

return, this *aperion*, maintaining oneself before this semblance of nothingness which is the void, and approaching objects as though at their origin, out of nothingness. This deliverance from the horror of the *there is* is evinced in the contentment of enjoyment. The void of space is not the absolute interval from which the absolutely exterior being can arise. It is a modality of enjoyment and separation.

Illuminated space is not the absolute interval. The connection between vision and touch, between representation and labor, remains essential. Vision moves into grasp. Vision opens upon a perspective, upon a horizon, and describes a traversable distance, invites the hand to movement and to contact, and ensures them. Socrates made fun of Glaucon who wished to take the vision of the starlit sky for an experience of height. The forms of objects call for the hand and the grasp. By the hand the object is in the end comprehended, touched, taken, borne and *referred* to other objects, clothed with a signification, *by reference* to other objects.* Empty space is the condition for this relationship; it is not a breach of the horizon. Vision is not a transcendence. It ascribes a signification by the *relation* it makes possible. It opens nothing that, beyond the same, would be absolutely other, that is, in itself. Light conditions the relations between data; it makes possible the signification of objects that border one another. It does not enable one to approach them face to face. Intuition, taken in this very general sense, is not opposed to the thought of relations. It is already relationship, since it is vision; it catches sight of the space across which things are transported toward one another. Space, instead of transporting beyond, simply ensures the condition for the *lateral* signification of things within the same.

To see is hence always to see on the horizon. The vision that apprehends on the horizon does not encounter a being out of what is beyond all being. Vision is a forgetting of the *there is* because of the essential satisfaction, the agreeableness [agrément] of sensibility, enjoyment, contentment with the finite without concern for the infinite. In fleeing itself in vision consciousness returns to itself.

But is not light in another sense origin of itself—as the source of light, in which its being and its appearing coincide, as fire and as sun? Here, to be sure, is the figure of every relation with the absolute. But it is only

* "Par la main, l'objet est en fin de compte compris, touché, pris, porté et rapporté à d'autres objets, revêtu une signification, par rapport à d'autres objets."

a figure. The light as sun is an object. If in the diurnal vision light makes seen and is not seen, the nocturnal light is seen as source of light. In the vision of brilliancy the juncture of light with object takes place. The sensible light qua visual datum does not differ from other data, and itself remains relative to an elemental and obscure ground. A relation with what in another sense comes absolutely from itself is needed to make possible the consciousness of radical exteriority. A light is needed to see the light.

Does not science make possible the transcending of the subjective condition of sensibility? Even if we distinguish from qualitative science that which the work of Léon Brunschvicg extolled, we can still ask whether mathematical thought itself breaks with sensation? The phenomenological message essentially answers in the negative. The realities physico-mathematical science reach derive their meaning from procedures that proceed from the sensible.

Total alterity, in which a being does not refer to enjoyment and presents itself out of itself, does not shine forth in the *form* by which things are given to us, for beneath form things conceal themselves. The surface can be transformed into an interior: one can melt the metal of things to make new objects of them, utilize the wood of a box to make a table out of it by chopping, sawing, planing: the hidden becomes open and the open becomes hidden. This consideration may seem naïve—as though the interiority or the essence of the thing which the form hides would have to be taken in the spatial sense. But in fact the depth of the thing can have no other meaning than that of its matter, and the revelation of matter is essentially superficial.

It would seem that between the different surfaces there exists a more profound difference: that of the obverse and the reverse. One surface is offered to the gaze, and one can turn over the garment, as one reminds a coin. But does not the distinction between the obverse and the reverse bring us beyond these superficial considerations? Does it not indicate to us another plane than that with which our last remarks were intentionally concerned? The obverse would be the essence of the thing whose servitudes are supported by the reverse, where the threads are invisible. Yet Proust admired the reverse of the sleeves of a lady's gown, like those dark corners of cathedrals, nonetheless worked with the same art as the façade. It is art that endows things with something like a *façade*—that by which objects are not only seen, but are as objects on exhibition. The darkness of matter would denote the state of a being that precisely

has no façade. The notion of façade borrowed from building suggests to us that architecture is perhaps the first of the fine arts. But in it is constituted the beautiful, whose essence is indifference, cold splendor, and silence. By the façade the thing which keeps its secret is exposed enclosed in its monumental essence and in its myth, in which it gleams like a splendor but does not deliver itself. It captivates by its grace as by magic, but does not reveal itself. If the transcendent cuts across sensibility, if it is openness preeminently, if its vision is the vision of the very openness of being, it cuts across the vision of forms and can be stated neither in terms of contemplation nor in terms of practice. It is the face; its revelation is speech. The relation with the Other alone introduces a dimension of transcendence, and leads us to a relation totally different from experience in the sensible sense of the term, relative and egoist.