to propose as the result of his archaeology of the recent past.

The key text to the future oriented tendency is of course the essay, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*,<sup>17</sup> which welds

17. The essay exists in three different versions, printed in I/2 (first and third version) and VII/1 (third version); for a discussion of the differences between these versions and the publication history, cf. the editorial remarks in *GS VII/2*, 661-90. English translation by Harry Zohn, in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). Henceforth cited: German/English.

together most of the radical proposals of the period into a powerful and coherent vision, and appears to unequivocally situate itself on the affirmative side. Benjamin's text has been marshaled for many purposes, especially because of its many connections to the current age of information technology, and it has been both cherished as prophetic and rejected as naive and misguided.<sup>18</sup> Its conception of the relation between technology and art, of the ontology of the art object, of the status of spectatorship, and of the mode of circulation of aesthetic objects in a high capitalist culture, still retain an decisive value—and perhaps *especially* so in its aporetic moments, precisely when it for us, situated at the other end of the space of modernity, appears at its most naive.

Benjamin begins by stressing the “prognostic,” even rhetorical force of his text, and the values his analysis might have for practical-political struggles. In one sense the essay makes predictions, but it is also a manual for perception, an instruction book as it were, that teaches us how to detect the way in which important aspects of how we understand works of art, cultural artifacts, and political phenomena, even the very phenomenological qualities of space-time itself, are caught up in a process of change due of the revolutionary upheavals in our technical environment.<sup>19</sup> These changes are brought

18. Implicitly, this will also be an argument against readings of this essay which construe it as a precursor of a postmodernity conceived as the era of the “free-floating signifier” and the reign of simulacra and copies without originals—readings that in my perspective attempt to pacify Benjamin's text by blunting its political edge, and thus obscure the fundamental articulations of its argument. The destruction of authenticity and originality intends to make art political and to force it to partake of everyday life, not to even further remove it from the world of practical affairs.
19. In some passages, Benjamin even seems to imply that this will affect the biological constitution of man. Susan Buck-Morss discusses this in the light of brain physiology and Benjamin's often overlooked adaptation of medical themes, in “Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered,” *October* 62 (Fall 1992).

about, Benjamin claims, by the advent of new *productive forces*, the most important being film and photography. In their restructuring of our experiential modes they fundamentally question the inherited values of creativity and genius, and evacuate the notion of aesthetic value as an interior and hidden quality (concepts whose use is “difficult to control,” Benjamin suggests, and may lead to a “processing of data in the Fascist sense,” I/2, 473/212). Mechanical reproduction exorcises humanism, and with it the whole of aesthetic culture as it was perfected in late 19<sup>th</sup> century symbolism and doctrines of *l’art pour l’art*.

In the second version of the essay Benjamin also analyzes this shift in terms of a transformation of our domination over nature, which gives an important twist to his argument. The origin of art and technology lies in the sphere of *magic*, which orients and guides our actions, and endows the beholder with a certain power. The first technology belongs to *rituals*, and it “puts man at stake” (*einsetzt*): “The technical great deed of the first technology is undoubtedly human sacrifice” (VII/1, 359), which for Benjamin also, and somewhat enigmatically, not only points to the violence but also the temporal structure, i.e., the *singularity* (*Einmaligkeit*) of the event. In contradistinction, the “second technology” (*zweite Technik*) avoids this sacrificial use of men (its greatest achievement is the “remote-controlled airplane that needs no crew,” *ibid*) and severs the link to the unique moment, and instead it takes us into the sphere of repetition, of the “Einmal ist keinmal” (*ibid*) where the experiment and the method of testing always assume a series of cases, a “tireless variation of the set-up of the experiment” (*ibid*). The second technology creates a distance to nature, it breaks with the mythical world, but Benjamin also adds another aspect when he proposes that the origin of this second technology lies in the category of “play” (*Spiel*), as a mediation between the first and the second moment. Play is connected to the pleasure gained in repeating, and thus also in a certain way to control, but above all to the “interplay” (*Zusammenspiel*) of nature and man, and in this respect it relates back to the magic quality of the first moment. *Both* of these belong to art: “Seriousness and play, strictness and unboundedness, appear in every work of art as intertwined” (*ibid*). Domination and play belong together, but the ritual and magic dimension is realized in second tech-

nology in such a way that the two phases appear as opposed. The intrusion of a second technology destroys the uniqueness of the object, but in this, Benjamin concludes, there is also an “immense gain in *Zeit-Spielraum*” (369), i.e., a new freedom in its relation to nature.

This magic origin of art also comes across in Benjamin’s theory of mimesis, as the medium in which art negotiates its relation to appearance (*Schein*) and play, and here the development of modernity appears more like a tragic *loss* of experiential depth. Mimesis, Benjamin says, is the “originary phenomenon (*Urphänomenon*) of all artistic activity, for the one who imitates does what he does only in an apparent way” (368, note 10). Language in the normal sense is only a fallen version of an originary Adamitic language of “naming,” where mimesis held sway, and traces of this remain in all linguistic usage. The mimetic “faculty” (*Vermögen*) is based on identification and similarity as the very “organon of experience,” as he says in the first notes to the *Passagen-Werk* (V/2, 1038), although it is becoming overtaken by a technicized and rationalist interpretation of language, and for us moderns only exists as a trace.<sup>20</sup>

The most famous argument in the text, which deals with the notion of “aura” as the essential aspect of the traditional work that disappears in mechanical reproduction, also contains references to this “mimetic” and magic origin of art, although now in the sense of a mythical di-

20. See “Über das mimetische Vermögen” (1933, IV/1). Benjamin’s philosophy of language is indeed maze-like, and often seems to counteract many of the theses put forth in those writings that take a more Constructivist stance on literature, for instance the essays on Brecht and “The Author as Producer.” For a discussion, see Rainer Rochlitz, *Le désenchantement de l’art. La philosophie de Walter Benjamin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 19-58, Winfried Menninghaus, *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), Michael Opitz, “Ähnlichkeit,” and Michael Bröcker, “Sprache,” in Opitz and Wizisla (eds.): *Benjamins Begriffe*, 15-49, and 740-73.

mension that must be overcome.<sup>21</sup> In the Artwork essay aura is defined as the authority and singularity of the original, but Benjamin adds an analogy to the aura of “natural objects,” which points to a more profound dimension: an *interior, singular, and unique distance* impossible to abolish by any physical proximity, “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be” (“*einmalige* Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein Mag,” I/2, 441). In one sense this points to the transcendence of the work over and above its material incarnation, the fact that it belonging to a realm of “aesthetic objects” by being removed from ordinary space-time, but it also relates back to the *Einmaligkeit* of ritual and sacrificial events, and to the magic origin of art.

This aura cannot survive the act of reproduction, which in modernity has been inscribed into the very structure of the object—immediately in cinema and photography, in a mediate way in the other arts, who find themselves drawn into the force field of the first two, so that they will more and more tend to appear as reproduced already from the outset. Things now come closer and they appear more similar, Benjamin argues, in a process that prepares the artwork for mass consumption.

This severs the object from its traditional context in a process that is equally destructive and liberating. Benjamin speaks rather brutally of a “liquidation” (*Liquidation*) of the tradition,<sup>22</sup> although this

21. The concept of “aura” in Benjamin is just as complex and highly stratified as the “dialectical image,” and the remarks here only relate to the use of the term in the Artwork essay; for an overview of the terms different senses, see Josef Fürnkäs, “Aura,” in Opitz and Wizisla (eds.): *Benjamins Begriffe*, 95-147.
22. This brutal vocabulary is no coincidence, and it can be found throughout Benjamin’s writings, which in fact contain a rich array of such “destructive terms” that are not only limited to the sphere of aesthetics: *Liquidierung*, *Zertrümmerung*, *Zerstörung*, *Verwischung*, *Zerstörung*, *Vernichtung*, etc. For an overview, see Dag T Andersson, “Destruktion/Konstruktion,” 183. The fascination with a kind of divine and extra-legal vio-



for him in fact promises an emancipation from the burden of an oppressive history. The aesthetic work of art in its insistent uniqueness and “once-upon-a-timeness” (*Einmaligkeit*) originated in a secularization of the religious cult object (and as we saw, in the second version even in magic), and in the guise of an ersatz fetish its development was perfected in Symbolism. The paradigm case of this would be Mallarmé’s at once sacral and formalist poetics, where secular officiates are to read aloud from the great Book so as to regenerate the world on the basis of an art this is nonetheless entirely pure, that goes beyond the world by being altogether Word, as it were. This residual ritual dimension now disappears in the era of reproduction, where there is no more transcendence or mystery, only what Benjamin, perhaps somewhat misleadingly, calls the “exhibition value” (*Ausstellungswert*). This seems at once to refer to the work as commodity (for instance in world exhibitions or world fairs, although magic indeed returns here in the guise of fetishism and phantasmagoria) and to the work’s capacity to communicate and enter into the fabric of social life.<sup>23</sup> Divested of its cult value, the work of art steps out of

lence in Benjamin, from “Zur Kritik der Gewalt” (1921) and onwards, and which links him to Carl Schmitt, has been interpreted differently; see for instance Giorgio Agamben’s positive appraisal in *Stato di eccezione* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003), and Jacques Derrida’s critical remarks in *Force de loi* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).

23. Benjamin explains the term by reference to the development of cult objects in religion, who become more accessible as they are put on display, and not directly in terms of institutions like museums: “With the emancipation of singular artistic practices from the womb of ritual, the opportunities for exhibiting their products increased” (VII/2, 358). Benjamin gives the example of a portrait bust vs. a fixed statue of a god, and an easel painting vs. a fresco painting. In modernity the relation between the two poles (cult value and exhibition value) has been fundamentally reversed, he suggests, and cinema is the art which makes possible the highest and most intense “confrontation with the archaic phase” (*Urzeit*) of art (*ibid*).

the aesthetic sphere, and this loss of autonomy renders it useful for new purposes, which for Benjamin means agitation and the active shaping of communal life.

The intrusion of technology and reproduction also shifts the position of the producer and the consumer. In cinema the distancing built into the productive apparatus encourages the spectator to “test” the actor, and identification occurs only through the technological mediation. The actor is estranged (*verfremdet*) from himself, since his performance is broken up into a series of discrete moments. The traditional painter relates to the filmmaker as the magician does to the surgeon: the first employs magic charm and *actio in distans* to release the inner essence of the object, the second penetrates the object in order to decompose it in a series of analytical operations. The new analysis of movement and social space made possible in cinema in fact renders it analogous to psychoanalysis—and Benjamin famously speaks of an “optical unconscious” (“The camera introduces us to the optical unconscious (*Optisch-Unbewußten*) as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.” I/2, 500/230, transl. modified)—where the seemingly marginal slips in our discourse are brought to attention.

This makes film absolutely opposite to theater, Benjamin claims, where we project ourselves onto the stage as if we were following real events. In cinema, the actor loses his own aura, a loss countered by the creation of a screen “personality” and movie stardom; but this, Benjamin claims, are but the vain and reactive attempts of capitalism to reinterpret the new modes of production on the basis of outmoded production relations, and as such they are doomed to fail. The proper utopian quality in cinema resides in the fact that anybody can lay claim to be filmed today (as in Eisenstein’s films, which here constitute the paradigm, where everyday people act as themselves), just as the distinction between reader and writer is gradually becoming obliterated in the development of the press, especially the “letters to the editor” section where reception immediately may change into the production of a new text.

This quality makes the new media more accessible to a mass audience. Painting was never able to organize a mass experience,

and remains locked within the orbit of a single individual and his contemplative stance in front of the work—its very phenomenology seems to perpetuate the status of the religious fetish. The new works, on the other hand, should be experienced in a form of “distraction” (*Zerstreuung*) and not in a contemplative attitude. This distraction, Benjamin claims, has long since been predominant in architecture, which focuses on an impure and tactile experience instead of a purely optical one, and on the insertion of the work into a social praxis from which it can never be detached as an isolated item for aesthetic contemplation. The new art, Benjamin says, arises immediately out of, and reflects back upon, the urban masses, and in this respect it has a direct political significance.

This not only makes the new media into a highly *efficient* political instrument, but also, and this is the most risky and tenuous point in his argument, into an instrument whose very technological structure seems to render it *inherently* progressive. This is why Benjamin in the final section of his text can display such a surprising confidence and claim that when Fascism seeks to *aestheticize* political life and finally to understand the destruction of mankind as an auratic phenomenon, then Communism can respond by *politicizing* art, as if the success of such a displacement would be somehow guaranteed by the very structure of media. This politicizing of art takes place by way of the new progressive technologies in their instrumentality, whereas the Fascist aestheticization takes place by an interpretation of society as a whole on the basis of 19th century aestheticism, which *rejects* technology, so the argument goes.

It is difficult to assess Benjamin’s claims on this point: should they be understood as mere wishful thinking that disregards the empirical realities of political propaganda? Fascism was indeed already at this time highly successful in using both photography and film to propagate its ideology, and the divide Benjamin wants to create simply did not exist (as is testified for instance by Riefensthal’s admiration for Eisenstein, whose work she studied carefully before producing her own films). In the next section Ernst Jünger will provide us with a counter-image to Benjamin’s optimism, in his comments on the use of photography and film as a new kind of political weapons, in a se-

ries of texts written slightly before Benjamin's essay.<sup>24</sup> But Benjamin's interpretation, full of fantasy projections as it may be, is in fact less a description than, as we stated initially, a "manual for perception": it wants to release the new art forms from an interpretation that is all too close, all too obvious, and it is situated at a historical juncture where the future was not yet decided. Their utopian energy derives from this projective strategy, but also their blindness to the present.

From the vantage point of the contemporary situation, there is no denying that both cinema and photography have been invested with those very values of cult and auratic experience that they were supposed to dislodge. Benjamin's claims that cinema renders identification impossible because of its status as a technological apparatus, seems impossible to uphold after Hollywood and the emergence of a modern visual culture.<sup>25</sup> The kind of hyper-commercial visuality that forms the

24. This of course extends to Soviet art and culture too, of which Benjamin seems equally oblivious at the time of his writing of the *Reproduction* essay. Boris Groys, in his *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin*, proposes that Communism under Stalin soon was transformed into one gigantic aesthetic spectacle, transferred to the level of a post-historical montage that was more radical in its overcoming of 19<sup>th</sup> century artistic categories than the excommunicated avant-garde itself ever was. Social realism was in this sense a truly avantgarde art, in tearing down the barrier between aesthetic production and life, although it did not achieve this by a destruction of the aura, but by a radical re-functioning of bourgeois art forms, such as figurative painting and the realist novel.
25. In fact, the very notion of the "cinematic apparatus," as it has been theorized by Jean-Louis Baudry, Stephen Heath, Laura Mulvey, Terese de Lauretis and many others, has been used to describe the infinitely powerful mechanisms of identification which lie at the basis of modern cinema precisely as a *production of subjectivity* in and as *ideology*; cf. for instance Heath and de Lauretis (eds): *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980). One of the few to continue Benjamin's project, and to understand film as a radical construction of new sensorial fields

basis of late capitalist experience was indeed unthinkable for Benjamin. Ironically enough, it would be possible to argue that no media are *less* estranging, reflexive, and emancipatory than film and photography in their current commercial use, which is perhaps also why they are constantly being re-functioned and re-appropriated in the art world, as if to retrieve a potential dormant in them. The fact remains that their popular and “vernacular” uses, which was what attracted Benjamin and *not* their potentials within a sophisticated high-brow art context, are by no means as such emancipatory or demystifying, rather the opposite. The legitimate claims of Everyone to be filmed has been transformed into Warhol’s “fifteen minutes of fame,” whose recent avatars return in constantly new guises, a transition which in its historical irony embodies the whole dialectic of historical avant-garde claims and their ironic and/or cynical actualizations in current media and culture industry.

If cinema and photography in their current mainstream uses seem to have lost the potential that Benjamin ascribed to them, then this potential seems to have been displaced onto various computer-based media, whose possible effect on the status of art and artistic production produce the same type of indeterminacy as once did the revolutionary technologies of the second machine age. At least some time ago (the immediate past indeed seems to recede from us more quickly than ever before) revolutionary claims were being made on behalf of digital image technologies, often involving a kind of active historical forgetfulness in relation to their historical predecessors. Three crucial issues seem to be involved here, all of which position the present as a repetition and retrieval of the “Benjaminian” moment:

1. *The transformation of perception.* Even more than in cinema or photography, the bodily sensorium is divested of its depth when transferred into informational space. Things come closer, they enter into a

and space-times beyond subjectivity, and as an active resistance to the present, is Gilles Deleuze, with his two books on *L'image-mouvement* and *L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1983 and 1985); on Deleuze and cinema, see also “Images of Philosophy” above.

sphere of manipulability, and as we move from the cinematic screen to the computer screen the loss of aura seems only to have accelerated. In the age of electronic media, there is a general “sitelessness” of the work (of art, but eventually other forms of work as well), which now—at least in its more apocalyptic versions—is conceived of only as a bundle of information in electronic memory storage. For Benjamin this de-auratization contained a cathartic moment, a liberation from the burden of history. Today, this burden is since long gone, and to reconnect to history as the very medium of critical reflection (a history that also must include Benjamin’s own visions), seems crucial. The re-entry of the body, the contingent, and the site-specific perhaps harbors an anxiety over the loss of “experience” in a medialized world. This loss, theorized—and as we have seen often cherished—by Benjamin as the victory of “Erlebnis” over an old-fashioned dialectical “Erfahrung,” constitutes one of the basic tenets of current information technology as global ideology and entertainment industry.

2. *The utopia of communication.* The capacity to organize mass consumption is now realized even more efficiently than in film and photography, and in electronic space a potentially infinite audience can be reached in a split second, and at the same time they revert back to the non-sociality of the painterly paradigm, denounced by Benjamin: each one of us is alone in front of the screen. Some current sociology wrestles with precisely these issues, and the notion of a “net community,” if it ever would be installed in any real and effective way, will be hard if not impossible to understand on the basis of older distinctions of private and public space. The consequences of this for politics and democracy are still unforeseeable, especially since the virtual community is likely to be transformed into a corporate mediascape in the near future. The rhetoric of anarchism seems in fact to be a typical preparatory stage, the followed by a higher order of domination within the “societies of control,” as diagnosed by Deleuze.<sup>26</sup>

26. See his “Postscriptum sur les sociétés de controle,” in *Pourparlers* (Paris: Minuit, 1990). This short essay, written in 1990 as a kind of afterthought

3. *The dissolution of the producer/consumer paradigm.* It is easy today to ridicule Benjamin's somewhat naive conception of "letters to the editor" as the new form of generalized writing that would supersede literary writing in the old sense. Yet new communicative spaces in which the distinction between reading and writing would be obliterated are continually being launched, one obvious case being the key word "interactivity" that today has almost fully displaced the old catchword "intertextuality" (which today spells "hyper-textuality"). The ensuing repositioning of authorship, legally, psychologically and epistemologically, is well underway, as is the rethinking of the category "text" itself. The concept of writing, the general *gramme* that Derrida proposed as the horizon of a culture in which the *essence of technology* (in Heidegger's sense, to which we will come back) begins to reveal itself, is perhaps only today beginning to be realized.<sup>27</sup>

to the monograph on Foucault (1986), points to the emergence of the "dividual," who displaces the "individual," and to the fact the Panopticon as a system for monitoring each individual from a central location at least since the Second World War has been replaced by a fragmented system, where universal modulation replaces the central function. This entails a molecularization of power, and the older ideas of resistance as nomadism and lines of flight now seem to be part of the system itself. The question of power and resistance has become much more complex, since the nomadic concepts that once could be pitted against the "State-form" have become identical with the infinite modulation that succeeds the State in a deterritorialized multinational Capital. As Paul Virilio suggests, control in a free space replaces closed and segmentary systems, and the old disciplines (school, hospital, factory, prison) enter into a crisis. The new system does not enclose and create rigid boundaries, it is rather like a sieve that shifts constantly, and the dividuals appear as constantly shifting and undulating wave-forms, and no longer as discrete entities. Control is fast, modulating, and unbounded, whereas discipline was extended, infinite, and discontinuous.

27. Cf. for instance Derrida's early comments in *Of Grammatology*, transl.

Using Benjamin's text in order to create a counterpoint to our contemporary technological fantasy as well as to provide it with a genealogy might run the risk of diluting our perception of the present and its possibilities rather than sharpening it, since it reads the present in terms of a *repetition* of the past. And in relation to Benjamin, this undertaking on one level means to rehearse the critique already put to him by Adorno in a famous letter commenting upon the Artwork essay.<sup>28</sup> Against the immediate revocation of the artwork's use value Adorno proposes that the reification inherent in the traditional art work in its separation from the immediacy of life should not be seen just as a loss or deprivation, but more fundamentally as a necessary condition for its capacity to resist society and attain a certain transcendence in relation to the actual world, which is the very precondition for its capacity to act as a *critique*. It is just as "bourgeois," Adorno claims, to deny the reification of the subject in cinema (the aura of the theater actor that disappears in the technical dimension of montage), as it is naïve and all too hasty—"it would border on anarchism," Adorno says (129)—to deny the reification of the autonomous work in favor of an immediate use, i.e., an art that would lay claim to direct invention in the praxis of life. There is indeed for Adorno too an essential disenchantment of the aesthetic moment that occurs through the advance of technique, but the difference is that this has to be understood precisely as an *artistic* technique, in terms of the immanent laws of construction for the work itself. Mallarmé's poetic materialism, which shows us that poetry is made of words, as well

Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998), 8 f. The "program" here outlined by Derrida has been followed up on a grand scale by Bernard Stiegler, most notably in his *La technique et le temps 2* (Paris: Galilée, 1996). See also his condensed statement in "Hypomnemata and grammatisation," in Joseph Backstein, Daniel Birnbaum, and Sven-Olov Wallenstein (eds.): *Thinking Worlds* (under publication, 2007).

28. Letter from March 18, 1936, in *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*. The following citations with pagination from the same source.



as Schönberg's serial method of composing that imposes a seemingly foreign set of "objective" parameters on the composer's subjectivity, dissolve the traditional idea of creation as a mystical act much more efficiently than the practices of the feuilleton writer or the industrial division of labor in the movies, whose disenchanting effects Adorno sees as vastly exaggerated. "I cannot express my feelings about the entire piece more clearly than by telling you how much I would like to see a study of Mallarmé precisely as a counter-point to this essay" (128), Adorno says, which means that it is only when *l'art pour l'art* is seen as essentially related to popular art, as its *precise and determined other*, that we can understand the dialectical totality as a contradictory whole. The aura is broken down just as much in the autonomous work as in the art of mass consumption, but in the first case because of an inner, formal development, in the second because of external demands, and reification is neither simply a loss or a gain, *but both of them at once*. The two extremes, autonomous and popular art, touch each other, but only if they are credited with the same dialectical value, whereas Benjamin appears to simply reject one of them as if were, in Adorno's expression, "counter-revolutionary" (ibid). And, he continues, it would be a bourgeois or a proletarian romanticism, but in both cases a romanticism, to opt exclusively for one of the two versions. In a famous and often cited phrase Adorno summarizes his critique of Benjamin's dream to directly transform art to life, when he of the respective works of the avant-garde and mass culture claims they both "bear the stigmata of capitalism, both contain elements of change... Both are torn halves of an integral freedom, to which, however, they do not add up" ("Beide tragen die Wundmale des Kapitalismus, beide enthalten Elemente der Veränderung... beide sind die auseinandergerissenen Hälften der ganzen Freiheit, die doch aus ihnen nicht sich zusammenaddieren lässt") (130). The true is not the whole (a figure that Adorno will constantly elaborate up to his dense formula in *Negative Dialectics*: "The whole is the untrue") but the *whole as differing from itself*, split in two halves that can just as little be reconciled as one of them can be simply discarded.

Against a certain technological futurism and romanticism of the unmediated and the spontaneous, which undoubtedly characterizes

Benjamin's essay, Adorno's criticism remains in full force even today. In the following two sections I will however attempt to do something else, namely to read Benjamin's theory in a somewhat different optic, and confront it first with the Ernst Jünger's writings on the impact of technology, to which they occasionally bear an uncanny resemblance, and then with Heidegger's meditations on the ontology of the work of art. Perhaps, then, we may be see that Benjamin's problems has less to do with just a naiveté than with the fact that it opens a space of questioning that must remain open for a long time to come, and that the intrusion of technology produces a kind of indeterminacy that will allow for many different answers.

### *III. The Worker in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

In Ernst Jünger's writings from the early '30s we encounter another radical response to technology, above all in *Der Arbeiter* (1932), but also in several other essays from the same period, such as "Die totale Mobilmachung" (1930) and "Über den Schmerz" (1934), and in a different form in the two collections of photographs that were published as *Der gefährliche Augenblick* (1931) and *Die veränderte Welt* (1933). In these texts Jünger develops a violent Nietzschean reading of technology as the latest form of a planetary will to power, which will sweep all historical systems of values and ideals aside, and fundamentally restructure the whole of existence. In this he both comes close to and constitutes a counterpoint to the views of Benjamin and Heidegger: he draws out some of the consequences of Benjamin's view while wholly subverting their political significance, whereas he for Heidegger is someone who provides a fundamental insight in the world which will come (and whose basic features are already in place), unless we succeed in making the "turn" away from the at once Platonic and Nietzschean metaphysics that comes to its fulfillment in the Gestalt of Jünger's Worker.

Jünger's earlier ideas were fundamentally modified in later reflections, such as the "Adnoten zum Arbeiter," written over a long period of time but only published in 1978 in the edition of the collected works, and in *An der Zeitmauer* (1959), where he, likely under the influence of various critiques leveled at his earlier positions, develops a more

“spiritual” and less affirmatively nihilist position.<sup>29</sup> The philosophically most far-reaching and probing of these critical interpretations can be found in Martin Heidegger’s essay “Zur Seinsfrage,” initially published in 1953 as a response to Jünger’s essay “Über die Linie” from 1950, but to a large extent also based on a critical reading of *Der Arbeiter* and Jünger’s work from the 30s. For the Heidegger of *The Origin of the Work of Art*, who will hold our attention in the next section of this chapter, the vocabulary of violence and heroism in Jünger exerts a definitive although ambivalent fascination, although the link is never made explicit. But already in the late ‘30s, and unambiguously so in Heidegger’s postwar thought, the position developed by Jünger comes to portrayed as the *culmination* of an active nihilism, but by no means as its *overcoming*; it is the apex of modernity as a will to power fueled by technology, although it fails to understand this in terms of the history of metaphysics, and just as Nietzsche’s philosophy of will to power it must be traversed and thought through from the other side if we are to grasp the essence of technology (the *Ge-Stell*) as a conjunction of the ultimate danger *and* the saving power.<sup>30</sup> I will come back

29. Jünger’s later ideas fall outside of the scope of the my theme here; for a discussion, see Peter Koslowski, *Der Mythos der Moderne. Die dichterische Philosophie Ernst Jüngers* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1991).

30. For recent discussions about this exchange, see Martin Meyer, *Ernst Jünger* (Munich: Hanser Verlag, 1990), 468 ff; Peter Koslowski, *Der Mythos der Moderne*, 150 ff; Michael Zimmerman, “Ontological Aestheticism: Heidegger, Jünger, and National Socialism,” in Joseph Margolis and Tom Rockmore (eds): *The Heidegger Case* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), and *Heidegger’s Confrontation With Modernity*, chap. 5-6; Massimo Cacciari, “Dialogues sur le terme. Jünger et Heidegger,” in *Drän. Méridiens de la décision dans la pensée contemporaine*, transl. Michel Valensi (Paris: Éclat, 1992), chap. 2. Heidegger’s own notes from the 30s have also recently been published as vol. 90 in the fourth section of the *Gesamtausgabe, Zu Ernst Jünger* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2004), and they show clearly that Heidegger from the

to Heidegger's later critical retrieval of Jünger's views on technology, nihilism, and modernity in the next chapter, and here limit myself to a discussion of Jünger's own conception of technology in *Der Arbeiter* and the writings from this period.

Jünger's ideas can and have often been directly derived from the immediate ideological context of the tense political debates in the Weimar 1920s and '30s and the German post-Versailles trauma, which makes them into merely a symptom of a national culture in crisis, but it is also possible to adopt a more general perspective within which his writings can be seen to share a set of presuppositions linking him with a historico-philosophical debate that extends over the whole political and geographical spectrum. Extracting this set of theoretical presuppositions in order to locate Jünger's place within a broader historico-philosophical conjuncture will shift the focus from the discussion of his relation to National Socialism, which is not intended as a defense or an acquittal, but rather as a way to grasp a set of common features in the debate on technology through analyzing one of its most extreme cases. In this respect the kind of synthesis of Futurism and Constructivism that Jünger's work proposes discloses in the most violent possible way a dark and threatening underside of modernism that cannot be defined away as a mere regression or an aberration, but has to be thought and worked through as forming part of a larger, complex, and contradictory unity. In the perspective adopted here, this also means to locate his Jünger's writings in the wake of the debates in the arts and architecture, since his political conceptions to a great extent can be understood as part of an avant-garde aesthetic, both in the sense that they imply that the new political order should be understood as an aesthetic one, and that one of his formative influences comes from the experiences of the artistic avant-garde in the two preceding decades. In an eerie way, Jünger's writings from the '30s spell out some of the most radical and unset-

start understood Jünger's position as philosophically shallow and untenable, although formidable as a *symptom* of the epoch of nihilism.

ting conclusions of the art-politics nexus, and this is what turns him almost into a mirror image of Benjamin.

Interpreted within the framework of the author's personal development, the texts from the '30s could be read as the summit of a development beginning with the 1920 work *In Stahlgewittern*, a novel in diary form based on the experience in the trenches of the First World War. On one level the book narrates the experiences of the soldier-warrior, whose initial enthusiasm is tempered by the harsh reality of warfare, and it provides an account in chilling detail of all its dehumanizing effects; on the other hand the war for Jünger remains a decisive event because it opens up a new historical epoch, and not only due to its material effects, but also because it extends out into a transpersonal and mythical dimension, where different forms of humanity can be seen to succeed each other. In this sense the war was the process in which a new Gestalt, which Jünger later would describe as the Worker, gradually displaced the warrior as the figure of individual courage and bravery. Looking back in 1984 on this course of events he notes that "the real front lines cut transversally through the positions, and we no longer had to do with a war in the Homeric or 19<sup>th</sup> century sense of the word."<sup>31</sup> Evolving from the pitched battle in the old style, through the positional war and the material battle, and finally into the mechanized battle, this process of *consumption forte* (an expression from Napoleon that Jünger makes into his own) of human lives and resources eventually attains a total character, where the all-pervasive presence of technology signals an era in which the individual is doomed to disappear.

This destruction of individuality does however not lead to the simple disappearance of experience, but rather to a different type of subject that relates to the intensification in terms of an "inner experience (*inneres Erlebnis*), and becomes capable of understanding itself as the subject and agent of the process: "But who in this war only experiences nega-

31. *Autor und Autorschaft*, in *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978-1983), vol 13, 469. Henceforth cited as *SW* with volume and pagination.

tion, only inherent suffering and not affirmation, the higher movement, he has experienced it as a slave. He has no inner, but only an external experience."<sup>32</sup> Inner experience does not denote a withdrawal into a subjective space, but that which opens the individual up to a different order of perception and reality endowed with almost mystical qualities, where the individual exists only in order to be transcended.

The energy unleashed by the war belongs to what Jünger calls a "total mobilization" of all energies and resources, technical as well as human, which is obscured by the interpretation of the war as a fight between ideological systems, between the morally just and unjust, or between civilized and non-civilized (which for him becomes the basis for what he sees as the hypocritical condemnation of Germany after the end of the war, and which gives rise to a sense of injustice that was to feed directly into the anti-"Western" and anti-"liberal" rhetoric). Beneath the mask of civilization and reason another process occurs that has to do with the gradual unfolding of the will to power, which draws the whole of society into a total effort. Germany's defeat was for Jünger less the result of a moral inferiority, and more of the fact that as a monarchy it was incapable of total mobilizing (due to the fear of

32. *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, SW 5, 107. The theme of "limit-situation" (*Grenzsituation*) first appears in Karl Jaspers's *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919), where it denotes certain moments where the finitude, and thus the totality, of experience, are revealed to us, and has since then had a long career. The idea of an "inner experience" as a certain kind of limit also appears in a significant way in Georges Bataille, whose *L'expérience intérieure*, written during the second world war and Bataille's travels throughout France, records a similar experience of absolute nihilism and catastrophe (in Bataille's case symbolized by the impossibility of the Hegelian system as the peak of Enlightenment rationality and belief in progress), which opens onto a new relation to death and nothingness. For Bataille this "inner experience" is essentially connected to the idea of sovereignty as the capacity of accepting irrecoverable losses, which he (via his reading of Nietzsche) opposes to Hegelian dialectics.

rebellion), whereas the Western liberal democracies were able to draw their resources from the population as a whole. The total war no longer knows any limits between soldiers and civilians: “The squadron leader who in his nightly aloofness orders a bomb attack knows no difference between fighters and non-fighters, and the deadly gas cloud extends like an element over all living beings. The possibility of such a threat presupposes neither a partial nor a general, but a general mobilization that even extends to the child in the cradle.”<sup>33</sup> Mobilization creates a new type of society, it blurs the distinction between private and public, political and non-political sectors, and it proposes the absolute primacy of the political as the element of radical decisions.<sup>34</sup>

The conclusion Jünger draws from the defeat in the war is the need for modernization, and for a mobilization that would no longer leave any part of society untouched, and that will have to discard the values of liberalism as well as of the old Wilhelmine Germany: “this means for us that we have to lose the lost war to the end, it means the consequent carrying out of a nihilistic act all the way to its necessary end. Since long we march toward a magical zero point, which only he who has other invisible sources of power at his disposal can pass beyond.”<sup>35</sup> The will to power is the will to total mobilization, which is the true meaning of that which appears in the guise of reason and progress, and only those who are able to assume this task to the fullest extent will control of the future, where the Worker takes the place of the Warrior.

33. “Die Totale Mobilmachung,” *SW* 7, 128.

34. Similar arguments were also put forth by Carl Schmitt in his *Der Begriff des Politischen* (1932) and his distinction between friend and foe. For Schmitt it is however a question of saving a certain existential truth in politics from the kind of automatization and technological reason that he finds in modern liberalism; for Jünger this technological force that absorbs the individual *itself* becomes an existential truth. The decisive analysis of decisionism in Jünger, Schmitt, and Heidegger is still Christian von Krockow, *Die Entscheidung* (Stuttgart, 1958).

35. *Das abenteuerliche Herz*, first version from 1929, *SW* 9, 134 f.

To take the step beyond this zero point will be the task of Jünger's 1932 treatise *Der Arbeiter*. On several levels this is indeed a terrifying text, especially if read in the light of what was to follow. Some have understood it as a straightforward Nazi manifesto, or even as a radicalization of Nazism,<sup>36</sup> others as a dystopia, or as a neutral description of an inevitable future social order. These shifting and conflictual evaluations all stem from the neutrality and detachment of the text, its Nietzschean "pathos of distance," although the author on many occasions shifts into a violent anti-bourgeois and national-revolutionary rhetoric. The emphasis lies on a certain art of seeing and an "optics" that occasionally appears as if projected from an extra-terrestrial position, a "lunar distance"<sup>37</sup> ensuring that all human, all-too-human values will have been evacuated from the text.

36. So for instance Jost Hermand, "Explosions in the Swamp: Jünger's *Worker*," in de Teresa de Lauretis, Andreas Huyssen, and Kathleen Woodward (eds.): *The Technological Imagination* (Madison: Coda Press, 1980). In fact, Hermand claims, "Jünger's ideology was more merciless, more bestial, and more Nietzschean than that of the Nazis, for he was openly steering towards chaos and end of the world—with the help of the most modern system of weapons." Jünger's aristocratic aloofness in 1933, Hermand continues, is explained by the fact that he "had hoped for worse things." (130)
37. The position *sub specie aeternitatis* is first explicitly formulated in "Sizilischer Brief an den Mann im Mond" (1930). From this altitude, Jünger claims, "a common crystalline structure" appears, which otherwise would be invisible to those too close to current affairs (*SW* 9, 19). The expression "lunar distance" stems from Martin Meyer's commentary on these passages, *Ernst Jünger*, 229 ff. The whole of chapter IV in Meyer's study is devoted to the notion of "aesthetic distance," which he ultimately derives from the tradition of Romanticism, cf. 285-89. The most thorough study Jünger's relation to the romantic and modernist literary tradition is Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens. Die pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1978).



The analyses of total mobilization proposed two years earlier here return, although transposed to a more metaphysical level: one of the peculiarities of *Der Arbeiter* is that it unfolds without very few empirical references, as if to further stress its poetical, or perhaps even science-fiction-like quality, rather than its status as a treatise on political theory.<sup>38</sup> These qualities of the text made it difficult to use as a political tool, and it should be remembered that it was received rather negatively by left and right wing reviewers alike, no doubt because of its uselessness for pragmatic political purposes—as one reviewer on the National-Bolshevik side claimed, it was an “im tiefsten apolitisches Buch.”<sup>39</sup>

In another perspective, its vision of a humanity transfigured into the “type” of the Worker would be the culmination of a desperate attempt to both *enter into* and *counter* the nihilism resulting from the war and its aftermath (in a kind of “identification with the aggressor” syndrome). Whether or not such biographical interpretations can be substantiated, the book’s vision is of a Nietzschean kind, situated beyond the confines of history, where a new type of humanity, having already accomplished the “revaluation of all values,” assumes the position of the new masters of the earth. This new humanity must be ready to sacrifice itself at any moment, it is characterized by a “heroic realism” that understands that subjectivity has no sense outside of the movement of

38. For a reading of *Der Arbeiter* as science-fiction, see Boris Groys, “Ernst Jünger’s Techniques of Immortality,” in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie des Forschungsinstituts für Philosophie Hannover*, vol. 10, 1999.
39. Wolf Lerson, review in *Die Sozialistische Nation*, 1932, cited in Peter Koslowski, *Der Mythos der Moderne*, 65, note 16. It should be noted that the book, with its “planetary” perspective, was badly reviewed in the NS press. “How does Jünger relate to the basic question of existence, to the problem of *Blut und Boden*? The answer can only be: not at all” (Thilo von Trotha, “Das endlose dialektische Gespräch,” review in *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 22, 1932, cited in Koslowski, 69). The review concludes rather surprisingly: “Ernst Jünger has with his most recent work proved that he is fundamentally and irrevocably caught up in liberalism.”

mobilization and the total “work-character” that it imprints on all of reality. Even more emphatically than its Futurist and Constructivist predecessors *Der Arbeiter* proclaims the disappearance of 19th century bourgeois-liberal culture, for whose individualism and cult of the idiosyncratic Jünger has little but contempt, and the rise of the Worker as the new metaphysical *Gestalt* or *Typus* of the future. In all sectors of society, economy, law, politics, education, etc., a collective order breaks forth, and it displaces the exception, the idiosyncratic, and the sentimental as mere residues. Whereas the bourgeois-individual order is based on security and puts its emphasis on pure reason as a controlling instance that fears the “elemental” dimension of existence, the Worker renounces his particular self and embraces danger as the “ever-present; as an element it always seeks to break through those embankments with which reason surrounds itself.” (*SW* 8, 55). The *type* is the name for this step beyond the individual, it is oriented toward “characteristics, that lie outside of singular existence” (148), whereas the bourgeois remains tied to the domain of the “particular.”

Beyond the “type” we find the concept of *Gestalt*, which no doubt is derived from a reading of Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*, but here takes on a different role. The Gestalt is a totality, a sum greater than all of its parts, and it is only as a Gestalt that the Worker will be able to exert dominion over the earth (as the subtitle of the book says, it is dedicated to the linking of the concepts of “Herrschaft” and “Gestalt”). The Gestalt absorbs previous oppositions (body and soul, individual and collective, power and law, etc.) through “organic construction,” and in this it brings about the “dissolution of the differences between the organic and the mechanical world” (244). In this sense the Worker is not be understood as a sociological concept defined through a set of relations to productive forces and social relations,<sup>40</sup> but as a Gestalt

40. This transcendence of the Gestalt means that the relation between the worker and the bourgeois can no longer be a dialectical *Aufhebung*, as in Marx, but forms a metaphysical *alterity*. In a letter to his French translator Henri Plard from 1978, Jünger returns to this question and comments on

situated beyond the vicissitudes of empirical history, which in its turn receives its “stampings” (*Prägungen*) from the Gestalt.

*Technology* is the essential *element* of the Worker, the way in which he “mobilizes” the world and uproots all earlier forms of community and life, but still it is only the “clothing” (*Gewand*) of his domination. Technology is not as such of the *essence*, but only the outward form of the will to power that ultimately assumes form in the Gestalt. The Worker takes us into a post-historical realm beyond ideology and politics, and the “order” that he obeys comes from the *things themselves*, from their own mode of presencing, and not from any political, social or anthropological subject. He is, to state this in terms derived from Heidegger, attuned to the essence of technology as *Ge-Stell*, i.e., to the end of metaphysics as a pure will to power without other aims than its own increase and solidification as planetary domination, and in this sense he constitutes, if we use Peter Koslowski’s formulation, the “heroic gestalt that would be capable of being the master of modernity, and not its victim.”<sup>41</sup>

Guided by this Gestalt, all of society moves from a *limited* to a *total* work character and we enter into the “workspace” (*Arbeitsraum*) where all things appear in the new light brought about by technology. The worker creates around him such a total workspace, where society is transformed into a gigantic production unit, and where man and machine form a new alloy, an “organic construction.” This is particularly true in the new megalopolis, where everything will be mechanized and

the relation to Marx: “I definitely reject the anti-Marxist interpretation [of *Der Arbeiter*]. Marx fits into the ‘worker’s system,’ but he does not fill it out completely. Something similar could be said about the relation to Hegel.” (*SW* 8, 390) Even though these remarks are made from a later point of view, it should be noted that Jünger’s attitude towards Marx, and especially toward Soviet Communism, was quite positive in the period of *Der Arbeiter*, and he was for a period connected to the “National-Bolshevik” movement; cf. on this point Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Der konservative Anarchist: Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1962).

41. Peter Koslowski, *Der Mythos der Moderne*, 64.

de-individualized, which also signifies that old class distinctions and privileges will fade away together with politics in the traditional sense. Unlike many other right-wing writers, Jünger does not see this emerging and almost ecstatic urbanity as a decadent phenomenon. Already in 1926 he writes in an essay on “Big City and Countryside” that the city will be the place where all decisions fall, and where the fundamental forces are located: “We must penetrate the forces of the metropolis, which are the real powers of our time: the machines, the masses, the worker. For here lies the potential energy from which will arise the new nations of tomorrow [...] Today any kind of revolt that does not begin in the urban centers is doomed from the start to failure.”<sup>42</sup>

Jünger also calls for the transformation of the arts so that they may join the new “elementary forces” of a transfigured humanity. This means that they will have to shed their old aesthetic function and become a productive force that relates to all possible materials, and to the totality of the world as a “planetary” dimension. Beginning with the violent transformations of the landscape brought about by modern engineering, communication and warfare, this process culminates in the Metropolitan world, which is always an architectural and technological space that obliterates any reference to “nature” as a foundation, and summons forth a transformed art that will have to take part in shaping the world in which it belongs.

This perception of the social and political world, which at once rejects all traditional values of the aesthetic in the name of a radically new aesthetic, can be seen as the return of an old theme: the public or the body politic as *sculpture*.<sup>43</sup> In projecting this vision Jünger was

42. “Großstadt und Land,” in *Deutsches Volkstum* 8 (1926), cited in Brigitte Werneburg, “Ernst Jünger and the Transformed World,” *October* 62 (Fall 1992), 47.

43. Cf. Michael North, “The Public as Sculpture: From Heavenly City to Mass Ornament,” in W J T Mitchell (ed.): *Art and the Public Sphere* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), which traces this tradition up to Joseph Beuys’ conception of a “social sculpture.”

by no means alone, but partakes in a certain expressionist tendency in Modernist urban theory, which attempts to retrieve the organic *inside* the technological, and wants to fuse individual experience with a larger collective order. So for instance Bruno Taut, on the eve of the First World War, admittedly without any bellicose overtones, imagining secular and revolutionary cathedrals that would regenerate society, and in which people should become “organic *Glieder* of a great architectural structure.”<sup>44</sup> This trope, whose ideological implications are highly equivocal, returns in many later theories that attempt to regenerate society, and we find it echoed in the modern movement’s authoritative historian Sigfried Giedion, when he as late as 1944 called for “collective emotional events, where the people plays as important a role as the spectacle itself, and where a unity of the architectural background, the people and the symbols conveyed by the spectacle will arise.”<sup>45</sup> In this space the public or the “people” (*Volk*) becomes what Siegfried Kracauer already in 1927, in a famous essay, called “mass-ornaments,” for him epitomized by the popular American chorus line The Tiller Girls, in whose performances the individual is transformed into a cog in the machine: “indissoluble girl clusters whose movements are demonstrations of mathematics [...] mere building blocks, nothing more. [...] Only as parts of a mass, not as individuals who believe themselves to be formed from within, are

44. Bruno Taut, *Die Stadtkrone* (Jena: Diederichs, 1919), 58; see also the commentary by Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 49.

45. Sigfried Giedion, “The Need For a New Monumentality,” *Harvard Architecture Review* (Spring 1984), 60. The talk was originally delivered in 1944, which indeed implies a “certain political amnesia,” as Michael North remarks (“The Public as Sculpture,” 16). As Martin Meyer points out, Giedion’s studies of *Space, Time, and Architecture*, as well as the later *Mechanization Takes Command*, in a certain way belong to the same problematic, i.e., a reconstruction of the field of experience on the basis of technology; cf. *Ernst Jünger*, 210 ff.

human beings components of a pattern.”<sup>46</sup> It should be remembered that for Kracauer there is an undeniable *truth* and *authenticity* to this very experience of loss of the subjective, and although it is rooted in a Taylorized capitalism that fragments and depersonalizes the body, the mass ornament’s “degree of reality is still higher than that of the artistic productions which cultivate obsolete noble sentiments in obsolete forms—even if it means nothing more than that.”<sup>47</sup> The conception of the space of experience as a malleable totality, subject to technological calculation and manipulation, a planetary *Arbeitsraum* in Jünger’s sense of the word, leaves little place for the individual subject, whose singular, phenomenological field of experience becomes a function of an imperial-spatial machine imposed from the outside. From the psychology of *Gestalt* explored in early modernist art theory we move, as it were, into a *Gestaltung* of the individual psyche based on calculation and regimentation of subjective experience.<sup>48</sup>

We need not dwell long on the examples of Riefenstahl and Speer to see the aesthetico-political exchanges between the avant-garde on both the political right and left on this topic. Goebbels’s novel *Michael* (1920) brings out in advance the most totalitarian consequences of this vision: “The Statesman is an artist too. For him the people is neither more nor less than what stone is for the sculptor.”<sup>49</sup> This is one

46. “The Mass Ornament” (1927), in *The Mass Ornament*, transl. Thomas Y Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 76. Cf. also Michael Hays’ remarks in *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, 263 ff.

47. “The Mass Ornament,” 79.

48. As we noted in the previous chapter this was a process underway since the 19th century and its investigations into the psychological apprehension of space-time. From Schmarsow’s explorations of a pre-objective *Raumgefühl* to Giedion’s *Durchdringung* and mutable and dynamic “space-time” there is an increasing emphasis on how the experience is *produced*; cf. Ignasi de Solà-Morales commentary, *Differences: Topographies in Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT; 1997), 94 f.

49. Cited in Michael North, *ibid.*

aspect of aesthetic modernism realized in the fullest extent, no doubt in a perverse way, but which also brings to light some of its hidden and most distressing implications.

As Brigitte Werneburg has shown, this modernization of the artist for Jünger found its paradigmatic expression in the use of photography as a technical medium with revolutionary implications.<sup>50</sup> Jünger was in fact one of the first to theorize how photography will transform not only the world of visual artifacts, but also the nature of our urban and political space. He compiled two volumes of photographic works, *Der gefährliche Augenblick* (1931), and *Die veränderte Welt* (1933), which both can be seen, in Werneburg's words, as "visual companions pieces to *Der Arbeiter*." Photography, Jünger argues here, can show us the industrial world of the Worker and its effects on time and space, the body, desire, and fantasy, more accurately than any other art form, because of its immediate link to the new vision technology. The emergence of a "colder" consciousness is enhanced by photography, this "revolutionary fact," as he will say later in *Über den Schmerz* (1934): "The act of taking a photograph stands outside the field of sentiment. It has a telescopic character: one realizes that the event is seen by an impervious and invulnerable eye. It captures both the flight of the bullet and the individual at the moment before he is blown to shreds by an explosion. This, however, is our specific manner of seeing, and photography is an instrument of this characteristic."<sup>51</sup> In creating such an inner distance to ourselves the telescoping objectification also has a profound effect on the body and its relation to *pain*, Jünger continues: "This is the technological order itself, this great mirror in which the increasing objectification of our life appears most clearly, and that in a special way is sealed off from the grip of pain. Technology is our uniform" (*SW* 7, 174).

The question of how these shifts in technology affect our perceptual

50. As cited in note 42.

51. "Über den Schmerz," in *Blätter und Steine* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1934), 201. English translation of this passage from Werneburg, 53.

apparatus provides Werneburg with the link to Benjamin's Reproduction essay. Just as Jünger Benjamin predicts that our relation our own body and our sensorium will change drastically, and the blurring of the line between the organic and the technological will allow us to see reality as a constant process of construction. For Benjamin this is a moment of emancipation, whereas Jünger perceives it as a subjection, although not just simply as a loss, but more fundamentally as an access to the transsubjective dimension of the *Gestalt* and the *Typus*. The new art forms both register and enhance this development; for Benjamin they will make us more aware of the process of *making* and provoke a kind of new "expertise" in the spectator, who can no longer remain passive and disinterested; for Jünger they further the structure of domination, and their "total entertainment character" will one day, he predicts in "Über den Schmerz," make it illegal *not* to be connected to the radio system, since it is one of the most efficient tools for mobilization.

From Jünger's point of view, Benjamin's claim that there would be an inherent quality in technological media that pits them against totalitarian domination would seem hopelessly naïve. The destruction of the aura indeed renders art, and particularly film and photography, politically useful, and gives them their status as weapons and means of assault and attack, but everything hinges on the will to power that mobilizes them, for which their instrumentality is merely a "clothing." And there is nothing that per se would prevent precisely that kind of re-auratization that allows mankind to contemplate its own destruction as a spectacle of the highest order; indeed, Jünger's writings from the early '30s could be read as a descent into a kind of collective death-drive, for which the capacity to be sacrificed is the highest achievement of the human.

In hindsight it is all too obvious that the politicizing of art and the aestheticization of politics tend to pass over into one another, and the proximity of Jünger's mobilization of art and technology to Benjamin's dreams of an emancipatory and reflexive use that would prevent them from becoming reified, constitutes a "provocative counterpoint."<sup>52</sup>

52. Werneburg, 64.



Arguably, *Der Arbeiter* and Jünger's adjacent works can be understood in the light of an extension of modernist aesthetics, which radicalizes some of its most disturbing potentials to such an extent that the book was perceived as useless by left and right wing commentators alike. This is no doubt why way its predictions of a planetary domination and the "total workspace" it projects in a technological and post-historical Metropolitan cityscape still retains its heuristic value as a diagnosis of modernity.

In a certain way, both Jünger and Benjamin are affirmative theorists of the technological object, and they perceive a new collective order emerging after the demise of individual subjectivity, a collective that will somehow be attuned to technology, and whose art will form an immediate part of the shaping of the life-world. In this they are both, their differences notwithstanding, part of a certain avant-garde aesthetic. The third case to be examined here, Martin Heidegger, seems to turn his back on a modernity that for him is nothing but the withdrawal of "great art," the exceeding dominance of subjectivism, aesthetics, and the culture of *Erlebnis*, from which he attempts to take a step back. But as we will see, this step back leads him into a dialog with both Jünger (explicitly) and Benjamin (explicitly), which will allow us to situate these exchanges in a more far-reaching perspective.

#### *IV. Heidegger and the origin of the work of art*

In *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, Heidegger sets for himself several tasks. The most important one can be gleaned from the topic of the lecture, first held in 1935, which served as the basis for the essay "Die Überwindung der Ästhetik in der Frage nach der Kunst."<sup>53</sup> Heidegger's

53. The lecture was then developed in three subsequent talks in 1936, which provided the tripartite structure of the text published in the first edition of *Holzwege* in 1950 (together with a Postface), to which an important "Zusatz" (written in 1956) was added in the Reclam edition from 1960. The first draft for the conference, dated 1935, has been published as "Vom

attempts to undo or overcome the edifice of aesthetics should not be construed as something negative, no more than should the earlier “destruction of ontology”; rather it seeks to free us up for a different experience, to allow us once again to approach art as a unique mode of disclosure situated beyond “aesthetics” in all of its classical and modern forms.<sup>54</sup> The Postface clearly states what is at stake: *Erlebnis*, as the modern, subjectivized and “aestheticized” form of the Greek *aisthesis*, is the element in which art dies, although this process might require hundreds of years in order to reach its completion. But, as Heidegger says in a handwritten marginal note, this does not simply mean that art would be “simply over and done with”; this would only

ursprung des Kunstwerkes. Erste Ausarbeitung,” in *Heidegger-Studien*, vol. 5, 1989. The text actually presented in 1935 has been edited and presented in a bilingual version by Emmanuel Martineau, as *Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerkes / De l'origine de l'oeuvre de l'art* (Paris: Authentica, 1987). For an analysis of the successive displacements of Heidegger's ideas through these three versions, cf. Jacques Taminiaux, *Art et événement. Spéculations et jugement des Grecs à Heidegger* (Paris: Belin, 2005), chap. 4-5. Here, I will make use of the version published in the *Gesamtausgabe* edition of *Holzwege* (GA 5) which also contains a selection of Heidegger's own marginal notes; henceforth cited as *UdK*, followed by references to the English translation by Albert Hofstadter, in *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993).

54. For the implications of Heidegger's *Destruktion* and *Abbau*, see “Heidegger's Turns,” above. Heidegger outlines the task of a destruction of aesthetics in the first lecture course on Nietzsche from 1936, “Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst,” in *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 94 ff. Somewhat idiosyncratically he locates the beginning of aesthetics already in Plato, but, as if strategically anticipating the other possibility inside the concept of art, he also adds: “the great Greek art remained without a corresponding thinking-conceptual determination, a reflection that did not have to be identical with aesthetics” (“die große griechische Kunst bleibt ohne ein entsprechende denkerisch-begriffliche Bestimmung auf sie, welche Besinnung nicht gleichbedeutend sein müßte mit Ästhetik.” (95, my italics)

be the case if *Erlebnis* were the only element for art. Instead we have to move out of *Erleben* and into *Da-Sein*, which means to attain a wholly different element for the “becoming” of art.<sup>55</sup>

In order to attain this element a whole series of precautionary measures have to be taken. Already from the outset, as Heidegger seeks to locate the very terrain of the question he is pursuing, he faces difficulties bearing on the same kind of reductionism and philosophical “inscription” of art into an encyclopedic system that is at work in German Idealism, from its opening in Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* to its closure in Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics*—a philosophy of art encountering or determining art as an object or ontic region among others, and this is one of the problems that will stay with Heidegger throughout the rest of his work, in his pursuit of a new constellation of *Dichten* and *Denken* that would disclose their elective affinities yet without reducing the one to the other. The question of the origin of the work of art must, Heidegger says at the outset, inquire after the “provenance of its essence” (*Herkunft ihres Wesens*), and not presuppose this essence as already given in relation to modern subjectivity. Keeping in mind the new notion of essence that becomes predominant in Heidegger’s thinking after the turning, where essence is not to be understood as generality, as *quidditas* in the sense of a general conceptual order subsuming particulars, but as a coming-to-presence in a temporal movement, we see that this question does not bear upon a formal generality valid for all times and in all contexts, but instead attempts to locate the origin of the work of art in the movement of being’s historical unfolding—indeed, as we shall see, as one of the primary manifestations of the very *event* of the presencing of being.

But what, then, is the essential character, the being, of the work?

55. “Dieser Satz besagt aber doch nicht, daß es mit der Kunst schlechthin zu Ende sei. Das wäre nur der Fall, wenn das Erlebnis das Element schlechthin für das Kunst bliebe. Aber es liegt alles daran, aus dem Erleben ins Da-Sein zu gelangen, und das sagt doch: ein ganz anderes Element für das “Werden” der Kunst zu erlangen.” (*UdK*, 67, marginal note b)

At first sight (i.e., as Gadamer notes in his introduction to the Reclam edition of the text, for a gaze that has been trained in the Neo-Kantian philosophy and aesthetics of the time),<sup>56</sup> it may appear as a *thing*, although a thing that always says and points to something else (an *allegory*), or is joined or “thrown” together with it (a *symbol*). Soon we however discover that this thing-like can never be just a substructure—the more we look at a painting, read a poem, or observe an edifice, the more the thing-like aspect (color, words, stone) not only appears as essential to the expression, but also as if it would first attain its own essence precisely when it is absorbed into the work. The relation between work and thing, between meaning and materiality, must be determined in a different way, Heidegger emphasizes, and the work as such can never be understood as thing. The material and thing-like must be thought out of the work-like and not the other way around.

Heidegger rejects three conceptual pairs that have traditionally been used to describe the thing: *the substance as bearer of properties or accidents*, which cannot grasp the “resting-in-itself” of the thing, instead it “falls over,” or even “makes an assault on it” (“sondern er überfällt es”); *the thing as unity in a manifold* of the sensory given, which fails to do justice to the phenomenology of experience—we immediately hear the concrete event, the sound of a car starting, and never bundles of abstract sensations (in order to have such an experience we must even undertake a specific modification, a particular “hearing-away,” a *Weghören*, from the phenomena); finally, *form-matter*, which is the founding conceptual scheme for all art theory and aesthetics, and together with analogous pairs like rationality-irrationality and subject-object provides a “conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding” (12/153). This latter distinction, Heidegger suggests, in fact belongs to the sphere of equipment, and cannot in any unproblematic way to be extended to the “mere thing” or to the work. But why does equipment offer itself as a natural model? What is a piece of equipment?

56. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Einleitung,” in Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960), 102 f.

Without being able to reconstruct all the different steps in Heidegger's argument, we can note that when he attempts to approach equipmentality and as an illustration selects a pair of peasant shoes, they are neither a real pair nor an idealized one that would result from a phenomenological fantasy variation giving us the *eidōs* of the shoe as equipment, but a work of art, a painting by van Gogh. The description of the painting functions like an epiphany or a conversion in the text, and it develops into a poetic meditation on the peasant woman's slow steps over the fields, the "silent call of the earth," and the weight and seriousness of rural existence, where two fundamental concepts, *earth* and *world*, appear for the first time. But more than this, and seemingly as a by-product of this ephrastic turn, we are *also* lead on to the path that the rest of the text will follow: the work of art as a disclosure of truth, if we understand truth as Heidegger wants to, i.e., not as a correspondence between a linguistic proposition or a mental representation and some outer state of affairs, but as the play between closure and disclosure within which such a correspondence at all can be established. As many times before, he here too leads this transformation of the concept of truth back to the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, but now he stresses more clearly that we should read it as *a-letheia*, "non-oblivion," thus underscoring that the openness and accessibility that belongs to the "world" always has to be understood in relation to, or in a more violent manner, as conquered, torn, stolen, or robbed from, the closure and opacity that is proper to the earth. The structure of *a-letheia* is no longer delimited to an existential features of Dasein but belongs to being and presencing themselves, as is also indicated by the introduction of the concept "earth" that fundamentally disrupts the earlier analyses of the worldhood of the world as a moment in Dasein.<sup>57</sup>

57. As Gadamer points out, the concept "earth" might at the time have sounded like a "mystical and Gnostic archaic sound, which at best had its legitimate place in poetry" ("Einleitung," 99), if not even as a direct reference to the theme of *Blut und Boden*. Without attempting to downplay Heidegger's political disasters, it is still not irrelevant point out that

It was, then, by placing us in front of this painting by van Gogh that the being of equipment became accessible to us, and in this sense the truth of equipment, the openness in which it can approach us in the “how” of its being, was granted by the work. For Heidegger this shows why we can determine art as the “putting-into-work” (*ins-Werk-Setzen*) of the truth of beings, instead of as the representation of a given object or the production of a beauty that would be purely aesthetic and the mere *occasion* of a judgment of taste, as Kant would have it. This putting-into-work of truth however only occurs under certain conditions, i.e. that the work not only participates in a world, but also takes an essential part in *founding* it, both of which have been lost in modern conceptions of aesthetic autonomy and in all those institutions that secure and underwrite this autonomy. Placed in a collection or a museum, or as objects of historical research, the works are “torn out of their native sphere” (*Wesensraum*), “withdrawn from their own world” (26/166)—and it should be noted that van Gogh’s painting indeed occupies a rather ex-centric position in this story of loss and decay, which in a sense already contains the whole enigma of the possibility of a authentically *modern* work of art for Heidegger. On the one hand van Gogh’s painting is the initial case that shows the truth-disclosive function of the art work, and it orients the rest of the text in

Husserl too in this period uses a similar conceptuality when he talks of the earth as an “originary arche” that resists all idealization, and as the absolute ground of all intentional activities. Cf. the fragment “Umsturz der kopernikanischen Lehre. Die Erde als Ur-Arche bewegt sich nicht,” printed in Marvin Farber (ed.): *Philosophical Essays in the Memory of E. Husserl* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), and the commentary by Derrida, *L’origine de la géométrie* (Paris: PUF, 1962), sec. 6. For a general discussion of the concept of earth in Heidegger, see Michel Haar, *Le chant de la terre* (Paris: L’Herne, 1985). The more violent aspect of founding is visible for instance in the reading of Sophocles’ *Antigone* in the lecture series from 1935, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*; for a discussion, cf. Daniel Payot, *Le statue de Heidegger* (Paris: Circé, 1998).

a decisive way (although it begins by a *detour* through what first seems just one particular case among an infinite amount of examples); on the other hand it is difficult to see in what way this work would resist being absorbed and neutralized by the aesthetic institution and the museum, and why the being of the rural earth-world complex that it opens up would not remain in the imaginary sphere.<sup>58</sup>

In order to show the world-formative power of the work, and as a counter-image to the placelessness and worldlessness of the modern work (that implicitly renders the value of van Gogh's painting insecure), Heidegger conjures up another image, this time of a Greek temple. The temple gathers a world around itself, it forms an intersection between the political, religious, and existential dimensions of a world, and allows them to come into their own as a kind of cosmologi-

58. Cf. the famous criticism put forward by Meyer Shapiro, who insists that the depicted shoes did assuredly *not* belong to a peasant woman, but to a "man of the city," namely van Gogh himself while he was living in Paris: "The philosopher has indeed deceived himself. He has retained from his encounter with van Gogh's canvas a moving set of associations with peasants and the soil, which are not sustained by the picture itself, but are grounded rather in his own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and earthy. He has indeed 'imagined everything and projected it into the painting'. He has experienced both too little and too much in his contact with the work." ("The Still Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh," in *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein*, ed. M. L. Simmel [New York: Springer, 1968], 205). This rather simplistic criticism assumes that the *meaning* of the painting would coincide with the *actual shoes* that at one point on time were used as a motif by the painter, which of course need not be the case, and appears to misinterpret most of what Heidegger is attempting to say. There is no doubt a projection and a kind of ventriloquism at work in Heidegger's text, although it needs to be analyzed in a more subtle way; cf. for instance the discussion in Jacques Derrida, *Le vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974).

cal event. The temple “portrays nothing” (*bildet nichts ab*), but “simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley,” it “encloses the figure of the god” and is that which “fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being.” (27 f/167) There is a radiance of the divine involved here, a singular presence of the god, that ties beauty to a sphere of the holy, and that gives the case of the temple the value of a distinct opposition to modernity.<sup>59</sup>

The temple-work *opens* and sets up (*aufstellt*) a world, at the same time as it sets back (*zurückstellt*) the work into the earth, and in this it finally sets forth (*herstellt*) the earth as the abyssal ground of this world and this work, i.e., first as the opaque and obverse side of the world, and secondly as the materiality of the work itself. In the complex unity of this threefold positing, *up*, *back*, and *forth*, *auf*-, *zurück*-, and *her*-, the event of truth takes place in and as the work, establishing a relation between earth and world. The work, Heidegger says, lets the earth be earth and allows the world to “world” (*welten*), and in its conflictual and tense unity it creates an articulation between these different orders that preserves and radicalizes their difference as a “strife” (*Streit*). “Truth wills to be established in the work,” he writes, “as this strife of world and earth,” and the being that is the work “must therefore contain within itself the essential traits of this strife” (50/187) As an antagonistic unity, the work is *one* of the fundamental ways in which truth occurs, and the “originary strife” (*Urstreit*) between concealment and unconcealment, which as such lies *before* the event of the work, is then materialized, erected, and comes to stand in the inner difference and unity of the work. This strife takes the form of a “cut,” a “rift” (*Riß*) between earth and word, which then is given a stance, acquires a contour and a shape (*Umriss*) in the work. That which on the level

59. Taminiaux reads this as an echo of Hegel’s analysis of the “Kunstreligion” in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, which even more strongly connects this to the Greek moment; cf. *L’art et l’événement*, 97 f, 110.



of traditional aesthetics would appear as a difference between form and matter is in this sense only a reflection of the more originary rift between earth and world, in the same way as the classical determination of the work as unity in difference is understood as a way in which the “originary strife” comes to a stance in the work. The work gives a permanence (though not an infinite one: artworks are born and they die, and as we will see this is an essential part of their finitude and historicity) to the clearing (*Lichtung*) of being and truth—and the same goes, Heidegger adds, for the “act that founds a political state,” the “nearness to that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most in being” (the divine), the “essential sacrifice,” and the “questioning of the thinker.” (49/186 f). The relation between these instituting and founding operations will remain unclear throughout the text, although the idea of a work seems to privilege the occurring of truth that belongs to art: the “impulse towards the work” (*Zug zum Werk*) in truth that is materialized in the temple appears to be the model for the other events of truth, above all the political deed, which Heidegger understands in terms of production, of *poiesis*, rather than as political praxis belonging to a communal space, all of which indicate the extent to which this is indeed an “aestheticizing” conception of politics.

That a work of architecture becomes the first full and unambiguous example of the origin of the work of art (given the insecure status of van Gogh’s painting that we noted above), the first work that in a complete sense sets up and installs a world, could be read as an echo of Hegel’s understanding of the interrelation of the fine arts, where architecture is the *first* but also *lowest* part of the hierarchy, because of its materiality and multiple connections to extra-aesthetic parameters (its function as shelter, but also its ties to economy, politics, technology, etc.). For Heidegger the earthbound quality of the temple is rather a function of its *excess*, its overflowing abundance, in the sense that the obverse and withdrawn side of the work forms a positive opacity that withdraws from interpretation, a resistance that flows from the priority and downward pull of the earth in its power of concealment. In Heidegger’s version architecture does not, as in Hegel, recede in order to form a background or a surrounding environment to the free-standing sculpture, which for Hegel is the first truly autonomous

fine art, but it forms the very passage between *physis* and *polis* in such a way that it grants the openness to the *politeia* while at the same time holding it back, containing it within the reserve of the earth. Only this double movement of granting and holding back allows the ground to appear, and transforms it into a “native soil” (*heimatlicher Grund*). The event of being, the clearing of the ontological difference, is repeated in the work of art, and the formation of the political space in a certain way repeats the installing an instituting event of the artwork.

That the work belongs to a particular *space*—or rather, that it is what first makes a space into a “place”—and in this mediates between physical location and historical signification, also means that it always belongs to a particular group, and that it only in a secondary way, when it has ceased to belong to a world and its “native soil,” can be endowed with universality. It also implies a *temporal* function: to bring the past into the present, to condense history and point to the future as a promise of continuity and memory—all of which is part of what Heidegger calls “establishing” or “grounding” (*Stiftung*) of history, which is one of the essential powers of the work, and that is underscored at the end of his text: “Art, as founding, is essentially historical. This means not simply that art has a history in the extrinsic sense that in the course of time it, too, appears along with many other things, and in the process changes and passes away and offers changing aspects for historiology. Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history.” (65/202).

In the act of founding the work does not remain there as merely a “first” event that would wait for reception and interpretation, it extends out to include the “preservers” (*die Bewahrenden*). The element of this extending is Poesy (*Dichtung*), which Heidegger proposes as the essence of art. Poesy must here be understood on in non-generic and non-literary manner although it remains closely connected to the sphere of language, above since it is the institution of sense, and all the other arts in one way or another have to pass through the kind of comprehension that language makes possible. Heidegger suggests that the instituting event of poesy should be understood as consisting of three dimensions, to which there also corresponds, he says, three respective modes of preserving (although this is never really devel-

oped in the text): bestowing (*Schenken*), grounding (*Gründen*), and beginning (*Anfangen*). In its first aspect as *bestowing*, the work is an overflowing, and its “thrust” (*Stoss*) into the extra-ordinary cannot be deduced from any pre-existing rules or norms, but it in fact declares everything that is already there and instituted to be invalid. But, and this second aspect changes the direction of the first movement in a decisive way, the thrust does not send us out into a complete void, it is addressed to the preserves to come, and the openness it grants is that into which *a Dasein* (not in the sense of individual finite existence, but as a historical human collective, “ein geschichtliches Menschentum”) is already thrown. It is a world anchored in an earth that is specific for each people, and through this becomes their own earth (“Dies ist die Erde und für ein geschichtliches Volk seine Erde,” 63/200), and it is transformed into a “bearing ground” (*tragende Grund*) only through this poetizing projection. In this second quality, as *grounding*, creating means to draw from a source (*Schöpfen*), but not to create out of a subjective depth, as in the case of the subjective genius.<sup>60</sup> If the poetic project in the first sense seems to come from nothing, in the second sense it remains essentially tied to a historical people: that which is thrown to the people, through the project, is “the withheld determination of historical Dasein itself.” (64/200)

If the first two aspects have an initiating quality (although the first more so than the second, as we have seen), then the third dimension, *beginning*, will allow us to grasp the function of poesy within history in another sense. Bestowing and grounding have “the unmediated character of that we call a beginning” (ibid/201), but this initiating, as a “leap” (*Sprung*), is however something which has been preparing itself for a long time, just as it also reaches into the future as a leap ahead

60. This is in fact a rather reductive conception of the genius, which in its Kantian version only breaks the rules because it is in contact with a more profound *nature*, whose mouthpiece it is. On the relation between Heidegger and Kant on this point, see Jay M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, 99-108.

(*Vorsprung*) and has already gone beyond everything which is to come, even though this may remain concealed until the very end. The beginning already contains the end within itself, as a fold of time and history, and as such the proper beginning has nothing to do with the “primitive,” which, Heidegger claims, always lacks a future because it is incapable of the bestowing and grounding leap.

In this three-fold temporal structure we can recognize important traits of the analytic of Dasein’s ecstatic temporality in *Sein und Zeit*, where past, present and future as objective-worldly temporal extensions are brought back into Dasein, which exists as “temporalization of temporality” (*Zeitigung der Zeitlichkeit*). As the origin of temporalization, Dasein is however neither conceived of as a theologically defined *nunc stans* located outside of time, nor as the transcendental subject acting as the founding kernel of time, but as a now always standing *outside* of itself, ec-statically opening up towards the future and allowing it to approach on the basis of the presencing of the past, and only in this way is Dasein able to receive the present as the intersection of the other two temporal modes. In *Der Ursprung* instituting qua basic trait of poesy, of *Dichtung*, is accredited with a similar temporalizing function, and in this way it can assume the role of instituting history, not only in relation to a separate sphere of aesthetic values, art history, and cultural memory (all of which for Heidegger indeed belong to the “death of art” as it has been proclaimed in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*), but to beings as such: “Always when beings as a whole, as beings themselves, demand a grounding in openness, art attains to its historical essence as foundation (64/201) And, Heidegger adds in a gesture which on the one hand inscribes the whole of the artwork essay within a highly traditional discourse, but also fundamentally connects it to his project of overcoming Western metaphysics in all of its ambivalence: “This foundation happened for the first time in Greece.” (*ibid*)

How should this traditionalism be understood? Does Heidegger claim that all art, if it is to remain within the sphere of poesy as instituting and putting truth (in)to (the) work, must necessarily remain within the Greek orbit? It is true that he in his critical discussions of the traditional concepts of the thing, of the passage from truth as *aletheia* to truth as *orthothes*, of the genesis of aesthetics in Plato’s sepa-

ration of the *aistheton* from the *noeton*, etc., attempts to bypass Greek metaphysics and all of its subsequent transformations in a search for a non-metaphysical concept of art. But it is equally true that he on another level almost never questions the *metaphysics of Greece*, the metaphysics of a certain and necessary origin which holds the historical schema together, and this historical figure is what opens *and* delimits the whole thinking of the history of being. The insistence of this figure in Heidegger's discourse has been pointed out by many commentators.<sup>61</sup> The poetic as well as philosophical founding of truth occurred in Greece in its originary form, so Heidegger seems to claim unequivocally, because this was the site for art's and philosophy's irruption into a finite historical world, and thus also for the setting of a measure for all of what is to come.

On the other hand different epochs of art may open different spaces, and Heidegger mentions the medieval transformation of beings into *ens creatum*, which then becomes a mathematically calculable object at the beginning of modernity, and in all of these epochs the openness of truth must be fixed in a corresponding *Gestalt*. Each of them, he says, has its own form of unconcealment, and is a way in which an "essential world" breaks forth through a "thrust" where history begins anew or takes a new turn. But even though these remarks endow art with a certain autonomy with respect to the Greek founding moment, at the next level they reinscribe it even more forcefully into the sending of being, since the "shapes" produced by art only become possible within an openness granted by the history of being, which appears to be Greek through and through.

61. Cf. for instance Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Hölderlin et les grecs," in *L'imitation des modernes* (Paris: Galilée, 1986); Jacques Derrida, "Envois," in *Psyche. L'invention de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987); Marc Froment Meurice, *That Is To Say: Heidegger's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988). A general treatment of the German fascination with Greece, with many bearings on Heidegger, is Jacques Taminiaux, *La nostalgie de la Grèce à l'aube de l'idéalisme allemande* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967).

It should be noted that this Greco-centric claim could, at least in some respects, be read as a conditioned one. The suggestion that the instituting event occurred in Greece, *in, with respect to, the Western world*, could be taken as a sign of reserve, although Heidegger does not in this context consider any other possible world, except the “primitive,” which he rejects as *devoid of future*, and thus outside of the *an-fängliche* historical project of poesy. Does this mean that it could not occur once more, somewhere else? For instance, in a modernity, or even a post-modernity, which would no longer, as a finite historical project, be essentially determined by the Greek beginning, but rather would have to come to terms with a different type of finitude for which the irreducible multiplicity and plurality of *origins*, and not the twofoldness, no matter how abyssal, of *the origin*, would be decisive? Even though elements for such a thought of finitude may be unearthed in Heidegger’s writings, for instance in his occasional remarks on the possible dialog between the Eastern and the Western world, the proximity he establishes between the history of metaphysics and the history of art as a sequence of *Gestalten*, and the position accorded to the instituting, which already reaches all the way to the end, seem to imply that the new thrusts can occur only to the extent that they preserve a continuity with the initial Greek instituting, which in this sense retains a definite supra-historical value. Poesy is a radical founding of history; it bestows, grounds and begins anew, but always on the basis of the Greek *Anfang*. Greece is the proper beginning, and as such it will always be “ahead” of us.

The traditionalism of this gesture is evident, as is its background in the tradition of German Idealism, although the image of Greece produced in Heidegger’s writings will be different, more conflictual, due to his view of Greece as already marked by the retreat from and obliviousness to the truth of being, an unconcealment and a forgetfulness from which we can never awake, but to which we can only become *attentive*. On the one hand Heidegger places himself in a basically Hegelian position, which conceives of history as a unitary space founded by a first Greek presentation that eventually comes back to us as a fulfillment at the other end of the span of the tradition. On the other hand the important difference is that Heidegger does not

think that art in any simple sense could be sublated into philosophical and conceptual thought, and for him “philosophy” will not necessarily have the last word (above all since it did not have the *first* word, whose disclosive power unfolded without there being such a discourse as *philosophia* in the sense handed down in the Platonic tradition). For Hegel, if the end is already present in the beginning, this means that the beginning is something abstract and unmediated, the simple presentation of being in the mode of a “not yet,” i.e., not yet mediated through consciousness; for Heidegger, the inception as *An-fang* has already reached into the farthest future, since the fullness of its unthought opens the space for all further determinations, although without predetermining them in any teleological fashion, which of course leaves the sense of the “farthest future” highly indeterminate.

The question of the origin of the work of art, then, finds itself, at the very moment when an answer seems to take shape, struck by a profound ambiguity. We have seen that art is the instituting preservation of the truth of beings in the work, and the essence of art is Poesy, a poetizing which brings together both creators and preservers on the basis of a thrust that opens a future. “Art lets truth originate” (“Die Kunst läßt die Wahrheit entspringen,” 65/202), Heidegger says, and this is the fundamental sense that Heidegger wants to hear in the word “origin” (*Ursprung*): to let something spring forth, as an originary leap or springing-forth (*Ur-Sprung*) in which truth becomes historical and grounds the historical Dasein of a people. The measure of this origin was however first established in Greece, and all subsequent origins will somehow have to measure up to this first event. But, he adds, the question concerning the essence of art was not raised in order to elucidate the meaning in art in the bygone days of ancient Greece, in fact it was not a historiographical question at all, but resulted from a *contemporary* need. Can art, for us, once more become an *origin* in the sense established above, can it become a “Vorsprung” reaching into the future, or is it condemned to remain a “Nachsprung,” i.e. a merely intra-cultural phenomenon? In short: does Hegel’s verdict in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* on the end of art in modernity, its sublation into the retrospective gaze of aesthetics as a philosophy of the history of art, for which this history is necessarily closed, still stand?

Now, in determining the origin of art as this originary leap, at once drawing on a Greek source but also requiring that it somehow be binding for our future, for our historical Dasein, Heidegger seems to place modern art in the face of an impossible challenge: either it should return to the Greek instituting moment, which is impossible, as Heidegger himself would be the first to point out—the world of the temple has crumbled, the flight of the Gods is irrevocable—or it should assume its modern destiny, which could mean simply a state of melancholy, a kind of work of mourning in relation to the past. But perhaps there is *another* way to be Greek, to be different from the Greeks while yet returning to their heritage—for the beginning, the *An-fang*, remained hidden from its moment of inception, which also means that it was hidden for the Greeks themselves. Perhaps, then, it is only at the end that there is a possibility to recover the possibilities of the *Anfang*, to return to it in a way which is “*more anfänglich*,” i.e. where the *Beginn* (the factual inception of metaphysics and art somewhere, sometime, in the Mediterranean world) starts to separate itself from the *An-fang*, as that which always comes towards us from the future, and where the Greek oblivion of being shows itself a positive source: “The beginning (*Beginn*) of Western thought is not the same as the inception (*Anfang*). But it is the concealment (*Verhüllung*) of the inception, and even an ineluctable concealment. If this is the case, the oblivion shows itself in a different light. The inception hides itself in the beginning (*Der Anfang verbirgt sich im Beginn*).”<sup>62</sup>

#### *IV. Crossing the Line*

How should we assess these three answers to the impact of technology? Does it make sense to see them as comparable answers, and if so, what is the root of the problem they address? In all three the question of a certain *nihilism* is posed, albeit with different accentuations, and the passage into, through, and beyond the zero point takes on a different form: for Benjamin the way through nihilism appears in

62. *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), 98.



the guise of a “liquidation” of the cultural heritage and the possible emancipation of new art forms from the aesthetic tradition; in Jünger it takes the form of the downfall of 19<sup>th</sup> century culture, and the emergence of new Gestalt of the will to Power, the Worker, where politics, aesthetics and metaphysics merge in the structure of an absolute planetary domination; for Heidegger it is seen in terms of the crumbling of the world of the work, its homelessness in the sphere of aesthetics, in terms of the loss of its world-formative power, within which he still attempts to discern a new “element” for its becoming. In all of them contemporary nihilism is an effect of technology: reproduction, the industrialization of the entire planet that devours all values, and the machinations of contemporary culture and its transformation of everything into a free-floating and empty *Erlebnis*.

On a simple level the most negative response seems in fact to be Heidegger’s. Unlike the unmistakable futurist tonality in Benjamin and Jünger, which both attempt to discern the way in which technology will reshape both art and politics, and fundamentally alter the structure of experience, the whole of Heidegger’s thinking on art can, and has indeed been, interpreted as a backward-looking romanticism, and some have claimed that he rejects any possibility for art to entertain any essential relation to truth in modernity. So for instance the early and highly influential interpretation of Otto Pöggeler, who at one point claims that *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* makes impossible any treatment of modern art, and although Heidegger planned a sequel which was supposed to deal with the possibility of art in a technological world, this project failed to materialize since it was contrary to his own philosophical presuppositions.<sup>63</sup> It is indeed true that Hei-

63. Otto Pöggeler, *Philosophie und Politik bei Heidegger* (Freiburg: Alber, 1972), 157. In a later work, *Bild und Technik* (München: Fink, 2002) Pöggeler returns to this question in a much more detailed interpretation, drawing especially on Heidegger’s notes to Klee, and he shows how Heidegger after the war constantly meditates on the question of how art can be possible in an age determined by technology. For Heidegger’s

degger devotes little time to commenting on modern art, and when he does so, he seems to take a rather negative and dismissive stance. The only modern work mentioned in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* is van Gogh's painting of a pair of peasant shoes, and even though it serves as the point of entry to the whole meditation, and in fact provides us with first insight into the complex of earth and world, there is no indication that Heidegger would ascribe to it the same world-formative power that belongs to the Greek temple or the cathedral in Bamberg. The modern work of art seems hopelessly enclosed in the museum, in the critical edition, in academic discourse, and as such its power is usurped by on the one hand a culture of *Erlebnisse*, on the other a culture of learned commentaries.

In a handwritten note (*UdK*, 67), Heidegger asks whether modern art could be able to step out of the sphere of such "experiences," or whether what we experience today is merely "the technological in the urge to create" ("das technologische des Schaffentriebes") and the "how of doing" ("das Wie des Machens"), both of which contribute in the highest degree to rendering art even more subjectivist and oriented towards "experience." The note then goes on to speak of the emptiness of "so-called informal art" (by which we should probably understand postwar abstract painting, *l'art informel* of the 1950s), and the verdict on modernism seems unequivocal.

But let us take our cue from another passage, this time from *Der Satz vom Grund*, in order to begin to assess these verdicts in another light (although a full explication will have to wait until the following chapter). Here Heidegger provides a rather different perspective, and claims that

later views on art, see also Günther Seibold, *Das Ende der Kunst und der Paradigmenwechsel in der Ästhetik* (München: Alber, 1998), which draws on both Heidegger and Adorno and develops a conception of art as based on an experience of negativity and "disappropriation" (*Enteignis*). Both of these interpretations are important for my argument here and the following chapter, and I will come back to them in a more detailed way in another context.

abstract painting in fact is the only appropriate form of art in a world dominated by technology: “That art in such an age becomes non-objective (*gegenstandslos*) testifies to its historical legitimacy, and this above all when non-objective art itself understands that its productions can no longer be works, but something for which the proper word is lacking.”<sup>64</sup> Just as technology exceeds the duality of object-substance and subject-consciousness, absorbing both of them into the transformational and positional matrix of technology, art must become non-objective, or rather “free of objects” (*gegenstandslos*) since it can no longer be a question of opposing the subjective and the objective. Emmanuel Martineau has proposed this type of reading, although without referring specifically to the analysis of technology, and instead he emphasizes the affinity between Heidegger’s early conception of “das Nichts” and the non-objectivity of Suprematism in Malevich.<sup>65</sup> Extending Martineau’s remarks in a somewhat different direction so as to connect them to the topic here, we could also locate an important affinity in how the painter and the thinker each in their respective ways determine the connection between the non-objectivity of art and technology.

Now, there is an important sense in which this “nothingness” could be taken as the proper truth of modern art: non-objectivity, resistance to, and even destruction of, the object-form as well as the subject-form,

64. “Daß in einem solchen Zeitalter die Kunst zur gegenstandslosen wird, bezeugt ihre geschichtliche Rechtmässigkeit und dies vor allem dann, wenn die gegenstandslose Kunst selber begreift, dass ihre Hervorbringungen keine Werke mehr sein können, sondern etwas, wofür das gemässe Wort fehlt.” (*Der Satz vom Grund* [Pfullingen: Neske, 1957], 66).
65. See Martineau’s preface to the selection of Malevich’s writings, *La lumière et la couleur* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1981) as well as the more elaborated argument in *Malevich et la philosophie. La question de la peinture abstraite* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1977). As we noted in the previous chapter, Malevich considers painting as a metaphysical practice that reaches into the same pre-objective domain as technology, the domain of the “nothing” out of which objects emerge as modes of the “something.”

the form-matter duality, etc., characterizes modern art *precisely to the extent that it is attuned to the essence of technology*. Its “moment of truth” (to use an expression from Adorno that is not so far from what Heidegger in his essay on technology will refer to as the “Konstellation der Wahrheit”) is its *un-truth* in relation to the traditional categories of aesthetics (beauty, pleasure, expressive signification), its way of violently undoing them so as to allow the *lethe* in *a-letheia* shine forth as the necessary and inescapable withdrawal of being’s own presencing. The question whether there can be “great art” (*grosse Kunst*) in late modernity, as Heidegger puts it, perhaps needs to be displaced in a way that may contradict a certain Heideggerian sentiment, but surely not the movement of Heidegger’s questioning: the greatness of late modern, and perhaps even postmodern art (if we leave the art historical dividing line between them undecided for the time being), could in fact be this very dismantling of the idea of greatness, of historical *Stiftung*, of the whole Romantic vocabulary pertaining to the “people” and their “native soil,” etc., in such a way that *art at the end of metaphysics* would allow us to perceive the end as a necessary loss that is the only the other side of a multiplicity of beginnings. “The origin of the work of art,” both as a question as well as a specific text by Heidegger, would then be more complex than a certain interpretation *of* (and to a large extent also *by*) Heidegger—though not the *only* one possible—has suggested, more historical through and through: the Greek origin is lost, but also in a certain way retrieved at the end of metaphysics and the final deployment of technicity, as *its own absence*, as the necessity to reinvent other grounds and origins, and the “greatness” of modern art would thereby be at once identical to and radically different from the origin.

The “thrust” would then have to recognize the radical absence of the ground from out of which it draws its meaning, that the “people” it addresses is indeterminate, and not tied to any particular soil or community, that the people is always “to come,” as Deleuze used to say.<sup>66</sup>

66. In *Cinéma 2: L'image-temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1985) Deleuze also connects the theme of the indeterminacy of the *le peuple* to the idea of a *belief in the world*.

And perhaps just not recognize it, but also bring it about in an active way, so that the grounding must always be a undoing of the soil, of the natal, always something *un-heimlich*. And finally, the *Anfang* would not already have leaped ahead of us so as to always have determined the end, but would have to be thought of as opening up an unknown future.

This would be indeed be something like an undoing of the temporal knot in Heidegger's thinking on the origin of the work of art in the 1930s, which would look forward to the question of technology. To follow this line of thought, as it cuts across Heidegger's texts and opens them onto the question of modern art, would indeed be a way to think through him, beyond and against him, but then in order to come back to him differently.

Classical cinema, both in Hollywood and the Soviet Union, preserved the 19<sup>th</sup> century faith in a unifying narrative (the birth of the nation or the transformative power of the revolution), with cinema as the essential art of the masses, a dream than also Benjamin shared. Cinema replaces the cathedrals, as Elie Faure said (cf. *L'image-temps*, 222), and its founding aspiration is to recreate the link between man and world. Modern cinema, on the other hand, seems to abandon this project, and beginning with Neo-Realism it gives us "time-images" of a highly complex nature that sever the senso-motoric tie to the world, and leaves us with opaque and disconnected "any-spaces" (*espaces quelconques*). A becoming without end, the Open, the event—in what sense could these new concepts produced by cinema help us reconnect to the world, make us "believe" in it, as Rossellini said? "We may be Christian or atheists," Deleuze writes, "in our universal schizophrenia we need grounds for believing in the world." (223) Can there be an immanent faith in the world, in the possibility of *inventing* of the world? This may indeed sound "naïve" (225), Deleuze admits, and yet it is his final and decisive question. Against Heidegger he claims that we should stop mourning the death of God, the loss of transcendence, and that the true question relates to the possibility of this world. As we will see in the next chapter, this is not so far from Heidegger's own proposals as it may seem at first sight.

If we connect these arguments to Benjamin, Heidegger's meditation may surely be read as an attempt to save something of the "aura" of the work of art in an age where it is rendered extinct precisely by the forces of technology and "mechanical reproduction," as Benjamin analyzed them. The case is however more complex than it may seem at first hand: as we have already seen, Heidegger does not interpret art as a simple counter-move to modernity, for instance as a way of retrieving "sense," "value," "culture," or any similar nostalgic concept, but as a possibility to think *through* modernity as the advent of technological nihilism, by way of reaching back to the hidden unity of art and technology in the Greek *techne*. As we will see in the following chapter, reaching back into the hidden essence in fact prepares for a new and free relation to technology, which as such can only be established if it also opens up a new relation to, leading through, the work of art, and should not in any way be construed as a mere resentment towards the modern world—in fact, it would be possible to see Heidegger's understanding of the work of art in modernity as the most ruthless acknowledgement of our condition (as has been proposed by, for instance, Massimo Cacciari).

The differences between Benjamin's and Heidegger's meditations are indeed considerable, but it is still possible, and indeed instructive, to discern some essential features they have in common. Both of them hold the view that the relation between art and technology cannot be *negative*, in the sense that art would attempt to save a domain of experience from the influence of modernity. Such an attempt would be reactive and merely reinforce the domination of technology by not being attuned to its essence. For Benjamin, the positive relation to technology is the true meaning of those art forms that are capable of embracing the new reproduction technologies, that dismantle the aesthetic boundary drawn around art and allow it to once more re-enter the world as a productive and shaping force. Heidegger could, on a certain level of abstraction, be construed as saying the same: Benjamin's auratic experience of art is in fact dependent upon its enclosure within the sphere of aesthetics, and it is only when this enclosure has been undone, and art has ceased to exist on the level of contemplative reflection and sensuous pleasure, that it can once

more become a world-constitutive power and a locus of truth as unconcealment. Both of them significantly enough also locate this auratic-aesthetic enclosure not only within a theoretical realm, but also on the material and institutional level constituted by, for instance, the museum and other analogous “framing” institutions, which at present are what deprive art of its authority and binding power by making it instantly available as enjoyment and pleasure. And is it a mere coincidence that both of them point to architecture as the paradigm for a non-aesthetic art that is part of life and of the world—even though the differences are vast, Heidegger pointing to the capacity to found a world, Benjamin to a “distracted” perception that socializes the subject on a pre-conscious level.

On another level, Heidegger would of course reject several of Benjamin’s propositions, at least on their surface level: the mere affirmative embracing of modern technologies of reproduction is not enough, and it is in fact imperative that they be worked through so that their root in *poiesis* and *techne* as modes of presencing is brought to the fore (although Heidegger is silent on how this change could be brought about, he would never claim that any technological medium could transform the world due to its material technicality alone, since the essence of technology is nothing technological, but the presencing of being itself). These differences notwithstanding, it is not unlikely that Heidegger’s meditations on the constellation of art and technology and Benjamin’s reflections on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction can be taken as constituting two parallel responses to the same situation: the homelessness of traditional art in the contemporary world, shaped by technology, mass culture, and a leveling of traditional hierarchies, paired with a desire to think art as instrumental in the regeneration of the modern world, by breaking with traditionally subjectivized modes of value-positing and world-mapping (which for Heidegger leads to an emphatic rejection of the very concept of “value” itself, for Benjamin to an experience of “poverty”). It would be far too simple to say that Benjamin’s answer is simply “progressive,” in its affirmative view of modernity, whereas Heidegger would retreat to a “reactionary” position that merely seeks to reinstate the aura and the quasi-religious dimension of the work of art. Both of

them, and in this respect they follow Hegel, see the dimension of the holy and sacred in art as essentially a thing of the past (Heidegger locates it in the Greek world, Benjamin in the Christian model of contemplation, in the cult object and the relic as an object of meditation in the Middle Ages), and both of them interpret its aestheticized sequel as an historical surrogate for the religious and ritual quality. And finally, both of them view the overcoming of the aesthetic enclosure as the way to a more true social function of the work of art, even if they, at least at first sight, disagree on the nature of this social function. Heidegger seems to locate it in the Greek *polis* and its centered structure, and remains doubtful as to the possibility of retrieving this in late modernity, whereas Benjamin opts for the new mode of collectivity embodied in the emerging mass societies, which, again at first sight, would be a perfect succumbing to all the tendencies Heidegger stigmatized under the rubric of “das Man,” the “They” that renders all things equal, available, and indifferent. It is true that Heidegger remains silent on how a practical efficiency is to be realized, whereas Benjamin’s analysis of the new modes of reproduction endows them with an immediate capacity for bringing about a new cultural formation. According to Benjamin, they disclose a new world characterized by distraction, by shared values and a leveling of hierarchies, which can only be brought about by the liquidation of the value of tradition itself. For Heidegger, this would simply mean to give in to technology without paying heed to its essence; on the other hand Benjamin might retort that any thought of this essence also has to pass through a direct confrontation with precisely the most sophisticated of our current technologies in their materiality if it is not to remain abstract and powerless. In this way, their respective reflections provide correctives to each other, while also cautioning us that truth is not to be gained by simply adding them to each other, or juxtaposing them, but by working through their conflictual positions as one of the aporias opened up by the destruction (*Liquidation*, Benjamin says, whereas Heidegger prefers the word *Destruktion*) of aesthetics.

And finally there is the case of Jünger, who appears to move into a different dimension with his analysis of the Worker. As we have seen, he shares many assumptions with Heidegger, although Heidegger’s



whole attempt to think the essence of technology can be understood as a way to resist the affirmative nihilism of the Worker; also with Benjamin, above all his affirmative stance toward the violent changes wrought upon subjectivity. Jünger brings out, as it were, the violence and will to power latent in both Heidegger and Benjamin, and in this sense, Heidegger's rethinking of technology in the postwar period, which will be the subject of the following chapter, can be understood as a "step back" from the position of *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in order to release the "un-thought" of the earlier work.



# Toward the Essence of Technology

## Heidegger and the Case of Architecture

### *I. The essence of technology: Framing as the final form of metaphysics.*

The question whether Heidegger's meditations on the origin of art ensnare us in a historical loop, always referring us back to a Greek origin whose retrieval in the present seems impossible and foreclosed, in short, whether there is a structural "nostalgia" in his thought, is perhaps far too simple.<sup>1</sup> The structure of repetition or retrieval (*Wiederholung*), which is already at work in *Being and Time*, is no doubt more enigmatic and complex than a simple return, as for instance in the neo-Kantian "zurück zu Kant," and the forms of historical anamnesis practiced in the later work on the basis of the excavation of the "un-thought" (*das Ungedachte*) render such formulas even more doubtful. The meaning of an archaeology of lost origins would just as much have to bear on the determination of the *end* of metaphysics, and on the status of the *contemporary* moment—as fundamentally *geschichtlich*, the question can only to a limited extent take its cues from historiographical accounts, from the *Historie* of philosophy's past monuments.

In order to address this question, and to remain faithful to the orbit of Heidegger's thinking—while nonetheless keeping a certain dis-

1. Which does not mean that "nostalgia" would be a simple und univocal concept, as can be seen by the contributions in Pip Day (ed.): *Once upon a Time: Modernity and its Nostalgias / Érase una vez: la modernidad y sus nostalgias* (forthcoming, 2007).

tance—we will have to pass through the question of the essence of technology in its intertwining with the question of art, which may allow us to understand how modern art, precisely in its irrevocable *modernity*, can provide a dimension within which the end of metaphysics can be experienced in a different way. And this it can do precisely by virtue of what from a more “orthodox” Heideggerian vantage point would appear precisely as its destructive and nihilist qualities, i.e., its very dismantling of the “aura” and everything that for the Heidegger of the 1930s would *seem* to be the essence of “die grosse Kunst.” In the previous chapter we noted the proximity between Heidegger’s essay and Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” and that both of these diagnoses are based on the predominance of *Erlebnis* and a dismantling of the subject, which must be interpreted as a *moment of truth*, and as a form of attunement to technology. Benjamin and Heidegger indeed draw diametrically opposed conclusions from this predicament—but this “diametrical” encounter also cries out for a translation, or perhaps even for a common root that would break forth *as* this very opposition between seemingly “forward-looking” and “backward-looking” modes of thought.

As we will see, the claim that the step beyond the closure of metaphysics in Heidegger’s later work is fundamentally related to technology (*Technik*)<sup>2</sup> does not immediately lead into an empirical analysis of

2. For a brief but lucid discussion of the distinction between technics and technology, cf. Jean-Yves Goffi, *Philosophie de la technique* (Paris: PUF, 1988). The normal acceptance of “technology” would, as Goffi points out, be “technics” (in the sense of practical knowledge inherent in all human activities) as informed and systematized by modern science, which is not wholly foreign to Heidegger’s use of the word *Technik*, although they are surely not the same. The word *Technologie* is in fact seldom used in German, where both aspects seem to be merged in *Technik*; when it is used, however, it often refers to concrete material artifacts (machines, equipment, etc.), as is the case when Heidegger occasionally employs the term. In fact, Heidegger’s conception of *Technik* cuts transversally

modern technological systems in their factual complexity,<sup>3</sup> but rather into what he calls the question of the *essence* of technology, which then, in a second step, proves to be intimately intertwined with the “essential provenance” of the work of art, i.e., its coming to presence *in* and *as* history. In “Die Frage nach der Technik” (1953) Heidegger attempts to show that this essence is itself nothing “technological” (*technologisch*) in the sense of being identical with certain types of industrial production, scientific theories, equipment, machinery, etc.—to use the terminology from *Being and Time*, we might say that it cannot be reduced to any “ontic” model—but must be understood on the basis of the sending of being (*Geschick des Seins*). This means that we should neither embrace nor reject technology, and above all that we should not understand it as something neutral that could be used for any purpose of our own choosing. The interpretation of technology in terms of instrumentality or as a tool for human action is insufficient, first and foremost since it rests on an anthropological metaphysics—man as the *master* and technology as a mere *tool*. If we on the other hand, Heidegger claims, attempt to understand it as a sending of being, i.e., as a way in which the history of meta-

through the distinction technics-technology, since he reconstructs it on the basis of the Greek *techne* which, as we shall see, for Heidegger is neither theory nor practice, nor is it determined as the interplay of scientific generality and practical everydayness, but is conceived of as a, or even the, fundamental way of “letting-presence,” of allowing-to-appear. For the sake of consistency, I will translate *Technik* as “technology” throughout.

3. This lack of empirical detail is undoubtedly one of the fundamental weaknesses of Heidegger’s analysis, although it is by no means certain that a heightened attention to the complexities of moderns “technical systems” would ultimately falsify his theory. The idea of a technical system has been developed by Bertrand Gille; cf. the collective volume *Histoire des techniques* [Paris: Gallimard, 1968]), and linked to Heidegger’s conception of *Ge-Stell* in a productive way by Bernard Steigler, in his *La technique et le temps I: La faute d’Épiméthée* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).

physics comes to an end and exhausts all of its possibilities in a movement of completion and saturation, then we might be able to grasp how technology extends back into the root system of the Greek *techne*, and in this sense constitutes a primordial form of “disclosing” (*Entbergen*). If we understand technology in this way, we can see that it too belongs to the sphere of truth as *a-letheia*—even though this structure of truth and disclosure has indeed changed fundamentally within modernity, since it is no longer a receiving and allowing to come forth, as in the Greek constellation of *physis*, *techne*, and *poiesis*, but an active, volitional positing and challenging, an ordering and pro-vocation (*Herausfordern*), a whole complex of operations that Heidegger will thematize under the concept of *Ge-Stell* (which I here will translate as “Framing”).

Even if modern technology only contains a faint and distorted echo of the originary Greek *techne*, it is essential that this thread back to the origin, no matter how thin it may seem to us today, is never completely cut. In fact, the intention of Heidegger’s meditations seems to be to re-establish this connection, and to do so in order to provide a different perspective on our modernity and our technological world. And that this connection will only come into its own through a certain meditation on the concept of “art,” although now understood as pointing into the sphere of *techne*, rather than into the “aesthetic” system of the modern fine arts, gives an indication of the central function of art in the turning away from metaphysics, even if in a way that severs the term from its current acceptance. It will be through a transformed idea of art, or rather a “constellation of truth” (*Konstellation der Wahrheit*)<sup>4</sup> bringing together art and technology as two modern descendents of the Greek *techne*, that Heidegger will attempt to open up a different relation to the essence of technology and, as a result of

4. “Die Frage nach der Technik,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1964), 35. English translation by William Lovitt as “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), 340. Henceforth quoted as *FT* (German/English).

this, also to determine the essence of thinking in a new way. Thinking in the present must be attuned to technology in terms of its *essence*, although not in the sense of being held captive or overwhelmed by it—the structure of *Geschick* means that technology is indeed *destined*, *sent* to us, but not as a *destiny*—but so as to regain a certain *freedom*. The way beyond aesthetics into art leads through the essence of technology, the way beyond technology into its essence leads through art, and this constellation can only be grasped if we are attentive to the hidden dimension of *techne* that holds sway in both of them.

Just as in the case of poesy in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, where *Dichtung* in the general sense of linguisticity of understanding and not as a particular form of literature permeated all of the other arts, the question of the essence of technology in the 1953 essay once more opens by leading us through language. What do we hear in the word “technology,” Heidegger asks, which are the reverberations in *Technik*? First of all, should we not acknowledge the fact that the normal approach, the “natural attitude” as it were, would indeed be to understand it as an instrument and a tool? And if this is true, in what way does this natural attitude help us to understand the essence of technology? Once more we find a certain similarity to the allure of the 1935 artwork essay, where the essence of equipmentality and of the tool led us toward the truth opened up by the work of art (it was through a meditation on the van Gogh painting that the truth of equipmentality opened up for us): the instrumental interpretation is given at the outset, and we need to *see through* it towards its condition of possibility, instead of simply discarding it.

First of all Heidegger claims, as we have already noted, that the essence of technology is not itself something technological. Other types of understanding—as a means to an end, or as a human doing (*Tun*)—are also rejected as too instrumental and anthropological. It is indeed true that such determinations could be taken as “correct” (*richtig*), but they do not reach the essential or “true,” which is required if we are to have a *free* relation to the essence of technology. This correctness however still provides us with a guiding thread for our questioning, and we have to probe deeper into the relation means-ends if we are to proceed from the merely correct to the true as disclosure: “Only at the point where

such an uncovering happens does the truth appropriate” (“Nur dort, wo solches Enthüllen geschieht, ereignet sich das Wahre”) (*FT*, 7/313). We have to seek the true *through* the correct, and thus we have to start with instrumentality. Instrumentality, Heidegger continues, is the sphere where causes and effects unfold, and where things are done in order to achieve something. But what, then, is a cause? Heidegger delineates the classical Aristotelian fourfold structure: *causa materialis*, *formalis*, *efficiens*, and *finalis*. But why these four types of causes, and what is here meant by “cause”? For us moderns the efficient cause has become predominant, and Heidegger notes that we are barely able to perceive the other three aspects as equiprimordial modes of causality, especially so in the case of the final cause. The Aristotelian conception is essentially different, however: it has nothing to do with “bringing about” (*bewirken*), and in order to avoid such connotations Heidegger translates the Greek word for cause, *aition*, as “that to which something else is indebted” (“das, was ein anderes verschuldet,” 8/314), although we have to keep the moral aspect of this expression away. The efficient cause has no priority here, and Heidegger gives the example of the bringing forth of a silver chalice intended for sacrificial use in the temple: the silversmith does not produce it “as if it were the effect of a making” (9/315), instead he gathers together (*versammelt*) the three other modes of bringing-forth, the *hyle*, the *eidōs*, and the *telos*, in a bringing-to-appear (*zum Vorschein bringen*), which is the movement of *apophainestai*. The silversmith is not a maker or a producer, but someone who gathers together and allows to appear, and does this in a mode of “acting” that cannot be circumscribed by the distinction between the active and the passive voice. This allowing the not-yet-present to presence is traversed by a “Bringen,” Heidegger says, and he cites a phrase from Plato’s *Symposium* that introduces us to the important concept of *poiesis*, which is determined as that kind of *aition* which brings out of non-being and into being (*he gar toi ek tou me ontos eis to on ionti hotooun aitia pasa esti poiesis*).<sup>5</sup>

5. *Symposium*, 205b. *Poiesis*, Stanley Rosen says in his commentary to this passage, “functions as the middle term between cosmic genesis and hu-



*Poiesis*, Heidegger notes, does not just include artisanal or artistic productions, but it also refers to the productive dimension of *physis*. The difference between these two poietic movements is that the products of *physis* come to presence out of themselves, whereas the artisanal product requires *another*, for instance the silversmith, in order to appear. Both of them however bring the not-yet-being into unconcealment, and thus they both belong to *aletheia*, to truth as disclosure and presencing. The decisive conception here seems to be that the movement of *poiesis* is something that the “maker” receives, and to bring about means to guide or allow to appear rather than to put a subjective faculty into play: *poiesis* means to acknowledge what is already there, to draw out of *physis* in a collaborative way rather than as a subjective imposition.<sup>6</sup>

Now, all bringing-forth is rooted in unconcealment (*Unverborgen-*

man *techne*” (*Plato’s Symposium*, [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987], 242).

6. It is curious that Heidegger in his discussions of *techne* in Aristotle to my knowledge always disregards its ties to *mimesis*. In *Physics* B II Aristotle proposes two versions of this link, which have become decisive for all of Occidental thinking precisely on the art-nature nexus. First, it can be said in general that “art imitates nature” (*techne mimetai ten fysin*, 194a 23), but a closer inspection shows that this must be qualified: “In general art appears to complete and bring to its end (*epitelei*) that which nature in general is incapable of achieving (*adynatei apergasasthai*) and in another sense it imitates” (199a 15-16). Man’s *techne* imitates nature, but in this imitation it also gives something back to nature that nature *itself lacks*, that without which it would not be fully itself, which underlines what I above called the “collaborative” aspect. When Heidegger discusses *mimesis*, he normally refers to Plato’s expulsion of the arts in the *Republic*; cf. for instance *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 198-217. For a reading of Heidegger’s somewhat hesitant and reluctant approach to *mimesis*, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, “Typographie,” in *Mimesis des articulations* (Paris. Galilée, 1975).

*heit*), which also includes the structure of means and ends—instrumentality in the wide sense of the term—as the founding trait of technology. The questioning of instrumentality thus leads us back to unconcealment, and all pro-ductive bringing-about has this as its precondition. Just as little as Greek *poiesis* can modern technology be exhausted by the idea of means and ends, but has to be understood as a mode of unconcealment, and thus of *aletheia*, even though it is a highly limited and reductive mode if we compare it to its classical counterpart.

But if our modern concept of technology derives from the Greek *techne*, this does not point exclusively to artisanal and/or industrial objects, but equally to the sphere of what has for us become the “fine arts,” which means that *techne* is itself *poietical*. And furthermore, *techne* does not only exceed practical knowledge, but as we have seen also contains a moment of knowing, of “making true” (*aletheuein*), and the decisive is in fact not the practical aspect of producing, but disclosing. “Technology,” Heidegger summarizes this phase of his argument, “is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens” ( “Technik ist eine Weise des Entbergens. Die Technik west in dem Bereich, wo Entbergen und Unverborgenheit, wo *aletheia*, wo Wahrheit geschieht.”) (*FT*, 13/319)

But in what sense could this apply to modern technology, above all since it has acquired a wholly new relation to the exact natural sciences as the rational substructure of modernity? It is still an unconcealing, although its structure has changed, so that it is no longer a poietical activity as for the Greeks, but a pro-vocation that no longer acts in accordance with nature, no longer completes and fulfils the movement of *physis*, but demands of it that it should provide energy that can be stored, transmitted, and circulated. The old windmill is subjected to the caprices of the wind and climate, whereas the modern power plant lays claim to a mastery over nature. Our activities “pose” (*stellen*) nature, they draw everything into a productive cycle, so that all moments eventually form an interlocking whole, and in this sense they always aim for a totality, for a “technical absolute” that no longer recognizes an outside. The artifices of Framing no longer form

an Other of nature, but arise from a process that aspires to become self-grounding.<sup>7</sup>

Heidegger's most famous example of this is the river Rhine, which now appears as a supplier of electric energy. The power plant is not built into the stream like the old wooden bridge, on the contrary the stream is here "built into" (*verbaut in*) the power plant. A certain "monstrousness" (*das Ungeheure*) holds sway here, Heidegger says, and this we will note if we compare the Rhine as "verbaut in das *Kraftwerk*," and as "uttered by the artwork, in Hölderlin's hymn by that name" ("gesagt aus dem *Kunstwerk* der gleichnamigen Hymne Hölderlins" (15/321). In this passage between the different senses of the work, the work of *power* and *force* and the work of *art*, Heidegger prepares the *constellation* of art and the essence of technology that will be the essay's final proposal.

All of these operations are still to be understood as modes of disclosing, although they now come together in a different way: the cycle of production finds its overriding determination in "steering" (*Steuerung*) and "securing" (*Sicherung*), i.e., in a cybernetic structure aiming for self-regulation and self-reflexivity. Here the structure of disclosure changes: everything becomes a "standing reserve" (*Bestand*) for something else, and thus it can no longer be understood even as "object," i.e., something which stands in a determined *there*, in the firm *over-against* of the *Gegen*, but only as a fluid and infinitely malleable possibility of *productive transformation*. It should be noted that Heidegger's view of technology in this respect does *not* amount to a simplistic theory of the "objectification" of nature, or to a critique of the subject-object dichotomy in the name of some pre-rational unity, as is occasionally presumed (which would somehow attempt to bring us back to the state of *magic*, if we remember Benjamin's discussion), and finally, it should not be interpreted as a pure and simple *rejection* of "instrumental reason." In fact, the structure of objectality has already been dissolved and overcome in Framing, just as the matrix of subjectality

7. For a discussion of the idea of a "technical absolute" in this sense, see Jean-Philippe Milet, *L'absolu technique* (Paris: Kimé, 2000).

(*Subjektivität*, a term that Heidegger uses in order to distinguish sub-jec-tality in general from subjectivity, *Subjektivität*, as consciousness), and instrumentality shows itself as the merely superficial aspect of a more profound structure that demands to be deciphered. All of these terms have become part of the standing reserve, whose operation is precisely to organize, mobilize, and displace, to render transformable and communicable, to initialize cycles of production and reproduction that no longer acknowledge any outside. Extrapolating somewhat from Heidegger's suggestions, we might say that the attempt to make fixed oppositions fluid, the drive towards mutual interpenetration of opposites and their subsumption into a neutral *third* term, is what propels technology forward, and our current fetishism of "information" surely inscribes itself in this lineage.<sup>8</sup> This is why technology cannot be understood on the basis of machines or mere technical innovations. Hegel's definition of the machine as an "autonomous tool" is insufficient, Heidegger claims,<sup>9</sup> since it is based on artisanal production; from the point of view of the standing reserve, the machine is wholly heteronomous, since it is what it is only as a function of the reserve.

The agent of this positioning can not be man as a subject, first and foremost since man has never had *aletheia* at his disposition, and this applies just as much to modern technological disclosure as to the Greek unfolding of being, but also since *man no longer exists in the form of a subject*. Man is himself drawn into the standing reserve, although not merely as a passive respondent, but as the one who is challenged

8. Contemporary theories of information technology, networks, "im-materials" (Lyotard), etc., occasionally revive these Heideggerian themes. I borrow this idea of technology as driven forth by the emphasis on mediation and the insertion of a third term from Lyotard; cf. his essay "L'inhumain," in *L'inhumain. Causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988).
9. Heidegger does not give any precise reference to Hegel, but he is presumably referring to the discussion of how the division of labor renders work more efficient, but also more mechanical and capable of becoming externalized. Cf. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, § 526.

to perform the operations of the reserve, and to carry out its specific mode of unconcealment. Thus he is never just one part among others (tools, machines, raw materials, communications systems, etc.) of the reserve, but the one who is pro-voked to pro-voke. Unconcealment occurs as a sending of being, but only to the extent that man *responds* to it—if it is true that technology is not just a human undertaking, not an instrument for the completion of our projects, then we must add that neither is it simply *without* man: it gathers man as the one who orders, as the “Besteller,” into the *Ge-Stell*. *Ge-Stell*, “Framing,” is Heidegger’s term for that kind of unconcealment that permeates the essence of technology, although it is itself nothing technical, not any kind of machinery or specific technology. *Framing is the name for that which gathers together all the different moments of technology as the unfolding of the metaphysical determinations of being into their final and most ambiguous moment, where both being and man lose all of their traditional determinations.*

However, Heidegger adds, in order to see this gathering-together as a figure of a radical possibility it is also necessary that we in the *Stellen* operative in Framing recognize an echo of the *Her-* and *Darstellen* that formed part of the Greek *poiesis*, otherwise we would lose sight of the fact that both the Greek and the modern moment belong to *aletheia*. In the modern pro-vocation there is still a trace—which as such is not just a remnant, a remainder of what once was, but also an inverted trace of *what is to come*, approaching us from the future—of another possible relation to being, and the meditation on the essence of technology demands of us that we follow this trace in order to re-establish a connection to what on a more straightforward historiographical level would seem irretrievably lost. The setting-up of a statue in the Greek temple and the modern *Stellen* are on the one hand undoubtedly and fundamentally different (*grundverschieden*), and yet they remain related in their essence (*im Wesen verwandt*) (20/326), and this kinship is what opens the possibility of thinking their articulation in a way that directs us beyond the surface of technology (machinery and technical appliances, instrumentality and efficacy) and into its essence, as the ultimate presencing of being within the overarching structure of epochality and withdrawal. To experience the co-implication of the Greek *techne* and Framing is a necessary precondition for experiencing

the end of metaphysics as the *end*, as the final gathering of all the different sendings (as “eschatology,” as Heidegger occasionally says),<sup>10</sup> where all possibilities are brought together, *exhausted from within* as it were, and thus making another relation to this history possible.

10. “The history of being is gathered together in this farewell [*Abschied*]. The gathering in this farewell as the gathering (*logos*) of the utmost (*eschaton*) of its previous essence, is the eschatology of being. As sending (*als geschickliches*), being is itself eschatological.” (“Der Spruch des Anaximander,” in *Holzwege*, *GA* 5, 327). We should however not understand eschatology in the theological sense, Heidegger adds, but rather “in the corresponding sense in which the *Phenomenology of Spirit* should be thought in terms of the history of being.” (*ibid*) Maybe it would be fruitful for the topic here to connect this theme to a rather obscure passage in the essay on Jünger, *Zur Seinsfrage* (in *Wegmarken* [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976], 398), where Heidegger asks the question how we should understand the relation between “pain” and “work” (with reference to Jünger’s two texts “Über den Schmerz” and *Der Arbeiter*). This task, he says, would be nothing less than to think through the unity of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and *Logic*, and to show how absolute negativity is the very power of the concept. The logic of Hegel must for Heidegger be seen in the light of the connection between *logos* and the Greek *algos* (pain), both of which are related to *alego*, as an intensive form of *lego*, the “inner gathering.” Pain as the form of an experience that goes beyond experience, that creates a different form of individuation on the basis of the *Ge-Stell*, could in a certain way be the final and last experience of technological modernity, and although this pain gathers together into the innermost interior, this interior is no longer the inner life of the subject or the mind but of something else. In this sense it can no longer even be understood as *Erlebnis*, but something that from the point of view of subjectivity must appear like free-floating intensities, such as they have been described in some of the writings of Klossowski and Lyotard, which admittedly take their cue from a reading of Nietzsche that is programmatically opposed to Heidegger’s.

Already in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, Heidegger makes use, as if *en passant*, of the notion of *Ge-Stell* in connection with the *Gestalt* of the work of art. “What is here called figure [*Gestalt*] is always to be thought in terms of the particular placing [*Stellen*] and enframing [*Ge-stell*] as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth” (*UdK*, 51/189). In the Addendum, according to Heidegger’s own editorial remark written in 1956, he adds that this *Stellen* is to be thought in the sense of the Greek *thesis*, as “bringing *here* into the unconcealed, bringing *forth* into that which is present, that is, letting lie forth” (70/207). If we juxtapose the two uses, separated by two decades, several questions inevitably arise. The first has to do with how we should understand the very nucleus *Stellen*, and the way it branches out into a whole series of compound expressions which remain operative throughout the artwork essay: *Her-stellen*, *Auf-stellen*, *Zurück-stellen*, or *Setzen*, as in truth putting itself (in)to (the) work (*Ins-Werk-Setzen*)—especially given that the everyday and ontic meanings of these expressions are insufficient. In the Addendum he also returns to this problem from another angle, and notes that there is an implicit contradiction between the claim that art would be both a “fixing” (*Feststellen*) of truth (51/189) and “letting happen of the advent of truth” (*Geschehenlassen der Ankunft von Wahrheit*) (59/197). The first statement implies something like an act of will, a positing that codifies, inscribes, and renders permanent; the second phrase speaks of letting in the sense of a “compliance and thus, as it were, a nonwilling that clears the way for the advent of truth” (*ein Sichfügen und so gleichsam ein Nichtwollen, das Freigibt*) (70/207). This contradiction is dissolved, Heidegger claims, if we grasp that *thesis* neither means to place something before oneself in terms of an egologically defined subject-object positionality (which, we may note, is the basic sense in phenomenology and its “thetic” acts of consciousness), nor the positioning within consciousness as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis that we find in German Idealism from Kant to Hegel. *Thesis* in the sense of “setting” (up and forth) should not be conceived of as a positioning emanating from subjectivity, which is how the concept of *Setzung* was understood within the metaphysics of subjectivity in German Idealism, but as a letting-presence that cannot be reduced to the subjective modes of either activity or passivity.

This terminology comes out of the later work, and it not only points to the role played by *Ge-Stell* in the analysis of technology, but also the role of *Gestalt* in the discussion of Ernst Jünger and modern nihilism in *Zur Seinsfrage*.<sup>11</sup> Starting from Jünger's essay "Die Linie," which wants to diagnose the present as a state of completed nihilism and ask for the conditions for its overcoming, for stepping "over" the line, Heidegger returns to his older reading of *Der Arbeiter* in the '30s and interprets the book as an active nihilism in the wake of Nietzsche, as a fully developed version of the symptom, as it were, but in this sense it partakes of the problem rather than of the solution. In short, if Jünger's descriptions point to the essential dimension of technology, and Heidegger acknowledges the profound influence they have exerted on him, they still do not allow us to think its essence on the basis of Greek metaphysics and the trajectory of being's sending up to Nietzsche and beyond, and consequently even less to assume a *free* relation to it. The "optics" proposed by Jünger, Heidegger says, itself belongs to a technician interpretation of thinking and to the "work-character" of being, and all types of optics and "Gestaltschau" presuppose a clearing (*Lichtung*) that itself cannot be understood as a product of thinking or as an act of will. The language spoken "beyond" nihilism, on the other side of the "line," cannot remain the same, as if the step beyond would simply be a continuation of what has hitherto existed—all of which remains hidden to Jünger, who simply adopts a type of discourse inherited from Nietzsche and filtered through Spengler (who undoubtedly is the immediate source for his use of the concept "Gestalt," even though Heidegger extends its genealogy back to the Platonic *eidōs* and *idea*).

The Gestalt for Jünger is fundamentally a type of humanity, no longer the "egoity" of the I, but the presence of a subjectivity (*Subjektivität*) that Heidegger sees as corresponding to Nietzsche's creation of Zarathustra as a prefiguring of a planetary violence and domination. This

11. The text was first published as "Über die Linie" in a Festschrift to Jünger in 1950, and then in a slightly revised form in *Wegmarken* (see note 10 above). Henceforth cited as *ZS*.



movement, from Zarathustra to the Worker, would then be the final version of modernity, where man is represented as the one who gives the measure and secures all beings in their being, while also showing us that “the essencing (as verb) of man [...] is nothing human” (ZS 391), i.e., that this essence goes far beyond the dimension of subjectivity. Beginning with Descartes, the transcendence of being become a rescendance (*Reszendenz*) that absorbs and collapses the two poles of onto-theology (the highest being and the most general being) until we are left with a pure immanence whose only mode of existence can be the will to power, and where man only meets himself—although he no longer meets himself as the bearer of reason, as the *animal rationale*, but in a certain sense as split between an animality that is more cruel than the merely morally depraved, and a rationality that goes beyond individual experience towards the systemic logic that characterizes the ordering and pro-vocation of the *Ge-Stell*.

Instead of a transgressive movement *beyond* the line (*trans lineam*), a resolute act that would finally make the new type of “humanity” into the subject and master of technology, but that in fact only *completes* metaphysics in its quest for domination and power, Heidegger now calls for a preparatory reflection *on* the line (*de linea*), i.e., a more developed determination (which does not mean a *definition*, as he constantly stresses, since this zone is what blurs all traditional conceptual boundaries) of the zone of nihilism, the “zero meridian” as the phase where all the possibilities of metaphysics is gathered together. Only then can we understand that this line does not delimit a space that would simply extend before us and that we could go beyond, but *passes through man himself* as the receiver of the sending of being. The overcoming of nihilism means to acknowledge that the *nihil* belongs to being itself and that all forms of “turning away” are only possible on the basis of a more fundamental co-belonging of man and being. Jünger indeed says that the moment of the crossing of the line also means a “turn” in being, and that the real here begins to “shimmer” in a different way, but, Heidegger notes, we should not understand being and man as two things that occasionally may turn to (or away from) each other. Even in the turning *away* in its most radical form, in completed nihilism, there is a turning *toward*, and man and being are in the last

instance nothing but two aspects of this turning, for which the duality subject-object remains a wholly inadequate conceptual tool. There is a belonging-together, a calling (*Geheiss*) from presencing (*Anwesen*), which is the real the sense of the question: *Was heisst denken?*

In this sense, nothingness does not simply disappear when we cross the line, rather it shows itself as the nothing that belongs to being itself. But in this, being itself changes into ~~being~~. Such a cross-wise crossing-out (*kreuzweise Durchstreichung*, 405), Heidegger says, is first only meant to ward off the idea of being as *a* being, as a thing, i.e. the tradition of metaphysics, but beyond this it is also a positive sign, since it points into the four regions of the Fourfold (*Geviert*), gods and mortals, earth and heaven, and their gathering in the “site of crossing-through” (*Ort der Durchkreuzung*, 405), a figure whose ramifications we will follow later in the essay on “Building Dwelling Thinking.” As implicated in the movement of “memorial thinking” (*Andenken*) of being as crossed out, man belongs to a more originary calling into the Fourfold, and the negative and positive aspects belong together.

Nothingness too must be written in this way, as ~~nothingness~~, in order to show that man belongs to nothingness as well: he belongs to nihilism as its own “critical zone,” and in this way the line never lies simply ahead of, in front of, before man, and there can be no unequivocal step *trans lineam*. The *topography* of nihilism, Heidegger claims, must be preceded by a *topology* that shows how being and nothingness are gathered together in a folded structure that does not allow for a simple stepping beyond. The overcoming, the *Überwindung* of nihilism as a transcending movement can only take place in the form of a release, a *Verwindung* (416) of the oblivion of being that steps back into the essence of metaphysics.<sup>12</sup> The critical zone opens up where everything

12. For a discussion of the difference between *Überwindung*, which Heidegger for a long time saw as the key word (cf. the essay “*Überwindung der Metaphysik*,” which according to Heidegger draws on notes from 1936-46, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze II*), and *Verwindung*, see Gianni Vattimo, “*Nichilismo et postmoderno in filosofia*,” in *La fine della modernità* (Milan:

has become a standing reserve, and when being shows itself in the form of *Unheimlichkeit* and *Heimatlosigkeit*, when the home and the abode have lost all their traditional determinations and securities. Metaphysics does not allow us to think its essence, it erases the forgetfulness, the trace, etc.—and yet, Heidegger concludes, we have to *build* on this barren site, although what we construct will not be “houses for God or dwellings for the mortals,” instead we have to make do with “building a way” (417): the temple as the opening and installation of a world in *The Origin of the Work of Art* is both far away and close.

This re-reading of Jünger is important, not just because of the final association of building and technology as ways to approach a certain truth that needs to be wrested away from concealment, but also in the sense that we here can detect a certain self-criticism that informs Heidegger’s relation to his earlier work. First, it retroactively shows the extent to which a heroic and voluntaristic terminology is endemic in the artwork essay, in a form removed from the sphere of subjectivity and transposed to another level, which in the later phase can be understood as a *prefiguration* of Framing. Second, and as a consequence of the first step, it opens a passage from the subsequent writings to the earlier, in the sense that the later essay on technology can implicitly look back to the earlier use of *Ge-Stell*, for a guide to the rethinking of the respective domains of art and technology as mutually intertwined. The work of art repeats the Greek notions of *thesis*, *poiesis*, *techne*, etc., and does so in such a way that their original essence comes to shine forth beneath their modern technological interpretation, both of which were still entangled in *Der Ursprung*. The thought of a “constellation of truth,” with art as the saving force hidden within technology, is fundamentally dependent on this connection. Heidegger’s own commentaries in the Addendum are a clear evidence of this (this text was written 1956, three years after “Die Frage nach der Technik”),

Garzanti, 1985). For Vattimo, this is the difference between a modernity that fantasises about a new radical foundation, and postmodernity that accepts the “weakness” of all foundations.

as well as the conclusion to the lecture on technology: “Because the essence of technology is nothing technological, essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it. *Such a realm is art.*” (FT, 35/340, my italics)

We noted earlier that man is neither the passive recipient nor the active “subject” of technology, but rather someone who is placed into Framing as the one summoned forth to undertake and carry out its implications: technology is neither independent of nor wholly dependent on man. For Heidegger this means that it is impossible for us simply to assume another stance or “attitude” towards Framing in retrospect, we can only change our relation to it to the extent that we are already inside of it, caught up in its way of presencing as that which *is*. We are, Heidegger says, sent on a path, a trajectory, we are the recipients of the “sending” of both *poiesis* and Framing as possibilities, and hence our freedom resides in *belonging* to the sphere of the sending in a more intimate and thoughtful way, in becoming attentive to its essence as essencing, and not in a act of will or some type of volitional causality in relation to it (as would be the case in Jünger). Just as truth, freedom belongs to the free and the open, to the “*gelichtete*,” which in its turn is founded on the *Zwiefalt* of *a-letheia* as simultaneously concealing and unconcealing, according to the logic of a certain “veil” (*Schleier*): “Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light (*das lichtend Verbergende*), in whose clearing shimmers the veil that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils. Freedom is the realm of the destining that at any given time starts a revealing on its way.” (FT, 25/330). The sending is in this sense nothing like an unavoidable destiny, rather it is an appeal to our freedom—we are claimed by the sending in such a way that a response becomes possible. There are two possibilities lodged within this sending, Heidegger notes: the first being simply to fulfill the commanding and imposing call, the second to think through the sending so as to become aware of the fact that Framing is only *one* of several ways to think being, and that being’s disclosure both *needs* and *uses* man, in the double sense of “*brauchen*” that Heidegger plays

upon in this context when he talks about “the requisite belonging to revealing” (*die gebrauchte Zugehörigkeit zum Entbergen*) (26/331).<sup>13</sup>

This ambiguity turns every sending into a danger, or perhaps even into *danger itself*: in Framing we stand at the edge of an abyss where man might turn a pure reserve, and where the memory of being is on the verge of becoming obliterated. This is the negative side of Framing, which covers over the possibility of ek-sistence and works towards erasing the memory of *poiesis* in dissimulating its own character as a process of disclosing. But given the duplicity of this utmost danger, we must be wary of demonizing technology, Heidegger cautions us, and instead we should meditate on the “secret of its essence” as *simultaneously* danger and promise, and he cites the two lines from Hölderlin’s hymn *Patmos* that will resonate throughout his whole thinking technology: “Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch.”

For this protective dimension to be saved, we require the movement of a “memorial thinking” (*Andenken*) able to step back into the essence: from the instrumental to the causal, then to the sending of unconcealing, and finally to the “granting” of openness in the sending itself, which “uses” man so that he may perform his part in unconcealing. The essence of technology must remain ambiguous, since it points to the “secret” of disclosure, to the duplicity of truth. The two moments, Heidegger claims, are like two astral trajectories both nearing and withdrawing from each other, just as (aesthetic) art and (instrumental) technology must seem infinitely at odds *and* yet intimately intertwined at the line separating completed nihilism from the other beginning.

Thus there is a fundamental analogy between the dismantling of aesthetics, which was undertaken already in the essay on the origin of the work of art, and the release of technology from the instrumentalist interpretation, in that they both point toward the constellation of truth: the closer we come to the essence of *technology*, Heidegger sug-

13. For Heidegger’s understanding of “Brauch,” cf. “Der Spruch des Anaximander,” *Holzwege*, 362 ff, where the term is derived from Anaximander’s *to chreon*, normally translated as “necessity.”

gests, the more enigmatic *art* becomes, and the only way to experience this constellation is to abide within the movement of questioning, which is, as the final words of the essay read, “the piety of thought” (*die Frömmigkeit des Denkens*, 36/341).

It is on the basis of the unity of *techne*, which comprises both our (aesthetic, subjectivist) “art” and our (instrumentally and/or anthropologically interpreted) “technology,” that art may become a countermove to Framing—memorial thinking, in its retro-activating, de-sedimenting, and archeologically reconstituting strategy, needs to find the common ground for that which in the conceptual diaspora of late modernity appears as free-floating notions devoid of inner relations. And the inner relation between art and technology is essential for this move: rooted in *techne*, they have within post-Cartesian modernity come under the rule of instrumentality and aesthetics, which is reflected in the tension between the memory of the Greek *thesis* and the pro-vocative machinations of the *Ge-Stell*. Thinking through this constellation, understanding it as a sending, would then begin to open a free relationship to their common history, and to the secret hidden in it.

In all of this, many interpreters have wanted to see an unmistakable proximity to a romantically tinted critique of technological modernity, but there is also an essential *distance* from such a critique that needs to be accounted for. When Heidegger in the seminar on “Zeit und Sein” (1962), talks of Framing as a “Janus-head,”<sup>14</sup> the emphasis lies on the constellation, on the dual nature of the figure and its capacity to become a passage: completed nihilism, where being appears as nothing, has to be traversed as the desert that it is, and the

14. “Between the epochal forms of being and the transformation (*Verwandlung*) of being into *Ereignis* stands the *Ge-stell*. This is like a station in-between (*Zwischenstation*), it offers a double face, it is, so we could say, a Janus-head. For it can still as it were be understood as a continuation of the will to will, thus as the most extreme imprinting (*Ausprägung*) of being. At the same time it is a preliminary form (*Vorform*) of the *Ereignis* itself.” (*Zur Sache des Denkens* [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976], 56 f).

only way leads ahead, never back to any kind of lost origin. It is only when all the epochal transformations have been exhausted and we are faced with the final and utmost concealment of being that we are set free from the metaphysical quest for foundations and security—when metaphysics, as it were, deconstructs its own authority by being fully realized. In *Identität und Differenz* (1957) Heidegger points to this dimension even more clearly: in the *Ge-Stell* man loses all of his metaphysical determinations—*zoon logon echon*, *animal rationale*, subject, spirit, will, etc.—and we enter into an “oscillating domain” (*schwingenden Bereich*) where being and man can encounter each other once more. This domain is indeed an abyss as long as we understand it through “representational thinking” (*vorstellendes Denken*), but not insofar as we leap, not insofar as we dare to perform the act that equates the *Satz* of the “principle of identity” (*Satz der Identität*) with the “leap” (*Satz*) out of metaphysics, and thus takes leave of the whole project of thinking as security, which is one of the essential traits of the self-reflexive and “steering” structure of the *Ge-Stell*.<sup>15</sup>

This aspect gets wholly lost if we interpret Heidegger’s thought as merely a *critique* of technology, or as a romantic rejection of alienation. As the descendant of Platonic eidetics, Cartesian subjectivity, and Nietzschean will to power, Framing is the (pen)ultimate and unavoidable way in which being gives itself as thinkable, as the final horizon of thought *within* metaphysics. The way out of the reign

15. “The *Ereignis* is the in-itself oscillating domain through which man and being reach one another in their essence, attain their essencing (*ihr Wesendes*), in losing those determinations that have been bestowed upon them by metaphysics [...] *Ereignis* appropriates (*ereignet*) man and being in their essential togetherness. A first and distressing lighting up of the *Ereignis* can be seen in the *Ge-Stell*. This constitutes the essence of the modern technological world. In the *Ge-Stell* we see the belonging together of man and being, where the letting-*belong* is what first determines the mode of togetherness and its unity.” (*Identität und Differenz* [Pfullingen: Neske, 1957], 26 f).

of technicity cannot be to reject it, or to entertain fantasies about a world before “objectification,” but can only lead through a memorial thinking that approaches the essence of technology as coming to as from the future just as much as from the past: the sending of openness that is being’s unfolding emanates from early Greek thinking and reaches its final stage at the completion of modernity, but then, as if in a strange fold in being and time, it also allows us to return to the beginning as an *other* or *second* beginning (*andere Anfang*), lodged within the first and yet in need of having passed through the epochal sequence in order to be given to thought.

## II. *Thinking architecture*

One of the decisive questions that surface in the later work of Heidegger bears on the possibility of an essential change in our relation to space and to location, to the world and our way of inhabiting it. In certain respects Heidegger here revives some of the phenomenological analyses in *Sein und Zeit* of being-in-the-world, equipmentality, care, and being-unto-death, but he also does so in such a way as to allow us to see the path traversed from the 1920s. This new type of reflection comes across most clearly in the essay “Bauen Wohnen Denken” (first presented as a lecture in 1951),<sup>16</sup> where Heidegger begins by addressing an urgent and concrete situation, i.e., postwar homelessness and housing shortage, although he interprets it on the basis of his understanding of technology and nihilism. The purpose of the lecture is neither sociological, nor to develop a philosophy or an aesthetic of architecture, Heidegger underlines (even though it has undoubtedly exerted a massive influence in this particular field).<sup>17</sup> Instead, it wants

16. In *Vorträge und Aufsätze* II, 19–36. English translation by Albert Hofstadter as “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in *Basic Writings*. Cited as *BWD* (German/English).

17. For a discussion of the original context of the essay, see Ignasi da Solà-Morales, *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture*, transl. G.



to direct us back to a set of more fundamental questions that are already presupposed in both of these previous types of discourse: *how should we understand the nature of dwelling, in what sense does building belong to dwelling, and how do they come together in a new understanding of thinking?*

Heidegger first acknowledges that not all buildings can be considered as dwellings on the typological level, and yet they are all located in the sphere of a dwelling that has to be understood in a much wider sense of being “at home” in the world, and in this sense modern technical facilities and improvements do not guarantee that a true dwelling takes place. Should building and dwelling then be seen as *means* and *end*? Proceeding along the same line as the critique of instrumentality in “Die Frage nach der Technik,” Heidegger notes that this is indeed “correct” (*richtig*), but that it does not reach the essence: building must itself already be informed by a more essential dwelling, which is the foundation of all structures of means and ends, just as the movement of letting-appear proved to be the hidden foundation of instrumentality.

Even more than the essay on technology, this text provides us with a whole series of examples of the peculiar etymological strategies that permeate Heidegger’s later works, and that often seem to take the place of the phenomenological method as a way of “showing.” But it also provides the idea of language as the “house of being” and the recurring image of “building” with a particularly concrete dimension, and articulates them with technology in a more direct way. Building and dwelling, Heidegger first suggests, are intertwined at their very origin, and the word “bauen” leads us back to *Buan*, which means to “dwell” (*wohnen*), to remain, to abide, traces of which are contained in the word “neighbor” (*Nachbar*). Dwelling is not just one among other comport-

Thompson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1997), 94 f. A work that was central in spreading Heidegger’s ideas in the architectural debate was Friedrich Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum* (Stuttgart: Kollhammer, 1963). For a discussion of Heidegger’s views in the context of both classical and modernist architectural theory, see Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1997), 136-165.

ments: it originally means to be, or “I am” (“Ich bin”) thought in terms of finitude. *I am* means *I dwell* as a finite, mortal being. We are on the earth as *das Buan*, in terms of dwelling: to be is to dwell as a mortal, and as we will see, mortal beings inversely exist in terms of something like an originary building. But “Bauen” also means to preserve and cultivate (to “till the soil,” as in the expression “den Acker bauen,” 21/349), i.e., to protect that which will come forth of itself (*physis*). Building signifies to care for and cultivate (*colere, cultura*) just as much as to construct buildings (*aedificare*), and both are implied in dwelling as equiprimordial moments. This connection however eventually becomes something that we get accustomed to, something we passively “inhabit” (it becomes something “gewohntes”), and this is one of the reasons why the unity of these senses becomes forgotten. Building is no longer experienced as the being of man, because of a certain *withdrawal of language*, which however indicates its essential and originary role. Language “keeps silent,” Heidegger says, and the fundamental problem is that we do not pay heed to this *silence*: we do not acknowledge the forgetting of the forgetting, the structure of *a-letheia* as necessary for the advent of truth.

We cannot say what building is if we lose sight of the fact that every building is a dwelling. But what, then, is dwelling? To dwell means to *be in peace*, to be safe, or to be *protected*. To protect or *spare* (*schonen*) is then not just to ward off a danger, but must be seen as a positive act: to leave something in its essence, as when we peacefully enclose (*ein-frieden*) something in its essence: “To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain in peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence” (23/351). The basic trait of dwelling, Heidegger suggests, is protecting in this sense of *schonen*.

But to protect the earth also means to be inserted into a larger structure, and this is where Heidegger introduces the idea of the “Fourfold,” which we earlier located as the positive aspect of cross-wise crossing-out *of* and crossing-over *into* ~~Being~~ in *Zur Seinsfrage*.<sup>18</sup> To

18. The origin of this concept is often located in Hölderlin; for Heidegger’s analysis of this motif, see, among many texts, “dichterisch wohnet der

be on the *earth*, Heidegger claims, means to be under the *heavens*, and to abide in such a way means to remain before the *gods* and to belong to the community of *men*. Dwelling is an originary unity of earth and heaven, gods and mortals, which together make up the Fourfold. In this structure earth is the rising and appearing out of itself, *physis*,<sup>19</sup> the heavens are the circular path of sun, moon, stars, etc., the gods are the “sign-making” (*winkend*) messengers of divinity, from out of whose power (*walten*) God appears or withdraws, and finally the men are the mortals, since they are capable of dying. The mortals *receive* the heavens, they *abide* by the gods as gods and their signs, and they *guide* their own essence unto death.

The mortals belong to this fourfolded structure because they dwell, and in this they *protect* the fourfold in its essence. To dwell is to *save* (*retten*) the earth, to let it free into its essence, and here we recognize

Mensch...,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze II*, and “Hölderlins Erde und Himmel,” in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, GA 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1996). For a thorough analysis of Heidegger’s sources, which also traces the theme back to his reading of Aristotle (through Brentano) and Kant, see Jean-François Mattéi, *De Heidegger à Hölderlin: La quadriparti* (Paris: PUF, 2001).

19. Even though the dimension of *physis* remains, we can here see how the earth no longer stands opposed to the world, as in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, and the violence and power of the “Riß” and the “installation” that always had to overcome the self-concealment and withdrawal of the earth, now tend to be absorbed into a more peaceful and “reflexive” mode, in several senses of the term. In the essay “Das Ding” (1950) Heidegger suggest that thinking means to receive the Fourfold as a “mirror game” (*Spiegelspiel*), and that it should no longer be understood as an originary *projection*, but rather like a way of being *inserted* into the world, as a play or game in which human existence would be more like a *re-projected* moment, a *re-flexion*. For a discussion that attempts to reconstruct this in terms of a post-metaphysical “system of earth and heaven,” cf. Mattéi, *De Heidegger à Hölderlin*, 189-255

the danger and the saving power in Hölderlin's poem (although Heidegger here somewhat cryptically refers this understanding of "das Rettende" to Lessing, cf. 24/352). But this dwelling should above all be understood as abiding among *things*, which is not a fifth and supplementary moment added to the other four, but in fact the very center of the Fourfold. *Dwelling protects the fourfold by bringing its essence into things*. But in order to do this, things will have to be released or set free as *things* (i.e., not as objects of representational and calculating thinking), and this is the task of building: to make edifices is building in the narrower sense, whereas dwelling brings the fourfold into things, and in this sense it is building in the more fundamental sense.

What, then, is such a built thing? Just as in the essay on technology, Heidegger uses a bridge as example, and he suggests that it does not just connect the two sides of the river, but in fact allows the banks to appear as such. It gathers the earth as a landscape, sets the river free in its course, and gives a path to the mortals in many different ways: the bridge gathers the Fourfold of earth and heavens, gods and mortals. This gathering is what Heidegger proposes as the originary sense of "thing": not a symbolic dimension added afterwards or even an originary symbolism, but the thing as the very event of coming-together. We have a far too narrow view of the thing's essence when we understand it as an *x* endowed with different qualities, for instance symbolic and aesthetic values (Heidegger here repeats some of the criticisms directed at the traditional thing-conception in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, but also points to themes developed the year before in the essay "Das Ding"), since such an understanding of the thing always makes the gathering appear as a secondary aspect.

This creation of things as gatherings gives the fourfold a free place, a sanctuary, but only that which itself is an "locale" (*Ort*) can achieve this, and provide the bridge with a "site" (*Stätte*). The locale is not simply there *before* the bridge, although there are different "spots" (*Stellen*), and what the bridge does, is to transform one of them into an locale. This *spacing* is what gives space as a defined order. The very word *Raum*, Heidegger proposes, must first be understood as the clearing of a place for a settlement, as a way of defining a limit that does not primarily signify *end* or *cessation*, but just as the Greek *peras* constitutes

that from which essence unfolds, as is also indicated by the Greek word for limit, *horismos*.<sup>20</sup>

Spaces are built up by such singular and individuated locales, instead of being derived from an all-encompassing space in general. The bridge forms a locale not by being located in an *a priori* determined mathematical-geometric space, but by presencing as that which allows space to unfold around itself as a signifying order. Building, then, must be understood as a way to receive and articulate this primordial nexus of sites and spaces, and not as the placing of an artifact into an indifferent space-receptacle: it forms and gives constancy to the relation between locale and space, but also between locale and man.

The first relation between locale and space suggests that there is a certain order of derivation and foundation at work here, even though Heidegger's shifting vocabulary, which attempts to account for the double quality of each term (its originary sense *and* the possibility of its mathematical interpretation) makes this somewhat difficult to follow. The places (*Plätze*) in the space installed by the bridge can be understood as "mere positions" (*blosse Stellen*, 29/357), as pre-existing spatial points separated by a measurable distance (as in the Greek concept of *stadión*). This would be something like an interspace, the in-between of a *spatium*, and it is the condition for the transformation of proxim-

20. For Heidegger's interpretation of *peras*, see for instance the chapter on "Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins," in *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), where the example he gives is precisely a building. The limit is a completion that gathers the becoming into a rest, which is not the cessation of the thing (as in the Cartesian *forma*), but its *telos*: "The house that stands over there *is*, to the extent that it is *exposed* in its outward look (*Aussehen*), exposed in unconcealment, and stands in this outward look. Standing, it rests, rests in the out- of this outward look. The resting of that which is produced is not nothing, but a gathering. It has in itself gathered all the movements that produce the house, completed them in the sense of a completing delimitation—*peras, telos*—and not of a mere cessation. Rest preserves the completion of that which is moved." (404).

ity and remoteness into metric distances. From this perspective the bridge may appear as situated at a particular “position” in an indifferent spatium. In the next step these three dimensions can be further abstracted and made into a pure manifold, the *extensio* that we find in different versions from Descartes through Leibniz to Kant. And finally, this can be abstracted once more into a space with  $n$  dimensions, the most abstract of intelligible spaces where there are no more spaces and places, no locales or things like bridges. This always present possibility of mathematization should however not be understood as the condition of possibility of spatiality as such, but inversely all types of idealizations of space, such as the one carried out in the history of geometry from Thales and Euclid to contemporary axiomatic constructions, have their basis in pre-objective space.<sup>21</sup>

This order of foundation however requires that we do not understand the pre-objective in the sense of something subjective; primary space does not belong to the interiority of mind, to a psychology. Psychic space is in fact just as much an abstraction from primary space as is the mathematized Cartesian *res extensa*. Man and space do not stand over against each other, and space is neither internal nor external, but

21. Heidegger’s argument to a certain extent here runs close to Husserl’s in *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, with the essential difference that Heidegger will reject any return to a constituting subjectivity as the origin of geometric or other types of idealities. For a commentary that brings Husserl closer to many Heideggerian themes, above all the “earth” (the “earth as originary arche,” as Husserl calls it) as the unthematizable background for all thematic acts, cf. Jacques Derrida, *L’origine de la géométrie de Husserl* (Paris: PUF, 1962), sec. 6. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty found in these late notes by Husserl a passage toward a questioning of the ground of science influenced by Heideggerian motifs, cf. *Notes de cours sur l’Origine de la géométrie de Husserl*, ed Reynaud Barnabas (Paris: PUF, 1998). For a general history of space and place that adopts a phenomenological perspective, see Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

most be understood in terms of the “stay” (*Aufenthalt*) in the Fourfold with the thing (and we can see the extent to which this vocabulary says the “same” as the “being-in-the-world” of *Being and Time*, with the difference that the whole structure is seen from the vantage point of the *world as a whole*, as it were). We do not represent outer spatial relations in an inner mental space, but when we think of the bridge in Heidelberg, thinking “persists” or “stands” through (*durchsteht*) the distance: we are over there, by the bridge, and not by a representational content in our consciousness. Spaces, Heidegger contends, are contained within the sojourn or mortals, and as the ones that dwell they are able to stand, persist, and walk through space, instead of being self-contained and sealed-off bodies.

Already in *Being and Time* we find a similar analysis where the world of utensils and circumspection and its existential spatiality forms the basis for any metric interpretation of space, and where a first proximity of Dasein to itself provides the source of secondary distances and nearness in the structure of *Ent-Fernung*. Space is always understood on the basis of Dasein’s involvement and projects, and Heidegger also gives examples drawn from architecture, for instance when we enter into an office and not just observe a volume enclosed by walls, but a certain whole structured like a “physiognomy,” since we always perceive it on the basis of a *task*. Similarly, in a formulation reminiscent of Le Corbusier’s “living machine,” Heidegger says that the spatiality of the habitat is disclosed to us a particular “Wohnzeug.”<sup>22</sup> Things and spaces are first and foremost practical, and they only acquire sense in relation to Dasein’s various activities, which in their turn are unified only on the basis on a temporal projection.

When Heidegger in the later works returns to these issues and says that the attempt in *Being and Time* to “derive the spatiality of Dasein from temporality is untenable,” and that we can only think the rela-

22. For this connection, see Maria Villa-Petit, “Heidegger’s Conception of Space,” in Christopher Macann (ed.): *Critical Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 1996), 140.

tion between space and Ereignis if we “understand the provenance of space from the sufficiently thought peculiarity of the *Ort*,”<sup>23</sup> then we can begin to take measure of how the theme of building and dwelling transforms the theme of being-in-the world. In *Being and Time* and other texts from the same period Heidegger sometimes discusses the “spreading-out” or “dispersal” (*Streuung*) of Dasein as a precondition for the splitting up of space in places, sites, and directions, and his argument constantly refers to a necessary subjection of spatial multiplicities to a unity in the project of sense as temporal. The “Auseinander” of places, their being “apart” as *partes extra partes* is always understood against a horizon that holds them together, since space as such is seen as essentially incapable of holding together: “Pure space is still concealed,” Heidegger writes, and “space is split up in the different places,” but in the Anhang he later adds a marginal note: “No, precisely a specific and non-scattered unity of places.”<sup>24</sup>

It is this specific unity that Heidegger now attempts to describe in the Fourfold, to which man belongs in the most intimate way—even psychological states such as depression, he notes, sever us from our relation to things, and they can only cease to approach us because we sojourn among them. This relation between man, space, and thing, is dwelling thought in its essence.

To build, then, would be to produce such things that “allow” and “install” the fourfold, and that allow *spacing* to occur. Since building is an institution and joining of locales, *spatium* and *extensio* too necessarily come into play in building, and with them whole dimension of metrics and measurement, but just as little as in the derivation of spaces can we say that the possibility of a mathematical description is what *founds* the order. On the contrary building receives its “guidance” (*Weisung*) and the measures for its metrics from the unity of the

23. “Zeit und Sein,” in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976), 25.

24. “Der bloße Raum ist noch verhüllt. Der Raum ist in die Plätze aufgesplittert.” (§ 22, 104). And the Anhang: “Nein, gerade eine eigentümliche und ungesplitterte Einheit der Plätze.” (442)



Fourfold.<sup>25</sup> This building is a “letting-dwell” (*Wohnenlassen*) that responds to the call of the fourfold, and all “planning” and calculation has its roots in this call.

This is the true foundation of pro-ducing, bringing-forth: we perceive it as an activity that would have a particular result, an edifice, and although this is indeed “correct,” it does not attain the true essence, which is a bringing-here that brings forth (*Her-vor-bringen*), i.e. brings the Fourfold into a thing (for instance, the old wooden bridge). Thus we can also see how the Greek *tikto*, the “joining-together” that lies at the origin of archi-*ecture* and shares the same root (-*tec*) as *techne* points to a dimension of *presencing* hidden inside the “tectonics” of architecture that goes beyond mere fabrication. Just as little as in the case of technology does the essence of archi-*ecture* lead us back to something technological, but to a gathering, joining-together, and assembling that is a letting-presence and a letting-dwell, which is still at work in late modernity, although in the almost fully inverted and obscured form of a *refusal* of dwelling. The example Heidegger gives, an old farmhouse in the Black Forest—which is reminiscent of the description of van Gogh’s painting in *Der Ursprung* in its “nostalgic” tone—in fact shows this *a contrario*. It is indeed true that the rural and peasant mode of life in its simplicity, its *Einfalt*, is a way to let the Fourfold presence that saves and protects the elements and allows the

25. Heidegger here seems to repress, with an arbitrary and unjustifiable violence, the whole tradition of architectural thought that draws on mathematics, geometry, the “perfect measure,” etc., from Vitruvius and onwards, and to some extent this is no doubt true. On the other hand, the mathematical basis of the whole system of the orders was always more or less metaphorical and symbolical, and it was only when this symbolism was erased that a modern “scientific” conception of calculation could come to the fore, roughly at the turn between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in the theory of Durand, as has been argued by for instance Alberto Pérez-Gomez, in his *Architecture and the Crisis of the Modern Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1983).

cycles of life to unfold in accordance with the rhythms of *physis*, but there is no way, and Heidegger is unequivocal on this point, that we could ever *go back* to this condition; however, through this historical example, we can show how such a dwelling was *once* able to build, as a reminder for thought. The point is not to provide aesthetic examples or models to be imitated, but to once more render dwelling worthy of questioning—and especially so since thinking itself belongs to dwelling. Both of them are indispensable, but insufficient if they are carried out in isolation, and only a thought that somehow builds an abode for man, and a building that is able to think itself in terms of such a dwelling, will allow us to experience the present to the fullest extent, also in terms of the *refusal* of world, dwelling, and building, that appears as the characteristic of the present.

But what is the present, and how should we measure its depth? If it is true that what characterizes our contemporaneity more than anything else is the absence of dwelling and building, the withdrawal of language, and the ubiquity of Framing, what task does this pose for thinking? There is indeed a crisis in housing, Heidegger notes (and we should remember the context the lecture, a conference dealing with the restructuring of Germany after the second World War), but the fundamental need or distress (*Not*) is something else, it is older than the devastations of modernity, and stems from the fact that mortals always and everywhere have to learn how to dwell. Homelessness, Heidegger proposes in a typical and seemingly insensitive gesture that leaps out of the current situation towards his own interpretation of the history of metaphysics, means that man does not think the need for housing as *the need* itself, the constitutive “turning in need” that belongs to Dasein as such. Thought in this way, homelessness is not just a misery, but the address that calls the mortals into dwelling, that calls us to build and think in relation to dwelling, and thus renders it worthy of questioning.

In one of his last texts, “Die Kunst und der Raum” (1969),<sup>26</sup> Hei-

26. “Die Kunst und der Raum,” in *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, GA 13, 206.

degger picks up a thread that once more leads all the way back to *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, above all to the relation between art and truth, but now also in terms of the texts on building and dwelling, and he poses the explicit question of how this truth relates to the spatiality of the work. Should we understand the work of art, and more precisely the plastic arts that here constitute the guiding example, as a “confrontation” (*Aus-einander-Setzung*), a debate or a settling of the account with already given conceptions of space? In a certain sense this can *not* be the case, if we accept that modern space is irrevocably correlated to modern science and subjectivity as it has developed from Galileo and Descartes up to the present. If the work of art should open up *another* spatiality, it cannot remain locked in a simply adversary relation to this type of space, but has to situate itself on another and more originary level, and perhaps it cannot even ground or found derived and idealized spatialities, as was proposed in the earlier essay on building and dwelling. The space of the artwork cannot be the same as that of science, since this would entail that the truth of the work is secondary, and at best it might provide an interpretation of or commentary on a pre-given spatial order, never an originary happening of truth.<sup>27</sup> Hei-

Henceforth cited in the text with pagination. This brief essay was originally conceived in dialogue with the work of the Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida; for a discussion of this encounter and Chillida’s work, cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Bild und Technik* (Munich: Fink, 2002), 225-31.

27. Characteristically enough, Heidegger here seems to exclude another possibility, just as obvious and from the art-historical point of view much more relevant, i.e., that art in many cases anticipates conceptions of space that science and/or philosophy will only conceptualize at a later stage. The paradigmatic case of this is of course the invention of the central perspective, which was worked out from Alberti’s *De pictura* (1435) and onwards as a practical and operationally oriented method for determining pictorial space, and whose mathematical and metaphysical implications were not developed until two hundred years later, first by Girard Desargues and the by Descartes. Art history undoubt-

degger writes: “If we admit that art is the way in which truth becomes a work, and if truth means the disclosure of being, then must not also in the works of visual arts the measure be true space, that which is uncovered in the ownmost of this space?” (206). Originary space is uncovered in the artwork and not in a scientific calculus, and this is why the work has a privileged relation to truth, even if no longer in the sense of being able to install a *world*, but more in the sense of pointing to other possibilities in the *margins* of this world.

Space must be understood as an *Urphänomen* (with a term that Heidegger borrows from Goethe), it cannot be derived from something else (for instance Dasein’s temporality), it is neither subjective nor objective, but transcends, or rather precedes, this alternative—and, Heidegger adds in a curious twist in the argument, this impossibility of turning away from the phenomenon toward something else is what produces *anxiety*. In this way space here assumes the same role and being-towards-death in *Sein und Zeit*, i.e., to lead us back to our constitutive finitude, and it does so by reducing the mathematical conception of space as a metric extension.

The reduction of objective space does neither lead us back to the transcendental-phenomenological subject as the constitutive origin of spatiality, nor to the “spacing” of Dasein’s *Ent-Fernung*, both of which continue a tradition that derives space from a more profound temporal interiority. Heidegger leads us toward another origin, and opens a

edly unfolds on a plane different from philosophy and science, and yet they are profoundly entangled, even though we need a certain historical distance in order to discern their more precise interrelation. For this second type of interpretation, cf. for instance Hubert Damisch, *L’origine de la perspective* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993); for a Heideggerian reading of the invention of perspective that interprets it as a “loss of world,” cf. Gottfried Boehm, *Studien zur Perspektivität* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1969). Desargues’ work as a mathematician and architect is discussed in Marcel Chaboud and René Taton, *Girard Desargues, bourgeois de Lyon, mathématicien, architecte* (Lyon: Aléas, 1996).

discussion with Aristotle's *Physics* and its analysis of space and place in terms of *topos*. For Aristotle *topos* always signifies a particular place, and there is no idea of a general and empty space in which places would be located. Place is not defined in terms of a system of coordinates, but belongs to the thing itself as its "surrounding," that which holds the thing and encloses it, and yet it somehow precedes the thing—it is located at the surface of the thing, but is different from its material limit. Place for Aristotle is at the same time a surface, a vessel, and a container. The question of course immediately arises how we should understand this reference to ancient Greek space conceptions. Aristotle's *Physics* may indeed be, as Heidegger says in another context, "the hidden basic book of Western metaphysics,"<sup>28</sup> but in what sense can its analyses of place and space still give orientation to our modern thinking, which is irrevocably situated at the other side of the Galilean-Cartesian mathematical paradigm (and for which the difference between sub- and superlunary mechanics that guides Aristotle's thought has ceased to be of any importance)? For Heidegger there remains something in Aristotle that is still unexplored and that contemporary plastic art, and above all sculpture, should develop, a rest or reserve that has remained unthought below or between the ideal objects of science, and to think and give form to this, either in art or in philosophy, would be the first and indispensable step toward connecting building and dwelling within the frame of a new experience of space.

Art, Heidegger proposes, should be seen as an "embodiment" (*Verkörperung*) of this primordial, pre-objective space, and show the process of "spacing" (*Räumen*). This spacing should however not be understood as the result of an activity, but as an event that allows locales and directions to emerge, and in this sense it is a kind of "letting" (*Lassen*) that gathers something "free" around itself, and establishes a first relation between man and thing: "Sculpture would be the embodiment of locales that by opening and preserving a region

28. "Vom Wesen und Begriff der Physis: Aristoteles Physik B 1," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 312.

holds something free assembled around itself, something free that allows the different things to abide, and men to dwell among things.” (“Die Plastik wäre die Verkörperung von Orten, die, eine Gegend eröffnend und sie verwahrend, ein Freies um sich versammelt haben, das ein Verweilen gewährt den jeweiligen Dingen und ein Wohnen dem Menschen inmitten der Dinge.”) (208) Art is one, or perhaps the fundamental way in which we can get access to space and world—but only insofar as art is situated outside of all traditional (or, as the reference to Aristotle seems to indicate: all modern scientific) conceptions of space and place, resists being thematized within the already formed spatiality of the world, and finally escapes all *naming*. What is named by the term “volume” is still dependent on a vocabulary of limits and surfaces, insides and outsides, and would have to “lose its name,” and “the qualities of plastic embodiment that seek locales and form locales would first remain nameless” (“Die Orte suchenden und Orte bildenden Charaktere der plastischen Verkörperung blieben zunächst namenlos,” *ibid*). This space is only accessible *via negativa*, and thought must admit its *powerlessness* in the face of the work. As “the embodiment of the truth of being in its work of instituting places” (“Verkörperung der Wahrheit des Seins in ihrem Orte stiftenden Werk,” *ibid*), sculpture can only become the object of waiting, listening, and meditation, and we cannot say that the task of thought would be to produce a “concept” of the space granted by the work, only that thought must allow itself to be guided by this work and its space, which thought in its turn inhabits as the condition of its own possibility within the constellation of building, dwelling, and thinking.

There is also an important sense in which this condition of sculpture and all plastic art in general is specifically modern. Heidegger suggests that all building and dwelling is characterized by the opposition between *Heimlichkeit* and *Unheimlichkeit*, between a rootedness in the home and an uncanny un-grounding. In the sites of modernity this appears above all in the loss of the sacred dimension, the flight of the gods: modernity is a double loss of place and abode that has to be acknowledged and worked through by sculpture, as if it were a kind of vicarious spatiality, a pre-figuring mode of thought for which namelessness is also a quality of time and an expectancy that must face the

risk of being *empty*: “Spacing is a setting-free of locales where a god appears, of locales where the gods have fled, of locales where the arrival of the gods will not occur for a long time” (206). The namelessness of art would then be readable as a contemporary condition: at the end of metaphysics, inside those spaces opened up Framing, art must lose its name (together with man, reason, animality, etc.), all of its aesthetic (and thus metaphysical) determinations, in order to prepare for another constellation of work and truth. The question then arises what kind of truth this would be—can there be a truth of art in an age determined by technology and Framing, by the collapse of the world that once allowed “great art” to flourish? In short: is there a place in Heidegger’s thought for an authentic work of art in the age of its mechanical reproducibility, to use Benjamin’s phrase? In order to situate this question, if not resolve it, we must once more return to the issue of building and dwelling, this time in the different and more concrete perspective provided by contemporary architectural theory.

### *III. Three ways of reading Heidegger*

Heidegger’s meditation on space and place, on building, dwelling, and thinking can and have indeed been interpreted in radically divergent ways. In order to get a sense of this diversity, I have here selected three different interpretations for scrutiny, which each in their respective way spell out certain latent implications in Heidegger’s texts, no doubt also exaggerating them in a one-sided fashion, but in this also sharpening our perception of the productive tensions that they harbor when read as an analysis of our modern condition.

These three types of interpretations (as well as the trajectory we have followed in this chapter) are all based on questions of the spatial arts, architecture and architectural theory, which may seem objectionable on two grounds: why should we at all step out of the sphere of thinking into one specific form of art, and why should we address precisely architectural theory? Doesn’t Heidegger caution us *specifically* against such a reading, when he notes that his reflections are not to be construed as contributions to a theory or aesthetics of architecture, but rather have to do with the matter of thought itself?

It is indeed true that such a confrontation takes leave of the sphere of “pure” thought, but the point here is to confront Heidegger’s thought with practices and theoretical work coming from a certain “outside,” and if my reading thereby runs a certain risk of giving in to various “ontic” models (although in the case of technology, it is this dividing line between the ontic and the ontological that is at stake), it is nevertheless a risk that needs to be faced if the *Zwiesgespräch* between art and philosophy is not to remain a monologue on the philosopher’s part. In this sense I am here attempting to go *beyond* Heidegger, but also, just as he himself claimed with respect to Nietzsche, to come *back* to him, albeit in a *different* way. Whether this is productive or not can of course not be decided in any a priori fashion, but has to be assessed on the basis of the results of the encounter itself.

But why focus on architecture? Why not, for instance, on *poetry*, which indeed holds a more prominent place in the corpus of Heidegger’s writings, and whose authority precisely as a work of language to a great extent seems to guide the interpretation of the various spatial arts, from the emphasis on Poesy in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* to the various etymological exercises in the later works? A preliminary answer would be that the questions of space, building, and dwelling remain in the forefront throughout Heidegger’s meditations on technology, even though the question concerning essence of technology begins by leading us through the maze of language, as Heidegger says at the outset of “Die Frage nach der Technik”: “all ways of thinking, more or less perceptibly, lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary” (*FT*, 5/311). **But in fact, architecture, as the most “impure” of the fine arts, the one most marked by materiality, facticity, and gravity (an interpretation whose classic formulation can be found in Hegel),<sup>29</sup> is also**

29. “It [architecture] is the beginning of art because, in general terms, as its start art has not found for the presentation of its spiritual content either the adequate material or the corresponding forms. Therefore it has to be content with merely seeking a true harmony between content and mode of presentation and with an external relation between the two. The ma-



the place where technology, modernity, art, and philosophy seem to confront each other in the most violent way, and it is also in this discursive field that Heidegger's work has been put to a test in a most challenging way—a way that may also lead us to ask to what extent it is possible to remain faithful to Heidegger's *texts* and still lay claim to continue his line of *questioning*. The “impiety” of many adaptations of Heidegger in this field need not be construed as simple misreadings of a “pure” philosophy—an argument that would be difficult to sustain, especially since Heidegger's own way of approaching the arts surely does not respect the normal academic divisions of labor, but could, or even *should*, be seen as ways to enact and transform the text of “thinking” into something else. What Heidegger's thought in the final instance means is dependent on what we do with it, and there is no way to once and for all draw the line between possible uses and misuses.

These three interpretations of Heidegger all start from the sense of a “loss of place,” from the experience of an increasing estrangement between man and his “natural” setting, and all of them perceive this contemporary situation as brought about by a whole network of technological Framing that affects our sense of time, space, body, and identity, in a profound way. The conclusions they draw are however radically different, and they range from, on the one hand, a vision of a return to the soil, of identificatory practices that would allow us to once more dwell in the world, to, on the other hand, an affirmation of radical placelessness and difference—two radical options between which we will find a mediating, synthetic, and avowed-

terial for this first art is the inherently non-spiritual, i.e. heavy matter, shapeable only according to the laws of gravity” (*Lectures on Aesthetics*, transl. T. M. Knox [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], vol. 2, 624; *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik, Werke*, eds. Eva Maria Moldenhauer and Klaus Markus Michel [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970], vol. 14, 259 f). For a discussion of these themes in Hegel, especially the “initiating” quality of architecture, which also connects him to Heidegger's concerns, see Daniel Payot, *Le philosophe et l'architecte* (Paris: Galilée, 1983).

ly “contradictory” position that wants to relocate architecture as an “arrière-garde” dependent upon and yet twisting free from the reign of technology and Framing.

Imposing this triadic structure surely does some injustice to the three respective bodies of theoretical work that will be address here; I will for instance refrain from analyzing their internal development and their own productive tensions, which will make them appear much more solidified and monolithic than they really are. My purpose here is however to produce a more variable and fluid way of understanding Heidegger, and thus these simplifications may perhaps be justified.

The first case is the Norwegian architecture theorist and historian Christian Norberg-Schulz. In a series of essays and books from the 1960s and onwards, he has analyzed the “loss of place” as the founding experience of modernity, and pointed to another architectural practice as a possible remedy, and he locates the theoretical source for this rediscovery of place as a grounding category in phenomenology. To some extent drawing on Husserl’s *Krisis* and Merleau-Ponty, but above all on Heidegger’s later works, he has developed this conception in a series of works, from the early *Intentions in Architecture* (1963) to *Genius Loci* (1980) and *Meaning and Place* (1988).

Our main example here will be one of his programmatic and most influential essays, “The Phenomenon of Place.”<sup>30</sup> Place, Norberg-Schulz contends, is an essential part of our life-world: a place is something concrete, it is always something singular, a “total phenomenon” endowed with unique characteristics, and functional analyses based on general behavioral schemata (eating, sleeping, etc.) tend to obscure this uniqueness, its “environmental character.” Phenomenology constitutes a remedy to this, the author claims, and starting from Heidegger’s reading of Georg Trakl’s poem “Ein Winterabend” in *Unter-*

30. The essay was first published in 1976, and then reprinted in a slightly modified version as the introductory chapter in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980). Citations are from the latter version.

*wegs zur Sprache*, he develops a whole phenomenology of space, of how space can be articulated and made meaningful by an architecture that follows the movement of nature's own spacing, as it were, that locates itself as the mediating juncture between nature and culture, and thus preserves them in their difference and harmonious unity.

Trakl's poem begins by opening up a difference between the inside and the outside, and through an image of the falling snow it sets up a relation between heaven and earth, thus creating a whole "environment," whose unity is indicated by, among other things, the tolling of the vesper bell that lets the inside become part of a "comprehensive 'public' totality" (8). In this model, interiority is positioned as shelter, as protection, and it becomes focused in the image of the set table, offering "bread and wine"—man, on the other hand, is a wanderer coming from the outside into the house, and to do this he has to cross a "threshold turned to stone," marking the "rift" between "otherness" and "manifest meaning" (9). To inhabit the house is thus to inhabit the world from the point of view of a center, a focal point that gathers together the inside and the outside, meaning and otherness. Through its concrete images, the poem renders visible a universal condition in the particular features of a specific life-world.

In this way, Norberg-Schulz continues, we might formulate an existentially relevant conception of landscape, not just in terms of a neutral spatial container or a location, but as a concrete place with a particular identity. The landscape is never purely natural, but acquires its full-blown shape through the intervention of artifacts: settlements, paths, and landmarks form focal points that "explain" the landscape, "condense" the natural environment into a meaningful totality, and actualize its capacity for sense. The proper sense of the "spirit of the place," the *genius loci*, Norberg-Schulz claims, is only achieved when all of these determinations—the natural and the man-made, the categories of earth-sky (horizontal-vertical) and outside-inside, and finally "character," the *how* of the presence of things—are brought together in terms of concentration and enclosure, so as to form "'insides' in a full sense, which means that they 'gather' what is known" (10).

Attempting a step beyond the dualism between space as three-dimensional geometry and as a perceptual field, Norberg-Schulz wants to

redirect our attention to “concrete space,” which is always anisotropic, made up of directions and localities—space results from such places, from a “system of places,” which is never derived from a general concept of “space.” Spaces possess varying degrees of extension and enclosure, and settlements and landscape interact as figure and ground, thus providing a fundamental sense of direction and centrality. The interaction between landscape and settlement is then repeated in the structure of the edifice: floor, wall, and ceiling, which condense and focus the triad ground, horizon, and sky. All places have a certain “character,” which is determined both by the natural constituents of place, and by how they are built into the edifice. Any phenomenology of place and space, Norberg-Schulz says, thus necessarily comprises “the basic modes of construction and their relationship to formal articulation” (15).

In this way we can say that man *receives* the environment and *focuses* it in buildings and things, and that things and artifacts thereby “explain the environment and make its character manifest” (16). The existential purpose of building is to *make the site become a place*, i.e., to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment.

We can see how the life-world for Norberg-Schulz is built up through a series of founding operations, in an ascending hierarchy leading from a first *visualization* of our understanding of the place, through a *symbolization* that detaches signification from the immediacy of its context and turns it into a cultural object, and in this allows for the final step, the *gathering* of all the parameters into an existential center. To transform the “site” into a “place” means to set free the signification that is potentially there from the start, in the natural setting. In this sense, “place” is both a starting-point and an end: we move from a potential signification to a structured (culturalized) world that actualizes it and gives it permanence (and Norberg-Schulz cites, as the paradigm case, Heidegger’s analyses of the bridge that does not just *connect* banks that are already there, but *emerge* as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream).

In the idea of *genius loci* we find a conception of space that emphasizes the sacred origin. Norberg-Schulz picks up the theme from Roman mythology, where the environment was understood as wholly permeated by spiritual forces that we have to adjust to, and the phe-

nomenological theory of architecture, demanding that we re-establish strong modes of identification and orientation, for Norberg-Schulz seems to constitute a kind of secularized mythology. We need a strong “image of the city,” a theme borrowed from Kevin Lynch’s *Image of the City* (1960), if we are to reach back into the sphere of dwelling and re-establish contact with the world in a way that releases us from the demands of technology and the objectifying machinations of modern planning. “Human identity presupposes the identity of place,” Norberg-Schulz states, and the priority accorded to movement and freedom in modernity is now in the process of being reversed: “It is characteristic for modern man,” Norberg-Schulz claims, “that for a long time he gave the role as a wanderer pride of place. He wanted to be ‘free’ and conquer the world. Today we start to realize that true freedom presupposes belonging, and that ‘dwelling’ means belonging to a concrete place.” (22)

Dwelling, then, finally means to be at peace in the world, and that the archetypal edifice must perform an operation of enclosure, or *Umfriedung*, which takes place as a “concretization.” And this, Norberg-Schulz suggests, is indeed the task of art, in opposition to the “abstractions” of science: works of art concretize what remains “between” the pure objects of science. One might wonder that the status might be of such interstitial states—are they something left over, rests or vestiges of something that once existed, or are they something that *de jure* precedes the lacunae in a life-world that has been torn apart by the intrusions of science? Such is the ambiguous status accorded to the work of art—its task is to gather together that which is now torn apart (or perhaps has always been dispersed), “gather the contradictions and complexities of the life-world.” In this sense, architecture belongs to poetry, Norberg-Schulz claims, since its task is to allow us to dwell poetically by understanding the “vocation” of place, concretizing the genius loci, and, as the final Biblical allusion of the text says, allow us to “cross the threshold and regain the lost place” (23).

The question is of course whether Heidegger’s conception of space, place, and the work of art really supports this claim. It is indeed true that, for Heidegger, modern spaces result from the loss of the sacred, as he says in “Die Kunst und der Raum”: “profane spaces are

always the privation of sacred spaces that are remote in time” (207). Norberg-Schulz’s reading seems however to downplay the unsettling quality of Heidegger’s thinking at this point, and his emphasis on the necessity of signification, sense, and direction displaces the kind of *indeterminacy* in which the work has to exist, as if the question of how to do this could be solved simply by a new type of *aesthetic*. We noted earlier that when Heidegger, referring to the art of sculpture, says that the concept of volume must lose its pertinence since we can only think this concept through modern science, he also adds that “Those qualities of plastic embodiment that seeks and forms locales would first remain *nameless*.” (209, my italics) Perhaps we should, against the all-too-hasty appreciation of Heidegger’s proposals as positive indications of how to build, allow this very *namelessness*, this *withdrawal* of language, to exert its negativity as long as possible, postpone all assertions as to how it could be made concrete and operative, in order not to give in to the very metaphysics that is being interrogated here.

Norberg-Schulz talks of “the loss of place” as the founding experience of modernity, a loss that has to be countered by a new understanding of the activity of building. Something similar could be said of the second and mediating position that we will bring up here, the “critical regionalism” of Kenneth Frampton. For Frampton, the “tectonic” does not, as in Norberg-Schulz, lead us back to the virginity of the passage between nature and culture, but rather functions as a much more complex mediation between the autonomous dimension of formal compositional language and a given setting that is at once historical-cultural and environmental. Just as in Norberg-Schulz, tectonics is not something purely technical, but forms the necessary basis for a structural poetic, although this poetic will give much more room for the direct impact of modern technology. This is put forth for the first time in the programmatic essay “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” (1983),<sup>31</sup> where Frampton

31. First published in Hal Foster (ed): *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983). All citations from this version.

ton launches a six-point program for critical regionalism as a strategy of aesthetic resistance, opposed to both a postmodern compensatory eclecticism and its remodeling of architecture as symbolism and scenography, as well as to a pure technological universality.<sup>32</sup> Frampton too derives several of his fundamental analytical tools from Heidegger, especially from “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” and at least to a certain extent he seems to share the same suspicion against the mathematical objectification of space. After Heidegger, Frampton says, “we are, when confronted with the ubiquitous placelessness of our modern environment, [brought to posit] the absolute precondition of a bounded domain in order to create an architecture of resistance.” (24)

Critical regionalism connects to local situations and in this way intends to act as a kind of *inertia*, a programmatic *arrière-garde* that mediates between local and specific traditions, which could contain parameters such as topographic peculiarities, conditions of light and climate, etc., and an increasingly homogenized universal “civilization.” In this way it wants to protect us from a universal leveling by focusing on physical and tactile elements, which work against what Frampton perceives as a one-sided emphasis on visual elements. Regionalism asserts qualities that tend to get lost in an architectural culture increasingly permeated by images and reproduction technologies, and it wants to preserve the “place-form” against both modernism and its obsession with the *tabula rasa* as well as all forms of sentimental and populist counter-reactions—but in doing this, it must remain within what Frampton himself calls a “double mediation,” for instance as in the interplay of the “*rationality* of normative technique” and the “*arationality* of idiosyncratic forms” (21–22).

In what must be considered his theoretical summa, *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, Frampton (1996) develops this in the context of a more

32. For a precise analysis of Frampton’s simultaneous battle against these two opponents, and which also reads his strategy on the basis of Heidegger, see Deborah Fausch, “The Oppositions of Postmodern Tectonics,” in *Any* 14, 1966.

encompassing and philosophically oriented discussion of the concept of modernity. Through a series of extended in-depth analyses of paradigmatic architectural works that attempt to grasp how their overall significance as cultural objects are reflected and expressed in the smallest technical details of their construction, he traces a “tectonic trajectory” leading us from the origins of modernist architecture into the situation of late modernity. He construes the dialectic of modern architecture as a tension between the “representational” and “ontological” (and in this he draws on the legacy of 19<sup>th</sup> century German architectural theorists from Bötticher and Semper to Schmarsow, although the very conceptual opposition is firmly entrenched in a Heideggerian soil), and once more positions the tectonic as the meditating force that allows construction to assume the form of a poetic practice, and to engage in a resistance toward technology’s transformation of the earth into a “standing reserve” and its flattening of things, ultimately of space itself, into calculable entities devoid of density and presence. Tectonics, on the other hand, would be that which allows construction to shine forth in a transfigured form as *truth*.<sup>33</sup>

In an essay from 1990, “Rappel à l’ordre: The Case for the Tec-

33. For a reading not unsympathetic to such claims, but that nevertheless fundamentally problematizes the claim to *truth*, see Fritz Neumeyer, “Tektonik: Das Schauspiel der Objektivität und die Wahrheit des Architekturschauspiels,” in H. Kollhoff (ed.): *Über Tektonik in der Baukunst* (Braunschweig: Vieweg & Sohn, 1993). Neumeyer shows that it is indeed the case that this truth is often an “image” of truth, a rhetorical display of structural honesty, more than a pure adequation between the demands of engineering and architectural expressivity. Even more emphatically than Frampton he also notes the extent to which the value of the tectonic, particularly in its constant referencing of the phenomenological body as a source of meaning, can only be defensive: its task is “not to once more make the disappearing body appear, but to prevent it from completely disappearing” (59).



tonic,”<sup>34</sup> Frampton adds another distinction, while also developing the Heideggerian background to his concepts: the tectonic object is not only opposed to its scenographic and technological counterpart, but is *itself* divided into an ontological and a representational aspect. These two aspects are then associated to Semper’s distinction between the tectonics of the architectural frame, and the compressed masses of stereotomy (i.e., a massing of similar elements, for instance bricks), and the frame is now understood as tending toward the “aerial element,” while the telluric mass-form descends downward into the earth. This duality for Frampton becomes an expression of “cosmological opposites” endowed with a “transcultural value” (95) that lie at the foundation of our life-world, and it is not difficult to understand these concepts as a somewhat demythologized version of Heidegger’s Fourfold that seeks to establish specific architectural interpretations of his seemingly religiously tinted notions.

Following Semper, but in a certain way Heidegger too, Frampton proposes that the *joint* should be understood as the essential element of architecture: it forms a fundamental syntactical transition from stereotomic base to tectonic frame, and works as a kind of “ontological condensation” (*ibid*) of the very idea of *likto* as bringing-together, and it allows the other elements to come forth—the joint establishes connections *and* separations, first between stereotomic earth and tectonic lightness, then unfolding its operations out into the rest of the constructional details. Sense, Frampton says, is thus an interplay between connecting and disconnecting, a “dis-joint” (102) that produces a gathering and assembling while also letting the different elements come forth in their *difference*.

Both Norberg-Schulz and Frampton are seemingly driven by an underlying discomfort, an anxiety about the present: could it be that we now, at the limit of the tradition, have taken the decisive step, passed beyond a dividing line into a state of no return, or is there a

34. Rpr. in *Labor, Work, Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 2002). All citations from this version.

way to overcome the condition of nihilism in late modernity? A different reaction to this predicament would be to say that the modern experience of site- and placelessness is quite simply something necessary, perhaps the logical outcome of what the anthropologist Marc Augé has called our “super-” or “over”-modernity (*surmodernité*).<sup>35</sup> For Augé new types of places (transit spaces, airports, highways) have become the ineluctable and positive starting point for a new phenomenology or an existential analytic, a new “anthropology of solitude,” as he says in a somewhat negative vein. These claims may be read as an injunction to conceive of a new hermeneutic of everydayness, attuned to the realities of Framing and without any fantasies of former life-worlds that are now irretrievably lost, and whose insistence on paradigms for “true” experience may in fact be the most difficult obstacle for a positive, substantial, and sensitive explication of our own mode of being-there, or our own “poverty,” as Benjamin would have it.

This last option seems radically at odds with everything that Heidegger proposes, and yet some interpreters have attempted to extract precisely such a dimension from his later writings. The main proponent of this is the Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari, whose radical reappraisal of Heidegger’s understanding of space, building, and dwelling will provide us with the third and last perspective.

Just as with Norberg-Schulz and Frampton, the *loss of place* is the starting-point for Cacciari. Modernity does not allow for “dwelling” in the sense that Heidegger—at least in the type of readings we have encountered so far—wants to retrieve. In a dialog with the work of Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco dal Co,<sup>36</sup> Cacciari radically denies

35. Cf. *Non-lieux: introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

36. “Eupalinos, or Architecture,” transl. Stephen Sartarelli, in K M. Hays (ed.): *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 1998). The text is originally a review of Dal Co and Tafuri’s *Modern Architecture*, 2 vol, transl. R. E. Wolf (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), although its main discussion relates to Heidegger (who remains a strong but implicit un-

that the lesson to be drawn from Heidegger's writings on technology and dwelling would be a return to an authentic world, a nostalgia for a pre-modern unity of man and world; the stake is rather to create an *authentic housing for inauthenticity*, to testify to the absence and impossibility of dwelling in the modern Metropolis. Heidegger could in this sense lead us directly into what is worthy of questioning in modern architecture, especially since—and this is Cacciari's most radical claim—Heidegger's thinking renders “impossible or inconceivable the Values and Purposes on which this architecture nourishes itself” (“Eupaulinos,” 394). There is in fact an unavoidable and radical “uprooting” carried out in modern architecture, Cacciari claims,

an uprooting from the limits of *urbs*, from the social circles dominant in it, from its form an uprooting from the place (as a place of dwelling) connected to dwelling. The city departs along the streets and axes that intersect with its structure. The exact opposite of Heidegger's *Holzwege*, they lead no place [...] The architecture “without quali-

dercurrent in the book under review; cf. for instance the concluding references in Tafuri and Dal Co, vol. 2, 392). I also draw on the English-language collection of Cacciari's essays, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*. Another important reference here is Dal Co's introductory essay “Dwelling and the Places of Modernity,” in *Figures of Architecture and Thought: German Architectural Culture 1890-1920*, transl. S. Sartarelli (New York: Rizzoli, 1990). There he undertakes a reading of the intrusion of technology, industrial production, and mechanical seriality into the 19th century world of bourgeois interiority that acknowledges an equal debt to Benjamin and Heidegger. In fact, Cacciari's argument belongs to a whole Italian debate in architectural philosophy, suffused by Heideggerian and Marxian ideas, and centered around the so-called “School of Venice” since the late 1960s, although this context cannot be reconstructed here.

ties” of the Metropolis—a conscious image of fulfilled nihilism—excludes the characteristics of the place.<sup>37</sup>

Tempting as it could be, we should not interpret this as a philosophy of alienation, as for instance in Spengler’s interpretation of the fate of modern architecture—“Spengler, not Heidegger,” Cacciari remarks ironically, “is Zarathustra’s monkey, who would like to drive the sage back to the mountain in the face of the great city” (“Eupaulinos,” 397). Heideggerian uprootedness is not “sterile,” he continues, but productive, and the fact that “spirit” may no longer dwell, that the “home” or “abode” (*dimora*) is gone, only leaving us with the possibility of “lodging” (*alloggiare*) is what gives spirit its movement and irresistible negative energy. The cycle dwelling-building-dwelling is broken up, which should not lead us—nor did it, in this interpretation, lead Heidegger—to adopt a nostalgic perspective: “No nostalgia, then, in Heidegger—but rather the contrary. He *radicalizes* the discourse supporting any possible nostalgic attitude, lays bare its logic, pitilessly emphasizes its insurmountable distance from the actual condition.” (395)

What Heidegger’s discourse produces is not the impossible dream of returning to the Fourfold, to dwelling, or to building, on the contrary it dissolves this dream by showing us the impossible conditions for such a return within the space of technological modernity. In one respect Heidegger indeed “keeps listening for the call to dwell,” but “no god calls,” and thus his “listening is just silence” (396): the *withdrawal of language is infinite*, and there will be no more name for being that could overcome the nameless of originary space. Heidegger’s language, Cacciari claims in a turn that will not fail to surprise most traditional readers, is *critical*: it produces division, detachment, difference, rather than unity, inclusion, and identity. When he meditates on the bridge as the thing that makes both stream and bank into what

37. *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, transl. Stephen Sartarelli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 199 f. Henceforth cited as *AN*.

they are, he also shows us the impossibility of such a bridge in the age of the power plant, the very *irreversibility* of our present condition. Heidegger remains waiting, listening, “hoping for the call,” but the call never comes, and what remains for us is perhaps to explore the silence in the *absence* of the call. We are indeed irrevocably Subjects, Cacciari claims, and thus indelibly marked by the will to power and destined to master the earth, which also means that we are essentially homeless, without proper abode, but this is also what opens our productivity.

Traces of dwelling can be found in poetry, the home has withdrawn into the poem, but this poem can only speak of *absence*: “Poetry,” Cacciari says, “preserves (in the non-being of its word) that tectonic element of architecture to which the edifice, in so far as it participates in the devastation of the earth, can only allude tragically” (398). In this sense, there is an “oscillating dialectic between *Andenken* as tragic theory and *Andenken* as nostalgic pro-position,” and Cacciari underlines that Heidegger, when explicating Hölderlin’s poem “Dichterisch wohnet der Mensch...,” points out that such a poetic dwelling could *not* be our condition today. Heidegger envisions a possible reversal in the order of things, but, as Cacciari notes, the “Freundlichkeit” that Hölderlin projects between man and landscape, between man and home, can only be represented in the *poem*, whereas the “measure” is lacking in the world, on *earth* (When Hölderlin asks: *Giebt es auf Erden ein Mass?*, his own answer is: *Es gibt keines*), and our life fades into the distance (“In die Ferne geht”).

At the end of the essay Cacciari briefly confronts Heidegger’s views with the works and writings of Mies van der Rohe, which are often considered as emblems of technological modernity. Cacciari emphasizes the use of glass in Mies’s projects, from the 1920-21 project for a glass skyscraper in Berlin to the Seagram Building in New York, and interprets this type of transparency as an explicit negation of the concept of dwelling, as the enactment of a “supreme indifference” with regard to the question of rootedness and dwelling: “The language of absence here testifies to the absence of dwelling—to the consummate separation between building and dwelling [...]. The great glass windows are the nullity, the silence of dwelling. They negate dwelling as they reflect the metropolis. And reflection only is permitted to these forms” (404).

Now, regardless of whether this is a warranted reading of Mies's architecture or not,<sup>38</sup> the general drift of Cacciari's argument is clear: it is through a reading of Heidegger's texts on technology, building, and dwelling—or more precisely put, by reading *through* them so that we may come *back* to them in a different way, in a movement analogous to the one in which Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche unfolds—that we may gain an appreciation of the possibility for a thinking encounter between art, technology, and philosophy in late modernity. In the epilogue to *Architecture and Nihilism* Cacciari distinguishes three ways in which we can relate to nihilism, and in a sense I have here been trying to discern a similar set of response to Heidegger's writings. For Cacciari, the first would be the attempt to retrieve “cultural” values, which he exemplifies by the German Werkbund, although this is a historically obsolete model that can be of little use to us today.

38. It should be added that Cacciari has subsequently elaborated his interpretation of Mies, cf. “Mies van der Rohe, der Klassiker,” in *Grossstadt. Baukunst. Nihilismus*, transl. R. Kacianka (Vienna: Ritter Klagenfurt, 1995). For readings of Mies more in tune with Cacciari's first remarks, see K. Michael Hays, “Odysseus or the Oarsmen, or, Mies's Abstraction once again,” in Detlef Mertins (ed.): *The Presences of Mies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), and more generally, Gevoork Hartonian, *Ontology of Construction: On Nihilism of Technology in Theories of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Eric Bolle proposes that there is a development in Mies' work from an early, nihilistic view, to a later and more redeeming idea of technology; cf. his “Der Architekt und der Wille zur Macht,” in *Weimarer Beiträge* 38, 1992. Kenneth Frampton's most sustained reading of Miesian tectonics can be found in *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, 159–209. For Mies' own theories of tectonics, see the collection of his essays edited and introduced by Fritz Neumeyer, *Das kunstlose Wort: Gedanken zur Baukunst* (Berlin: Siedler, 1986). I discuss some of these different readings of Mies, and particularly the idea of “silence” that imposes itself on many of his interpreters, in my “Mies van der Rohe: The Collected Silences,” forthcoming in *Site*, 2007.

The second would be to gather the world into a “unified symbol,” and to understand it as one single place, which Cacciari sees as the underlying motif in Scheerbart’s and Taut’s Expressionist visions, but where we can also recognize certain more or less totalitarian visions, as in Jünger’s conception of the Worker as the Gestalt that exerts a planetary domination.<sup>39</sup> The third option, and the one that Cacciari appears to embrace, is the one that turns dwelling into an act of “resistance,” and the he finds exemplified in the work of Adolf Loos. Here there is no nostalgia but, in Cacciari’s dense formulation, a critique that “lays bare the absolute the mortal aporia of the nihilism of the project: that if the dimension of space-time is in itself absolute, this absoluteness can only be a product of the project itself. According to this logic, the project becomes the new subject, the substance of this uprooting power.” (*AN*, 202). Loos’s project accepts its own condition, but in this it also opens up another time, “the multiplicity of times that must be recognize, analyzed, and composed [...] no absolute may resound in this space-time,” (203), which means that that absolute aspect of nihilism as the utmost gathering, the moment of eschatology

39. This sense of an *ineluctable Metropolitan condition*, whose founding process is that of *nihilism*, is what connects Jünger to but also sets him apart from the themes discussed in Cacciari’s investigation, whose end-point is the work of Adolf Loos and the problem of a “nihilism fulfilled” (199). This nihilism, as Cacciari notes, has to do with a perpetual *decentering*, the city as “a chance of the road, a context of routes, a labyrinth without center,” which cannot be countered by any nostalgic project—but, he adds, “different from this, or at least much more complex, is the quest of one who imagines in symbol the general *Mobilmachung* (mobilization) of the epoch: the elimination of the place is here transformed into the imago of the whole Earth made place.” (*AN*, 200) The reference to Jünger is obvious. In fact, this second nihilism hinted at by Cacciari seems much more threatening than the mere derouting, fragmentation, and *Entortung* of the first version, which is also what makes Jünger’s contribution to this discussion important as a memento.

of the nothingness of being, in a certain sense here becomes something relative and plural. In his constant return to Loos, Cacciari finds a complete avowal of the disruptions of modernity, but also the imperative that this condition always has to be accounted for again and again, in continuous acts of displacement and transformation, and that this paradoxically enough can become the point of departure for a positive and productive nihilism. This would perhaps be the other side of what he himself proposes as “negative thought,”<sup>40</sup> a thinking that always “registers the leaps, the ruptures, the innovations that occur in history, never the flow, the transition, the historic continuum.” (13). There is an obvious tension here—on the one hand a desire to point to the completion of nihilism as the ineluctable consequence of modernity, which has been covered over by humanist thought in its willingness to compromise, on the other hand to show that this nihilism becomes a positive fragmentation and a recognition of the plurality and difference of language, which opposes the first tendency to assemble all modes of expressions around *one* core, to contract all “active” and “reactive” moments into one inescapable logical progression. The gathering becomes a dis-assembling, a fracturing, and a dispersal that is also part of Heidegger’s trajectory.

Reading Heidegger through such a grid shows us that he can indeed provide us with elements for a nostalgic view, which looks back to the lost Place and fuels our desire to “cross the threshold and regain the lost place,” as Norbert-Schulz has it; he may, when read in terms of a poetic of construction, give us elements for a theory of a mediation of universality and singularity, which attempts to create a free relation to technology, as Frampton attempts to show; and finally, as in Cacciari’s version, he may allow us to grasp a thought of radical difference, where the absence of the Home and the Place becomes our irreversible fate, but also the positive condition of thinking in the present.

40. For Cacciari’s first formulations of the idea of negative thought, cf. *Krisis: saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche e Wittgenstein* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), and *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* (Venice: Marsilio, 1977).







# Foucault and the Genealogy of Modern Architecture

## *1. Biopolitics, governmentality, and the genealogy of individuality*

The theory of the development of modern institutions and a “panoptic” regimentation of society proposed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) was for a long time seen as, if not his final word, then at least his basic position: modernity is a continuous history of discipline and incarceration, and its basic tonality is dystopian and somber. In this sense, his genealogy of the modern subject and the forms of rationality that have produced it can, as has indeed been, inscribed in the same lineage as Adorno and Horkheimer’s dialectic of the enlightenment, or Heidegger’s claim that modernity is the unfolding of technology as the utmost oblivion of being; in short, as a pessimistic view where our possibilities for agency and response become increasingly circumscribed. This reading, in all of its shallowness, also engenders a predictable critique: Foucault’s genealogy of modernity is one-sided, it refuses the emancipatory aspects of rationalization, and its only promise is a blind and irrational utopia of anarchic forces, devoid of normative criteria for political action.<sup>1</sup>

*Discipline and Punish*, of which the famous analysis of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon is an essential although perhaps also an all too eas-

1. A paradigmatic and highly influential reading of this kind, which also connects Foucault to an equally schematic version of Heidegger and Adorno/Horkheimer, would be Jürgen Habermas, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).

ily quotable part, is however only a link in a long chain. The panoptic and disciplinary diagram is but one aspect of what in a different and larger perspective must be seen as a process of a simultaneous *subjugation* and *subjectivation* (both of which are welded together in the word *assujettissement*), i.e., the totality of those ways in which modern individuals have come to be formed, both in terms of a modeling from without *and* an inner response. Power is always both “power *over*...” (application of an external force that moulds matter) and “power *to*...” (the work of shaping a provisional self as a response to external forces), and its operations are always connected to a certain *knowledge* that is formed of the self. In a late, lucid overview of his work, “The Subject and Power,” Foucault proposes that his “objective has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects,” and that this investigation is structured according to “three modes of objectification”: first “the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject,” then “the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of science,” and finally the “objectivizing of the subject in dividing practices.”<sup>2</sup> Subjectivation and subjugation always occur through complexes of knowledge and power, just as the process of discipline is fundamentally connected to the emergence of the various *disciplines* of the human sciences, but it would be unreasonable and short-sighted to see this simply as a one-sided process predicated upon coercion. In short, if power is not essentially *oppressive*, as in the “juridical” model that Foucault begins to identify as a problem in the early ‘70s, and that he subsequently will ceaselessly reject, but *productive*, we must also analyze how it both produces individuals *and* sets them free to produce themselves, and account for the “technologies of the self” that have a rhythm and history of their own, instead of being mere effects of discursive regulations.

2. “The Subject and Power,” in *Essential Works*, 3 vol, ed. Paul Rabinow and James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 2001), 3, 326; henceforth cited as *EW*. This is a selection from *Dits et écrits*, 4 volumes (Paris: Galimard, 1994); henceforth cited as *DE*.

The reductive view of Foucault as exclusively a theoretician of incarceration—a kind of Nietzschean version of Weber’s iron cage of rationality, where the only moment of freedom lies in a wholesale rejection of the legacy of the Enlightenment—has no doubt been due to the fact that many of the works from the ‘70s have remained unpublished, but the ongoing edition of his courses from the Collège de France has begun to initiate a revision that will fundamentally change many facets of the clichéd image.<sup>3</sup> Simply saying yes or no to such a thing as the “Enlightenment,” and asking whether it is a “project” that should be continued or not, always amounts to a kind of blackmail, Foucault says, and we need to pose the questions in a much more subtle and nuanced way that does not straightforwardly appeal to any category of choice. We are indeed *inside* the process of Enlightenment, and irrevocably so, inside multiple processes of rationalization, disciplining, and subjectivation, and it can never be a question of stepping out of them, only of inhabiting and undergoing them in a more thoughtful way. This aspect is what Foucault pointed to in his concept of an “ontology of actuality,” i.e., a reflection on the limits and structure of the present, and whose first outlines he located in the philosophical-political reflections of Kant.<sup>4</sup>

3. Particularly relevant for my topic here are *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978*, and *Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979*, edited and with postface by Michel Senellart (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004). Henceforth quoted as *STP* and *NB*.
4. Between 1978 and 1984 Foucault writes a whole series of short essays on Kant and the Enlightenment. In the first, a lecture from 1978, “Qu’est-ce que la critique? Critique et *Aufklärung*” (published in *Bulletin de société française de philosophie* 84.2, 1990, not included in *DE*), he associates critique to a will not to be governed: “a sort of general cultural form, at once a moral and political attitude, a way of thinking etc., which I would simply call the art of not being governed or again the art of not being governed like that, or at that price [...] the art of voluntary nonservitude,

The ontology of actuality means that we should not read history in order to judge it in the light of the present, but in order to free us from the grip of the contemporary moment, and thus also to a certain extent *from ourselves*, from the image of an identity that otherwise would seem as an unavoidable outcome of some deep underlying necessity (“se dépendre de soi-même,” as Foucault says in the introduction to the second volume on the history of sexuality). In this sense Foucault’s work is everything but a totalizing story of the formation of a disciplinary iron cage, instead it unearths the ever-changing and shifting openings where there is always a possibility of freedom and resistance—in fact, resistance comes *first*, as Foucault often claims—; it is about the always untimely forces that surround

a considered nondocility” (cit. in Colin Gordon’s introduction to *EW* 3, xxxix). Later on he would suggest that Kant’s philosophy is the first moment when contemporary events (in this case, the French revolution and the “enthusiasm” it produces among the spectators) enter into the substance of thinking and in our definition of ourselves; cf. “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?,” (text nr. 351),” in *DE* 4. In another text, which somewhat confusingly bears the same name, he also attached this to a moment of self-fashioning, and drawing on Baudelaire, to the idea of making one’s own life into a work of art; cf. “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?,” (text nr. 339), in *DE* 4; transl. as “What is Enlightenment?,” in *EW* 1; but he also relates back to the initial formulations of political nonservitude, and phrases Kant’s essential question as: “How can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?” (*DE* 4, 576/*EW* 1, 317); on life as art, see also the remarks in “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” *ibid.*, 261. For general discussions of the role of Kantian critique and “maturity” in Foucault’s later work, see David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London: Routledge, 1997), and Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow’s defense of Foucault against Habermas, “What is maturity?” Habermas and Foucault on ‘What is Enlightenment?,”” in David Couzens Hoy (ed): *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (London: Blackwell, 1986).

the present and dispel the idea of a unitary and linear development.

From the early 1970s and onwards Foucault is engaged in several parallel research projects that all deal with the emergence of modern institutional forms and with a genealogical analysis of those discourses and power relations that are materialized in them, within which the individual appears as simultaneously object and subject. In these investigations one of his main concerns is how to think with, through, and beyond the Marxian categories of social analysis—class, dialectical contradiction, determination in the final instance, base-superstructure, etc. Much of this polemic and the aggressive tone it occasionally assumes must be understood as an effect of French politics of the 1970s, and should not lead us astray today. The deeper questions concerning the meaning of these concepts indeed remain, and Foucault's battle with them, which was provoked by a whole set of questions that his work from the previous decade on madness, the clinic, and the "epistemic orders" had left unanswered, is just as relevant in the present as it was then.<sup>5</sup> The basic problem is to what extent the multiplicity of tactics and strategies that traverse the social field, and all those types of assemblages and "dispositifs" that they produce, within which "the order of discourse" acquires both mobility and stability, can be understood uniquely as a narrative of the development of capital. It is against this conception, with its unidirectional view of history and its tendency to reduce all conflicts and struggles to the labor-capital divide, that Foucault begins to develop his analysis of how power grows from below, of how it, as he will later say, always emerges out of a "microphysical" di-

5. For a discussion of the relation between Marx and Foucault, see Richard Marsden, *The Nature of Capital: Marx after Foucault* (London: Routledge, 1999). Foucault himself never makes any clear assessment of the connection to Marx; the interviews gathered together by Duccio Trombadori under the title *Remarks on Marx* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991) unfortunately only rarely touch upon the subject (which is also an invention by the translation: the Italian version bears the more neutral name *Colloqui con Foucault* [Rome: Castelvetti, reed. 2005]).

mension. This should not be understood just as a smaller-scale version of larger structures, but as the *construction* of a new plane of analysis, which is not simply “there” as an evident empiricity, but has to be constituted as a different space of research.<sup>6</sup> With terms borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari we could say that the large, “molar” macro-entities—state, capital, class—must be dissolved in “molecular” functions, and it is the latter that through long series of convergence can explain the genesis of the former, not the former that explain the latter in a teleological fashion, by directing the historical process toward a distant goal. In this sense we should not start from a given concept such as “the” State, but instead focus on processes of “becoming-state,” where certain segments of the state apparatus can capture and redistribute processes that do not necessarily emanate from its own interiority, and do not express its own logic. In his analysis of this theme in Foucault, Deleuze notes that it is “as if a kind of consensus has been broken, ”a break that also has political and strategic consequences, since “the theoretical privilege accorded to the state as a power apparatus in a certain way also entails a practical conception of a leading party that struggles to seize power over the state.”<sup>7</sup>

6. For an analysis of the difference between *propositions*, which refer to a logical content and form a *typology*, in which they can be derived from each other, *phrases*, which refer to a speaking subject, repress each other, and form a *dialectic*, and *statements (énoncés)*, which are essentially scarce and dispersed, refer to rules of formation and form a topology, cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), chap 1. The statement is at once *not visible and not hidden*, Foucault says (cf. *L'archéologie du savoir* [Paris: Gallimard, 1969], 143); it is not hidden since it does not refer to other possible statements that it would repress, as in a hermeneutics of suspicion, and yet not visible since it is “always covered by phrases and propositions,” and the archaeologist needs to “discover its ‘socle,’ polish it, even construct and invent it” (Deleuze, *Foucault*, 25).
7. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 38. This seeming absence of the level of the state in Foucault’s writings has led him to be criticized for having neglected



Foucault develops his genealogical method in close connection to Nietzsche, and it engages a whole set of issues that have to do with the specific French reception of Nietzsche in the wake of Heidegger's massive two-volume *Nietzsche* (1961), and Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (1962).<sup>8</sup> Deleuze's analysis was the first to highlight genealogy as a critical analysis of power relations, and among its many proposals we find the *body* and a certain idea of *sense* as focal points: the body as an ongoing construction, a source of resistance as well as the object of discipline ("docile bodies," as Foucault would say), and sense as the always shifting perspective of discourse, the irruption of the question "who speaks" that always remains hidden in the question of essences. Deleuze's reading of the will to power breaks both with Heidegger's interpretation, which understands the concept of power as the last answer to the metaphysical question of the being of beings in the tradition of Aristotle's *dynamis* and *energeia*, and earlier subjectivist readings that located will and power in the domain of individual psychology, and in many ways it provides a conceptual underpinning for Foucault's historical analyses. The microphysical level consists of assemblages of bodies and affections, and it is precisely because of its unruly and

the political level (processes of deliberation and decision making, the role of diplomacy, etc.), as well as the whole field of political philosophy. The more recent lecture material will no doubt correct this view; as we will see, the whole issue revolves around how to conceptualize the state as a complex entity, as a result of conflicting forces, instead of endowing it with a quasi-mythical substantiality. On the notion of the state as a machine of capture, cf. also Deleuze and Guattari, *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), chap. 13, "Les appareils de capture."

8. The beginnings of this can be seen in the central essay from 1971, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," more than in the earlier piece on "Nietzsche, Marx, Freud" from 1964, which belongs to the set of problems that were to be treated two years later in *Les mots et les choses*. For more on Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche, and its relation to Heidegger's interpretation, cf. "Images of philosophy," above.

shifting quality that power relations remain unstable, and a “distant roar of battle” can always be heard behind the official eloquence of institutionalized discourses of knowledge, and behind this “central and centralized humanity.”<sup>9</sup> There is however no way we could return to

9. “Dans cet humanité centrale et centralisée [...] il faut entendre le grondement de la bataille.” (*Surveiller et punir* [Paris: Gallimard, 1975], 360; *Discipline and Punish*, transl. Alan Sheridan [London: Penguin, 1977], 308) This is not to deny that there is an important yet overlooked difference between Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) experimental philosophical constructivism and the analytic of power in Foucault, which in a certain way reflects the difference in temperament and style between the philosopher and the historian. For Foucault the emphasis lies on how we have become the type of subjects that we are (sexed, normalized, deviant, etc.), in an interplay with technologies, discourses, and mechanisms of power, whereas the positive programs for a new subjectivity are difficult to discern, which automatically leads Foucault’s critics to demand that he should provide a normative basis for his inquiries. For Deleuze and Guattari, who work with synthetic, universal-historical models where historiographic specificity is less decisive, the issue is rather to discern those lines of flight that always open up in every assemblage, and to conceptualize the tension inside every order and regimentation between “micropolitics” (molecular becomings that swarm below the surface of forms, sexes, and subjects) and “segmentarity” (the hardened forms that produce binary spaces); cf. *Mille Plateaux*, chap. 9. Foucault on his part is suspicious of all non-historical and ontological conceptions of desire as a productive force, since he sees the very idea of a “desiring subject” as a product of modern confessional technologies; on the other hand he seems occasionally to evoke a similarly straightforward idea of “pleasure” (*plaisir*), which underlies the split between sex-desiring subject and bodies-pleasures, and the rather naïve dualism between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* in the first volume of the history of sexuality (Foucault’s brief remarks are admittedly an aside, and yet they have a distinct strategic significance in the argument, which is further complicated when he

this pre-subjective level, and there is no such thing as a true or authentic life beneath the discursive order that would be deformed by a simply external force, which is Foucault's response (rightly or wrongly) to phenomenology and the idea of a "savage" and "vertical" being that we find in Merleau-Ponty. At the socio-political level, it could also be read as a rejoinder to the Situationist utopia of the "beach beneath the pavement" and Henri Lefebvre's project for a critique of everyday life, which both draw on a similar conception of authentic experience.<sup>10</sup>

suggests that *scientia sexualis* in fact could be understood as a particularly modern and subtle form of *ars erotica*). For Deleuze's comments on these disputes, cf. "Desir et plaisir," in *Deux régimes de fous* (Paris: Minuit, 2003).

10. The debate between Foucault and Lefebvre seems to have been interrupted before it began, but there are plenty of reasons, political as well as philosophical, to reconstruct it today, when the ideological battles of the early '70s have calmed down. Both of them in fact undertake a profound analysis of how mechanisms of power and knowledge permeate everyday life, and how subjective experience is at once an effect and a lever for resistance. At first they would seem to be straightforwardly opposed on these issues: a Foucauldian-style critique of Lefebvre would no doubt accuse him of being caught up in an illusory belief in the "given," and of not being able to see how subjectivity is produced, whereas Lefebvre, in the few remarks on Foucault that he actually made, claimed that he was unable to acknowledge the contradictory and open quality of everyday life and its space because he derived them without mediation from an abstract "diagram" of power relations, as in the case of Bentham's Panopticon. Foucault symptomatically stops at the abstract notion of *savoir*, Lefebvre claims, but does not address the more concrete concept of *connaissance*, and this makes him incapable of bridging the gap between the sphere of epistemology and the world of practical affairs (cf. *La production de l'espace* [Paris: Anthropos, 1973], 18, note). This critique has been developed further by Michel de Certeau, although much more sympathetically toward Foucault; see for instance *Histoire et psychanalyse entre science et fiction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987). This

A particular dimension of this, and which to a large extent has been absent from the discussion of Foucault's work, is that it from the 1970s and onward begins to be applied to questions of how knowledge and power are materialized and spatialized in urban and architectural forms. To some extent this absence is due to the scarcity of Foucault's own comments on these topics; it is only rarely that he directly comments upon issues of architecture and urban planning, although they form a decisive background for his ideas of discipline and biopolitics. A notable exception is the interview with Paul Rabinow in 1982, "Space, Knowledge, and Power,"<sup>11</sup> where Foucault comments on the new political quality that architecture assumes in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century within the techniques of governing (and, as we will see in the next section, Foucault's claims are here based on several concrete research projects). In the period before the French revolution, new conceptions of public facilities, hygiene, and public order begin to impose themselves, and the classical "treatise" on architecture must be rethought. The *city* becomes the main problem: how to govern it, but also how to use it as a paradigm for the control and surveying of larger territories, in a strategy for "policing" space in all of its details that eventually was broken up by a new type of liberal discourse that came

sharp divide between the subject as authenticity and as construction in fact seriously mutilates the question at stake here; I will come back to Foucault and Lefebvre in another context.

11. See also the responses to the questions posed by the journal *Herodote* in 1976, "Questions à Michel Foucault sur la géographie" (*DE III*); transl. "Questions on Geography," in Colin Gordon (ed): *Power/Knowledge* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980). Faced with the question of the status of geography Foucault is at first somewhat suspicious, but then acknowledges that the genealogy of power and knowledge bears on "tactics and strategies deployed through implantations, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organisations of domains which could well make up a sort of geopolitics where my preoccupations would link up with your [the geographers'] methods." (*DE III*, 39 f; *Power/Knowledge*, 77).

to question the *limits* of governing. In the same process architecture was dislodged from its role as the bearer of traditional orders and aesthetic hierarchies, and Foucault points to the formation of the *École des Ponts et des Chaussées* and the emergence of “polytechnicians” as the organizers of the new social space. Architecture lost its traditional authority as a symbolic form, but in this it also came to form a node in a network of knowledges and practices through which individuals were formed and a modern social space emerged.

In order to assess the scope of these brief, admittedly superficial and occasionally also misleading remarks,<sup>12</sup> we however need to insert them in a more encompassing view of Foucault’s research. The first

12. The perspective delineated in the discussion with *Herodote* seems to have receded into the background in the later interview. Foucault in fact appears to remain within a Beaux-Arts idea of the “Architect” when he pits the new polytechnic culture against architecture, and suggests that the “three great variables” of modern societies, “territory, communication, and speed,” all “escape the domain of the architect” (*EW* 3, 354). In fact, given the predominance of the Polytechnique over the Academy ever since Durand, it could more plausibly be argued that the whole of modern architecture has been dedicated precisely to the mastering of these variables and nothing else, and that the discourse of space, networks, and territoriality is a fundamental feature of architecture at least since the 1920s and onwards. For a productive Foucauldian perspective on these issues that shows their decisive presence in 20th century architectural theory, cf. Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2003). It is also curious that Foucault does not ascribe the same position within systems of power to the architect as he does to the doctor, priest, psychiatrist, etc.—“After all, the architect has no power over me. If I want to tear down or change a house he built for me, put up new partitions, add a chimney, the architect has no control” (*EW* 3, 357). That some of Foucault’s remarks seem singularly naive should however not detract us from attempting to extract a coherent theory from his work.

years after he was appointed to the chair at the Collège de France, his research was in a period of intense fermentation, and many of the inquiries outlined at the beginning seem to have turned into dead ends, or at least to have undergone substantial modifications (but in fact, as Deleuze proposes, the dead end in Foucault must be seen as an invaluable and necessary part of the work, since the impasse is an objective aporia that the power/knowledge imposes on us, it is that which “forces” thought, the “to-be-thought” that “calls” thinking forth, to use a Heideggerian vocabulary). Two of the themes that crystallized however have a direct bearing on our topic: first, the issue of health and disease, and of how a new conception of normality and deviation produced a “medicalization” of space; second, the issue of the habitat and the family, and of how the mechanisms of reproduction of life were integrated into a new complex of power and knowledge. As we will see, these concerns are tightly interwoven in terms of what Foucault calls “biopower” or “biopolitics,” and they are articulated within techniques of a “governmentality” that always implies a spatial ordering and regimentation.

In Foucault’s published writings the term “biopolitics” surfaces for the first time at the end of *The Will to Knowledge* (in the lectures at Collège de France the same theme is announced at the end of *Il faut défendre la société* from 1976),<sup>13</sup> and at first this idea seemed like a sketch for a particularly *modern* extension of the overall theme of the book, i.e., the historical origin of the modern idea of the sex as the deepest truth of the individual’s inner life, but not as a theme that would itself be able to include the theme of the sex. Picking up themes already developed in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault here describes a shift in the structure of power from the epoch of sovereignty, whose theory can be found in paradigmatic form

13. *Il faut défendre la société. Cours au Collège de France, 1975-1976*, edited and with a postface by Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). For discussions of this volume, see Jean-Claude Zancarini (ed): *Lectures de Michel Foucault. vol. 1, a propos de “Il faut défendre la société”* (Fontenay-aux-Roses: ENS, 2000).

in someone like Hobbes, where the right of the ruler is to *take life* or *let live*, to the modern conception of power as way to enhance, render productive, compose, maximize, and administer life—“*gérer la vie*.”<sup>14</sup> In

14. The project of Giorgio Agamben to retrieve and reformulate Foucault’s conception of biopolitics seems to me to be firmly opposed to Foucault’s actual conceptions, in fact a complete inversion of the latter’s “nominalism.” The originary act that for Agamben founds the space of the political is an inclusive exclusion that splits bare life (*zoe*) from a qualified political life (*bios*) and sets up the structure of sovereignty as a “ban,” whose primordial form is the “state of exception” (the basic features of which he picks up from Carl Schmitt). The sovereign guarantees the validity of the law by remaining *outside* of it, and by retaining the power to suspend the legal order in its entirety—he is “constituting” and not “constituted” power, and in this sense an ultimate source and foundation of a power that in itself remains undecidable and anomic. Sovereignty for Agamben is an *ontological* concept, whereas it for Foucault is historical and relative through and through; Foucault’s nominalism rejects universals, whereas Agamben’s quest leads toward the political version of the Greek *ti to on*, “what is being,” and in fact lays claim to displace the ontological question. Sovereignty for Foucault is a concept inscribed in the passage from territorial states based on a legal model to the modern states that will take population as their object, whereas for Agamben life has since immemorial time been the object of the sovereign operation, which itself withdraws into a time before history: “When the modern state places biological life at the center of its calculus, it only lays bare the secret connection that unites power to bare life, and in this way it connects back to [...] the most ancient of *arcana imperii*.” (Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Il potere sovrano et la nuda vita* [Turin: Einaudi, 1995], 9). The idea of such a “bare life” would make little sense for Foucault, just as the very idea of an ontologically based sovereignty—in fact, this is the very conception that Foucault’s theory opposes. Cf. for instance his famous remarks on the need to cut the head of the king not only in real life but also in political theory (“We need to cut off the King’s head: in political theory that has

some respects this is an undeniable progress toward a more “humane” world, but Foucault underlines that it simultaneously opens for a biological conception of the political. To exterminate the enemy, to expel the degenerate, the enemy of the people or of the class from the social body in order to attain the purity of race or class—these will be the imperatives that lead to our modern genocides.

On one level this new form of power works by individualization, or more precisely by *producing individuality* as the focal point where techniques for monitoring the social can find their anchoring point, and techniques of government can be applied. In this sense individuality is produced by techniques that at the same time *discover* it as their proper object. But in this process they also make another object visible on the macro-level, *population*, which is how individuals appear when they are treated as statistical phenomena, and when they become endowed with a collective health and collective forms of reproduction and life. This double structure establishes the crucial link between the production of sex as the individuating force par excellence, and the production of the population, i.e., the sex as collective entity, and it does this by positing the *family* as the relay between them. The family will henceforth be the source of all happiness and misery: as a dense and saturated environment the family has indeed made us sick, but one day it will make us healthy again, once it has been reorganized in a rational fashion, all of which Freud will eventually discover as the almost a priori condition of the triangulations of desire and the painful way toward socialization. Life becomes the biological life of the population, in constant need of monitoring and analysis, and a profound source of worries, but also a source of the inventions of new

still to be done.“ [“Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge*, 121]), or the harsh and unequivocal statement in the interview with Paul Rabinow: “Nothing is fundamental. That is what is interesting in the analysis of society. That is why nothing irritates me as much as these inquiries—which are by definition metaphysical—on the foundations of power in a society, or the self-institution of a society, and so on.” (*EW*3, 356).



techniques and forms of knowledge that will probe the depths of this new *bios*.<sup>15</sup> How do people live, how is their domicile structured, what is their hygienic and medical status, how do they mate, under what conditions does the family become happy and when does it turn into a source of disease—these are the types of questions that impose themselves, and that demand a new type of governing, or a new “governmentality” (*gouvernementalité*) that deals with both the sexed and desiring individual in his singularity and as part of a biological collective with a productive and reproductive force.

In *Sécurité, Territoire, Population* Foucault sketches a vast historical picture where biopolitics is connected to the development of the modern state apparatus in the second part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The text continues the argument from the previous lecture series, where the concept was introduced as a modality of power that supersedes the disciplinary investment in the body: “at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century,” Foucault writes, “we see the emergence of something new, no longer the anatomo-politics of the human body, but something I would like to call the ‘biopolitics’ of the human race” (*IDS* 216). Together with “population” we also see the emergence of the concept of “security,” which becomes central since threats now come from *within*, from the population itself and its inherent tendency to create imbalances, deviations, and unpredictable crises, whereas the old model of

15. We can also see how the concept of biopolitics allows Foucault to integrate earlier analyses in a new context. In *Les mots et les choses* the emergence of Man as a category at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was only possible to understand as a fundamental and irreducible mutation within knowledge; in *Discipline and Punish* man appears a subject with a decipherable depth at the point of intersection of all the disciplinary forms of knowledge that can be extracted from him (“the criminal gets a soul...”); now Foucault can claim that the discourse on man “must be understood from out of the emergence of the population as a correlative to power and as an object of knowledge. In the final instance Man [...] is nothing but a figure of the population.” (*STP*, 81)

sovereignty, which aimed to seize and preserve control over a territory, predominantly understood dangers and enemies as coming from without. This shift will demand new techniques of ruling, and in the first three lectures Foucault highlights three fields of intervention: the problem of the *city*, focusing on the concept of “environment” (how to create favorable life conditions, increase hygiene, regulate the family structure, etc.); the handling of temporary and unpredictable *famines*, which need to be tempered via the regulation of the production and circulation of grain (thus introducing the dimension of political economy); the problem of *smallpox*, leading to new medical techniques and control systems, and to a general “medicalization” of political space.

In the fourth lecture the perspective shifts and Foucault provides us with a whole series of digressions that at first may seem confusing. The most important of these shifts is the introduction of the concept “governmentality” (*STP* 111), which appears to open up a new field of exploration. This field is first and foremost organized by the question of the *state*, and of how we can understand this form of apparatus on the basis of the earlier analyzes of power. As we have noted earlier, the question of the state had to a large extent been absent or even explicitly rejected in many previous texts, at least if put in terms of theories that would try to locate an “essence” behind its varying manifestations. “Would it be possible,” Foucault now asks, “to insert the modern state into a general technology of power that would have assured its transformations, its development and function? Can one speak of something like a ‘governmentality’ that would be to the state what the techniques of segregation were to psychiatry, what the techniques of discipline were to the penal system, and biopolitics to the medical institutions?” (124) This new interest should however not be construed as a departure from the earlier analyzes of power, nor as a rejection of the theme of biopolitics, but rather as a new perspective that shows how it is only at the level of the state that the mechanisms of discipline converge. This will however neither be in terms of the state as an instrument for class domination, as in traditional Marxist theory, nor in terms of a bureaucratic and self-regulating power structure, as in certain types of functionalist sociology. The state, Foucault claims, must be understood as a fundamentally composite

phenomenon: it has no essence, it is not a universal, but “a mobile cut in a constant process of becoming-State” (*étatisation*), the “mobile effect of multiple governmentalities” (*NB* 79). The state is never an autonomous source of power but a structure that captures other forces, and thus always also a zone of conflict.

A long historical detour then leads through a scrutiny of the origin of governmentality in early Christianity (the role of the “shepherd” in the parish), via the Christian pastor’s transformation into the “shepherd of men” during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to the emergence of the “Raison d’État” and the idea of a “science of policing” (*police* or *Polizeiwissenschaft*), i.e. the formation of a comprehensive method to survey all functions of society in terms of efficiency, developed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and onwards, and finally perfected as a systematic doctrine of the science of administration and bureaucracy by von Justi.<sup>16</sup> Only in the final lecture does Foucault come back to the issue of biopolitics, now once again in relation to political economy and the “policing” of society. These detailed analyzes of the genealogy of different “governmentalities” seem to give less weight to biopolitics, and what we see is perhaps the emergence of what would later become one of Foucaults central themes, “governing over oneself and over others” (which is the topic of the two last and still unpublished lecture series from 1982-83, entitled *Gouvernement de soi et des autres*), where he turns back to the subject and its self-relation as an “ethical” problem (a process initiated in the series from 1981-82, *L’Herméneutique de sujet*, which focuses on antique texts). In one sense this sequence of texts—where there are also other important lacunae, such as the lectures between 1979 and 1981, *Du gouvernement des*

16. Cf. *Grundsätze der Policey-Wissenschaft* (rpr. Frankfurt am Main: Sauer und Auvermann, 1969 [1756]), and *Die Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten; oder ausführliche Vorstellung der gesamten Policey-Wissenschaft* (Königsberg, 1760, 2 vol). For the connection between police and the extension of city space to the whole of a territory, cf. Foucault’s remarks in “Space, Knowledge, and Power,” *EW* 3, 351.

*vivants* and *Subjectivité et Vérité*—could be construed as a gradual shift from disciplinary techniques to the theory of the subject, where we would move from the outside to the inside, as it were, to the capacity for self-fashioning that lies at the heart of individuation. In this transformation the issue of biopolitics would have had to remain suspended in-between, as an intermediary stage, since it was too strongly linked to a problem of power that excluded those processes in which humans turn themselves into subjects, which Foucault more and more came to understand as an *ethic* in the widest sense of the word. This interpretation can also be underwritten by the fact that the last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* almost wholly discarded the themes of power, state, and biopolitics.

Even though this reading is not unwarranted, we should still note how the theme “governmentality” integrates the question of biopolitics in a larger context rather than bypasses it. The lecture series following after *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, with the title *Naissance de la biopolitique*, gives another twist to the topic by surprisingly connecting it to the liberal tradition, which now surfaces as the exemplary “governmentality” for biopower, and precisely so by virtue of its *critique* of the policing governmentality of State Reason and its discovery of a new art, the art of *limiting* state activity. The problem will now be how a rule or a government can hold itself back, which points ahead to a wholly different type of political rationality: how can we achieve *maximum* efficacy by a *minimum* intervention? For Foucault this is the problem of liberalism as it appears in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, already before the word as such had gained foothold in the political vocabulary. This shift takes place first and foremost in the theory of political economy, which displaces the idea of an external limitation on the basis of “law” as the founding structure of the state, and in this sense liberalism will become the new foundation for a maximizing of life, which may seem surprising. For is the population not precisely the object par excellence of *control*, of a power exerted from above, an object for all the different types of measures and programs administered by states and parties—in short, a theme wholly contrary to what we traditionally understand by “liberalism,” where individual decisions and preferences are supposed to be basis for the political community?

Foucault enters into the problem by way of what he calls a “nominalist” method: the analysis does not bear on liberalism as a theory or an ideology, it does not evaluate it as a philosophical conception, but as a practice, a method to rationalize and reflect upon governing. In liberalism governing is not an end in itself (to keep power for its own sake), but an instrument, and through this it transforms earlier doctrines of “Raison d’État (the continued existence of the state is its own end) to what Foucault calls “la Raison du moindre État,” the reason of the *smaller* state. In the second and third lecture Foucault goes on to investigate the relation between liberal governmentality and truth, i.e. the “market” as a new type of place for verification of political theory, and he details the changes that this brings about with respect to traditional ideas of the state, above all the emergence of the concept of “society.” Society now becomes that which stands over and against the state, a space that to a certain extent has to be *left to itself* in order to achieve a maximum efficacy.

This is of course not to deny that liberalism can be read as a defense of radical individualism, in its opposition to the tyranny of religion and public opinion in the name of the freedom of personal choice, and the classic case of this would of course be Mill’s *On Liberty*. But if we insert this doctrine of freedom into the strategic field of political economy, we can see that it just as much has to do with techniques aiming to make the individual productive and with the possibility of extracting a surplus value that is both material and intellectual. The emphasis on negative freedom (absence of external constraints) becomes a tactic moment in a strategy for increasing production, for rendering individuals useful. Foucault’s analysis shows that there is no contradiction here, rather a complementary relation where freedom and a certain type of discipline increase *simultaneously* and reinforce each other. In an important passage it also becomes clear that the famous analysis of Bentham’s Panopticon proposed in *Discipline and Punish* ultimately has little to do with that exclusively “repressive” cliché it has become among most readers of Foucault (in spite of his repeated assertions of the productive nature of power), but has to be understood as *one* part of a “liberal governmentality” (cf. *NB* 68–69). In this sense biopolitics becomes the privileged mode of intervention for the new governmen-

tality: the individual can be discovered within an emerging political philosophy as a *subject* with all of his rights and duties (both as a *sujet* and a *citoyen*, as Rousseau said). These are the individual's new capacities, which have been produced by techniques of discipline that precede and condition political liberalism as a theory that discovers the individual as a *given* entity. The new problem of liberal governmentality bears on how the state can increase its power by diminishing it, how it can extract a maximum from its subjects by leaving them in peace, how it can promote collective strength by strategically opposing the society to the state.

This is the type of governmentality that once set the modern industrial societies on their course, and Foucault emphasizes that we are still within its logic—how can we generate and control a spontaneous and unpredictable complexity that gives rise to emergent qualities, precisely by setting society free from the mechanisms of state power? Where is the optimal limit of state interventions, not in terms of legitimacy, but of efficiency? And inversely, are there any limits to the interventions that the state can make with respect to the health and well-being of its subjects? Is there a dimension of life that must remain withdrawn from state policy? The idea of the “welfare state” is one way to answer the question,<sup>17</sup> Neo-liberal attacks on state power is another, but both of them share the same premises, which form the bedrock of modern governmentality.

For Foucault liberalism is not an abstract utopia of freedom and unlimited self-realization that at one point would collide with a refractory reality made up of inert structures and traditions, but a project of self-criticism, a reflection of governmentality on itself, and to this extent it instigates a permanent *crisis* in governing. In this sense it also corresponds to the Kantian moment in the history of philosophy, and it initiates a perpetual tribunal of political reason (Kant says that we are living in an age of enlightenment, not an *enlightened* age,

17. For a history of the idea of the welfare state from a Foucauldian perspective, see François Ewald, *L'État-providence* (Paris: Grasset, 1986).

since the latter would imply that the tribunal is closed and we could revert to dogmatism). This perpetual self-questioning also means that there is nothing that could *guarantee* freedom, no legal or physical institutions, or any other types of structures that could once and for all define a space of liberty. Responding to a question by Paul Rabinow on whether architecture has a possible emancipatory power, Foucault says: “I do not think that there is anything that is functionally—by its very nature—absolutely liberating. Liberty is a *practice*. So there may, in fact, always be a certain number of projects whose aim is to modify some constraint, too loosen, or even to break them, but none of these projects can, simply by its nature, assure that people will have liberty automatically, that it will be established by the project itself.” “Liberty,” he concludes, “is what must be exercised.” (*EW* 3, 354 f).

If we understand the problem of liberalism in this wide sense, right and left alike are still caught up in a liberal discourse.<sup>18</sup> This is why modernity for Foucault is not at all a continuous process of discipline and control, but rather a complex production of subjectivity, a “sub-

18. It is also a highly significant fact that these lectures is the only place where Foucault devotes a large part to contemporary politics, and he undertakes a long and to many of the listeners no doubt surprisingly appreciative analyses of West German postwar Ordo-liberalism and American Chicago School Neo-liberalism, both of which he sees as corrective of a certain “excess in government.” “No matter how paradoxical this may seem,” he writes, “during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, freedom, or more precisely liberalism, is a word coming to us from Germany” (*NB* 25)—a statement that surely did not fail to raise anger at the time, when the controversies around the German RAF attorney Klaus Croissant’s demand for political asylum in France divided the intellectual community. For Foucault’s relation to liberalism, cf. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and Nikolas Rose (eds): *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government* (London: UCL Press, 1996), and Maria Bonnafous-Boucher, *Le libéralisme dans la pensée de Michel Foucault* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004).

jugation” that is also a “subjectification,” where the individual is produced in order to then discover himself as “free.” This is somehow a complete reversal of the idea of man as “born free, but everywhere in chains” proposed by Rousseau in the opening lines of *Du contrat social*: the individual, endowed with a set of “given” freedoms and rights whose limits and legitimacy can become the object of a whole political-philosophical discourse, results from the convergence of several long-term processes that mold the subject into a reflexive entity.

Here I will not follow this theme in all of its ramifications in Foucault, but only focus on one aspect, i.e., how this complex of knowledge, power, and subjectification comes to be *spatialized* at the moment of emergence of modern biopower and governmentality. As already noted, space, architecture, and urbanism play an important and yet often overlooked role in Foucault, and precisely in the crucial juncture where the modern diagram of power emerges.

## *II. The curing machines and the habitat*

The first concrete phenomenon that Foucault and his team of researchers engage is the emergence of the doctor and medical knowledge as public authority figure, which on the institutional level is reflected in the construction of the modern hospital. This will be the place where patients can be studied in isolation from one another, where new types of medical knowledge and curing techniques can be applied, techniques that require a thoroughgoing individualization and rationalization. In the hospital we can see how spatial ordering of knowledge and power reaches a new level, and it becomes the paradigm for a pervasive medicalization of social space as a whole. In 1977 the results of this project are published in the collective volume *Les machines à guérir (aux origines de l'hôpital moderne)*.<sup>19</sup>

19. *Les machines à guérir (aux origines de l'hôpital moderne)* (Brussels: Mardaga, 1977). Henceforth cited in the text with pagination. See also Foucault's condensed statement of these themes in “The Politics of Health in the



The investigation partly returns to the theoretical work developed earlier in studies like *History of Madness* (1961), and in particular *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963). If the book on madness dealt with the problem of the constitution of a discursive object, “madness,” in the second book Foucault turned to another type of object-creation, how the sick body was constituted as a visible sign in and through a new experience of death. “This book,” he begins, “is about space, about language, and about death; it is about the act of seeing, the gaze.”<sup>20</sup> Foucault wants to show that the very visibility of objects such as madness and sickness, even the body itself in all of its complexity, is dependent on systems of discursive regulations, or a “syntactic reorganization of visibility,” which determines a new sense of *space* (distance, the discovery of the patient as an object), of *language* (a new type of medical discourse, a new mode of enunciation), and finally of *death* (which now, most significantly through the work of Bichat, enters into the body as an immanent process underway since the constitution of the organism, instead of being the result of external influence). Modern medicine is born through the constellation of these three modes of

Eighteenth Century,” and “The Birth of Social Medicine” (*EW3*), both of which draw on the more extensive research presented below.

20. “Il est question dans ce livre de l’espace, du langage et de la mort; il est question du regard.” *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: PUF, 1963), V; *Birth of the Clinic*, transl. Alan Sheridan. (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), ix. It should be noted that the subtitle, “An Archaeology of Medical Perception” (“Une archéologie du regard médical”), with its emphasis on the gaze (*le regard*) disappears from editions after 1972, as if Foucault wanted to avoid a reading that could give preeminence to the function of the subject. The vocabulary of the 1963 edition in fact testifies to the constant presence of the phenomenological themes that Foucault at the same time is trying to discard, which produces a series of particularly contorted figures; cf. Frédéric Gros, “Quelques remarques de méthode à propos de *Naissance de la clinique*,” in Philippe Artières and Emmanuel da Silva (eds): *Michel Foucault et la médecine. Lectures et usages* (Paris: Kimé, 2001).

seeing and talking, of the visible and the sayable. The theme “space” is here however limited to the sick body, and if the analysis of “spaces and classes” shows how “the exact superposition of the ‘body’ of the disease and the body of the sick man is no more than a historical, temporary datum” (1/3), this only rarely extends out to embrace a larger institutional framework, even if Foucault also notes that such a medicine “can be based only on a collectively controlled structure, or one that is integrated in the social space in its entirety.” (19/20)

The important difference in the later work will thus be that the “archaeology of the medical gaze,” as the subtitle of the 1963 book reads, now acquires an fundamentally architectonic dimension, instead of remaining within an epistemological inquiry of the visibility of certain medical objects, based on an analysis of discursive regularities. What emerges during the last decades of the 18th century is a “curing machine” (*machine à guérir*), to use the expression coined by J-R Tenon in his *Mémoires sur les hôpitaux de Paris* (1778)—a technology of power that allows a whole knowledge of the individual, but through this also a new form of individuation, to take place. The forms of architecture have to reflect in the most precise way the new forms of techniques for assessing and determining health (to separate, but also to allow for circulation, surveillance, classification, etc.), which will demand a typology that must break away from the academic morphologies and orders that derive from the tradition of architecture. Instead architecture must mobilize a multiplicity of medical and other forms of knowledge that at a certain moment form an assemblage within which the individual is constituted, and to which it contributes its specific spatial tools.

This also changes the perspective within which the history of modern architecture could be written: under the gaze of the genealogist this history no longer obeys the rhythm of formal or tectonic-structural mutations, regardless of where they are located, instead it is inscribed in a much more complex field, where the discourses of knowledge, the applications of power, and the processes of subjectification form three linked and yet irreducible vectors—all of which shows that architecture must be understood as an essentially *composite object*, an *assemblage* that results from convergent technologies. This polemic against a certain historiography of architecture only appears parenthetically in the

text, but it no doubt opens for a different genealogy of the “theories and history of architecture,” to use Manfredo Tafuri’s phrase, than conventional historiography, and it goes beyond the choice between operative, reconstructive, and critical modes of writing.<sup>21</sup> These insights however seem still to have exerted only a limited influence on a writing of history that remains predicated on formal and stylistic descriptions (which to a large degree also applies to Tafuri, who certainly probes into the ideology of forms at great depth, but rarely analyses their positive mode of production and functioning), and here a vast territory of research opens up, which has remained strangely uncharted despite the pious references to Foucault in much recent architectural theory: to describe the genealogy of modern architecture, as a dimension distinct from its theories and history.<sup>22</sup>

21. For Tafuri’s conception of an “operative” critique, cf. *Teorie et storia dell’architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1968), chap. 4. The division of historiography into an operative model, which projects the past onto the future, as in classic modernists like Sigfried Giedion and Nikolaus Pevsner, and a “reconstructive” (my term), which wants to discover another history inside modernism in order to open another future, as in Bruno Zevi and Rayner Banham, and finally a critique that wants unearth those insolvable contradictions that constitute modernism as a project from the start, as in Tafuri, is inspired by Panayotis Tournikiyotis’ discussion in *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1999); I discuss these three versions of historiography further in *Den moderna arkitekturens filosofier* (Stockholm: Alfabeta, 2004), chap. 5 and 6.
22. There is an abundance of detailed and profound analyses of how architecture shapes political space during this period; cf. for instance Richard Etlin, *Symbolic Space: French Enlightenment Architecture and its Legacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), and Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the late Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), and more generally, Thomas A Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993). Often these works stop at the

The starting point for the debate that forms the archive for Foucault is the fire in Paris 1772, where the “general hospital” Hôtel-Dieu was destroyed, which led to a public discussion on the principles for the reconstruction of such a public facility. The former institution with its seemingly random mix of patients of all categories was subjected to sharp criticism, not only because of its lack of efficiency, but rather on the basis of a new concept of efficiency centered on productivity and “nursing capacity.” This is the origin of the hospital as a “public facility,” although the precise term “équipement collectif” appears much later,<sup>23</sup> which relates to the population understood as

capacity of architecture to express and symbolize relations of power, and they rarely touch upon how it distributes and produces individuals, masses, and populations. A similar program for analysis, which also draws on Foucault (and Bruno Latour) is proposed in Chris Hight, “Preface to the Multitude: The Return to Network Practice in Architecture,” in Per Glemboldt, Katja Grillner, and Sven-Olov Wallenstein (eds): *AKAD 01: Beginnings* (Stockholm: Axl Books, 2005).

23. An analysis of this term was proposed by the research group Cerfi in 1972, in *Recherche 13, Généalogies du capital I: Les équipements de pouvoir*. Cerfi (*Centre d'études, de recherches et de formation institutionnelles*) was founded in 1965, and up to the late '70s the group functioned as a network for free scholars and political activists. During its most productive period Cerfi was led by Félix Guattari, whose experience from the experimental psychiatric clinic La Borde was an essential source for their work, and through him the group also came to collaborate with Deleuze and Foucault. In 1971 the group received a commission from the Ministère de l'Équipement, which posed the question how to evaluate the increasing demand for “public facilities” and lead them to an investigation of the “genealogy of Capital,” subsequently published in the journal *Recherche*. For discussions of the connections between the group and Foucault, see Daniel Defert, “Foucault, Space, and the Architects,” in *Documenta x: Poetics/Politics* (Stuttgart: Cantz, 1988), as well as the contributions by François Fourquet, Anne Querrien, Meike Schalk, Helena Mattsson,

an object of a politics of health. Blandine Barret Kriegel's study of the "hospital as facility" emphasizes how this erases the difference between the inside and the outside of the building, and how the rules earlier applied to the single edifice now extend to the whole of the "urban facility" (*équipement urbain*), so that the "hospital system must be reorganized on the level of the city."<sup>24</sup> The Academy of Sciences will eventually reject the proposals made by the famous architects, and it replaces the idea of the building as an isolated object with a variable and flexible facility that corresponds to the fluctuating needs of the population as a whole, thus also introducing "public hygiene" as a new type of discursive object.

Anne Thalamy, in her contribution "La médicalisation de l'hôpital," shows how this new facility mobilizes techniques for surveillance and an effective ordering of time, for instance in the introduction of the "round" and the role assumed by the written document in individualizing the patient. The modern clinic is born through this strict regimentation of time and space, and with it emerges the role of the doctor as a figure of authority. François Béguin underlines in his essay, "La machine à guérir," that Tenon's definition of the hospital as a "machine" projects those sanitary principles that previously had been formed in other disciplines into architecture, and the extent to which it highlights instrumental instead of symbolical values, subjecting each detail to a strict analysis based on a global function (that was perceived as lacking in the proposals by the "master-architects," which was one of the reasons why they were rejected by the Academy

and Sven-Olov Wallenstein in *Site 2-3*, 2002, which also includes translations of sections from *Recherches*. For a history of the group, cf. *Recherche 46: L'accumulation du pouvoir, ou le désir d'Etat. Synthèse des recherches du Cerfi de 1970 à 1981*. See also Janet Morford, *Histoire du Cerfi. La trajectoire d'un collectif de recherche sociale* (Mémoire de D.E.A, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1985, available at IMEC, Paris).

24. Blandine Barret Kriegel, "l'Hôpital comme équipement," in *Les machines à guérir*, 27. Henceforth cited in the text with pagination.

of Sciences). This will become the paradigm for most future public facilities, and fundamentally displace the inherited architectural vocabulary. Traditional architectural discourse finds another temporary outlet in the fascination with history as a ruin, and Béguin speculates that there may be a common root for the machine and the ruin, since both are born from the dissolution of classical forms: “a desire for a completely free architecture, free from every convention, but with a direct effect on real transformations,” which in the case of the ruin was understood as an impact on individual sensibility through “machines that move and make us travel in time,” in the case of the curing machines as their “socially quantifiable effects” (42).<sup>25</sup>

This moment of balance between the ruin and the machine was however to be short-lived, and the future belongs to the machine. Bruno Fortier points in his contribution to how a new urban theory emerged out of the functional demands that subjects form to a scientific methodology, and to the decisive role played by Hôtel-Dieu in this process. Traditional authorities were rejected and their place was taken by new forms of knowledge (use of the questionnaire to gather information, statistic surveys of birth and mortality rates, analysis of demographic structures, etc.): “Within the history of modernity,” Fortier writes, “the affair Hôtel-Dieu may be one of those moments when the architectural project is no longer exclusively understood in relation to history, but as a function of a double imperative: technical rationalization and efficiency in matters of discipline, economy, and power”

25. Tafuri’s remark that the work of Piranesi and his generation can be seen as a “systematic and fatefull autopsy of architecture and all its conventions” (“Towards A Critique of Architectural Ideology,” in K Michael Hays [ed]: *Architecture Theory Since 1968* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2000], 9) can surely be seen in this light. Tafuri develops the argument further in *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1976), 12-19; see also his “L’architecte dans le boudoir,” in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, transl. by Pellgrino d’Acerno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1990).

(46). This clearly indicates the limits in the type of interpretation that places a single figure, for instance Durand, as the beginning of a modern functionalism, and then proceeds to describe this in exclusively negative terms. This would for instance apply to the “loss of meaning” diagnosed in Alberto Pérez-Gomez’ account of “architecture and the crisis of modern science.”<sup>26</sup> What the genealogical analysis shows, is that this shift can not just be described as a *loss* of (symbolical) meaning, but that it just as much implies the opening of the architectural object to a multiplicity of knowledges, techniques, and strategies that constitute conditions for the emergence of new meaning (or “sense,” as in Deleuze’s understanding of Nietzsche’s genealogical method), for a another type of subjectivity and individuality that will be both produced and discovered by modern institutions and facilities.

We should also note that it is in connection with these investigations that Foucault encounters the panoptical model, in Bernard Poyet’s proposal for a reconstruction from 1785 (Bentham’s first letter dates from 1787, from his stay in Russia, and it was translated in French in 1791, so any direct influence seems excluded). Poyet’s *Mémoire sur la nécessité de transférer et reconstruire l’Hôtel-Dieu* describes how the circular form “gives rise to an admirable order that easily can be introduced in the hospital, above all since it is founded on a capacity

26. As the title of the book indicates, Pérez-Gomez situates his analysis in the wake of Husserl’s diagnosis of the crisis of the “European sciences.” In Durand, Pérez-Gómez writes, “the irrelevance of any transcendental justification” appears, and architecture should henceforth “merely be assured of its usefulness in a material world ruled by pragmatic values” (*Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1976], 299). Pérez-Gómez shows eloquently how Durand rejects all mythical stories of the origin, which have followed architecture from Vitruvius to Laugier, and how he severs its links to a bodily, symbolic, or metaphoric order in order to grasp it starting from a technical and structural rationality, but he can only interpret this a loss of meaning and of the “symbolical” function, not as the production of *new* systems of meaning and sense.

to provide the most uniform and simple distributions, to allow everything to be seen from one point and to make everything accessible in the shortest possible time” (cited in *Les machines à guérir*, 109). In 1788 this proposal was rejected by the Academy in favor of a system based on four free-standing unities (*le plan pavillonnaire*), of which Poyet was commissioned to build two; this project was also quickly abandoned, although for other reasons, and La Commission des Hôpitaux was relieved of its mission. This does however not put an end to the expansion of the panoptic principle, it in fact indicates that we should not connect it to any particular architectonic form, but to what Foucault calls a “diagram”: an abstract machine that presents relations of power, and that is capable of assuming many different physical shapes (hospital, prison, military barrack, factory, school, etc.).

If the first question posed by Foucault and his fellow researchers bears on the emergence of the doctor and the medical institution, then the second relates to the “politics of the habitat” that appears in the first half of the 19th century. This second investigation is finally published as two volumes, *Généalogie des équipements de normalisation. Les équipements sanitaires* (1976, with an important preface by Foucault), and *Politiques de l’habitat, 1800-1850* (1977), where Foucault does not participate with a text of his own, even though his questions inform the contributions in a decisive way (with a few exceptions the team of researchers is the same as in *Les machines à guérir*).

In the preface to the first publication (parts of which also appear in the preface to *Les machines à guérir* the year after, which indicates that these projects must be understood as a coherent unity), Foucault notes that we in the 18<sup>th</sup> century enter into a “reflective nosopolitics”: health becomes a problem that appears at a number of decisive points, and that can only be solved by interventions on the collective level. From the idea of a general poor relief we move toward an increasing differentiation of the population into various degrees of fitness. If the question now becomes how to treat the population as a complex whole and increase its productive potential, this can only be done by a detailed knowledge of its different subsets and their interaction. Whereas the earlier task of government was to create “pax et justitia,” it now becomes to create a favorable environment for life, and since the end of



the 17<sup>th</sup> century this was understood under the rubric of “police,” a capacity and technique for surveying and monitoring the *polis*, of which our modern police seems to have retained only the repressive aspect.<sup>27</sup> The role of medicine becomes to create a link between a new and differentiated analysis of poverty, and the general “health police.”

The contributions in *Politiques de l'habitat* inquire into how urban space was rationalized in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and how living conditions, the “habitat,” interacted with public space. In her introductory reflections Anne Thalamy notes that “the concept of habitat from early on proves to reflect a will to urban order, composed of defined and organized places, each with their defined functions: the house, a space of individual life, even though occasionally controlled; the street, the privileged place for circulation but also for salubrity, which excludes congestion and filth; the permanent market, preferred over mobile booths with their multiple surfaces of contact; injurious professions, activities, and functions that should be placed far away.”<sup>28</sup>

An analysis is developed on the basis of three levels, habitat, street, and city, and it starts off from the idea that the balance between them somehow has been altered, and that order therefore has to be restored. 1724 a royal decree on the borders of Paris was issued, and the first systematic survey of the morphology of the city began. The single houses must be localized, measured, and described if the limits and the system of the city is to be established (especially in the case of the *faubourgs*, the outskirts that began to expand in an uncontrolled manner) and the flow between inside and outside is to be controlled. Paris must be subjected to a grid, it must be codified in terms of new techniques for measuring and gathering data.

27. Foucault develops the analysis of the role of the police in the French 18<sup>th</sup> century in *STP*, 319-348; for a condensed statement, see also “*Omnes et singulatim: vers une critique de la raison politique*,” in *DE*, IV.
28. Anne Thalamy, “Réflexions sur la notion d’habitat au VIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Politiques de l’habitat*, ed. Michel Foucault (Paris: Corda, 1977), 15. Henceforth cited in the text with pagination.

At another level this project of surveying comes to focus on the hygiene and the needs of the family. Economy must pervade the choice of materials, it must regulate the use of spaces and prescribe compartment, so that a spatial rentability can be ascertained. Medical science comes to invest in the health of workers, and the habitat functions “like an instrument and a mirror of morality” (47), Thalamy claims, just as the family forms “a kind of prism that reflects the habitat of the population as a whole” (52). Macro- and micro-levels are made to correlate, and measures taken on one level would inevitably have repercussions on all the other.

The contribution by Blandine Barret Kriegel, “Les demeures de la misère. Le choléra-morbus et l’émergence de l’habitat,” shows how the idea of the habitat grows out of a need to control integral processes of production and consumption in order to avert the threat from overcrowded living quarters and epidemics (the paradigm example is the great cholera epidemic in 1832): there is need for a hygiene of the atmosphere, a control over the conditions of air circulation, a whole health police that identifies sources of infection where efforts have to be concentrated, while still understanding them within the nosopolitics of the city as the overarching problem. Danielle Rancière pursues this problem in her study of “La loi du 13 juillet 1859 sur les logements insalubres,” where she investigates the link between philanthropy and the state in the constitution of a sound working class. The problem becomes more complicated as it has to deal with the relation between open and closed, light and space, etc.—too much transparency and circulation leads to a “social contagion,” to indolence and depravity, and Rancière formulates the equation as follows: “The worker’s lodging has to be opened to the exterior (air, light), at the same time as it is closed off toward the neighbors. One has to increase light at the same time as light should be reduced. There is need for a space where currents of air can cross, but not the workers. The city has to be open and closed.” (199). This problem could be called the *squaring of the urban circle*: to separate and join at the same time, to create a union that separates and individualizes, that averts the illegitimate mixtures while still maximizing the productive assemblages.

In the concluding text of the book, “Savoir de la ville et de la maison au début du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle,” François Béguin once more emphasizes how the micro- and the macroscopic dimension reflect each other, and he points to the importance of Harvey’s analysis of blood circulation, which was to become a fundamental biological analogy for the urban order. This tends to even more remove the focus from the single architectural object, which must be understood as a node, a point of intersection in a larger urban order. Béguin notes that “the forms of architecture are no longer governed by the subtle play of imitation and variation [in relation to the tradition], but by a constant adjustment of the norms of architecture to other norms whose scope and content completely escape the power of the architect.” (259) In this way architecture was opened up to other disciplines and forms of knowledge (which was also the case with the hospital, as we saw in *Les machines à guérir*), and a whole plethora of specialists were called upon. This is something that the discipline of architecture for a long time refuses to acknowledge, and it has produced a false self-image; Béguin points out that it was first during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and “functionalism” (a concept that itself was borrowed from biology) that an explicit attempt was made to overcome this situation. He develops the theme from a fascinating quote from Adolphe Placé: “A house is an instrument, a machine as it were, that does not only serve to protect man, but as much as possible has to comply with all his needs, support his activities, and multiply the results of his work. In this respect the industrial arts, manufactures, and factories of all kind are worthy of imitation” (cited in Béguin, 306).<sup>29</sup> Here we find a decisive root to Le Corbusier’s ideas on the house as a “living-machine” (*machine à habiter*):

29. The quote comes from a review in *Encyclopédie d’Architecture*, May 1853. The original French: “Une maison, c’est un instrument, c’est une machine pour ainsi dire, qui non seulement sert de l’abri à l’homme, mais doit, autant que possible, se plier à tous ses besoins, seconder son activité et multiplier le produit de son travail. Les constructions industrielles, les usines, les fabriques de tous les genres sont à cet égard digne d’être imitées”.

the machinic view of architecture grew out of the paradigm of the hospital, and was then spread concentrically via other types of facilities, and only then did it enter into the habitat. The aesthetic and architectonic vocabulary capable of expressing this in a self-conscious way however lay almost seventy years ahead (which in the case of Corbusier's machine aesthetic is further complicated by the fact that his abundant references to a classical discourse on beauty also attempts to show that architecture's modernity must be understood as part of a natural formation of types that has remained the same since the Parthenon).

This rethinking of function also leads us beyond the house, from the habitat to the street and to the city. The task, Béguin says, is to “de-rigidify the house, de-mineralize, deconstruct it” (318). Gas, water, air, and light are all external variables that penetrate the house and inscribe it into a much wider logistic network; but inversely every inner space, every domestic universe, at the same time appears as the result of a certain interiorization or domestication. The different “apparatuses” of the house (which have to be understood in the widest sense of the term, just as the “state apparatus”) connect it to the outside, and these technologies have to be historicized, Béguin claims, as part of a “large project to restructure the whole of the urban territory” (332). We move from domestic apparatuses to “mega-urban” structures, and, using water supply and the development of conduit systems as the example of a long and stratified technological development, Béguin shows how the very idea of enclosing, of the habitus as an inner sheltered space, becomes more and more dependent on an all-pervasive connectivity. Just as the individual body and its obscure desire reflect the life of the population as a whole, the single edifice must be understood as part of a larger organization and spatial distribution, which expresses a diagram of power relations and mobilizes a whole new set of knowledges and discourses, a process that reaches its first peak in the formation of the idea of “urban planning” in Ildefonso Cerdás *Teoría general de la urbanización* (1867).<sup>30</sup>

30. For a discussion of Cerdás's work that draws on Foucault, see Françoise Choay, *La règle et le modèle* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 290 ff.

### *III. The heterotopias of power*

Now we can see the extent to which the theses proposed in *Discipline and Punish* bring together several of these motifs within a more general theory of the deployment of modern power technologies, even though the book focuses primarily on the development of punishment. The general structure of the argument is familiar: normalization and surveillance gradually replace the intervention of sovereign power and violence, and visibility becomes a quality of the lowest part of society, which is where the individualizing power is exerted, and not at the top. It is the subject of the law, and above the abnormal and deviant, who become charted and studied in a new body of literature (to which Foucault pays a lyrical homage in his essay on the “Lives of Infamous Men”), whereas the higher strata enjoy a new privilege of invisibility. In this process the individual will be endowed with a certain “depth” to be sounded and deciphered, he is produced at the point of intersection of all the techniques deployed in order to understand, investigate, and interpret him (as in the case of the “soul of the criminal” in *Discipline and Punish*, or sexuality as the answer to the riddle of the subject in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*). The emerging discourses of knowledge of man (the human sciences) and techniques of power form a new assemblage: criminology and prisons, psychiatry and mental institutions, pedagogy and schools, although Foucault tends to focus in his published texts less on the concrete architectonic devices and more on their discursive aspects – regulations, manuals, reports, and so on.

This is a whole diffuse environment where a “knowledge” takes on form outside of the jurisdiction of the “great thinkers,” and Foucault emphasizes that it is not a question of a form of knowledge and power that would emanate from an elite and permeate society from the top down, but of autonomous processes that eventually and for different reasons hook up with each other. These relations are productive rather than repressive, although they can of course be repressive too, but there it is as tactic functions that work within a larger strategy. Power is not one “thing” that some have and some don’t, but is made up of complex forces (always involving several parts) and points of conflicts that come to resonate—like soldiers walking in lock-step over

a bridge, setting the whole structure in motion—and are linked together into a system without any pre-existing plan. Power relations, Foucault says, are not parts of a systematic manipulation, they can not be exhaustively understood on the basis of class or group interests (even though he of course does not deny their existence), but has to be understood as at once “intentional and non-subjective,” as parts of a local tactic that can be made to operate within a larger strategy. Power relations form a “diagram” for a society that we should understand as independent of any particular use, and this is why the essential aspect of Bentham’s Panopticon should not be located in its spatial shape, but in its diagrammatic structure: to exert a maximal influence over a population by the minimal use of physical force. To do this by means of transfer of the active force to an “object” that thereby becomes “subjectivized” and individualized as the bearer of responsibility, which becomes “for itself” and thus endowed with a certain freedom, is the task of the diagram. A global increase in freedom and prosperity for all individuals is the outcome of the Panopticon, Bentham claims, it invigorates economy, perfects health, and diffuses happiness throughout the body politic.<sup>31</sup>

Power comes from all directions, it is “exerted” rather than “owned,” it connects rather than separates, and it produces specific knowledges, individuals, desires, and assemblages. In opposition to the Marxist theory of a determination in the last instance, i.e. a central contradiction between labor and capital that pervades and overdetermines all other contradictions, Foucault emphasizes the presence of a multiplicity of subsystems that in their interaction give rise to entities ranging from populations to the desires of the localized subjects, but do not obey a singular logic of conflict. The individual, whose genealogy perhaps is Foucault’s real problem (whereas for Marx the individual remains a mere surface effect) appears in the intersection between these systems, although he cannot be reduced to any one

31. For Bentham’s own statements, cf. *The Panopticon Writings* (London: Verso, 1995).

of them. Whether Foucault is wholly at odds with Marx, or in fact provides an inverted perspective (that finally could be reconciled with Marx), from which we could observe the process of production of capital from below, as it were, in terms of bodies, individuations, and the forming of “labor power” as a docile and pliable force, is a matter of dispute, and must here be left open.

That Foucault intends not only to subvert Marxism, but in fact to simply discard its lessons, is however assumed in an early polemic against his work, which is historically significant since it was formulated on the basis of equally radical theoretical positions, in the Venice School. In the collective volume *Il dispositivo Foucault* (1977, with contributions from Franco Rella, Manfredo Tafuri, Georges Teyssot, and Massimo Cacciari) Foucault’s conception of power was scrutinized in a highly critical but as we will see ultimately misleading fashion. In this sense the polemic is instructive, since it provides a negative relief against which Foucault’s conception becomes clearer, but also because it articulates parts of its polemic in terms of architectural issues.

In the introduction Franco Rella proposes an almost mystical interpretation, where Foucault’s rejection of the “juridical” (prohibitive, negative) and unitary concept of power leads to the idea that power would be nothing but a plurality of dispositifs that attempt to “suture an empty center,” something wholly “other,” a blank or a void in being. In Rella’s interpretation power becomes a non-place, a “mysterious noumenon,”<sup>32</sup> and it transforms all concrete spatial arrangement, even space itself, into a heterotopia: “Space is always ‘other,’ always heterotopic” (12). For Rella this also means that the concept of ideology, and with it any distinction between appearance and reality, the false and the true, tend to become useless: “Transparence is absolute. Thus there is nothing to dissolve. Nothing to analyze.” (13) Power, he says, is for Foucault a “non-place” that can only be grasped through its “infinite heterotopic localizations” (ibid). For Rella, Foucault can never reach any determinate contradictions, and his concept of power

32. *Il dispositivo Foucault* (Venice: Cluva, 1977), 10, note. The following quotes from the same source.

in the end becomes useless and counterproductive. In the subsequent essay in the book, “The political economy of the body,” he draws the even sharper conclusion that Foucault’s discourse “in the end becomes not a critical discourse *on* power, but the discourse of *power itself*” (55, my italics), a kind of demystifying veil draped over reality so as to hide its true contradictions.

On one level Rella’s reading is quite similar to the one proposed by Jean Baudrillard the same year in his *Oublier Foucault*, although Baudrillard’s interest is more to prolong what he sees as Foucault’s conclusions in the name of a kind of ontological nihilism. Since power and sex are everywhere in Foucault’s analyses, Baudrillard suggests, they are in fact nowhere, they have imploded, and Foucault is the last one to believe in a “principle of reality” of critical language, which for Baudrillard has to be discarded.<sup>33</sup> Both of these interpretations are undoubtedly misleading—Foucault never presented power as a “non-place” or a “mysterious noumenon,” on the contrary he wanted to dissolve what he saw as far too massive and global dualisms in favor of a more differentiated analysis that pays attention to complexity of

33. “It may be that Foucault only speaks so eloquently of power (and, let us not forget this, in *real* and objective terms, as dispersed multiplicities, but in terms that do not question the objective perspective he assumes on them—an infinitesimal and pulverized power, but whose reality principle is not put into question) because power is dead, and not just irreparably dead through dispersal, but quite simply dissolved in a way that still escapes us, dissolved through reversibility, by having been annulled and hyperrealized in simulation.” (*Oublier Foucault*, [Paris: Galilée, 1977], 13). Immediately before this Baudrillard also states, similarly to Rella, that “Foucault’s presentation is mirror of those powers that he describes” (11). Rella on his part connects Foucault to Baudrillard and the “nouveaux philosophes” (*Il dispositivo Foucault*, 17, note 16). Commenting on this, Foucault says: “I felt like I was in the skin of Althusser, being dissected by Trotskyites” (cited in Daniel Defert, “Foucault, Space, and Architects,” 280).



local conditions. Far from dissolving the power relations into a non-localized “noumenon,” he wants to understand the materiality and spatiality of power in the most concrete possible manner, as it takes on form in prisons, schools, hospitals, factories, etc.

The concepts of “heterotopia” and “non-place” proposed by Rella are in fact derived from the discussion of linguistic systems of classification in the introduction to Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses*, and they have little or nothing to do with the kind of spatial analysis that he developed later in 1970s. This notwithstanding, the concept “heterotopia” has had a vast and diffuse presence in much recent architectural theory, and it deserves some scrutiny, if only to point to some shifts inside Foucault’s own development.

Foucault famously opens *Les mots et les choses* by citing Borges’ imaginary Chinese encyclopedia, which seems to defy all normal logic. Animals, it says, should be divided in categories like: “(a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embelmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabolouse, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.”<sup>34</sup> Borges’ text, Foucault claims, creates a self-reflexive and impossible taxonomy that can only exist in the non-place (*non-lieu*) of language by erasing the mental “table” on which the categories could meet and co-exist. This is why the encyclopedia should not be understood as a utopia but a *heterotopia* that “destroys ‘syntax’ in advance” (9/xix) by tearing apart the connection between “words and things.” In Borges’ text Foucault finds a point of entry to his own archeological project in *Les mots et les choses*, i.e., the possibility of uncovering a dimension that lies between those fundamental codes of a culture that determine what can be understood as “empirical” and regulate the conflict between different types of scientific explana-

34. *Les mots et les choses*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) 7.; *The Order of Things*, transl. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1989), xvi, Henceforth cited in the text with pagination (French/English).

tions. This archaeological space, Foucault says, is the obscure region where a culture deviates from its codes in such a way that they become visible in their naked existence and contingency, and come to form a *limit* of culture. Thus it is also the place of critique and transformation, and it is the most basic level situated before words, perceptions, and gestures, before a subject that would comprehend or constitute them. But in spite of this suspension, or bracketing of the subject (in a non-, or counter-phenomenological sense: a reduction *of* meaning, and not *to* meaning), Foucault proposes that we should approach this limit as a kind of *experience* of “the pure experience of order and of its modes of being” (13/xxiii) that would allow us to unearth the “historical a priori” that make it possible to see and make enunciations in an orderly and regulated fashion. Archeology lays bare a certain ground (*sol*), but neither in terms of fundament or an ontology (we are both close to and far from Heidegger here), nor in terms of a relation to an ideality or objectivity (which is the essential difference from Bachelard’s analysis of the “epistemological breaks”), but as a system of rules that on the one hand remain fixed, on the other (when seen as a limit) shows the cracks and fissures that set the historical a priori in motion, in order to show that also the silent ground of our culture, “the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet” (16/xxvi), has its own displacements and fault lines.

In this sense heterotopia would be the site from out of which thought emerges, that which opens the possibility of thinking the Other and not the Same; it is not dialectically or logically opposed to the topology of everyday language, but forms the very condition of (im)possibility of a stable signifying order. Regardless of what weaknesses and inconsistencies there are in Foucault’s line of argument, above all the difficulty in determining the position from which he himself speaks—or rather his unwillingness to say anything substantial about it—it is still clear that this idea of heterotopia is substantially different from the analysis of power relations that he would develop later, instead it relates to the contingency and ontological groundlessness of order. Even if these two forms in the final analysis are indeed related (and the work on power and knowledge in the 1970s will attempt to locate their precise intersections and articulations), conflated-

ing them too quickly can only lead to confusion, since it performs precisely the kind of reduction, for instance of power to knowledge, or inversely, against which Foucault always cautioned us.

As Daniel Défert points out, what all the authors in *Il dispositivo Foucault* miss, with a certain exception for Georges Teyssot, is that Foucault at this time in fact had developed a different and much more concrete concept of “heterotopia,” which indeed relates to real and material places in the world. In this version heterotopias are that which in an inverted form reflect our everyday social relations, and in this sense they have an at least implicit bearing on the concept of power. Foucault proposes this other idea of heterotopia in a lecture from 1967, “Des espaces autres,” and the theme was also addressed in two radio lectures the year before.<sup>35</sup> Heterotopia is now connected to the production and above all reproduction of a society’s spatial system, and it functions at the limit of a certain idea of discipline, and not as a system of linguistic classification. Order should here not be understood primarily as classification, but as control, command, and regulation., i.e. those mechanisms that would become predominant in the inaugural lecture at Collège de France in 1970, *L’ordre du discours*. The order of things is always a relation of power, a relation of inclusion and exclusion that ultimately rests on the exclusion performed by the will to truth, or will to “know” as Foucault would later call it, the most enigmatic of exclusions since it makes truth into a problem, a result of a battle or struggle rather than something emanating from the good will or spontaneous rectitude of the subject’s faculties.<sup>36</sup>

35. The radio lectures have been published in a bilingual German-French edition, *Die Heterotopien. Der utopische Körper / Les hétérotopies. Le corps utopique* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005). The lecture “Des espaces autres” was presented to a small circle of architects and remained unpublished until 1984, when it was printed in a German translation in the catalogue to the Internationale Bauausstellung in Berlin. For a discussion of the history of reception of this text, see Daniel Defert, *op cit*.

36. This is one of the many points that would connect Foucault to Deleuze’s

What interests Foucault in the lecture on “other spaces” is neither space as a mathematical or geometrical phenomenon (although he sketches a brief history of space from Greek antiquity to the spatiality of modern informational networks), nor as an imaginary or psychological entity (which has been treated in great depth by Gaston Bachelard in terms of a “poetics of space,” as he notes), but the space that “eats and scrapes away at us,” where “the erosion of our life, our time, and our history takes place,” places that resist the operations of consciousness, even subvert it; places that relate to all other spaces in the sense that they “suspend, neutralize, or reverse the set of relations that are designated, reflected, or represented by them.”<sup>37</sup>

These spaces could be called both utopias and heterotopias, and Foucault proposes that we should differentiate them in the following way: utopias are inverted or perfected imaginary forms of present society, and thus they cannot be localized inside of it; heterotopias on the other hand are real places, but as *contrary* locations they represent, question and invert all other spaces, and form part of the very foundation of this society with all of its imperfections. One could even imagine a “heterotopology,” Foucault says, a systematic description, if not a science, of such places.

The text provides a rather loose and improvised description of these “different spaces”: graveyards, libraries, museums, brothels, cinemas, ships, all kinds of sites for rites of passage and initiation, etc. It would be easy to criticize Foucault for certain inconsistencies (but maybe he is making fun of our desire to classify, just like Borges...), although this is not my purpose here. What is important is that these spaces have a both productive *and* subversive relation to everyday

work of the period; for Foucault’s famous appraisal of Deleuze, see the review essay from 1970 of *Différence et répétition* and *Logique du sens*, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” in *DE* II; transl. in *EW* 2. On Deleuze’s idea of truth, cf. “Images of Philosophy,” above.

37. “Des espaces autres,” in *DE* IV, 754 f; transl. Robert Hurley as “Different Spaces,” in *EW* 2, 177 f.

spaces.<sup>38</sup> A heterotopia is a place where we can find rest and withdraw (the holiday resort, the convent, the library), it allows for a certain overturning of the rules of everyday conduct, and in this sense it operates as an integrated and functional part of the cycle of spatial (re)production—to go on holiday means to return to work in a better shape—but it also produces fantasies of subversion: why are we not always on vacation? What is the sense of work, why do we perceive it as such an important part of our lives? Heterotopias thus function both as an instrument for the reproduction of the social order, and as a constant source of disorder and contestation that has to be contained within precise limits.

Whether Foucault's later analyses of power, knowledge and spatiality can be directly deduced from this early sketch, which is at least implied by Defert, and explicitly assumed by Edward Soja, in his discussion of Foucault as a forerunner of a "spatial turn" in the humanities and social sciences, is a matter of dispute, and I find it doubtful.<sup>39</sup> Foucault's later concept of power does not deal with heterotopias, neither in the sense of linguistic and classificatory anomalies, nor with spaces that make up exceptions, but with the *constitution of the system of normality and deviation as such*, in its full extension.

38. Mary McLeod criticizes Foucault for his negligence of sexual and cultural differences, but above all for his disregard for everyday life, domestic space, the kitchen, the street, etc., in favor of marginal phenomena that are construed as subversive. See "Other' Spaces and 'Others,'" in Diane Agrest et al (eds): *The Sex of Architecture* (New York: Abrams, 1996). This criticism seems somewhat unfair: the very point of heterotopias is their marginal status, and Foucault underlines their *interaction* with everyday spaces. McLeod's criticism seems more to relate to architects who in the name of Foucault have attempted to create heterotopias by juxtaposing incongruent formal elements, all of which of course has very little to do with Foucault.
39. Cf. Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), chap. 5.

In his contribution to *Il dispositivo Foucault*, “Eterotopie e storia degli spazi,” Georges Teyssot is the only one who takes note of Foucault’s different uses of the term heterotopia, but he still understands the term basically in a taxonomic way, and his main reference is to *Les mots et les choses*. But in spite of the rather foreshortened reading of Foucault, he still extracts a highly productive question. Teyssot applies the heterotopic model of classification to a hospital from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and in the first step his analysis seems merely to confirm that the taxonomy of patients from our perspective appears as wholly arbitrary. But then he proceeds to another question, which comes close to the one we have been pursuing here: does architecture belong to the *episteme* of its age, to a set of rules that under a given time would regulate the visible and the sayable? Or must architecture be understood essentially as a hybrid entity, a result of many conflicting interest, a composite that analysis should “de-rigidify, de-mineralize, deconstruct,” to once more quote François Béguin’s formula? Should we open the edifice to a completely different network, to what we, following Nietzsche, could call a genealogy? Teyssot favors this second option, and it is what I have been trying to sketch here as a program for research in architecture in the wake of Foucault: an analysis of how the structures of everyday life down to their most minute spatial regimentation reflect the processes by which we are individualized and subjectified, in short, by which we at once become *more free* and *more disciplined*. It is true that Foucault at one point developed an idea of heterotopias as specific places where our everyday life is subverted and where something “other” of “different” appears in the cracks in the fabric of normality. But what above all came to occupy him from the 1970s and onwards was an analysis of how power and knowledge inform the everyday, how every heterotopia becomes a *commonplace* in all senses of the word. Relations of power and knowledge inform techniques of normalization, and they produce subjects and objects through an infinite modeling that extends into the smallest fibers of bodies and desires, but the space they create is also an openness, a multiplicity that contains an equally infinite capacity for resistance and transformation, and for the actualization of other spaces and subjects.



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