Visible and Invisible

Summa philosophiae anthropologicae

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Contents

Sources and references

I quote rather extensively and from rather different traditions. However, I never go into exegesis of the texts or analysis of the thoughts of others. An attempt to do so would make finishing this work impossible. On few occasions I make more detailed statements in order to illustrate differences which also should clarify my meanings. The variety of sources and inspirations makes me even limit the quotations to the most succinct statements which, I think, express some essential idea. Although the basic rules of conscientious exegesis may be thus violated, and some quotations might have even been not only drawn out of their context but even adjusted to fit the present one, the intention is never to violate the meaning of the quoted text. (Besides, exegesis is not our objective.)

Variety of traditions suggests that we should focus on affinities and often even only vague similarities rather than differences and oppositions. Was St. Augustine entitled to claim the presence of Christian truths in the neo-Platonic texts, as he did in the much disputed and controverted passage in *Confessions* VII:9? Was St. Clement of Alexandria right in the similar claims of the affinity of the Greek philosophy and literature with the Christian revelation? Was Philo Judaeus right claiming not only the similarities between but even the direct dependence of Greek thought on the Biblical tradition? Scholars might prove that they were all wrong pointing out significant differences making the two views different and even incompatible. The Greek spirit was, after all, completely different from the Christian one. Perhaps, but this depends on how one draws the borders around the intuitions like 'Greek spirit' or 'Christian spirit'. One can always find differences separating two views – the question is at what level, and then, what value one will attach to them as opposed to the similarities. (After all, the neo-Platonic culmination of Greek spirit, with its severe critiques of the emerging Christianity, provided the foundation for the depth of Christian mysticism.) Opposing, say, Greek spirit and Christian spirit, one should never forget that in both cases one is speaking about spirit which, incarnated in opposing socio-historical and political constellations, remains at the bottom human spirit. It takes some wisdom to recognise concrete unity behind actual differences and to stop distinguishing when everything worth saying has been said – the problem of perspicacious thoroughness, as La Rochefoucauld observed, is not that it does not reach the end but that it goes beyond it. We will for the most focus on the similarities and it is up to you to decide whether they are only due to the negligence in observing the important distinctions or, perhaps, they are justified because the possible distinctions are of negligible importance.

There are a few special sources which deserve a comment. The authorship of *My Sister and I* is the matter of dispute and scholars can not tell for sure (perhaps, rather seriously doubt) that it is indeed, as is also claimed, autobiography written by Nietzsche himself. The authorship of relevant thoughts should not be that important. However, in an academic context the issue may become a bit sensitive, especially when the claimed author is Nietzsche. (It might be so, in particular, if one wanted to relate the contents of this autobiography to his other works which, however, I am not doing.)

Even if it were not Nietzsche, it certainly could be, though the author might also have been more Nietzschean than Nietzsche himself. Facing the lack of any decisive proofs or disproofs of purely textual, linguistic or medical nature, we are left with the text which looks like it might have been written, if not carefully re-read and edited, by Nietzsche. The voice for or against his authorship depends then on one's view of his thought – whether this text 'fits' into the image one has of his whole thinking and, not least, personality. For me, there is a perfect match with the image I had formed before I found this book. (Possible objections against the portrait arising from it, should be confronted with less extreme, yet by no means incompatible, impressions of the close friend in L. Salomé, *Nietzsche*.) "In the end, *My Sister and I* reminds me of a true story."[1] Having made this reservation, I will quote the text as if Nietzsche was its author.

Another referenced text, hopefully of much less dubious value, is a collection of early Freiburg lectures by M. Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life* [*Phenomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, Gesamtausgabe, vol. 60]. Some of these have been reconstructed almost exclusively from the notes of the students. Thus the reader should be warned that the quoted formulations, although reflecting hopefully the intentions, are hardly Heidegger's. (In any case, they are translated by me into English, and that mostly from the Polish translation of the German text. Well...)

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[1] W. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche and the Seven Sirens*.

Likewise, Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, is only reconstructed from the extensive fragments quoted and criticized in Origen, *Against Celsus*. In this case, however, the breadth and details of Origen's response give reasonable confidence into the authenticity of the reconstruction. Much worse is the case of Porphyry, *Against the Christians* where even the attribution of authorship may be disputed as the work is reconstructed mainly from the *Apocriticus* of Macarius Magnes which need not reflect the philosophy of Porphyry. These works are quoted as if they were written by the authors to whom they are attributed by the general (though not universal) scholarly opinion. For investigating the associated doubts and controversies the reader may start by consulting the referenced editions.

Two distinct editions of J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon* have been used. The critical edition (started by late I. P. Sheldon-Williams and continued by É. A. Jeauneau) of volumes I, II and IV is referenced as just done, with the number+letter identifying the page number and the manuscript as in the edition. Volumes III and V are from the abbreviated translation by M. L. Uhlfelder and are referenced to in the same way, J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, with only page numbers in this single volume edition. In either case, the volume number identifies uniquely the referenced edition.

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One encounters sometimes cases when, in an English text, quotations and longer passages are given in French, German or some other language of the original – sometimes even Latin or Greek. Although this may serve as an indication that the text is addressed to a particular audience, it is no more pleasing than any other form of intellectual snobbery. It is perhaps a good tone to know German, French, Italian, Latin and Greek, but few people do and I am not one of them. Since I have used extensively sources in other languages, I have attempted to access – and if I did not succeed then to translate – all the quotations into English. (A few exceptions concern passages of German poetry which I did not dare to attempt translating.) Sometimes, I ended thus translating back into English texts translated originally from English into another language in which I read them. Such cases are marked as 'my **re**translation...'. Hopefully, this will not cause any serious confusion – to fix it, I have to find some time with nothing better to do.

Some conventions

All the works are referred by the English title, even if I used the source in another language; this is then indicated in the Bibliography at the end of the text. (A few exceptions are made when the original source is referred after another author, as is often the case with collected works or fragments.)

The references to all the works look uniformly as

<div align="center">Author, *Title* XI:1.5...</div>

where the part before ':', typically a Roman numeral, refers to the main part into which the source is divided (e.g., book, part, chapter), and the numerals after ':' to the nested subparts. The references to the Bible have no 'Source', thus 'Matt. X:5' refers to *The Gospel of Matthew*, chapter X, verse 5. (I have used primarily King James Version and commented occasional usage of other translations in the footnotes.) Likewise, the references to pre-Socractics are usually given without any source by merely specifying the author and the Diels-Kranz number, e.g., 'Heraclitus, DK 22B45', where the number identifying the philosopher (here 22) is taken from the fifth edition of Diels, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.

Identifying quotations by page numbers might have been reasonable in times when most books existed only in one edition. I have tried to avoid such references but in a few cases, where the structuring and numbering of the text happens to be very poor, I had to use this form. This is also sometimes the case with the quotations borrowed from others which I did not verify (the source is then given in the square braces "[after...]" following the reference). The pagination follows then at the end of the reference as 'Author, *Title* XI:1.5...;p.21', where the numbers indicating part and subparts usually involve only the main part (i.e., only 'XI;p.21'), and may be totally absent, if no such division of the work is given. The edition is identified in the Bibliography. Occasionally, the subparts may have a letter, as e.g., 'II:d7.q1.a2'. These are only auxiliary and their meaning depends on the source. Typically, these are used with the medieval authors and the reference above might be to the **d**istinction 7, **q**uestion 1, **a**nswer 2, in the second, II, volume/book.

In few cases I do not know the origin of the quotation, or else I only (believe to) know its author. I chose to indicate such incomplete pieces of information, rather than skipping them all together. I have likewise indicated the use of unauthorized, or in any case unedited, versions of the texts found on the interned for which no bibliographical data except for the title and the author are given in the Bibliography. (For some, certainly very pragmatic reasons, books printed in the USA do not carry explicitly the year of publication but only the year of copyright. Consequently, the bibliographical information for such books refers usually to this date.)

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Words which are given some more specific, technical meaning are written with *slanted font*. "Quotation marks" are used for words and quotations. 'Shudder-quotes' indicate, typically, either the referent of the word in the quotes, or else a concept or expression which is not given a technical meaning in the text but which is borrowed from somewhere else or even is only assumed to have some technical sense. Thus, for instance:

- *subject* – is the subject in the technical sense introduced in the text;

- 'subject' – is subject in some, possibly technical sense of somebody else; it may often indicate a slight irony over only apparently precise meaning one might believe the word "subject" to have;

- "subject" – refers to the word itself (quotations are also given in the quotation marks);

- subject – this is just subject, with full ambiguity and with whatever meaning the common usage might associate with it at the moment.

I have tried to place more technical details in the footnotes which therefore can be, for the most, skipped at first or casual reading. They are not, however, addressed specifically to the scholars. Sometimes they elaborate the text but in general will be useful only for those who find some ideas interesting enough to follow them in other authors.

Book I   (of indifference)

In the beginning ...

1   there was Nothingness   *"Even the transcendental subject had to be born."*

"Why is there something rather than nothing?" What makes one ask? Just because we have   1. the intuition, if not of nothingness, then at least of a sheer possibility of nothingness, its empty intention? But an empty intention, a sheer possibility – isn't it just the idea of actual impossibility?

Why? Because you *are*, because you were *born*. *Birth* is the *separation* from the *origin* and *separation* results in a confrontation of the separated poles. *Birth* establishes the *confrontation* of the emerging being with the *transcendence*. Such a *confrontation* is *existence*. "By *existence* we do not mean here the existence in the sense of an occurrence and 'being there' (being-at-hand) of some being. Neither does "*existence*" mean here the existential worries about body and soul underlying man's moral care about himself. [...] *ex-occurence* is the *confrontation* in the openness of Being as such."[1] Something is there because we *exist* and without us, or other *existing* beings, everything would sink back into the indistinct waters of *original nothingness*.

Before any experience, there was *nothingness*; no 'what', not even a 'that' which is not yet any   2. 'what' – but just *nothing*.

One designed notions of mere nothingness *for* consciousness, or *of* our finitude. What we cannot grasp, what we cannot see and embrace may seem to be nothing. And there is a lot of psychological plausibility in such notions. But *nothingness*, the hardly imaginable *indistinct* homogeneity, the *lack* of any objects, concepts, distinctions, is not nothingness of myself, of a subject, for *nothingness* does not know of any subject, it is there long before a subject appears. It is *absolute*. There is no access to it, it is "above anything which even in thought or name could be a mere image or phantom of differentiation, in it vanishes every definiteness and property."[2] There can be no experience of *nothingness*, for an experience requires a *distinction* – *nothingness* is exactly a total lack thereof.

Birth is not an experience, it is the ontological event. It precedes any *distinctions* and so no one   3. remembers own *birth*. *Birth* brings forth an *existence*, that is, a *confrontation*. *Confrontation* is not a relation, it is a meeting. Only when seen as if 'from outside' it can be reduced to a relation between two dissociated entities, but to be *confronted* means to encounter *transcendence*, whose ultimate form is *nothingness* of the beginning.

In *confrontation* the *separated* poles reflect each other. Not in the sense of one being somehow 'similar' to another, but because they together, and only together, constitute the uniqueness of the event. *Confrontation*, in all its later and more specific forms, can be likened to a fight or a game in which one opponent *reflects* the other; responding to the other's moves or punches, he is in fact an *imago* from which one could reconstruct the moves of the other.[3] In this sense, *existence*

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[1] M. Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*. IV «"Existenz" heißt hier nicht existentia im Sinne des Vorkommens und "Daseins" (Vorhandenseins) eines Seienden. "Existenz" bedeutet hier aber nicht "existenziell" die auf eine leiblich-seelische Verfassung gebaute sittliche Bemühung des Menschen um sein Selbst. [...] Ek-sistenz ist die Aus-setzung in die Entborgenheit des Seienden als eines solchen.»

[2] Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West*. A:I.3.b]

[3] As all analogies, this one is not perfect either. Primarily, *confrontation* lacks the symmetry of a fight or interaction.

is *imago* of *nothingness* (and one would be tempted to say, *imago Dei*).

4. The *original confrontation* takes place in the midst of *nothingness* – it is *absolute*. It is not relative
    to any particular being, because *nothingness* is the total lack of any particular beings, the total
    lack of *distinctions*.

    You were *born*, and there was time when you didn't exist. But then there was *nothing* – no
    distinctions which now fill the world you are living in. To put it differently, if there always has
    been something then no beginning has ever taken place. Beginning, true beginning means precisely
    this – something emerges from *nothing*. If it emerges from something else, it is a beginning only
    in a derived, analogous sense given to the word in the practical context of daily experience. If
    it emerges from something else, it is not new, it is not unique – it is a repetition, no matter
    how different it may be from everything which preceded it. *Absolute* beginning, creation from
    nothingness, is the only way a unique individual, something that isn't a repetition, can emerge.
    Birth is such a beginning and so no *existence* can be repeated.

5. To be *confronted* means to be confronted with *transcendence*, and such an encounter implies also
    immediate self-understanding. On the one hand, it implies "being in such a way that one has an
    understanding of Being,"[4] that one has the understanding of the very fact of *confrontation*. But to
    begin with this 'understanding' is nothing else but the very *confrontation* itself, 'knowing' oneself
    to be an *imago* is neither more not less than simply being *confronted*, that is, *existing*. Therefore
    the "question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself."[5]

    Existence is "in each case mine [...], delivered over to its own Being"[6]. Heidegger does not,
    of course, mean any solipsistic 'mineness', and his emphasis on 'mineness' refers rather to the
    unique individuality, *haecceitas*.[7] Such an individuality is nothing more (nor less) than the event
    of *confrontation*. It is only that which 'I am not' which delivers me over to myself, which throws
    me back to myself and makes my own being an issue. For a solipsist there can be no 'mineness'
    for that, as Fichte maintained, arises only in a *confrontation* with 'not-mine'. The all-embracing
    immanence of some postulated spiritual unity is void of any 'mineness' except, perhaps, for the
    one which reminds it that it is not so all-embracing and immanent as it would like to believe. It
    is only *confrontation*, encounter with *transcendence*, which constitutes anything that can have a
    character of 'mineness' – *haecceitas* is involved in the notion of *existence* only because it is an
    aspect of *confrontation*.

6. The *original confrontation* takes place in the midst of *nothingness* – as the *separation* by *birth*.
    Although it has many *actual* analogues, it does not belong to phenomenology – happening *above*
    any *visible* contents, it never constitutes a 'phenomenon'. Perhaps, it only underlies all phenomena,
    surrounding everything that appears *for* ..., with an *invisible* trans-phenomenal *rest*.

    We witness many *births*, of people, of animals, even beginnings of things. Reasonably enough,
    we see the analogy and think that our *birth* was of the same kind. It was – when seen from outside!
    If you reduce yourself to this mode of thinking, if you try to 'jump out of your skin' and pretend
    that you are not here, only 'out there', you will never be able to appreciate the meaning of *your
    birth*, and hence neither of any *birth*. For the ultimate uniqueness of every person is also what is
    the same in every person – those who like paradoxical formulations might say: every *existence* is
    a repetition of the unrepeatability of the beginning . . .

    One can consider one's *birth* exclusively in the order of causality and dependence, whether
    natural, biological, physical, or whatever, in the *objective* categories of *externality*. Just like one
    can consider one's life in such categories. But can one, really? And even if one could, would one
    like to? One can not doubt that many events preceded one's *birth*. But this is something one
    has to realise, something which is not among the first things one learns. One has to develop the
    whole understanding of the world and even if such a development does not amount to an idealistic
    constitution, it amounts to a discovery. This discovery, which we will follow, begins with the
    trans-phenomenal *nothingness*.

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    [4]M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Intro.1.4 (H12)
    [5]Ibid.
    [6]Ibid. I:1.1 (H42)
    [7]We will borrow this term – though not the concept itself – from Duns Scotus. (The 'concrete, i.e., autonomous,
    lowest eidetic singularities' from E. Husserl, *Ideas* I:1.1.§15, seem to be exact counterpart of Duns Scotus' concept.)
    We do not intend any univocal analogy. E.g., the concept applied to all things, while we apply it only to *existence*.
    However, the emphasis it put on the fundamental character of individuality which is not conceptual (*quidditative*)
    and is really coinciding with, yet formally distinct from, the actual individual, gives very adequate associations.

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One may easily claim that a (human) being never has been in such a 'state of *nothingness*': 7.
before experience there had been simple feelings and sensations which we do not remember but
can identify in innocent tests on new-borns, even fetuses. And on embryos? If there was a time
when I didn't exist, if there was a time when no humans, no living beings existed, then there was
a time when there was *nothing*. And sure, (human) being was never in the state of *nothingness* –
for then there was *nothing*, in particular, not this being.

In our daily life we are surrounded by all kinds of objects which we can, more or less precisely,
distinguish from each other. The table in front of me is obviously different from the chair on which
I am sitting: they have different properties, occupy different regions of space, one can be moved
without affecting the other, and so on. However, the further we look into the past of our personal
being the less we find there, the fewer definite objects and experiences. And it is not simply our
memory which should be blamed. There *were* fewer objects and less diversity. It is only in the
process of growing and education that we learn to distinguish things and experiences which were
previously fused with an indistinct 'background'. It takes time before a child learns that a chair
and a table are two separate things. It takes time before it learns that a chair and a table are
things at all, before they emerge from the *indistinct* background as two independent entities. And
when that happens it happens because they are *distinguished* from the background and from each
other, because they emerge as *distinct* things.

Once we begin to distinguish sharply and precisely, it is difficult to recall this original, almost
magical power of the surrounding which has not yet fallen apart, where parts have not yet been
estranged from the background and acquired independent existence of their own. Perhaps, we can
sometimes experience a similar situation when placed in an entirely new and unknown surround-
ings. We do recognise individual objects (this ability, once acquired, hardly ever gets lost) but the
whole world appears chaotic, perhaps, meaningless. There are no indications as to which things
or observations are significant, which mean something and carry relevant information and which
do not. We experience a chaotic variety which – due to the lack of meanings and significance –
appears as an undifferentiated, homogeneous totality. Only after some time we are able to pull
some objects out of this background, to distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant.

These, however, are only imperfect analogies.

The "appearances are not things in themselves; they are only representations, which in turn have 8.
their object – an object which cannot itself be intuited by us, and which may, therefore, be named
the non-empirical, that is, transcendental object $= x$. The pure concept of this transcendental
object, *which in reality throughout all our knowledge is always one and the same*, is what can
alone confer upon all our empirical concepts in general relation to an object, that is, objective
reality."[8] The emphasized phrase is the point from which we would start remodelling Kant to
fit our purposes. He speaks here only about the pure concept of such a transcendental object,
not about the object itself. Yet, there isn't much which could distinguish the two, except for the
presumed conviction that the two should be distinguished. Allow us therefore to think them the
same: emptiness of the 'pure concept of x' is but a reflection of the pure *nothingness, indistinctness*
of x.

There is hardly anything in Kant's Critiques which would justify a *multiplicity* of things-in-
themselves. The concept is always one and the same and the whole Kantian exposition might be
carried without much (if any) changes if we allowed, equally, only *one* thing-in-itself – inaccessible
to the categories of understanding because … entirely *indistinct*. Different things-in-themselves
are equally empty, contentless and transcendental – offering no grounds for being distinguished,
they should better remain one and the same. This would make even identity and distinctness of
different things of experience a mere 'appearance' in the Kantian sense but, with all reservations
to be made on the way, we are going to do precisely that.

So, no things-in-themselves but thing-in-itself and, as a matter of fact, not even thing-in-itself,
but just *indistinct nothingness*, or the *one*. As we will also see, this *one* does not arise from but, on
the contrary, is the *foundation* of *experience*, and then also of any specific experience of 'objective
reality'.

Nothingness is void of *any* experience. But it is as well the simple *one*, the *origin*, since everything 9.

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[8]I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. B137

in the world originates beyond world's boundaries, comes from what embraces it, from the entirely other – in the world's language, from nothingness. "Sacred ignorance teaches me that which seems to the intellect to be nothing is the incomprehensible Maximum"[9] But we do not want to posit too much into *nothingness* which would force us to find it there later through 'sacred ignorance'. *Nothingness* is not any 'Maximum', and even *ens realissimum* has too much of *ens* to be adequate; it is the *virtual*, not *actual origin*, the germ from which everything arises, perhaps a *summmum*, but not a sum containing everything *within* itself – being *indistinct*, it does not 'contain' anything. It is the background from which and against which anything that is appears. "All things proceed from the Nothing, and are borne towards the Infinite."[10] And it is the background which, once the world has appeared, continues to encircle it.

10.   *Nothingness* is what precedes the world, not so much in the temporal order, but in the ontological order of *foundation*. It is the state before things and the world emerged, when "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."[11]

Things arise only from this formless homogeneity, from 'the dark and indistinct waters' which embraced everything before the creation of the world. Whether it is 'creation from *nothing*' or else 'emanation from the *one*' is only a manner of speaking. It has no adequate names not because our knowledge is finite and imperfect but because the lack of any *distinctions* makes every name inadequate.

The mystery is not how the mind forms, out of the diversity of perceptions and atomic properties, the idea of a sustaining, self-identical object, nor how the objective atoms 'compose' to form the experienced unities. Such questions address secondary constructions and can be asked and attempted answered with full *visibility* of their objects and contents. On the contrary, the mystery is how the original uniformity passes to the multiplicity of independent individuals, how the *one* becomes 'many', or how God creates the world from *nothingness*. "The simplex [absolute] requires no derivation; but any manifold, or any dual, must be dependent."[12]

11.   We will not disturb the tranquility of mysteries attempting to answer any 'How?' We only notice that what marks the end of *indistinct nothingness* and a transition towards the world of experience, is that "God divided the light from the darkness"[13], is *distinction*. The primordial act of creation is an act of *distinction*, turning the *indistinct nothingness* into something, pulling this something out of *nothingness* and letting it come forth, letting it appear. This happens still in *illo tempore*, against the background of mere *nothingness*, before we can talk about any person or subject. We could say, it is *birth* which is the first *distinction* in that a new being is *separated* from the *origin*. But it is immediately accompanied by a multitude of further *distinctions*, which will concern us most.

Distinction breaks the original unity. *Nothingness* withdraws and becomes a mere background, a mere stage for the performance of the richness of the world. Every being will now carry within itself the element of the *original nothingness* from which it emerged. Or else, as the Pythagoreans could say, the limit introduced into the eternal and ageless indefinite (*apeiron*) results in the limited cosmos (of *distinctions*) which "inhale" the surrounding air, the boundless (*apeiron*) encompassing all the worlds. *Distinction* does not merely *distinguish* something and brings it forth. Primarily, it introduces the difference between the *distinguished* and the *non-distinguished*, between the 'many' of actual *distinctions* and the *one*, or *nothingness* of the *indistinct origin*. Then it is indeed "most difficult to apprehend the mind's invisible measure//Which alone holds the boundaries of all things."[14] Whether one says that the mind's measure is in the mind or outside, that the beginning was in the mind or not, one puts it wrongly, for (the indefinite and boundless) *nothingness* knows of no *distinctions*, and hence neither of any 'either-or' nor of any 'outside'.

Confrontation is the constant circumscription of the boundaries of all things, limiting the unlimited, *distinguishing* the *indistinct*. We might thus characterise *existence* equivalently as the being which makes the difference and for which things make difference, which *distinguishes* and

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[9]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:17.51
[10]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. II:72
[11]Gen. I:2 [Septuagint has "invisible and non-composite" instead of "without form and void".]
[12]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:6.4
[13]Gen. I:4
[14]St. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*. V:12 [quoting Solon]

hence for which there is not only the *indistinct* but also *distinctions*; in short, the being which is not merely enveloped by *nothingness* but which encounters something.

2   In the begining there was only Chaos, the Abyss

Distinctions emerge only gradually as we grow up and learn. As we become more sophisticated and mature, the world becomes richer and more diversified. How and when does the first *distinction* occur? Perhaps, at the moment of birth, perhaps earlier. We do not know. We do not know and it does not matter. What matters is *that* we did begin to *distinguish*. The indistinct waters embracing everything in the beginning withdrew as the primordial act of creation brought the first *distinctions* to the surface. But we do not remember. We do not know and creation remains a mysterious gift of the *origin*.   12.

The first *distinction* does not occur alone. Strictly speaking, there is nothing like *the first distinction* – only a transition from the state of undifferentiated *unity* to the multiplicity of *distinctions*. And naturally, one *distinction* may encompass other ones, one *distinction* may be a gathering place of many other. Creation does not merely bring forth a single object but a whole world. We do not merely *distinguish* pain from a formless background but at the same time from hunger and satisfaction, we *distinguish* this light from that darkness, one person from another, mother from father, then a chair from a table ... A *distinction* occurs only in the midst of other distinctions. The gradual emergence of the world amounts only to the gradual refinement and adjustment of the distinctions. At every stage there is always unlimited number of distinctions, in fact, a chaos exceeding our possibilities to embrace it in a single act.

Chaos – the limitless manifold, the ever too big, the ever exceeding our capacities number of *distinctions* – is not *nothingness* any more. *Nothingness* has no *distinctions*, in particular, no subjective pole. But *chaos* exceeds *somebody*'s power. It has a subjective pole – the *actuality* of our finite being which emerges in its midst. For this *actuality*, chaos is the first, differentiated analogy of the *origin*. The *actuality* confronted with *chaos* appears powerless. The *proto-experience* of the limitless *apeiron* is *the same* as the *proto-experience* of the finitude of *actuality*. It is the experience of the impossibility to embrace everything within the *horizon of actuality*. The *confrontation* with the limitless reveals not *nothingness* but the limited; the limited whose fragility dissolves in the overpowering. This fragility, the finite reflection, *imago* of *chaos*, is the site of *actuality* or – *proto-consciousness*; the limitless is its primordial correlate.

"*Why* is there something rather than *nothing*?" and "*How* did *nothingness* become something?"   13.
are perhaps questions introducing to metaphysics. But there is a grave danger that metaphysics attempting to answer such questions, instead of ending up with saying something – no matter how vague and imprecise, but still *something* – ends up merely glorifying its impotency and inability to say anything.

The celebrated question is certainly different from many others but, nevertheless, shares with them some common ground. For instance, "*How* can the subject be certain that its knowledge represents adequately the external reality?" Differences notwithstanding, both questions ask for an *explanation*, perhaps, even for a demonstration. "Why" and "how" are questions more or less successfully addressed by sciences and common sense – the agents seeking *explanations*. But when directed towards the *origins* preceding the world, they can, at best, produce conceptual analyses of dubious value, transcendental illusions and, sometimes, transcendental dogmas. The task of philosophy is not to explain.

If we don't want to end up in a pseudo-science of conceptual analysis, if we renounce the 'whys' and 'hows', we are left with the simple and audacious 'what', or even worse, with the mere *that*. 'Why' and 'how' something happens are already involved in the differentiated world of experiences and concepts. But *what* experiences, *what* concepts? The philosophical challange is to see and say 'that' something happens and 'what' this is. 'Whys' and 'hows' can only sometimes, and only possibly, help to clarify this 'what'. The challange is not to explain, perhaps not even to understand but to gather and give an account.

If there was a time when you didn't exist, then there was a time when there was *nothing*. And   14.
as something is there now, it must have started to appear some time. That much one can say. But when? How? In the first hour, first minute after your birth? Before? When you were an

embryo? Just afer conception? We do not know and it is not important to us. Some time, some things begun to emerge but these somethings were not things, forms, people, etc. as we know them. In the beginning "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep". Then "God said: 'Let there be light' [...] and God divided light from darkness"[15], then "God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament"[16]. Not before the third day the "grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit tree"[17] emerged.

" 'Pure experience' is the name which [one] gave to the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories. Only new-born babies, or men in semi-coma from sleep, drugs, illnesses, or blows, may be assumed to have an experience pure in the literal sense of a *that* which is not yet any definite *what*, tho' ready to be all sorts of whats; full both of oneness and manyness, but in respects that don't appear; changing thoroughout, yet so confusedly that its phases interpenetrate and no points, either of distinction or of identity, can be caught."[18]

15.   If we try to imagine – and we can hardly do anything more than *imagine* – a *proto-experience*, it is like a continuous, irreflective flux of 'somethings'; a chaos of *pure distinctions* not only without any mutual relations, but without any sameness. One should not focus here on an object, on 'this pen on the table', because such an act involves already fixation and *recognition*. I may turn off my reflection and just stare at 'this pen here'. It is probably as close as I can get, but it is not a *proto-experience*, because there is nothing like 'a pen' in *proto-experience*. *Proto-experience* is not an experience of something; it isn't even an experience of nothing – it just isn't an experience of anything.

Proto-experience does not involve any thing. It does not even involve a 'that' which is too much suggesting some kind of a definite entity.[19] But it is not *nothingness*; something begun to emerge at the edge of *nothingness* which soon will become the edge of the world. It is like a pure heterogenity, merely opposed to *nothingness* but not yet incarnated in any definite 'thats'.

It is not *nothingness* because it involves *distinctions*. And whatever is *distinguished* already is. We can never find anything about which we couldn't, in one sense or another, say that it is. The universal equivocity of the word "is" reflects this fact that to be is to be *distinguished*. Yet these are only *pure distinctions*, like mere facts of mere differences possessing no sameness, no self-identity; it is a flux, a light which isn't darkness any more but where still there are no 'thats', no somethings at which one could stop and point.

16.   *Proto-experience* is not divided into 'now' and 'then', it is timeless, that is, 'objectively' it may last one second as well as one day. Approaching it phenomenologically, one will easily use images like "a flow of continuous change with the absurdity that it flows just as it flows and can flow neither faster nor slower."[20] The "flow" is, however, not a name for any flow of time but rather for an 'overflow', in the sense of each content flowing over into every other, static co-presence of *distinctions* without any distinguished objects, mutual interpenetration of *vaguely* distinct contents which, however, possess no inherent identities. "Thus any changing object is here missing; and in so far as in every process 'something' is happening, here no process is involved. There is nothing there which is changing and hence one can not speak meaningfully about anything which is lasting. [...] It is the *absolute subjectivity* and has the absolute property of an image as 'flow' to the signified [...] For

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[15]Gen. I:3-4

[16]Gen. I:7

[17]Gen. I:11

[18]W. James, *The thing and its relations*.   [This, by the way, seems to be one of the carrying ideas of the late XIX-th century, a crucial aspect of the *Zeitgeist*. Not only the calculus of inifinities of Cantor and rigorous treatment of continuity and real numbers emerging from the work of people like Weierstrass and Dedekind, but likewise *durée* of Bergson's, 'stream of consciousness' of Joyce's and psychoanalysis, the Absolute as experience with distinctions but without relations of Bradley are all variations over this theme. We will rather continue with our presentation, leaving the comparison of the similarities and differences to the interested reader. Our *proto-experience* is, probably, closest to James'. Here the fundamental difference consists in that he very quickly passes from it to another meaning, which is also the cornerstone of his 'radical empiricism', namely, a 'pure experience' as *actual*, that is, limited to a 'now'. *Proto-experience* knows as yet nothing about time and such a limitation.]

[19]The reader manages hopefully to distinguish the cases when (like here) 'that' is meant as a pronoun, and the more usual ones when it is a conjunctive, especially when written *that*.

[20]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. A:3.§35 «einen Fluß stetiger 'Veränderung', und diese Veränderung hat das Absurde, daß sie genau so läuft, wie sie läuft, und weder 'schneller' noch 'langsamer' laufen kan.»

all that we lack names."[21] Being timeless it is also spaceless, not divided into 'here' and 'there'. It is like an 'absolute place', that is, one not relative to any other place, one beyond which no other place exists, and yet a *concrete* place and not the whole abstract universe. Finally, this *concreteness* does not involve any subject, there is no subject of *proto-experience* just like there is no object. There is nothing of the sort because there are no somethings, because *pure distinction* is not a distinction between this and that. Rather, it is a *distinction* without content. From the point of view of later *reflection*, we might also say that it is the mere *fact* of distinguishing.[22] The 'mere fact' also because the only thing we can say about it is *that* it happens – not 'what' was *distinguished*, only that what happened to be, also could be *distinguished*; above all, there is nothing which could entitle us to say that it was true or necessary to *distinguish* this rather than that.

All these lacking distinctions are what distinguishes *proto-experience* from *experience*, in partic-   17.
ular, any experience empiricists ever managed to suggest.   Using words like "*proto-experience*" and "*chaos*", we should keep in mind that there is no experience *of chaos*. *Proto-experience* is not *an experience*. It is *chaos* which was at the beginning, after the darkness of *nothingness* was separated from the light, but before the world and anybody who could experience anything emerged. It is not accessible to any *reflective* introspection. "Born as we are out of chaos, why can we never establish contact with it? No sooner do we look at it than order, pattern, shape is born under our eyes."[23] As Husserl used to emphasize and as we will emphasize in what follows, the fact that something is not (an object of) *an experience* does not mean that it is not experienced! We could say that it is co-experienced. As *nothingness* and *chaos* withdraw beyond the horizon of *experience*, they do not disappear. They constitute an integral part of *experiencing* as well as of *any experience* and so are given along with it. They are only never given as *objects* of any particular *experiences*.

Except for being differentiated, *proto-experience* does not offer anything. It is properly continuous,   18.
not in the sense of a successive flux of distinct 'nows' and 'thats', but as timeless, without any 'now' and 'then'. It is *chaos*, but not a chaos of objects (which is secondary) but just *chaos* – of *pure distinctions*, "without number or multitude", of 'thats' which are not 'whats' and do not yet pretend to possibly possessing any meaning. It is no longer *indistinct* Parmenidean 'is', but rather Anaximander's *apeiron*, with full ambiguity of the term meaning *both* indefinite *and* infinite, unlimited and limitless. This second hypostasis precedes any later differentiation – "it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some other *apeiron*, from which came into being all the heavens and the worlds in them."[24] For the moment, there are still no 'elements', no things, there are no *distinguished* objects, as there is no subject making any *distinctions*.

2.1   Spatiality/simultaneity

There is nothing like 'the first *distinction*'; emerging *distinctions* mark simply the second hypostasis   19.

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[21] Ibid. §35-36. «Sodann fehlt hier jedes Objekt, das sich verändert; und sofern in jedem Vorgang 'etwas' vorgeht, handelt es sich hier um keinen Vorgang. Es ist nichts da, das sich verändert, und darum kann auch von etwas, das dauert, sinnvoll keine Rede sein. [...] Es ist die *absolute Subjektivität* und hat die absoluten Eigenschaften eines Bilde als 'Fluß' zu Bezeichnenden [...] Für all das fehlen uns die Namen.»

[22] The word "*distinction*" will be, intentionally, used in the equivocal sense: as the act of distinguishing and as that which is distinguished. So far, there are no acts nor things distinguished, and distinguishing between the two would be misleading. Derrida's 'differance' is probably a close analogue of this concept. However, we wouldn't dare to attempt any more detailed review of what *he* possibly might mean, so this is only some hunch that both point to the same intuition.

[23] W. Gombrowicz, *Cosmos*. II

[24] Anaximander, DK 12A9, Theophrastus' account [after G. Kirk *et al.*, eds., *The Presocratic Philosophers*. III] Plotinus about the limitless: "what is known as the flux of the unlimited is not to be understood as local change; nor does any other sort of recognisable motion belong to it in itself; therefore the limitless cannot move: neither can it be at rest: in what, since all place is later? Its movement means little more than that it is not fixed in rest. Is it, then, suspended at some one point, or rocking to and fro? No; any such poising, with or without side motion, could be known only by place [which Matter precedes]. How, then, are we to form any conception of its being? We must fasten on the bare notion and take what that gives us – opposites that still are not opposed." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:6.3] We would be willing to discern the same theme in many forms: in the chaos of Hesiod, in *materia informis* of neo-Platonism or *materia confusa* of alchemists; likewise, in the symbolism of water, as both the source of life *and* the confused and hardly differentiated principle: *hydor theion*, divine water, the indistinct image of fertile, life giving, first *arche* of Thales; the world-encircling *Okeanos*, *aqua vita* of the alchemists.

in which the primordial *nothingness* turns into *chaos* – a manifold of heterogenity. However, the time has not yet begun to flow, there is as yet no *distinction* between the *actual* and *non-actual*, not to speak about any succession. Another word for this may be "heterogenity" or "simultaneity" – all *distinctions* are simultaneous, not because they were comprised into a simultaneity, because all 'before' and 'after' have been abstracted away, but because there is, as yet, no 'before', no 'after'. Likewise, there are as yet no entities which could be distinguished through their properties. There is no sign of a distance, nor any measure, because *distinctions* are merely distinct – not so that an x may be more distinct from y than from z, but only so that x, y and z are simply mutually distinct, and are not even any identifiable x, y, z.

This feature – mutuality which means also simultaneity of *distinctions* – can be taken as the fundamental characteristic of *spatiality*. Thus *spatiality* (not space, but mere simultaneity of *distinctions*) is somehow prior to temporality. It is a mere expression of the fact that *distinctions* do not arise one after another[25], that the level of *chaos* involves immediately a whole range of mutually different, heterogenous elements. *Chaos* is the *virtual* co-presence of a manifold of *distinctions*.[26]

2.2   Distinction

20.   To *distinguish* means to cut out of the formless background of the *proto-experience*. To "connect" means to connect distinct somethings; it presupposes distinct 'thats', and the difference between now and then, between here and there. In order to connect we first have to *distinguish*.

To *distinguish* means, in the primordial sense, to encounter *for the first time* – and only once; to encounter the '...' entirely new, the '...' never encountered before. But this '...' isn't anything specific, it isn't 'this something' as distinguished from 'that something'. *Distinction* does not involve relation, it does not distinguish 'this' from 'that'. *Distinction* is anything that makes a difference; but making a difference does not require being noticed, making a difference does not require being perceived. It *distinguishes* '...' from the background and thus makes it appear – not *for* anybody, not *for* so beloved consciousness which can hardly be postulated at this stage, but just *appear*: in the middle of *indistinct nothingness*.

Before anything recognisable emerges, something must be first distinguished. Distinction is a cut from the indistinct; from the formless – and hence also timeless – background.

And how and when did the first *distinction* appear? Ridiculous question. As far as I am

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[25]This happens too, but it is a completely different – factual, and not, as here, *virtual* – process.

[26]Looking for an intuition of *chaos* in our *reflective experience*, we are naturally bound to recognise in it an element of duration. Bergson's *durée* comes very close to our *chaos*, if only we are willing to subtract from his descriptions the phenomenological element of observing consciousness. "Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. [...] We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organisation of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought. [...] In a word, pure duration might well be nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate each another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalise themselves in relation to one another, without any affiliation with number: it would be pure heterogenity." [H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. II;p.100-101-104]

We notice here the crucial ambiguity which penetrates Bergson's *durée*: it is succession but, on the other hand, it is a pure heterogenity, simultaneity. "Bergson's duration is eventually defined less by succession than by co-existence." [G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*. III] Duration may be imagined and posited 'in itself', as merely happening 'out there' without any witnesses. As such, it can be imagined and posited as not requiring any simultaneity, as merely flowing. But, of course, one has posited it, that is, gathered all this duration in the simultaneity of one act. Only extreme objectivistic abstraction can allow itself, while considering duration, to dispense with the one actually apprehending it. Any form of apprehending duration requires simultaneity, requires juxtaposition of some earlier and some later moment in one act. This aspect of simultaneity and constancy is more emphasized by later Bergson. "A *moving continuity* is given to us, in which everything changes and yet remains." [H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. IV:3;p.197] The dissociation of the experience into 'inner' and 'outer' happens to the distinctions which are originally present in one unified field: "Psychologists who have studied infancy are well aware that our representation is at first impersonal. [... I]f you start from my body, as is usually done, you will never make me understand how impressions which concern that body alone, are able to become for me independent objects and form an external world. But if, on the contrary, *all images are posited at the outset*, my body will necessarily end by standing out in the midst of them as a distinct thing, since they change unceasingly, and it does not vary." [Ibid. I;p.47 [my emph.]]

Durée can be taken as a close analogue of *chaos* if we emphasize this aspect of simultaneity rather than succession, and then dispense with any attempts of identifying any particular contents.

concerned, I do not remember. If there was a time when I did not *distinguish* then, *a fortiori*, I couldn't remember this time. Because to remember means to remember *something* and when there is *nothing* then there is nothing to remember either.[27]

Psychologists, however, biologists or brain researchers can say something more definite on this 'how'. Although objective 'whens' and 'hows' do not concern us so much, let us, nevertheless, make a short detour into infant psychology since it may provide some concrete illustrations. 21.

Neonates have preference for sweet taste but, for instance, "weak saline solutions are not found aversive, because they have been experienced before birth, as aminotic fluid."[28] There is a vast experimental evidence on a wide spectrum of innate abilities to distinguish various stimuli, many of which are probably present before birth and which develop rapidly during the first months of life.

For instance, during the first weeks, the intake of food is regulated by stomach distension irrespectively of the amount of calories in the food. 'Full stomach' is a distinction which leads to the reaction 'stop sucking'. One shouldn't claim that it is distinguished *from* 'empty stomach' – these are just two *distinctions*, originating in the same organ but, otherwise, unrelated to each other. It doesn't seem plausible to assume that a cry of a hungry infant – shall we say "of an empty stomach"? – in the first weeks of life has any intention of filling the stomach.

At around 6 weeks[29] much more sophisticated regulatory system emerges based on monitoring blood sugar and other, more peripheral mechanisms (like gastric-emptying rate). After the age of 7 weeks infant's system can no longer "be fooled" by low calories food which is now compensated either by increasing consumption or frequency of feeding until the energy needs are met. These are, of course, the terms in which we describe the observations but they do indicate that the system attunes and reacts to new *distinctions* which weren't registered before.

And now, more interestingly, what is it that can so be *distinguished* from the background? One would say, a thing, 'this table here'. Perhaps. And things too are cuts from the background. But 'this table here' seems rather too complicated – or better, too specific and precise – an object. A 'that' would be better, but the question concerns exactly what, from our later perspective, such a 'that' might be. Possibly, it can be a sensation, especially an intense one, heat, warmth, pricking. One only should keep in mind that it is not *my* sensation – it is a sensation of a newly born (or, perhaps, very primitive) being. It is an autonomous sensation of a peripheral organ provoking possibly, but not necessarily, a reaction which need not be mediated through the central nervous system. 22.

But original *distinctions* can be much more than just sensations.

1. Vision acuity in the neonates is somewhere between 10 to 30 times poorer than in the adult.[30] It develops rapidly and from about 6 months it is at near-adult level but initially it prevents the infants from making all too fine visual *distinctions*.

2. 2-day-olds shown a square in different slants, on the test trials preferred to look at a novel shape, trapezium, even if the slants might have given the appearance of a square.[31] Similar experiments with cubes of various sizes indicate that, to begin with, infants prefer stimulus giving the largest retinal image size. However, when desentisised to the changes in the distance (and hence retinal size) of a constant-size cubes, they strongly preferred different-sized cubes on the subsequent trials. The experiments suggest that infants as young as two days, can distinguish both slant and retinal size but also have the ability to perceive objective, real shape and size.

3. 2-day-olds show preferences for moving, rather than stationary stimuli. At about 6 weeks they can distinguish coherent, biomechanical motion and prefer it to a random one. These tests did not present any moving objects but merely point-light displays produced by filming a person in the dark who has points of light attached to his major joints.[32] The general

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[27]Hence, by the way, we got it other way around than those who imply that distinction presupposes memory. Not at this level, at least. *Distinction* and *recognition* are different things and the latter presupposes the former.

[28]G. Harris, *Development of taste perception and appetite regulation*.

[29]Perhaps earlier – this is the age for which experimental data have been gathered.

[30]A. Slater, G. Butterworth, *Perception of social stimuli: face perception and imitation*

[31]A. Slater, *Visual perception and its organisation in early infancy*

[32]Ibid.

distinction of organised motion can be thus thought as an 'innate', or original, category of *distinction* which need not evolve from the subsequent observations of moving objects.

4. Few-days olds fail to recognise a three-dimensional object after having being shown its photograph which indicates that the *distinction* between two- and three-dimensional objects is more significant than their possible similarities.[33]

5. 4-day-olds seem to have a preference for human speech above music, and music above noise.[34] A one week old girls can *distinguish* a baby cry from a background of general noise of a similar volume.

6. 1-day-olds seem to discriminate visual stimuli according to the degree of contrast rather than to the actual pattern.[35] Still, given approximately the same contrast, face or face-like pattern will be preferred to other patterns. Within few hours after birth, neonate's reaction to mother's face shows that the face is *distinguished*, perhaps even *recognised*.

7. There is some evidence that infants are attuned not only to face-like patters but also to the emotional expressions, including facial, vocal and gestural movements of others.[36] 1- to 2-day-olds can focus on and imitate – in a voluntary and not merely reflexive effort – a wide range of expressions, like sad, happy and surprise.[37]

   One study shows that two to four days old girls spend twice as long as boys maintaining eye contact with a silent adult and also look longer than boys when the adult is talking. Also, baby girls are more easily comforted by soothing words and singing – even before they can understand language, they seem to identify the emotional content of speech.[38]

   Few-weeks old infants show clear preferences for happy rather than sad, as well as attractive faces. They also seem to discriminate faces according to gender.[39]

   In a famous experiment[40] a 2-months-old and mother were sat in front of a television monitors showing the other's face. When the images were transmitted in real time, the two engaged in an apparent proto-conversation, initiating communication and responding to the other's signals. When then video was replayed with a delay of 30 seconds, and thus mother's expressions did not represent any adequate responses, infant showed considerable distress, turning away from and darting brief looks back at the mother's face.[41]

   The intention is neither to give an overview of this research nor to suggest that it constitutes a proof of anything. But it provides illustrations, if not sufficient grounds for some of the following claims.

23.   *Distinctions* emerge gradually, in a top-down fashion, from the general and diffuse ones, they gradually become more acute and precise. They involve initially only some rough, vague categories rather than sharp, specific differences. Every *distinction* is, on the one hand, 'real' or 'true' in that it arises from the background, it pulls something out of the undifferentiated homogenity of the *one*. On the other hand, however, it is 'uncertain' or 'unsharp', it does not draw an absolute, definite border between x and not-x, it merely sketches the *distinguished* pole. It is like the adjacent stripes of the rainbow, mutually distinct but without any definite boundary separating them from each other. *Distinctions* are like waves: here is one, there another, and there yet another, but

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[33] A. Slater, G. Butterworth, *Perception of social stimuli: face perception and imitation*

[34] M. Harris, *Language and its pathology*

[35] A. Slater, G. Butterworth, *Perception of social stimuli: face perception and imitation*

[36] D. Messer, *Referential communication: making sense of the social and physical worlds*

[37] V. Reddy *et al.*, *Communication in infancy: mutual regulation of affect and attention*, A. Meltzoff, M. K. Moore, *Newborn infants imitate adult facial gestures*, A. Meltzoff, M. K. Moore, *Imitation in newborn infants*.

[38] C. Hutt, *Males and Females*, A. Moir, D. Jessel, *Brain Sex*

[39] A. Slater, G. Butterworth, *Perception of social stimuli: face perception and imitation*

[40] L. Murray, C. Threvarthen, *Emotional regulation of interactions between two-month-olds and their mothers*

[41] Similar distress was observed in infants confronted with mothers assuming indifferent 'blank face' posture or affected by postpartum depression, J. F. Cohn, E. Tronick, *Three-month-old infants' reaction to simulated maternal depression*, L. Murray, *Intersubjectivity, object relations theory and empirical evidence from mother-infant interactions*.

The infamous experiment of Friedrich II (in which new born infants, deprived of any emotional and verbal contact with adults, died all together) was interpreted already by the contemporary chronicler in the same way as we would tend to interpret it today (if only the experiment was recorded adequately; as it is, one could easily imagine all kinds of reasons of the deaths other than the lack of contact). E.g. E. Seidler, *Der Neugeborenversuch Friedrichs II von Hohenstaufen*, also E. Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*.

where one ends and the next begins, nobody can tell. We only can point to the peaks and thus be sure that there are, indeed, different waves.[42]

The so called "paradoxes" of Heap or Sorites[43] appear as paradoxes only under the assumption that *concepts* draw rigid *distinctions* with uniquely identifiable boundaries and, as a consequence, uniquely determined negation. But although this may be the case as long as one plays with the *concepts* obtained by *distinctions* and constructions within the sphere of prior *reflective dissociations*, it does not apply generally to the contents *experience*.[44] But primarily *panta rei* and even later, in the world of words, *concepts* and apparently rigid *distinctions*, everything still flows into another, the imperceptible shades of meaning attached by different people to the same understandings make them unexpectedly drift apart, as the differences come forth and drag one and the same thing in opposite directions. Moreover, a *distinction* can be always refined, made more precise. Yet, although never reaching the final, definite, rigid form, the *distinctions* exhaust the content of the world, for as Dr. Johnson observed, the fact of twilight does not mean that one cannot tell day from night.

From the very beginning *distinctions* aren't limited to sensations but concern structures and objects which, according to traditional empiricism, would have to be 'constructed' from the material of minute sensations. Furthermore, a thing, understood as a definite, well-defined object, is by no means a fundamental component of our *experience*. What is *distinguished* from the formless background is pretty accidental and it may be just ... anything. It may be an 'abstract' property, like a shape, a size, or a colour; it may be warmth or movement or an emotional expression of another. 24.

The original *distinctions* do not discriminate between different *kinds* of objects because one thing is not distinguished from another but from the background. Everything counts equally: properties and relations, some actual things, sensations, changes, motions, continuous processes not composed of any parts, feelings, emotions. No things are more fundamental than others. Before we can begin to *experience*, we have to first make enough *distinctions*, from which the later *experience* may be built.

There is no hierarchy of original distinctions; no distinctions are more fundamental than others.

Sure, something which later will be called a "thing" can be *distinguished*, too. This table can be *distinguished* too. To begin with, it is nothing, or else, as an integral part of the background, it is not at all. There may be a play of lines and shades which run indiscriminately through the table, the wall, the windows. In the psychological experiments one always attempts to make sure that infants are presented with a distinct stimuli not to be confused with other unintended elements of the environment. But even such a complex thing as a table, when somebody pushes it aside thus effecting a *distinction* of the sub-chaos of lines, forms, shades and colours from the surrounding chaos, and, at the same time, giving them totality, may give this sub-chaos, which we call table, a new status – of something *distinct* from the rest.[45]

Originally, things, like other distinctions, are just cuts from the indistinct background of proto-experience.

A *distinguished* thing counts equally with a *distinguished* property, a *distinguished* sensation or a *distinguished* emotion. It remains to be seen if the 'square shape' is *distinguished* on the basis of generalisation or innate predispositions. But in any case, *if* this is what is *distinguished*, then it does not involve only a purely *actual* object but something, well, universal. 25.

Hunger is something that does not appear just like that. It increases gradually. When it eventually hits the barrier at which I say "I am hungry" and an infant begins to cry, it involves not just this moment now but the continuity of the whole development, of its gradual increase. It

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[42] Analogous phenomena are observed in experiments (with adults) concerning span of apprehension. When multiple letters are briefly exposed, only some are identified although all are certainly seen. The subjects insist that they were there, clear and distinct, can even tell their number but can not identify them.

[43] One stone is not a heap, neither are 2, nor 3 stones, not 4, nor... So when do we get a heap? Likewise, removing the stones, one by one, from a heap, when exactly does the heap cease to be a heap? Man with no hair is bald, and so is man having only 1 hair, or 10 hairs, etc. But when exactly does man cease to be bald?

[44] These formulations may sound a bit cryptic at this point. Section 4 below should provide enough clarification; *concepts* are then discussed in II:1.2.

[45] Common motion is used, for instance, to test infants for object permanence.

is never so that I am not hungry in one moment and then, in the next, I suddenly am. *Experience of hunger involves something which is not, seen 'objectively', purely actual.*

Fear aroused by possibly very different circumstances, the atmosphere of love and acceptance not connected with any specific person or actions, security or insecurity, all kinds of emotions which, unlike sensations, cannot, in general, be classified as arising and occuring in a specific moment, are among things which can be *distinguished* along with colour, shape, size, motion. 'Objectively' speaking, these *experiences* require more time to occur, but since the time has not yet begun to flow, they all are equally just cuts from the indistinct background. *Proto-experience* itself is timeless and knows not only no difference between 'this' and 'that', but neither any between 1 second, 20 minutes and 5 days. Consequently, something which is later determined as an object can be *distinguished* in the same way, on the same footing, and with the same status, as something we later will call a "property", a "complex", a "process", a "feeling", a "conjunctive relation".

The primordial distinctions are not limited to objects given within a here-and-now; they may bring forth something actual, like this colour, or this table, as well as changes, processes and emotions which span over 'long periods of time'.

2.3   Signification

26.   In spite of its indeterminate, timeless and spaceless character, despite its reactive and objectless character, despite its entire lack of relations, *distinction* involves a virtual *signification*. For the moment, not in the sense of one thing signifying some other thing, but merely in the sense of cutting off the *actual distinction* from the *rest*, from the background. The former, except for being *distinguished*, or better, precisely by being *distinguished*, involves also an immediate reference to the background from which it emerged. In this sense it is a *sign*, a *sign* of all the *rest*, of all that was left behind when the *distinction* has been made.

This *aspect* of a *sign* in every *distinction* expresses merely the mutuality of the two poles, the fact that *distinction* arises only from something which, only from now on, can be properly called background. It is the seed of two later poles of *actuality* and *non-actuality*. Everything *actual* will always be interpenetrated by the *non-actual*, every *here-and-now* by *there-and-then*. And this signifying reference is not the result of abstraction or successive *experiences* but the very beginning of *experience*. As a bare reference to the indefinite and indefinable 'something more', 'all the rest', it will be later involved in all life, consciousness and, in a derivative form, in all specific *signs* and *representations*.

27.   The primordial *signification*, as the *aspect* of the first modification of the *original confrontation*, *founds* the permanent and indissoluble awareness of 'something being out there', expressed by the common uneasiness with all kinds of solipsism and subjectivism, as well as by Samuel Johnson's refutation of idealism. Every *actual* object and situation, every *actual experience* is haunted by the all-permeating shadow, the *non-actual rest*. But *experience* is only "haunted" by it, because *experience* is always directed to something more specific, never to this indefinite "murmur of being."

We do not have *any experience* of the objectivity of the world, because this objectivity is rooted in *proto-experience*, is something preceding *any experience*, and thus more primordial than the world. We do not have any specific experience of it, only a sense of it – as imperishable as it is ineffable, as *clear* as it is *vague*. The 'out there' comes before any 'something out there'; the separation of light from darkness comes before any particulars.

3   In the beginning was the Word

"when all things were in disorder God created in each thing in relation to itself, and in all things in relation to each other, all the measures and harmonies which they could possibly receive."   Plato, *Timaeus*, III:37

28.   *Chaos*, though created from *nothingness* and thus, in a way, opposed to it, is not yet the world. It is like the *materia prima*, or even *confusa*, from which world can be created. In the world there are no *pure distinctions* but things – things which may disappear and then return because they

have some identity, some sameness; things which can be seen and thought because they can recur, that is, be *recognised*.

To *recognise* is to signify and *recognition* is a *sign*. This structure of *sign* is no longer a mere *signification*. It means that something *actual* carries with it the burden of *non-actuality*, it points towards something that is not entirely *here-and-now*.

It points from *here-and-now* to somewhere else or sometime else, 'outside' of *here-and-now*. A *sign* is something which points from the *horizon of actuality* somewhere 'outside' it, which makes something *transcending actuality* present. Things are *signs*, words are *signs* and *signs* are what make the world emerge from *chaos*.

The exposition of *proto-experience* can be summarised thus: in *proto-experience* something is distinguished but nothing is *recognised*. 29.

We have to speculate to the extent that we do not *recognise* and do not remember. Experience is *pure*, is *chaos*, to the extent it does not involve *recognition*. Any talk about it is thus bound to be a speculation. Or, if you prefer, it is a mystery how God created the world from *nothingness*, how He *divided* light from darkness and the waters under the firmament from the waters above it. But it is also a mystery how He, having separated these *virtual* elements, created the things which we *recognise*. But our concern is not with 'how' but with *that* and 'what'.

Pure distinction does not distinguish *A* from *B*, but only brings forth *A* against the *indistinct* background. *Recognition* is to *proto-experience* what *distinction* is to *nothingness*: it cuts off what is *recognised* from the *chaos*, from the formless horizon of *proto-experience*. It brings forth not only a *pure distinction*, an unrelated and unconnected 'in itself', but an appearance, that is, an appearance of *something*. To appear is the same as to be *recognised*; nobody would like to speak about unrecognised appearances (although this, like most expressions, can also be given some meaning). But also only appearances bring forth 'somethings'. Properly speaking, only from now on the word "something" can mean something which is not a mere reflex but a 'this', which has some character and sameness.

To be sure, *recognition* is not *reflective*, it is not made by *you*, but it is what will make *reflection* and *yourself* possible.

3.1 Sign and recognition

Recognition, the *separation* of *actuality* from *non-actuality*, *founds* a *sign*: not any more a merely virtual *signification* of 'all the rest' as in §26, but a *sign* of *something*. *Recognition* refers 'this here and now' to 'that then and there', brings forth something *actual as* something else. Any connection between *distinctions* involves a *sign* in this elementary sense that an *actual* appearance signifies another, non-*actual* or even *non-actual* one.[46] As yet no *sign* appears as a sign – *sign* means here just the 're-' of the immediate *recognition*. It is a *sign* in the sense that something *actual* points to, or just is continued in *something* else, something non-*actual* or *non-actual*, even if the two are immediately merged into one and thus the *sign* is entirely transparent. 30.

And how and when did the first *recognition* occur? Ridiculous question, indeed. As far as I am concerned, I do not remember. If there was a time when I did not *recognised* anything then I couldn't remember that time. Because to remember means to remember *something* and when there is *nothing* then there is nothing to remember either. We let the child psychologists say a few more words concerning these 'hows' and 'whens'.

A confusion might have arisen with respect to the word "preference" when relating the experiments on neonates in §22. We said that *pure distinction* cuts something off the background and not from another something, while one prefers something to something else. Infants' "preferences" is the name given by the psychologists to what is measured in the quoted experiments: the reaction to or time span of attention to given stimuli, the longer time span indicating the greater "preference". It is certainly disputable whether this is what such a time span reveals. For our part it is sufficient to assume that different reactions indicate the fact of *distinguishing* the given stimuli. 31.

More significantly, we wouldn't claim that *distinguishing* necessarily precedes *recognising*, that they are really dissociated and temporally ordered events. The two may overlap and while

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[46]We will later distinguish between the non-*actual* things which could be *actual* but just happen not to be *here-and-now*, and the *non-actual* ones which never can be fully *actualised*. Non-*actual* contents presuppose *non-actuality* and so, occasionally, we may omit the latter designation leaving it implicit.

some things are *recognised* at some stage, others may be *distinguished* only later. The very fact that the experiments involve, first, a habituation stage, when infants are familiarised, possibly, desentisised, to some stimuli, which are then used in the trial tests may be taken as an indicator that from the very first hours infants also *recognise* various stimuli. There seems, however, to be sufficient differences in the character of the stimuli to which infants respond, to classify them into *distinctions* and *recognitions*.

32.   One of the most significant changes concerns object permanence observable, for instance, in that infants search for hidden objects. According to Piaget[47] such a search that is guided by a representation of the hidden object develops in the final stage of infancy, after 18 months when infants fist show capacity for symbolic representation. The recent research, and techniques of habituation, indicate that, whether guided by representation or not, perception from very early age has an objective character.[48]

    1. 4-month-olds were habituated to a rod which moved back and forth behind an occluder, *A*, so that only the top and the bottom of the rod was visible.

A   B   C
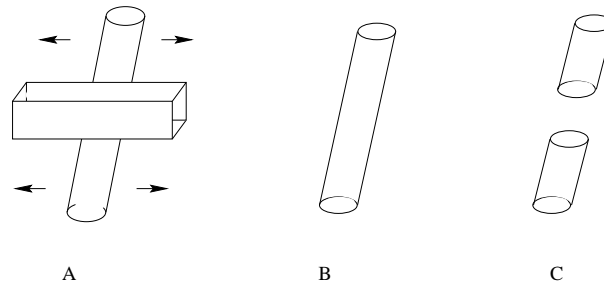
    On subsequent trials the babies were shown two test displays without the occluder, one, *B*, being a complete rod, the other, *C*, being the top and the bottom parts, with a gap where the occluder had been. The babies spent more time looking at the two rod pieces.[49] One is more than willing to interpret it in the obvious way: the original common motion of an occluded rod leads to object completion – perception of one moving object; two unoccluded separate pieces are then a kind of surprise to a four month old infant. Babies younger than 4-months, however, perceive the complete rod as novel.

    2. It is important to emphasize that the object permanence does not seem to be a matter of a definitive either-or.[50] It is suggested that permanence, as well as representation, develop gradually, from briefly permanent objects to solid and varying representations.

    3. 3- to 4-month-olds perceive subjective contours.

A   B   C   D
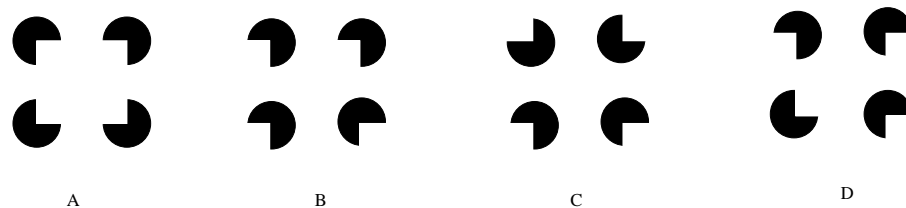
    Infants familiarised to pattern *A* discriminated in the subsequent trials this pattern from those, like *B-D*, not containing subjective contour. Infants familiarised to *B*, however, did not discriminate between it and other patterns without subjective contours. The difference between patterns with and without subjective contours seems to be greater than the difference between patterns without such contours.[51]

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[47] J. Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*
[48] Our *recognition* has little to do with *representation* which appears at yet later level of experience.
[49] A. Slater, *Visual perception and its organisation in early infancy*
[50] P. Willatts, *Beyond the 'Couch Potato' infant...*
[51] A. Slater, *Visual perception and its organisation in early infancy*

4. At about 4 months one can observe *distinction* of perceptual categories. Familiarised to a number of stripped patterns which differed in their orientation but were all oblique, the infants on the test trials ignored other, new and differently oriented oblique patterns and preferred a novel vertical pattern.[52] Similarly, shown distorted versions of some prototype shape (square, triangle), on the test trials infants treated the never before seen ideal shape as familiar and directed their attention to a distorted, even if seen before, version.

5. If 3-month-olds are shown a series of pictures of horses, within a few trials they will form a perceptual category of horses that excludes zebras and various other animals.[53] Interestingly, 7 to 11 months olds showed categorisation at a 'general level', differentiating animals from vehicles, even birds from aeroplanes, without, by the same time, categorising at a 'more basic level', i.e. without differentiating dogs from fish or dogs from rabbits.[54]

6. Again, as in the case of *distinctions*, infants seem much earlier attuned to communication with others. Not later than at six to eight weeks, this attunement is not limited to the purely *actual* situation. Following disruptions in the other person's communicative behaviour, 6- to 8-week-olds attempt a series of other-directed acts. If the adult is unresponsive the infant may increase the intensity of the proto-conversational expressions, like vocalisation, arm movements. When the other is looking elsewhere, infants develop ways of "calling" the other, for instance, with a shrill vocalisation with a pleasant expression and gaze on the other's face.[55]

As there was no order and hierarchy among the emerging *distinctions*, so there is no such inherent order in *recognitions*. A rod can be *recognised* as well as a shape, a perceptual category as well as a feeling, a friendly and coherent response of another person, as well as an object. 33.

Recognition of object's permanence testifies to the emerging *distinction* between the *actual* and the non-*actual*, even *non-actual*, where the *actual* functions as the *sign* for the *non-actual*, but also for the unity of both aspects. This is the stage where we can properly start talking about signs in the more common sense of the word.

What distinguishes the above examples from those concerning *distinctions* in §22 is the non-*actual* or *non-actual* element discernible in the infants' reactions. Infant sees two separate parts but fills this *actual* stimuli with the missing part and perceives one rod. The disrupted communication with the other makes the infant attempt to attract the other's attention. Shall we call it "intentionality"? Why not? Thus understood, intentionality is just the presence of the non-*actual* or *non-actual* in and through the *actual*, the pressure it exercises on the *actuality*. It is a more crisp, more definite modification of the virtual *signification* from §26. But the word "*sign*" might be preferable – it captures better this relation of the *actual* functioning here as a *sign* of something which is not *actually* given. The objects appear only to the extent they transcend the pure *horizon of actuality*, or better, this is what gives an appearance an objective character. An appearance, a *sign* is *actual* through and through, is exhausted within the *horizon of actuality*. An object, on the other hand, bears the dual character consisting of the *actual* and the non-*actual* moments. This non-*actual* aspect is what gives it the objective character surpassing the subjectivity of mere appearance. Pure *subjectivity* means pure *actuality*; *subjective* is only what is exhausted in an *actual* experience and does not hide, does not keep anything for itself, like the passing feelings and immediate sensations. 34.

The presence of the non-*actual* and *non-actual* in all *experience*, its penetration through the *actuality*, may be, perhaps, called "intentionality". Even in the least reflective moments of *experience* one hardly ever focuses exclusively on the merely *immediate* sensations, everything is always interwoven into the texture of other, non-*actual* experiences and eventually of *non-actuality*. The transcendental subject is what, in the philosophy of pure *actuality*, plays the role of the *non-actual*; it is responsible for endowing the *actual* contents with the noumenal identity, that is, inaccessible source of all possible contents. For idealism this constitution, like everything else, must happen instantaneously, 'now'. But intentionality need not be so *dissociated* from the rest of *experience*;

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[52] Ibid.

[53] J. M. Mandler, *Development of categorisation: perceptual and conceptual categories*

[54] Ibid.

[55] V. Reddy *et al.*, *Communication in infancy: mutual regulation of affect and attention*, D. Messer, *Referential communication: making sense of the social and physical worlds*

it is only its *actual* moment, the focus which gathers various threads into the totality of the *actual* phenomenon. 'Intentionality' is a phenomenological expression of the co-presence in *any experience* of the *non-actual aspect* which, nevertheless, is viewed exclusively from the perspective of *actuality*. What constitutes the unity of these two *aspects* is just the fact that it is gathered, appears – true, itself, but only through a *sign* – within the *horizon of actuality*. Even if two parts, and not one rod are present, the whole one rod is now perceived, and if, in the next moment, it turns out to be two after all, it is a surprise. Life is full of such surprises and no transcendental constitution of objects of adequate intuition can force it to always conform to our expectations, sorry, intentions.

35.   We have not yet attained a full *dissociation* of *actuality* from non-*actuality* and *non-actuality* which still remain in the unity of a *virtual nexus*. But they have begun to be *distinguished*, to play the role of two *distinct aspects*. It is therefore too early to speak about abstract *signs* which we will encounter in the following section. Yet words, or at least some vocal signs, begin to appear and function as *signs* at this early stage. It is, moreover, exactly the relative lack of *dissociation* of such a *sign* from its meaning (characteristic for the current level) which accounts for its *creative* role.

A child learning its first language (or languages) is not in the position of an adult who recognises different contents and only has to attach to them appropriate linguistic expressions. For a child the words are tools, as many others, of drawing the *distinctions* in the matter of *experience*. Acquisition of the first language proceeds along with the process of differentiation in which no difference is given between the *actual sign* – the word – and the distinguished, signified content. Both emerge simultaneously and words are not merely 'attached' to things but are the *signs* which bring things forth. Providing the means of drawing the *distinctions* (the most elementary example might be recurrence of particular words in situations from which, eventually, the child distinguishes the element signified by the recurring words) and organising the *chaos* of *distinctions*, the first language contributes to the creation of the world.

It is thus also understandable why learning the first language is so natural and easy while later learning a foreign language so difficult. Learning the first language is learning the world, is the emergence of the world for the first time. It takes some years, but it also happens without conscious effort – the language comes to a child as naturally as the world does. For one who has already acquired the world, learning a new language implies almost always translation of his world to the other world of the foreign language. This is the most challenging part of foreign language acquisition which is responsible for the associated difficulty. A person speaking fluently another language will never translate it into one's own – he will live in the world offered by that other language as naturally as he does in his original world. What may happen here in terms of fusion of different worlds, and how the difficulty of learning a foreign language increases with the linguistic distance between the two, are certainly interesting topics, but would bring us too far off our main track.

3.2   Actuality

36.   The lack of the spatio-temporal aspect in the *chaos* of *distinctions* is based on the lack of any proper difference between the *actual* and the *non-actual*. There is only simultaneity of *distinctions* and the *virtual signification* which refers a *distinction* to the *indistinct rest* but not to any specific, non-*actual* or *non-actual* something. Before *recognition*, *pure experience* is heterogenous but continuous or, if you prefer, simultaneous – in short, *spatial* (in very rudimentary sense) but timeless, even non-temporal.

37.   Like *distinctions*, *recognitions* are not limited to minute *immediacies*. Although an element of temporality has emerged through the fusion of *actual* and *non-actual*, *recognitions* are just cuts from the *chaos* with no 'objective' time-stamp on them. Whether it is a missing part of an object, a general schema of several instances, a lack of other's attention or a lasting feeling of satisfaction – the 'objective' duration does not matter for the event of *recognition*.

Something born at one moment and dead two hours later wouldn't be able to *recognise* 'a day'. There is no specific moment – no single *act* – when we encounter 'a day'. Day, by its very nature, lasts, i.e., cannot be embraced by a single *act* within the *horizon of actuality*. (If it were explained to this something what 'a day' is, it might understand it, perhaps, acquire a concept of 'a day',

but this would require development of the understanding of the objective world.) What takes time is not to develop a *concept* of 'a day' but to have enough *experience* to be able to cut from its background a unit which is denoted by this word. And initially, *in illo tempore*, what is *recognised* as such units may be anything which only later *reflection* will classify as single things or *complexes*, as *immediate* sensations or anything endowed with temporal duration. But temporality has not yet entered the stage; a *sign* involves only a primordial separation of its *actuality*, on the one hand, and its meaning, on the other; the meaning which may embrace *distinctions* not only not *actual* at the moment but genuinely and essentially *non-actual*.

Thus, although objectively speaking *recognition* requires some passage of time, so from the point of view of *experience*, there is no time before something has been *recognised*. *Recognition* is not a repeated *earlier* cognition, it does not juxtapose two separate images. It merely fixates an *actual sign* as something involving also *non-actuality*. It cuts off the *recognised* something from the *chaos* of *pure distinctions*. This separation brings forth – in fact, is – the separation of *here-and-now* from there-and-then, or better, of *here-and-now* from not-*here-and-now*. It *founds actuality*, where what is *recognised* appears, and which is distinguished from the *non-actuality*, from the rest of the – first now, only potential – things.[56]

Recognition of something from the *chaos* establishes the *horizon of actuality* as distinct from the background, which now becomes a not-*here-and-now*.   38.

The name "*here-and-now*" should emphasize that we are talking here about elementary *horizon of actuality*, not any kind of time. It is equally spatial and what we call "non-*actual*" (and even more so "*non-actual*") means as much 'there' as 'then', or rather, 'not-here' and 'not-now'. *Here-and-now* is like a site, a location, a designated point in the midst of its surrounding; it is not yet differentiated into space and time. But the further breaking of the horizon of *experience* into temporal and spatial dimensions is based on this *nexus* of the two primordial *aspects*: the *actual* and the *non-actual*. The *horizon of actuality* marks *actuality* but there is as yet no ordering, no past or future, no mutual relations between *recognitions* except that of being distinct and that of a *sign*: this *actual* vs. that non-*actual* or even *non-actual*. These two aspects mark only the first modification of the *spatiality* from §19. Their tension will later give rise to *temporality* and its directedness, but here the 'not yet' is still indistinguishable from the 'already not', the thirst of an expectation is not yet different from the remembrance of a loss.

The *horizon of actuality* encircles the simultaneity of *actual recognitions* which, in turn, carry within the *distinction* between the *actual* and the *non-actual*. It isn't any longer a mere simultaneity; it is a simultaneity which is, so to speak, doubled, followed by a shadow of *non-actuality*. In so far as it involves simultaneity, it will give rise to space; in so far, as it involves element of non-*actuality* and *non-actuality*, it will give rise to time. But it precedes both space and time, is their *spatio-temporal nexus*, the nucleus from which the two *aspects* will be *dissociated* achieving their eventual crispness.

It is recognition – in which something is distinguished from something else – which gives this something actuality. Recognition means a kind of proto-focus, a distinction of the bare actuality from non-actuality. This horizon of actuality is the spatio-temporal nexus of the subsequent   39.

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[56]As always, we have a *nexus* of *aspects* which here involves emergence of *actuality*, *recognition* of some content, and several others to be observed in the rest of this section. With respect to the *horizon of actuality*, one might be tempted to say something like: "The original time field is obviously limited, exactly as perception is. In general, one might well dare the claim that the time field always has the same extension. It kind of slides over the perceived and freshly remembered movement and its objective time, like the field of vision moves over the objective space." [E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time.* A:2.§11 «Das originäre Zeitfeld ist offenbar begrenzt, genau wie bei Wahrnemung. Ja, im großen und ganzen wird man wohl die Behauptung wagen dürfen, daß das Zeitfeld immer dieselbe Extension hat. Er verschiebt sich gleichsam über die wahrgenommene und frisch erinnerte Bewegung und ihre objektive Zeit, ähnlich wie das Gesichtsfeld über den objektiven Raum.»] Of course, the expression "the same extension" can hardly mean 'definite and fixed in minutes or seconds objective duration'. It may rather intend the fact that *actuality* retains its character of a horizon, its identity as constitutive for a new level of being, also across the variations in its objective duration. But it is not constitutive in isolation, for it is only one *aspect* of a *nexus* and 'now' is relative to other *aspects*, e.g., "In the ideal sense, a perception (impression) would be a phase of consciousness which constitutes a pure now, [...] perception constitutes actuality. In that a now as such emerges before my eye, I must be perceiving." [Ibid. A:2.§16-§27 «Im idealen Sinne wäre Wahrnehmung (Impression) die Bewußtseinsphase, die das reine Jetzt konstituiert, [...] Wahrnehmung konstituiert Gegenwart. Damit ein Jetzt als solches mir von Augen steht, muß ich wahrnehmen.»]

distinctions of space and time.

Any attempts to relate temporality to a succession of objects or perceptions are concerned with secondary notions, time and space or spatio-temporality of, so to speak, higher order. They are projections of *reflection* and *reflective experience* of time. But by the time when we reach the reflective stage, the *spatio-temporality*, interwoven into the primordial *recognitions*, has sunk into the depths of proto-conscious life. We can, perhaps, reach it by imagination but hardly by introspection.

40.   If one prefers another kind of story, it was time (Cronos, if only we are allowed to identify him with Chronos or, as we say, *spatio-temporality*) who, castrating his heavenly father, Uranus, separated heaven and earth, Gaea. Before the appearance of time heaven and earth were married, but time separated them from each other, bringing forth multitude of distinct things on earth or – as the myth has it – the war with its heavenly father. Then, time keeps devouring its own children but, eventually, just like the highest and first gods, heaven and earth, had to give place to a more earthly time, so also time itself, Cronos, having entered the stage at the very beginning, has to yield its place to his son, Zeus, who does not any more rule over the heaven but over the sky, weather, thunder and other lesser gods. Cronos is from then on inaccessible to the earthlings, either ruling Elysium, the Golden Age of the origins, or imprisoned by Zeus in the very depth, in Tartarus or even in a cavity behind it.

3.3   Awareness and self-awareness

Everything we are taking about are still primordial – still only *virtual* – matters. But these *virtualities* constitute the nuclei on which their more advanced forms, once developed, will rest and to which they will always try to return.

41.   The notion of consciousness originates from our reflective experience, where we can easily differentiate between moments of reflective – in the common language, yes, just conscious – attention given to something, and the greater part of our *experience* which goes without such a particular attention. And all that empiricism ever managed to say on the subject concerns this commonly understandable notion.

Yet, although the reflective *experience* is what concerns us most, we do not have to throw away the baby with the bath water. If we weren't immediately aware of ourselves and our activities, we could hardly pause to reflect over them. Beholding a view I can be completely absorbed in it or, as one says, unconscious of it. Yet if interrupted and asked "What are you doing?", I can immediately answer "I am beholding this beautiful fiord." The answer involves an act of reflection, but I can give it only because I have already been *aware* of what I was doing. Calling this awareness for (self-)consciousness is probably too optimistic, but it is what philosophy of consciousness used to do.

It is here that the confusion arises and it concerns the impossibility to discern the intended meaning of the word "consciousness" – the word simply refuses to be completely dissociated from its common meaning. No matter how transcendental and primordial consciousness becomes, it always bears the marks of reflection. Although one claims to be talking about consciousness which is *not* reflection, the reader may be at any moment exposed to a transition in which something follows about consciousness because it can be justifiably said about reflection.

42.   The principle of intentionality may serve as a good example. The principle postulates an intentional object, that is, a definite correlate of consciousness. Sure, what characterises *reflective attention* is exactly its focus on some particular object. This break of continuity, *dissociation* of a particular object and narrowing the horizon of attention to it with exclusion of everything else, is what distinguishes *reflection* from the *experience* otherwise. *Reflection* conforms perfectly well to the principle of intentionality and it may be a reason for its great popularity. It makes the *reflective act* the paradigm for our whole being.

A lot of abstracting effort is needed to bring it down to the level of *experience*, because most of *experience* does not conform to it. A feeling of restlessness is an experience which does not provide me with any object, any intention. It may be, but also may be not, aroused by some specific events, but once it appears it is not directed towards anything. In fact, it can be characterised as a search for an object which could calm it down. Once found, it terminates the experience of

restlessness. Kierkegaard's experience of 'Angst' made some phenomenologist invent 'nothingness' as its intentional correlate. With all respect for the ingenuity and justification of the analyses, the whole point was that 'Angst' does not allow me to get hold on its source, that no possible intention can account for the experience.[57] It may be methodologically pleasing to substitute the experience of 'nothingness' for the experience of 'Angst'. But it is a straight way to disregarding the content and the character of such an experience. The former tries – in spite of all denials and explicit statements to the contrary – to posit an object while the "of" of the latter does not refer to any object. It does not refer to anything! It is equally adequate to say "an anxious experience" as "an experience of anxiety" and in both cases it is clear that neither 'anxiety' nor anything else is the object of the experience but that the phrases designate its quality, in particular, its objectlessness.[58] Calling nothingness the "intentional correlate" of the experience of 'Angst' is to pay a lip service to the methodological postulates.

What used to be called "consciousness", perhaps, "immediate consciousness", "non-thetic con- 43. sciousness" or "apperception", we will call "*awareness*". The following may be taken as a merely normative definition, not of consciousness in its common sense, but of its germ haunting the post-Kantian idealists:

Proto-awareness is actuality.

It is not founded upon, it does not emerge from, it is not involved in – it *is* the *horizon of actuality*, the horizon within which all contents, all *recognitions* have to be inscribed in order to become *actual*. It is as much the place, the 'here' defined by the position of the body and the reach of the perceptual field, as the 'now' of the immediate presence.

All these aspects: *recognition*, *actuality* and *sign* are *equipollent aspects* of one *nexus* of *experience*. *Equipollent*, that is, simultaneous and irreducible to each other. Trying to account for one of them, involves immediately the other, and that irrespectively of which is taken as the starting point. In this rudimentary sense, *proto-awareness* serves merely as an abbreviation for this *equipollence*, simultaneity and interplay, of these *aspects* centered around the *horizon of actuality*. And *nothing* more! No subject-object relation, no consciousness-of, no appearance-for. It is merely an emergence of mutually distinct, *recognisable* contents, whether sensations, things, moods or feelings. A play of shadows can fill the *horizon of actuality* equally well as a pen or an anxious feeling.

When the *actual* contents emerging in *proto-awareness* become *recognised*, we may with greater 44. confidence speak about *awareness*. There is no sharp border separating *proto-awareness* from *awareness*. As *recognitions* emerge gradually from the *chaos* of *distinctions*, so does *consciousness* emerge gradually from the pure *actuality* of *proto-awareness*. The former is a modification of the latter effected by the sufficient degree of the non-*actual* aspect in its contents. *Awareness* is still *actual* but only in the sense that it is fully absorbed in the *actual sign*. This *sign*, however, carries now with itself an element of non-*actuality* which is sufficient to indicate that it extends beyond the pure *horizon of actuality*.

Awareness is the difference between the actual and the non-actual. 45.

An *object* is not a necessary correlate of *awareness*, it is only one possibility. (Unless we want to use the name "objects" for moods, feelings, vague intuitions and the like.) Properly speaking, we shouldn't even use the word "correlate" here, unless by this word we mean an *aspect*, that is, one among several elements of a *nexus*, none of which has any priority above others. *Awareness is actuality*, the *horizon of actuality* in which all kinds of contents may emerge: some of them as *vague* as the original intuitions of *chaos* and *nothingness*, as apprehension of holiness or intangible evil, of meaning or meaninglessness; some of them more specific but still indefinite, without any identifiable essence, as feelings and moods; yet other quite precise and, although containing the non-*actual* element, emerging in an unveiled and full *actuality* of a transparent *sign* like things and concepts or minute sensations – simple *objects* – which are eligible to a complete grasp by

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[57]Heidegger, in his considerations of the moods was close to this realisation. But it seems that it was Levinas who was the first to point out the limitations of the principle to the *actuality* of conscious experience.

[58]In fact, we can discern here a slight transition expressed by the two phrases. "An anxious experience" stays still close to the objectless quality, focuses on the unity of *the experience*. "An experience of anxiety" marks already a more *reflective dissociation*, an attitude of a more distanced 'experiencing subject' to the 'object' of this experience which arises anxiety. We will follow this transition in the subsequent sections.

the *acts* of *reflection*. Appearances are *actual*, everything that appears does so only within the *horizon of actuality*. For most contents which themselves can not be fully fitted within this *horizon* this means that they appear exclusively through their *actual signs*. What constitutes the formal difference between different kinds of contents is the *distance* – the *experienced distance* – which separates the *signs* from the *distinguished* contents.

46.   In all cases, the objective aspect of *awareness* emerges through the *recognition* of something *actual* as something non-*actual*. The sharper presence of the non-*actual* element signals the sharper modification of *temporality* from §39.

        In a *recognition* of, say, the room I am in now as the room I left yesterday, the sameness of the *actual* object is its coincidence with the memory of it. But we are not, as yet, reached the past and future dimensions of *temporality*. *Recognising* one rod behind an occluder, "filling in", as a phenomenologist would say, the missing part between the two, synchronously moving ends, isn't exactly like an invasion of the past into the presence. Perhaps, no rod has ever been seen and there is no ground for speaking about recognition of something past. *Recognition* is not the same as *re-cognition*. 'Filling in' may be of any character: it may be filling in of something known from the past but, equally, it may be a mere, unjustified and unfounded expectation, a wish to find something non-*actual* there. The past is being accumulated but there is yet no experienced difference between something which receded into the *non-actuality* of the past and something which awaits in the *non-actuality* of the future.

47.   *Awareness*, the *distance* separating the *sign* from its content, the *actual* from the non-*actual*, is of course the same as the *distance* separating the content from the *actual sign*. Being aware of '…' is the same as to be *aware* of the *distance* separating this '…' from the *actuality* of awareness. But this is the same as being *aware* of the very *awareness* itself, of the very fact of being *aware*. *Self-awareness* is an *aspect* of *awareness*. It is even an *equipollent aspect*, for *self-awareness* is nothing more than *awareness* of being aware, which is again just the distance separating the *sign* from its content – it is always and only consummated in the event of being aware of '…'. Every event within the *horizon of actuality* is the event of *awareness* and *self-awareness*. (We only have to keep in mind that these *aspects* do not mean any *reflective* consciousness or introspection.)

        In the jargon of Fichte: Ego is equiprimordial with Non-Ego, positing non-Ego is also self-positing, while self-positing is only positing of Ego against non-Ego. Sartre would say that consciousness is equivalent to self-consciousness. Any consciousness, being a consciousness of …, is the consciousness of … being different from the consciousness itself, i.e., is self-consciousness; and vice versa, any self-consciousness is only consciousness of itself being different from some …, i.e., is consciousness.[59] Awareness of this *equipollence* precedes the philosophy of consciousness. As Aristotle says, it is "by sight that one perceives that one sees"[60] – seeing, like any other *act* consummated within the *horizon of actuality*, is an event of *actual awareness* and, *by the same token*, of *self-awareness*. Proclus: "Every intellect apprehends itself. [...] Every intellect in its act knows that it apprehends. Intellect whose feature is to apprehend is not different from that which apprehends that it apprehends."[61]

        If we subtract the differences in the vocabulary and concepts, all these formulations say the same: *awareness* and *self-awareness* appear simultaneously or not at all, they are *equipollent aspects* of the same *nexus of experience* and *recognition*.

48.   *Awareness* is not any faculty of a *subject* – it precedes *subjectivity* of any experience. Neither is it any quality, property which accompanies *experience* – the two are *equipollent aspects*. It is not so that you (or an ant, or a bat) can have *an experience* without also being *aware*: to have

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[59]"[C]onsciousness is aware of itself *in so far as it is consciousness of a transcendent object*." [J.-P. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*. I:a] "[E]very unreflected consciousness [is] non-thetic consciousness of itself."[Ibid. I:b] The two are *equipollent*: "the necessary and sufficient condition for a knowing consciousness to be knowledge *of* its object, is that it be consciousness of itself being that knowledge. This is a necessary condition, for if my consciousness were not consciousness of being consciousness of the table, it would then be consciousness of that table without consciousness of being so. In other words, it would be a consciousness ignorant of itself, an unconscious – which is absurd. This is a sufficient condition, for my being conscious of being conscious of that table suffices in fact for me to be conscious of it." [J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. Introduction:3]

[60]Aristotle, *On the Soul*. III:2.425b12

[61]Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §§167-168 [Although Proclus' concept of intellect (which translates *nous*) cannot be identified with our concept of *awareness*, it seems that "intellect in its act" can be. (Justification makes it quite clear "[...] since it sees that it apprehends, and knows that it sees, it knows that it is intellect in act [...]") In any case, it is legitimate to claim that the quote refers to the same *equipollence* we are considering here.]

experience is to be *aware*. It does not mean that you have to be *reflectively* conscious *of* what this experience consists of, what it presents, etc. As Nagel says it, an organism has consciousness (*awareness*) "if and only if there is something it is like to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism."[62] This famous 'to be like' is fine, only that there seems to be no need to distinguish it from *experience* – *experiencing* things may be taken precisely as that which 'it is like' to have . . . this form of *experience*. It does not require any 'mental states', any concepts, any introspective consciousness but just that: a particular way of *experiencing*.

The crucial thing is the *equipollence* of *awareness* and *self-awareness*. In the following Section, we will see more and more sharp *distinction* between *actual* and non-*actual*, the *sign* and the content, eventually, the *subject* and the *object*. This will be associated with the gradual transition of *awareness* and *self-awareness* towards *reflection* and *self-reflection* – and the respective *dissociation* of the two *aspects*.

Consciousness is anything between these two extremes – it, too, is a matter of degree, which on this scale corresponds to the degree of *precision*. In the rest of the book, we will use "consciousness" in a non-technical sense but one may always exchange it with "*awareness*" or else "*reflection*" – the results will hardly ever be incorrect, though usually different, as these represent only the limiting cases.

4 Reflection

We have thus arrived at some structure of the concept of *experience*, of *recognition* within the *horizon of actuality*, following the stages of *nothingness* and *chaos*. The latter, although they do not constitute separate *experiences*, form always *present* background accompanying any experience. The ultimate *nothingness* is the outermost horizon of *experience* – not only in the logical order, but also in the sense that it is the deepest *aspect* of any *experience*. *Experience*, and any particular experience is always surrounded by this ultimate homogenous background. Its first modification is the *chaos* of *distinctions*. The virtual *signification* of a *distinction*, in the midst of this chaotic modification, refers to the underlying *nothingness*. And finally, in the midst of 'all the rest', within the *horizon of actuality* surrounded by 'something more', there emerge *recognitions*, *signs* which not only refer to their original background but which carry *non-actuality* within themselves, confronting *awareness* with contents exceeding its *horizon of actuality* and, by this very token, constituting also *self-awareness*.   49.

Experience is an inexhaustible source of novelty and surprise, the source of ever new *recognitions* offered by the *chaos* and, eventually, *nothingness*. Thus we might think that the only thing to do is to study *experience*, to ask how it emerges, how it is multiplied, developed, refined. In the extreme case, we might assume the objectivistic attitude toward *experience* and, miming the attempts of sciences, try to *re-construct* it, build its model from *actual* concepts.   50.

But even if we do not go that far, a study of *experience* is seldom what it pretends to be – instead, it is a study of *experiences*. Conceiving *experience* as a series, a totality of *actual experiences*, splitting *experience* into *dissociated experiences*, such an activity marks a new mode of being which, emerging from and, so to speak, within or into *experience*, places itself outside *experience*.

This is achieved through *reflection* which is to *experience* what *recognition* is to *chaos* and *distinction* to *nothingness*: further and sharper differentiation. It is a *re-cognition*, but of second order; it is a *distinction* abstracting something which, in *experience*, has already been *distinguished* and *recognised*. Now, this is *dissociated* from the *experience*, *externalised* as an independent *object* of *reflection*.

Acts of pure *reflective* consciousness involve a mere registration 'that ...', that something is, that it is so-and-so. This is the abstract characterisation of *reflection*: the mere observation 'that ...' But the underlying theme of such 'that ...' is precisely the *dissociation* of '...' – the 'that ...' points specifically to '...', focusing on this particular '...' rather than another. The conjunctive "that ..." expresses but this fact of isolating, cutting this particular '...' from the context of *experience*, which now becomes its surrounding.

Reflection amounts to splitting *experience* into *experiences*. We may *reflect* over the whole   51.

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[62] T. Nagel, *What is it like to be a bat?*.

experience as such, but such a *reflection* would require *distinguishing* 'experience', opposing it to something else. Consequently, it either can not become an *object* of *reflection* or else becomes such an *object* only ceasing to be itself. Primarily, *reflection* focuses on a particular situation, particular context, a particular thing. When it does not and tries to capture some greater totality, it turns whatever it is *reflecting* over into its *actual object*. In either case, one ends with a particular (*object* or situation) *posited* as an independent entity – independent because *dissociated* from the surrounding of *experience*.

An *experience* – a particular, limited totality of *distinguished* and *recognised* contents – is a correlate of a *reflective cut* through *experience*.[63] It need not be an act of deep thoughtfulness; any, most common *act* of focusing on this rather than that, is *an experience*, a conscious experience, an *act* of *reflection* in this sense. 'Reflection' in the more common sense, an *attentive reflection* is but *reflection* carried to its extreme. It brings perhaps a new quality to *experience* but it does not bring anything else which is new – it only *dissociates* further and more definitely, fixates and freezes the contents offered to it in the *reflective experience*.[64] This ultimate possibility of *reflection* arises when the *reflectively* isolated '...' becomes completely *dissociated*, that is, posited as thoroughly independent, self-subsisting entity, when *distinguishable* is seen as *dissociated*, when separable becomes separated, when, following Hume one admits "that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences."[65] This leads to the experience of *objectivity* which we will encounter pretty soon.

52.   *Distinctions* make *nothingness* into *chaos* and *recognitions* make *chaos* into *experience*. But *nothingness* did not disappear under *chaos*, and *chaos* did not disappear under *experience* – they only withdrew beyond the horizon to stay and surround the *experience*. A *distinction* is the virtual *signification*, contains a reference to *nothingness*. Similarly, every *recognition*, besides the reference to something *non-actual*, contains also the reference to *chaos* by which it is surrounded. And *reflection*, having *posited* its *actual object*, contains always also a reference to *experience* – which surrounds it.

These references, these inherent *significations* are not appropriations. On the contrary, *nothingness* is inaccessible through the *distinctions* and *chaos* is inaccessible through the *recognitions* – precisely because the latter are just what transform the former, what change them into something else. Now *reflection* changes the *experience* into *an experience*, into 'experience diversified into separate experiences'. From this perspective, *experience* remains an inaccessible horizon, surrounding the *reflection* with the perpetual intention to integrate what it has *dissociated* back into the continuous texture of *experience*. An attentive, positional, truly thoughtful and reflective 'reflection over experience' is but a more intense, sharper modification of this primary structure of *reflective experience*.

53.   Inaccessibility deserves a short remark. It does not mean that *reflection* is entirely unaware of *experience* or that *experience* has no contact with *chaos*. To say this would be to abstract, to *dissociate*. All these are *aspects* of an individual being, which *experiences* as it *reflects*, which is immersed in *chaos* as it *experiences* and which touches *nothingness* through the *chaos* of its depth. Inaccessibility means the impossibility of recovering the mode of being, the quality of the higher level, using exclusively the categories of the lower one. It can be attempted reconstructed but all such attempts are bound to dwell in and apply the categories characteristic for the level from which they are undertaken. The problem is not to forget them, to erase them, to jump to the higher level, but to accommodate these categories so that they do not gain exclusive power and thus break the continuity which underneath the increased dissociation of the lower levels leaves the *traces* of the higher ones and connects the different levels of one being.

54.   To be sure, *recognitions* effected already diversification of *experience* into various sub-totalities of *signs* and objects. But this means only that *experience* is not a homogenous background nor a pure *chaos*, it is not an indistinct but a differentiated flux of heterogenous variety and mani-

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[63] As always, we do not search for any causes, we do not ask which element yields which but consider them as *aspects* of one *nexus* – here, the *nexus* of *reflective experience*. Although the word "correlate" emphasizes the element of *dissociation* and opposition, it is not meant to abstract from this fact.

[64] Sartre's 'positional consciousness' is a good expression denoting the same as our *reflection*. The 'positional' aspect is just the effect of *dissociating* the *object* from its background, 'positing' it as the only correlate for the *actual* thought.

[65] D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Appendix [to be inserted in Book I:3.14 (p.161) after the words "any idea of power", p.636]

fold. A particular sub-totality of this variety is what, traditionally, one would call "an experience". However, we have to pay attention not only to what is *distinguished* but also *from what*. *Recognitions*, emerging from *chaos*, constituted the horizon of *experience*, the field from which various *experiences* can be later *dissociated*.

Experience is not a *totality* of *experiences*; on the contrary, it is a mode, a level of being which, preceding, *founds* particular *experiences*. *Recognitions* differentiate *experience* but do not *posit* separate *experiences* – these are distinguished but not made independent from each other. This happens first through *reflection*. The basic rôle or, if you prefer, the functional definition of *reflection* is just that: *dissociation* of *experience* into *experiences*, emergence of abstract *signs* and of the *dissociated, external objects*.

Thus *reflection* is a *new* mode of being which *dissociates* from the flux of *experience* a particular totality, *an experience*. Any further, attentive discourse about *experience* or about *an experience* involves a prior *reflective dissociation* of this aspect from the horizon of *experience*. "When we speak of different experiences, we can refer only to the various perceptions, all of which, as such, belong to one and the same general experience."[66] *An experience* emerges as a part of *experience* only through an *act* of *dissociation* – *reflective* focusing on this particular aspect of *experience*, *positing* it as the *actual object*.

Just like the earlier processes of *distinction* and *recognition* so, too, *reflection* can bring forth and ⟨55.⟩ fixate *anything* from *experience*. Which particular '...' is *dissociated* into a given *experience*, is the matter of this particular *experience* and *reflection*. Just as before, so for *reflection* there are no universal principles defining what is basic and what is secondary, what is first and what last. The only general rule is that *reflection*, confronted with the *excess* of *experience*, like *recognition* was confronted with the excess of *chaos*, proceeds gradually from indefinite and vague towards more specific and precise. It also has the strong tendency, though it is only a tendency, to focus on the *distinctions* and their configurations which can be embraced within the *horizon of actuality*, which can be naturally *represented*.

4.1 Representation

Distinction introduces the primordial *signification*, underlying and all embracing reference to the ⟨56.⟩ ultimate 'outside', *nothingness*. *Recognition* happens through a *sign* – an *actual distinction* which merges into some non-*actual* ones, an *actual* reference to something non-*actual* and, by the same token to the *chaotic* background. *Reflection* brings in a *representation* – a *sign* but not any more an immediate and transparent one but a *sign* which is given *as a sign*.

Representation, *sign as a sign*, is the first form of *repetition*, the *repetition* of the *recognised experience* as a *dissociated experience*, as an isolated totality which through this *act* of *reflection* becomes *repeated*, i.e., acquires the character of an independent event, no longer merged with the background of *experience* but merely *related* to other *experiences*. The word "re-presentation" expresses this double perspective on the same – as a moment of the unity of *experience* versus as an entity extracted from it. The *reflected* experience *repeats* the unreflected *recognition*. And this very *repetition* is also *dissociating* the repeated aspect from its background. Thus, *representation* is not any new thing, any copy, any miraculous internal duplication. It is just a next level of differentiation, it is a part of *experience* which has been more sharply isolated, a *dissociated* part cut out of the whole.[67]

I am in a room and catch myself focusing, staring at one piece of furniture. I stare at this cupboard and as I do it, it loses its earlier character of being just one, indifferent aspect of the whole room. It gains importance of being on its own, of being in the focus. Sure, its surroundings, the whole room, are still present here, but the cupboard has been pulled out, cut out of the room and is experienced in a new way. It has been doubled: I *experience* the fact of its being merged with the background, of being there but, on the other hand – and simultaneously – I *re-cognise* its particular status of a *dissociated* entity, which my *reflection* found there (in its form, perspective,

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[66]I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. B-138 [We would not, of course, restrict the differentiation to 'various perceptions' only since, unlike Kant, we do not identify the 'matter of experience' with sensations. This and other conceptual differences notwithstanding, the quoted formulation and its underlying intuition fit the present context.]

[67]In Hegelian or Bradleyan terms, a particular is an abstraction from the totality. In Bergsonian terms, a perception is a part of the perceived, is the very object of perception stripped of some, at the moment irrelevant or overlooked, aspects.

colour, solidity, what not...), but found there only through its very *act* of *dissociation*. The two are the same but also the latter *repeats* the former, is the continuity of the former *represented* in the discontinuity of a single *act*.[68] *Representation repeats* its *object* by merely drawing a contour around it, a border which not merely *distinguishes* but also *dissociates* it from the surrounding *experience*.

Thus it is not a repetition in the common sense of 'recurrence of the same for second time'. Yet, this common 'repetition as recurrence' is founded on the possibilities opened up by the primordial *reflective repetition*. The latter is not confronted by the problem of "how do I know that this is really a repetition of *the same* thing?" Indeed, starting with the ready made things, with the *objects dissociated* within the *horizon of actuality* by *reflective experience*, the possibility of repetition presents a mystery. And one need not go as far as the possibly infinite series of repetitions – a single repetition, recurrence of *one and the same* thing only *twice*, is already something mysteriously ideal. But the original *repetition* is merely a *dissociation* from differentiated *experience* of its particular aspect; it is an emergence of a *sign as a sign*, of the difference between the repeating and the repeated, between the *sign* and the signified – but this whole event happens within the *horizon of actuality*. Thus there is, as yet, no way to talk about 'second time', there is no question about how one knows that the two are the same – it is the same *experienced* simultaneously from two different angles, as if in two different contexts. Representation in the more common sense of the word is but a sharpened version of this initial *representation*. It is a more explicit repetition – it presupposes something *of which* it is a representation as already given. To be represented, this something must be already more or less definitely and *precisely dissociated* from other objects. Our *representation* is the event of this primal *dissociation*. Thus *dissociated* units *found* then also the possibility (in fact, the need) of representation in the more common sense, of a one *dissociated* thing or image by another, in short, of abstract *signs*. (We will return to the abstract *signs* in a moment, §59, and to the question of 'repetition as recurrence' when discussing identity in II:2.2.3.i.)

57.   The *reflective repetition* can also be called "double *dissociation*". The *act* of *reflection dissociates* this cupboard from the rest of *experience* as an independent *object*. It singles out a unit which can be contained within the *horizon of actuality*, and which is contained there with the exclusion of everything else. "The mark of the mind is that there do not arise more acts of knowledge than one at a time."[69] The object acquires thus a special status as compared to all the rest of *experience* which is, for the moment, ignored by *reflection*. (This implicit reference to 'all the rest' is the earlier mentioned *signification* common to all *signs*.)

On the other hand, the object of *reflection* has been already *experienced*, it is something which has already been *recognised*. In fact, the more intense my attempts to grasp and embrace the cupboard by my attentive look, the more it loses its real presence, its reality withdraws and gives place to the domination of my *reflective* attention, becomes a mere *representation*. The original *representation* is just a *dissociation* of an *experience* from *experience*, a sharp *dissociation* of an *object* from the background and, by the same token, from itself. An *object* appears by being so *dissociated* – an *act* we call "*positing*". *Dissociation* is definite, it actually 'tears the object out of the context' and, desiccating it, lends it independent identity. As a consequence, the object no longer coincides with its *sign*, it has been *externalised* and the *sign* appears *as a sign* – it does not coincide with the signified whose intended *experience* has been *dissociated* and turned into ... the *object* of *reflection*. In so far as it is a *sign*, it indicates the background; in so far as it does it *as a sign*, it makes also clear the *distance* separating it from this background. This *distance* is now also the distance separating the *reflective sign* from its *object*, which is only another way of saying that *sign* appears *as a sign*.

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[68]There are several places in G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* indicating that this might be a legitimate interpretation of his notion of 'repetition'. Fichte makes the following observation concerning the meaning of copula: "In the statement A=B, A denotes that which is now posited; B that which is encountered as already posited. – *Is* expresses the transition of Self from positing to the reflection over the posited." [J. G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre*. I:1, F.11 [«So bezeichnet im Satze A=B, A das, was jetzt gesetzt wird; B dasjenige, was als gesetzt, schon angetroffen wird. – *Ist* drükt den Uebergang des Ich vom Setzen zur Reflexion über das gesetzte aus.»]] "Reflexion" does not refer to philosophical reflection but to the structure of immediate experience. If we replace B with another A, and then read *recognition* for "Setzen" (positing), we obtain a possible description of our *repetition* (without, of course, claiming that this was all Fichte wanted to communicate in this passage).

[69]*The Nyaya Sutra.* I:16

We will call this double *dissociation* "*externalisation*". *Reflection externalises.* This is the characteristic feature distinguishing *reflection* from the earlier processes of *distinction* and *recognition*.[70]

Signs and meaning

Distinction is indiscriminately the event of distinguishing *and* the distinguished content. Similarly 58.
the *signs* of *recognition* coincide with the signified – if not in fact (that is, not in so far as the *actuality* of the *sign* might have been only a limited aspect of the possibly *non-actual distinctions*), so in any case in *experience*, in so far as *sign* does not appear as distinct from the signified. *Reflective signs* do not do it any more; the *sign as a sign* is constituted exactly by the *dissociation* of the *sign* from the signified.

The background has been now diversified into a variety of *representations* – *representations* which parade as if they were the objects, the *signs as signs* which, precisely by the fact of being mere *signs*, make it possible to embrace within the *horizon of actuality* more objects (that is, *signs*) than if we were to keep there the objects themselves. *Sign as a sign* means: to *represent* a non-*actual* (possibly also *non-actual*, or else only *external*) object by means of a *sign* which (i) is *dissociated* from this object and which (ii) fits completely within the *horizon of actuality*.

The point (ii) is particularly relevant here and might be even taken as conditioning (i). It applies namely even if the object itself could not be comprised within the *horizon of actuality*. "This" is perhaps the paramount case of a *sign* which refers to something so *immediate* that it often escapes all more specific means of linguistic identification. On the other hand, *reflection* over pleasures or pains is bound to use mere words "pleasure" or "pain" with only approximate and never finally determined meaning. As the object of discourse becomes more and more remote (life, world, love, God), the *distance* separating it from the *actual signs* becomes longer and more *clear*. The *distance* in general separates *actuality* from *non-actuality*, §45. In the current case of *reflective signs*, it amounts to their inherent inadequacy, the impossibility to capture the signified. (This inadequacy is, in fact, if not the same as their *meaning*, so in any case a witness to their involvement into more than merely *actual* relations.) With respect to *actual objects*, it may be their mere *externality*; it increases with respect to the *signification* underlying all *distinctions* and becomes virtually infinite with respect to the *invisible origin*.[71]

The appearance of *distance* amounts to a new discovery: the *sign* need not be an *aspect* of the 59.
signified, the two are *dissociated* and so may be *put into a relation* to each other. Thus emerges the possibility of abstract (or conventional) *signs*. Abstract *signs* are the ones which have been completely *dissociated* from their meaning. Artificial and conventional signs provide the most typical examples. 'Smoke', as a sign of fire, is still only a *sign*, in so far as it means only that: fire. When used for the purpose of signaling it becomes an abstract *sign*. Thus appears also the *trace* which the prior unity leaves among the *actually dissociated aspects*, the relation between the *sign* and the signified.[72] We call this relation "*meaning*". It is the bond which still keeps the *actual signs as signs* and the possibly *non-actual* or *externalised distinctions* together. Or else, it is the means allowing the use of abstract *signs* for actually drawing some *distinctions*. But the

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[70]*Recognitions*, too, involved the element of *non-actuality* and were made against other *recognitions* as well as against the background. But this double *dissociation* – of something from the background and, at the same time, not only from another something but also from itself – becomes fully constituted only at this *reflective* stage.

[71] A possible experience of the *distance* coincides with the experience of its increase or diminution, for instance, when somebody unexpectedly formulates an association revealing a deep insight, makes a very clear expression of a thought which seems to be as final and adequate in its revealing content as it is open for future and more specific interpretations. A moment of insight, bringing a sense of communion, diminishes the *distance*, and when the insight is provoked by (or in any other way genuinely *shared* with) another, it diminishes also the distance between the persons.

[72] We will encounter *traces* many times, so here let us only observe a close relationship to the Derridean traces: an *actual sign* may carry a *trace* of its *origin* and, to this extent, also of its *actual* opposite(s) *dissociated* from the same *nexus*. Typically, *traces* emerge as various relations between the *dissociated* entities. They come always 'from above' and are not reducible to the given context where they terminate as *actual signs*. The following is perhaps a bit mystified but nevertheless adequate expression of meaning also of our *traces*: "As rigorously as possible we must permit to appear/disappear the trace of what exceeds the truth of Being. The trace (of that) which can never be presented, the trace which itself can never be presented: that is, appear and manifest itself, as such, in its phenomenon. The trace beyond that which profoundly links fundamental ontology and phenomenology." [J. Derrida, *Différance*. p.23]

bond notwithstanding, the effected *dissociation* and emerging abstract *signs* allow now for much free play with all three elements.

A *sign* is *the* means of comprising (possibly *non-actual*) *distinctions* within the *horizon of actuality*. *Sign as a sign* is, in addition, given as distinct from its *meaning* and, appearing within the *horizon of actuality*, most typically makes present something which *transcends* it. Most words provide the examples. "Red" or "perseverance" do not bring in all possible aspects of 'redness' or 'perseverance'. But they do draw enough *distinctions* in the *actual* context to make 'redness' or 'perseverance' ... well, *actually* present or relevant, to bring them into the *actual* focus. We say, the *signs actualise* the respective aspects, they draw the respective *distinctions*. A *sign* is a way of *actually* drawing some (possibly *non-actual*) *distinctions*, is a form under which such *distinctions* may enter the *horizon of actuality*. The *distinctions* drawn thus by a *sign* constitute its *meaning*.[73]

Meaning, as an expression of the *distance*, is also the *trace* of *transcendence* (of the signified non-*actual* or even *non-actual* with respect to the *actuality* of the *sign* and abstraction of *sign as a sign*). This is illustrated also by the fact that a word whose meaning could be fully analyzed (if there were such a thing) would be redundant. It might function merely as a convenient abstraction, a normative definition, increasing efficiency of the system. The difference between words and 'mere words' is exactly this: the latter fail to make anything present, while the former do reveal. The 'mere words' turn out to be *signs* which try to ignore the *distance*, and trying that end up without any. But where there is no *distance* there is nothing to reveal either. The power of language seems to lie also in our ability to say – and communicate – something very *distant*, something deeply meaningful which we however do not quite grasp, which we can not make *precise*. What makes *signs* and words meaningful is the fact that they never embrace the whole (reality) which they intend – they merely hint at it, are mere *signs*, pointers. If you do not understand what is being said, perhaps, you do not know what the talk is about. And if you know, you need not the absolute univocity and precision of the expression – a mere indication, a vague sign will suffice.

60.   *Meaning* arises in the context of *sign*'s application, in some *actual* situations. Unused *sign* is almost a *contradictio in adiecto*, unless one wants to refer to the potentiality of being used as a *sign* which, however, can be ascribed to every thing. And to be used as a *sign* means to be applied in an *actual* situation to make some *distinctions*, to make a difference. "The arrow points only in the application that a living being makes of it."[74] The context of use usually disambiguates the abstract signs making their meaning clear – "Danger!!!" means something different from "Danger?", and both can mean quite different things depending on the context of usage. A "sweet danger" is so different from a "terrible danger", that we would never attempt any definite assignment of fixed meanings.[75]

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[73]The *actually* drawn *distinctions* comprise quite a lot. "It is sunny" means certainly that it is sunny. However, pronounced on a sunny day to a stranger, it might mean insecurity as to the stranger's intentions, an attempt to start a conversation. It could mean "Are you interested...? In talking..." These, too, are *distinctions* which the statement may make in the *actual* situation. As hermeneutics never ceased to repeat, the *meaning* of the initial "It is sunny" need not be given uniquely and to the extend it is, it may be as vague as a mere wish to say something. However, a feature very specific to language is that words, written or pronounced, are always already inscribed in the context of inter-human communication and carry their residual meanings independently from any *actual* situation. Thus, whenever encountered, they can hardly fail to produce some *distinctions* beyond the trivial *distinction* of their mere presence (which is a *distinction* made by everything that is).

[74]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:454

[75]This can remind of Wittgenstein's 'meaning as use' and indeed his observations on language are highly relevant to us. (i) "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? In use it is alive." [L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:432] Together with the general idea of language games as pertaining to a specific form of life, we could accept that "the meaning of a piece is its role in the game" [Ibid. I:563], reworded as: the meaning of a word is its place in a life (form). Such a place might be identified with our *distinctions* made when using the word, or better, with the *potential distinctions* which could be made using the word. The ambiguity of "use" as such a *potential* for use versus as a (posited) totality of all *actual* cases of use creates some tension. (ii) Yet, our *signs* arise as the result of the *distance* between the *actuality* and *non-actuality* and only lowest, *reflective signs* become *dissociated* abstracts endowed with lasting meaning (potential for use) primarily by convention. This convention, however, is *founded* on the prior *distinctions*. "The agreement, the harmony, of thought and reality consists in this: if I say falsely that something is *red*, even the *red* is what it isn't." [Ibid. I:429] For *red* is distinguished anyway and, for instance sensations are also *signs*, although not yet conventional, *dissociated signs*. Words and language constitute only a very specific and limited subset of all *signs*, a subset of conventional *signs*. Although their inter-subjective and conventional structure could hardly sustain without a linguistic community, they could hardly arise and sustain without individuals capable of making *actual distinctions* independently from the use of language, that is, capable of recognising *meaning* through *signs*. "Human conventions are useless if they are not

Besides the context of application, there is also another aspect of the indeterminacy of sign's *meaning*. There is no *precise* border separating definitely the *meaning*(s) of one word from possible *meanings* of many other words, and its possibilities of expressing various meanings depend just on where such borders are drawn. The *meanings* of *signs as signs* arise as *traces* of the earlier *nexuses* of *signs* and of *signification*, and this amounts to their inherent interrelations: it is always a *system* of *signs* which jointly circumscribes the *distinctions* effected by any single *sign*. "Tree" means tree also because "bush" means bush and "wood" means wood – in the absence of these latter words the former would probably mean something slightly different. Words are only *signs*, that is, tools for actualising *distinctions*. No *distinction* comes alone, and neither does any *sign*. There are no rigid *distinctions* and things are but their limits. Consequently, not only abstract *signs* can be associated with different meanings by various conventions, but even *meanings* themselves can move their boundaries. Neither *signs* nor abstract *signs* have any unique and final *meanings*. The stability of *signs* reflects mostly only the stability of the corresponding *distinctions*. But *dissociated signs* acquire abstract stability, independent from their *meaning* and thus, the constancy and consistency of words can even strengthen the stability of the signified *distinctions*.

The turn towards the most specific context of *actual* usage has an opposite effect tending to dissolve any *non-actual* sense of *signs* in general, and of words, in particular. Nevertheless, the specificity of words is that, having been *dissociated as signs*, they are *always* signs, they always carry if not a specific *meaning*, so at least its promise. A word is not a mere string of letters, a completely *dissociated*, that is, meaningless entity. But it is precisely the *dissociation* of the event of distinguishing from its content, of 'use' from 'meaning', which makes the one *dissociated* pole always carry the promise of the other, which makes every word and sentence pregnant with meaning, and every *actual* meaning dependent on the used words. 61.

Encountering a single word written on a stone in the middle of the woods, I know that it is a sign, perhaps only a joke, but still a *sign*, a message. This is the dependency characteristic for abstract *signs*: I understand in general what the word means, it carries some meaning prior to the *actual* encounter and independently of the context of its use. Only this makes it possible for me to understand something from the written word at all and, possibly, even some more specific intentions of the author.[76] If the written word is "Danger", I will almost for sure look suspiciously around for, on average and for the most "danger" means danger. The world is different from what it would be if the word were "Quiet", or "Abzdangh". The lack of any more specific information about the context and the author makes, perhaps, the message imprecise and unclear, but it remains something understandable (and to misunderstand is, also, to understand). The ultimate

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connected with the motives that impel people to observe them." [S. Weil, *Waiting for God. The Forms of Implicite Love of God*:The love of religious practices;p.121] (iii) There is thus a difference to the extent that Wittgenstein's 'use', embedded in the 'rules of the language game', seems opposed to any other form of sedimented 'meaning'. ("There cannot be a question whether these or other rules are correct ones for the use of «not», (I mean, whether they accord with its meaning.) For without these rules the word has as yet no meaning; and if we change the rules, it now has another meaning." [L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. 548(b)] One can hardly disagree, if only we read this as saying that the meaning is not reduced to the use/rules but only captured, reflected by them, so that we could say: "Let the use of words teach you their meaning." [Ibid. II:xi], but not that it *is* their meaning. Indeed, changing the rules of using "not" would change its meaning – but not merely because it would be combined differently with other words, but because it would thus lead to other *distinctions* whenever used. We are interested exclusively in *what* is thus captured, while Wittgenstein only in *how* this capturing happens in language.) Such a disposal with meaning which could be intended beyond or before *actual* use, is typical for thinking which, encountering the impossibility of any objective fixation of well-defined 'objects' or 'states of affairs' (which, one used to assume, provide the meaning), replaces objectivity with its substitute, socio-cultural relations. As far as the *constancy* of meaning of conventional signs and *inter-subjective verifiability* of this constancy is concerned, the association with the rules of use is hardly disputable. But as an explanation, or even a mere suggestion of the *meaning actually carried* by the signs, it must refer to deeper, not only extra-linguistic but also extra-social aspects (which indeed happens in *Philosophical Investigations*, for instance, 'life form', 'image'.) Our *meanings* are the possible and effected *distinctions* – *distinctions* of a communication process which is neither *founded* in nor exhausted by the linguistic interaction. Only *sedimentation* of meanings and their constancy in the abstract signs of language are aspects relative to a community (which we do not really address). We can nevertheless observe the close correlation (even *equipollence*) of 'use' and 'meaning', if we view them as the result of *dissociating* the two *aspects* of *distinction*: the fact or event of distinguishing (corresponding to the pragmatics of 'use', the illocutionary force of Austin's, or speaker-meaning of Grice) and the effected distinction (corresponding to actual meaning, locutionary content or sentence-meaning). Recognising this close kinship, the origin in the common *nexus*, we are far from reducing any *aspect* to the other.

[76] Of course, the two need not agree, and one can often encounter words one knows used in a (at least slightly) new meaning. But that encountered words are messages *from other humans* is as obvious as it is fundamental; even if no recipient were ever intended, an author has been there and this is a part of the *meaning* of every text.

specificity of the most *immediate* contexts, of the *actual* situations of use may be, indeed, needed to acquire the understanding of the language and the meanings of words. But once the words, the abstract *signs* acquired some meaning, they will carry it in relative independence from the context of use. "May we not, for example, be affected with the promise of a good thing, though we have not an idea of what it is? Or is not the being threatened with danger sufficient to excite a dread, though we think not of any particular evil likely to befall us, nor yet frame to ourselves an idea of danger in abstract?"[77]

Meaning, in an actual use of an abstract sign, may involve all aspects of the actual situation. If I suspect that you want to cheat on me, the meaning of your "Danger!" may include my theories about the possible ways of you cheating on me by saying just that. Thus, (almost) every situation of using a *sign* results in some meaning which, being dependent on the context, is unique. Such an extreme nominalism forgets, however, that the possibility of using a sign in a given situation is conditioned by its meaning prior to this situation. "Here one might speak of a 'primary' and 'secondary' sense of a word. It is only if the word has the primary sense for you that you use it in the secondary one."[78] One can scream "Danger!" as a joke or to cheat others, i.e., use the expression for purposes which, for the most, do not go well with its meaning. But one could make such a joke *only because* "danger" means something prior to its actual usage. Thus, the meaning of a *sign* has a twofold aspect: on the one hand, every *actual* use effecting some particular *distinctions* in a given context and, on the other hand, the potential for making various *distinctions* in various contexts, a floating and eventually undefinable kernel (in empiricist's terms: a family resemblance) with which some philosophers would like to endow each *sign* in its *dissociation* from the rest of the world or the language. The ability – and purposefulness – of such an endowment depend only on the degree of the attempted *dissociation* and may vary from quite useful ones (like in the dictionaries), to hardly plausible postulates of some metaphysical relation between an abstract sign and its meaning.

62.   There are much more *signs* than there are words, and much more *distinctions* than *signs*. We are sceptical to all forms of reductionism and we are not interested in *signs* as such, let alone abstract *signs*. We will therefore stick to the just mentioned disquotational schema of *meaning* which simply says that *meaning* of the linguistic *signs* is, typically, not determined and not definable by purely linguistic means. The *meaning* of a word, the *distinctions* it can actualise, transcend usually possibilities of the language simply because they are of non-linguistic kind. To know the meaning of "blue", no amount of linguistic or other explanations will ever suffice. One just has to know what blue is. That its use will be related to and mutually dependent on the use of "green", "red", etc. is only a reflection of the fact that blue is *distinguished* relatively to green, red and other colors. "Horse – what it is like, everybody can see." said one version of Larousse dictionary. Uninformative as this may be, it is perfectly sufficient with respect to most trivialities. One might think that the story with trivialities like "blue" and "horse", for which we have obvious, *immediately* given *distinctions* of other than linguistic kind which these words signify, does not generalise. But why should the story with any other words, like "perseverance", "hate", "eternity",... be any different? Because one assumes that the only reality is *hic et nunc*, is the pure *actuality* and everything which extends beyond its horizon is something mental, uncertain, suspicious. We have already started to oppose this assumption and will continue doing so. There is a difference between the way in which "blue" means blue and "hate" means hate. But this difference is simply the difference between blue and hate. The shortest *distance* separating hate from an *actual* pronouncement of "hate" is incommensurably longer than the longest *distance* possibly separating an instance of blue from the *actually* spoken word "blue". We will have more to say about this difference, especially, in Book II, which could hardly ever be characterised by lengthy comparisons of possible

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[77] G. Berkeley, *A Treatise....* Introduction §20. Here lies a difference from most approaches addressing the issue of the genesis of linguistic meaning. Fluctuations of use may provide basis for the subtleties and variations of the meaning, but this process of constitution does not change the fact that some residual, even if undefinable meanings of most words are being constituted – most people do have an idea of what "Danger" written on the stone could mean, irrespectively of the fact that it might have been meant in different ways. For us, the issue of language is not so much that of how it possibly might have arisen in the human history and how it possibly may function in the society but, primarily, how it is encountered by an individual. In this respect, it certainly has an element of 'givenness', of some meanings which are encountered and not constituted.

[78] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.* II:xi

and impossible contexts of usage of the words "blue" and "hate".

Reflection externalising its contents gives rise to *signs as signs*, to the *distance* separating ac- 63.
tuality of the *sign* from the drawn *distinctions*. The *dissociation* of the *nexuses* of *sign* and the
more primordial *signification* results in at least three elements: a *sign* (which has now become
abstract), its *meaning* – the *distinctions* it actualises (or, in general vagueness, which it possibly
can actualise), and the *actual* situation, the background of the addressed *distinctions*. *Reflection*
might be now taken simply as the sphere allowing these three *aspects* to function in a relative
independence.

This independence is embodied in the structure of 'as' (and is related to the abstract or
conventional character of the new level.) 'As' in *sign as a sign* signals the *dissociation* of *sign* from
what it signifies (the *object* of *reflection*, 4.2). But it comes in various concrete forms. Seeing
something *as* something, x as y, is *founded* in the fact that x has been *dissociated* from its *actual*
presentation and, on other occasions, could also be seen as something else. In the deepest sense,
'as' is a *reflection* of a variety of 'aspects' of one *nexus*. One can view love 'as' enslavement and
'as' liberation, friendship 'as' obligation and 'as' gratification and 'as'... It is no coincidence that
all such 'aspects', contrary as they might appear, are joined by "and" which represents the fact
that they are only possible *actual* manifestations of a unitary *nexus*. In more mundane examples,

one can see a duck-rabbit drawing 'as' a duck or 'as' a rabbit[79], one can see the drawing
'as' a glass cube or 'as' a solid angle or 'as' a wire frame or... (And, of course, the context, the
background against which the drawing appears, can contribute significantly to how one will see
it.) Here we notice the difference: various 'as...' are now joined by "or" for, indeed, one cannot see
it as *both* glass cube and solid angle. This difference signals a new status acquired by a *sign*. In a
sense, it has become itself an object, it has become independent from its signification and can now
represent different objects, depending only on 'as' *what* one sees it. It is this *dissociation*, where
not only one *nexus* happens to have different *aspects* and *actual* manifestations, but where also
one *sign* can *represent* different objects, which marks sharply the level of *reflective representation*.

Distinctions in the (same) indistinct

Just to anticipate a possible worry which we will address in more details in the last section of this 64.
Book, in particular, 6.3.

Signs are *actual* tokens of *distinctions* – *distinctions* which are drawn and made *in* the current
situation, *in* the world but, eventually, in the same *indistinct*. Every *distinction* makes a *distinction*
in the *indistinct*, and so does (*meaning* of) every *sign*. There is nothing peculiarly 'mental' about
the meanings of *signs*.[80] Meanings typically *transcend* the *horizon of actuality* and, in any case,
may remain fully *external*. Hearing you saying "There is a danger around the corner!" changes
the *actual* situation, makes a difference. It does not happen 'only in my head' – it modifies the
world in which I actually am. (Of course, it does not modify it 'physically', but the material,
physical things constitute only a minor element of the world which only seldom concerns us.) In
this sense every linguistic *sign*, every utterance, is a true 'speech act': it effects some *distinctions*
in the matter of the world.

Asking "How does a thought act?" Frege gives the immediate answer: "By being apprehended
and taken to be true."[81] *Distinction*, we could say, acts by merely being apprehended, although
this would here mean simply effecting some *distinction*. (And as we have remarked several times,
often the mere fact of a triviality being uttered, introduces *distinctions* far beyond the mere fact
of the utterance.) *Distinction* can not be *dissociated* from its meaning because every *distinction*
is its own meaning, is a *distinction* only in so far as it makes a difference, even if no practical and
observable consequences follow. A *sign*, and in any case a *sign as a sign*, has its being independent
from its possible *meanings*, but it is a *sign* only to the degree in which it effects some *distinctions*,
i.e., has some *meaning*.

This crucial point seems to go counter much of common-sense but, at the bottom, it complies
with it. *Recognition* of a *sign*'s *meaning* is not something which happens 'in my head' as opposed
to some mysterious 'reality outside': a *sign* is a *sign* only to the extent it is *recognised*, and its

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[79]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* II:xi

[80]We do not know what "mental" means, unless it is, perhaps, just the meanings of *signs*.

[81]G. Frege, *The thought: a logical inquiry*.

recognition amounts to drawing some *distinctions*. And *distinctions* are not something 'in my head' but in the world, eventually, in the *indistinct*. The *meaning* of the exclamation "There is a danger around the corner!" is the set of *distinctions* it draws, the way it changes the world. *Sign* is not any copy of anything, and neither is its meaning. *Sign* is originally an *actual aspect* of a wider experience and, eventually, of the whole *experience*. Its *meaning* is not any picture one carries and can recreate 'in one's head' – it is the way in which it can affect the world, a set of *distinctions* carved, eventually as all *distinctions*, in the *indistinct*.

What kind of *distinctions* a *sign* effects, and if they are sufficient for, say, me deciding to act according to them is a completely another question. It may not draw them in the final and sufficiently definitive way. Hearing about the danger around the corner, I may wish some further *distinctions* to be made which should carve the world along the same lines. To be convinced that there is *actually* a danger, I may need more information, perhaps, to know whence you know it, what danger it is, perhaps, to *actually* see it myself. All such steps are but collecting the *distinctions* which may or may not modify the world in the same way as the original announcement did. At some point, I may indeed stop further verification and conclude that what you said was true. If there were no distinction between meaning and using, I could hardly wonder about that – at most, I could wonder what you mean by saying "Danger!" when I see none. But truth, although itself an adventure of meaning, is a further story, which we postpone for the moment (II:2.2.3.ii).[82]

4.2 Subject-object

65.   To *externalise* means to objectify. And vice versa, to *dissociate* an object means to posit it as distinct from the positing consciousness, as *external*. *Externality* is what constitutes an *object* in the strict sense. *Recognitions* of awareness contain the germ of this *externality* since they appear through *signs*, involving an element of non-*actuality* or *non-actuality*. But it is only when I pause to *reflectively* consider an *object*, when it is pulled out of the horizon of *experience* and enclosed within the *horizon of actuality*, that it appears as an *external* totality. Objects of *awareness*, of *experience*, are not *external* in this strong sense; they are *distinguished* but their *non-actuality* is only a germ of *externality*. In this strict sense, an *object* is only an object of *reflection* and only *reflective* being is confronted with *objects*.

Since *externalisation* involves double *dissociation*, §57, in particular, the *dissociation* of its

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[82] If this looks like a repetition of Wittgenstein's "language is a tool", then it probably is. Wittgenstein seems happy with the fact that the tool works and analyses *how* it happens. The question one might ask is: *what* makes the tool work? The question could be declared illegitimate if the tool were inherent part of the game but, as it seems, humankind played the game once without it and, moreover, every baby begins to play it without. *What* makes it possible to include language into the whole game, to turn game into a language-game? It seems to be the fact that words do have *meanings* and that these *meanings* get woven into the rest of *distinctions*, i.e., both are *distinctions* in the same matter of life. Putting no more (and perhaps less) charity than necessary into the reading of the private language argument (*if* such an argument was given and *if* it was an argument – we leave clarifications to scholars), it says: a solipsistic subject could not possibly maintain any reliable criteria of correct usage of his *dissociated* signs, of the consistency in obeying conventions of their usage. Why not? Because the only reliable criteria, if any, of following a rule are other players. We can accept critique of 'mental states' and *dissociated* sensations but have problems with understanding why seeing Eiffel Tower twice, one needs any conventions to *recognise* it as one and the same. If this can happen, one should be also able to associate with these two *experiences* the same abstract sign, say, "Eiffel Tower" (or #!*), and use it consistently. (Of course, our whole development suggests that we maintain the possibility of an individual to actually *establish the very relation* sign-signified, not only to utilise such a relation established socially for defining new and private special cases of it.) Sure, private convention is not public convention and no social verification of correctness can be ensured. But, although public verification often *may* be more reliable, at bottom it is neither better nor different than one's private ability to *recognise* Eiffel Tower for the third time as "Eiffel Tower" (or #!*). Language is essentially social in that it accumulates sedimented meanings with which each individual is confronted. But if one did not have the private ability to establish the relation of *meaning*, the mere rules of use could hardly guarantee anything of significance except, perhaps, a general consensus. (Such a consensus maintains only the sedimented *meanings*.) This private ability with respect to most *actual experiences* and *signs* is *founded* in the deeper layer of *signs* and *recognitions* which are not *dissociated* as abstract signs are. Eventually, private consistency can be maintained because *existence* is not a solipsistic subject in need of some 'internal' verification criteria but, on the contrary, is *confronted* with something it is not, whence criteria for lower levels arise from the higher ones. (The possibility of imagining, after Max Scheler, a 'lifelong Crusoe', who grows up alone and nevertheless establishes and uses consistently a system of private signs, seems to be a critique of the 'argument', e.g., in G. P. Baker, P. M. S. Hacker, *Malcolm on language and rules*. But if we were willing to see the 'argument' as directed against solipsism in general, not only against linguistic solipsism (e.g., N. Malcolm, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*), there need not be any genuine conflict between these two interpretation schools.)

object from itself, the respective *sign as a sign* has also more definite direction towards its *object* than it was the case before. *Distinctions* and *signs* of *recognitions* referred primarily to the background. A *sign* of *reflection*, appearing *as a sign*, is by the same token explicitly directed towards an *external object*. *Object* is more sharply distinguished from its background than it was in *recognition*; *sign as a sign* focuses more sharply on its *object* than a simple *sign* does.

Objectivity, like most other things, is a matter of degree. In this Book, we are drawing *distinctions* 66.
separating different levels of ontological *founding*. Different levels mark, indeed, distinctions in nature. But the distinction in nature between levels is but a distinction of degree which has been drawn so far, which has been so intensified, that it caused emergence of new *aspects*. Thus, for instance, there is a distinction in nature between *recognition* and *representation*, in that the latter introduces *signs* which are no longer mere *signs* but are *signs as signs* (we may say, not only natural but also abstract signs). Yet, *awareness* is a nucleus from which *reflection* develops by a process of further differentiation. In this sense, they are on the same, continuous line, on the same *trace*, and all differences are only differences of degree.

This applies also to *objectivity*. There are degrees of being an *object*, that is, degrees of the potentiality for being captured as a *sign* within the *horizon of actuality*. This pen here can easily be pointed at and made into an *object*. 'The whole world' can, too, be *posited* as an *object* of *reflection*, but we feel easily that there is a significant difference between the two. I can isolate myself as an independent entity, as an *objective* totality and think of my, then only *external*, relations to the world and other people. I can then also think about 'my time', the time of my life, as different, perhaps, even independent from the time of others. But doing this I know immediately that it is not the whole truth about myself, that the isolation went too far, and that this being I have just objectified stands in more intimate relations to its surroundings than those I can discover treating myself as an *objective* entity.

Objects are sharply distinguished, *externalised* contents. This sharp *precision* is possible due to the 67.
dissociation of an *object*, the fact that it is entirely inscribed within the *horizon of actuality* from which it has suppressed all competitors. The fact that *objects* carry with themselves the aspect of *non-actuality* escapes easily *reflection* and appears for it only as the fact of their *externality*. *Externality* is the distance separating *reflection* from its *object*, which is just another side of the *distance* separating it from its origin. *Reflection* is a mode of perception and understanding, a hypostasis of being, farthest removed from the *virtuality* of the *original nothingness*.

As contents become more *precisely dissociated* from their background and turn, eventually, into 68.
objects of *actual reflection*, so does emerge their counterpart within the unity of *horizon of actuality*, the *actual subject*. The inseparable relation of *subject-object*, always thought in terms of pure *actuality*, is an event of *reflection*: an isolated, purely *actual object* and equally *actual*, instantaneous *subject* – this is how the tradition, whether its idealistic, rationalistic or empirical branch, used to see it. Of course, in order to obtain a purely *actual subject* which, nevertheless, has something to do with at least a shadow of the real world, one has to invent a lot of transcendental machinery, constitutions, and what-not. And, on the other hand, starting with a purely *actual objects* which, nevertheless, should appear for at least a shadow of a real being, one has to perform a lot of constructions, sensations, associations, amalgamations, juxtapositions, shortly – desperate, even if ingenious sewing, before one is forced to unwillingly give up.

For us, the *objects* are the final hypostases, the *actual* limits (usually, only provisional and never necessary) of a process of *distinguishing*.[83] Some of these *objects* fit better into our sensuous and perceptual capacities, into our scope of *horizon of actuality*, and these are the most common *objects*. Others do not fit equally well, always immediately announcing the inadequacy and insufficiency of the *objective representation*, and these are termed more "subjective". In either case, the *actual subject* is nothing more than the fact of the *reflective sign* appearing *as a sign*, of its non-coincidence with the signified *experience* – *actual subject* is the place, or better, the event of this 'non-coincidence'.

As in §47, p. 20, the distance separating *object* from *subject* is the same as the distance separating 69.
subject from *object* (as we will see in 4.3.§74, *before* is the same relation as *after*). The sharper separation of the *object*, the sharper separation of the *subject*; the more *external*, independent

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[83]Virtually the same idea – that *objects* are results of objectification relative to the *existence* – can be found in N. Berdyayev, *I and the world of objects*, in particular, II.

the former becomes, the more precisely and definitely the latter is delineated from the background of *experience*. The two are *equipollent aspects* of *reflection*.

And yet, the *equipollence* of *awareness* and *self-awareness* does not go over into the *equipollence* of *reflection* and *self-reflection*. Further *dissociation* has taken place and *self-reflection* is no longer a necessary *aspect* of the *actual subject*. In fact, *reflection* and *self-reflection* are incommensurable because they represent two different *acts* which are hardly ever performed jointly. *Actual subject* is directed exclusively towards the *actual object*, it is exhausted within the *horizon of actuality*. "The mark of the mind is that there do not arise more acts of knowledge than one at a time." *Reflection* is continually focused on its *objects*, in spite of their *externality* it almost 'identifies' itself with them. In this process, that is, in the series of *reflective acts*, *self-reflection* can (although it seldom does) arise as one of them. Limited to the *horizon of actuality*, *reflection* can occupy itself with the *objects* only to the extent it forgets itself, only to the extent it does not *reflect* over itself. *Reflection* forgets itself and in order to catch a glimpse of the *self-awareness* which underlies its fascination with the *objects*, it has to actively gather itself to perform another *act*, an *act* of *self-reflection*. This is the site of infinite regress. The 'I' objectified in an *act* of *self-reflection*, being an *object*, is always distinct from the *reflecting subject*. To make the two coincide, one has to *posit* an infinite chain of such acts and claim the existence of the fix point obtained as its ideal limit.[84] This ideal construction is as much as *reflective dissociation* can do to re-construct the intuited *unity* of *awareness* and *self-awareness*.

Thus, although *object* and *subject* are *equipollent aspects* of a *reflective experience*, *reflection* and *self-reflection* are not such *aspects* – they are two different modifications of a *reflective act*. If they ever find place together, in a simultaneity of the *horizon of actuality*, this can happen only by a considerable effort of will and attention.

70.   *Externality* has nothing to do with *spatiality*. It is just an aspect of *subjectivity*, of *reflection* which is *aware* of the distance separating it from its *object*. If my *reflection* chooses as its *object* my sensation of pain, a particular memory, a particular feeling, these will appear as *external* in the same sense as other *objects*. Thus understood, *externality* is opposed to something like 'internality', to that which has not been *dissociated* as an independent *object*. What this 'internality' comprises is a perplexing question because any answer proposed by *reflection* posits immediately an *external object*. By opposition to *objectivity*, one terms it "*subjective*". We will return to this opposition, but for the moment it should be admissible to see 'inner' life in the flux of *experience*, of heterogenous *distinctions* and *recognitions*, but only as long as one lets them flow, only as long as one does not isolate them as independent *objects*. In the moment one does it, they leave one's 'interior' and appear as *external*, even if not *spatial*, *objects*.

4.3   Time and space

Externality is something different from the three-dimensional extensionality, and time of the *objects* and their changes (not to mention *temporality* of the flow of *experience*) is different from the linear and objective time. Yet they are both *aspects* of the *nexus* of *subjectivity-objectivity*. Also, they are steps in the process of emergence of the eventual objective time and space and we will now follow this process.

The *spatio-temporality* from 3.2 involved merely the *distinction* between the simultaneous *aspects* of *actuality* and non-*actuality*. *Representation*, the *reflective repetition*, *dissociating* an *object*, establishes its identity. As an experienced identity it underlies the emerging *experience* of time and space. As the identity pushed to its ideal limit of the residual point (or 'substance'), it gives also rise to the abstract ('objective') structure of both *aspects*: linearity of time and homogenous space. Let us consider the former aspect first.

4.3.1. Time

71.   *Reflection* comes always 'too late', it *represents* something which 'has already been' *recognised* in the flux of *experience*. And as any act involves its whole structure within itself, no additional

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[84]After ω iterations of that-ing one gets to the point '$f = \text{that}_1(\text{that}_2(\text{that}_3(...$', i.e., a fix point where no more that's add anything new, so that $that(f) = f$. Knaster-Tarski theorem is a mathematical reflection of this coincidence, specifying also simple conditions on the operation (here, that-ing) under which ω iterations indeed yield a fix point.

step is needed to establish the experience of '*after*' – it is the distance separating the *representing sign* from what it *represents*. It does not matter that, objectively speaking, this distance may take time 0 (if such a thing exists). It is there, in the structure of the *reflective experience* and hence also in the experience itself: *reflection repeats* what it *reflects*, and this basic *repetition* is the same as the primordial *after*.[85]

This *reflective after* is not that of one *actuality* coming after another. We are still 'within' the scope of the *horizon of actuality*, where the first *after* finds its place. We can view it simply as the Husserlian retention, as the *primäre, frische Erinnerung*. The withdrawal of the just-perceived-object into the immediate past amounts just to the impossibility of *actually* grasping and retaining the *object* in the unity of the *reflective act*.

The *after* is the *distinction* between the *actual sign* and the signified thing which it *dissociates* and *after* which it comes. *After* is the *trace* of the *nexus of experience* which has been *dissociated* into the *objective* content and *subjective sign* – *after* is the *distance* between the two. This is also the *distance* separating the ever fleeting 'now' from *reflection* which always comes *after* it. This *distance* is experienced simultaneously with the poles it *dissociates*, all elements of the relation *after* are experienced simultaneously within the *horizon of actuality*. The *experience dissociated* by *reflection* plays for it the role of simultaneous, *immediately* present virtuality. Its withdrawal into the background, effected by the *reflective representation*, establishes the *after* which from now on permeates the whole life of *reflection*.

We only want to claim that this event is not something that merely happens to *reflective* consciousness, but is one of its constitutive *aspects*. (Ideally, its description should be free from references to the passing time because it is what constitutes the very *experience* of time.) *Reflective experience* is *equipollent* with the *experience* of time. The more definitely *reflection* approaches *dissociation*, the more 'objective' becomes the time of the experience.

James, speaking as always only in terms of *actual experiences* "explained the continuous identity 72. of each personal consciousness as a name for the practical fact that new experiences come which look back on the old ones, find them 'warm', and greet and appropriate them as 'mine'. The pen, realised in this retrospective [*reflective*] way as my percept, thus figures as a fact of 'conscious' life. But it does so only so far as 'appropriation' has occurred; and appropriation is *part of the content of a later experience* wholly additional to the original 'pure' pen."[86] Such 'appropriations', pragmatically or phenomenologically convincing as they may be, can be used for explaining the emergence of a *conscious ego*, which "is a part of the content of the world experienced"[87] and which indeed seems the only form of personal unity pragmatism is capable to account for. But since such 'appropriations' are *actual experiences* and the whole explanation happens from the perspective of *actuality*, it must need to presuppose continuity in time, or as we would say in temporality, which is more primordial than any contents of *actual experiences*. Such continuity does not pertain to the *actual subject* except, perhaps, for the *experiences* of 'appropriations'. Continuity in time is *founded* in the sphere of *experience* preceding time, and *reflection* finds itself always perplexed by this continuity, since it is irresistibly separated from itself, as it is from its *object*, by the *after*.[88]

The 'pure past', the past which not only isn't merely a collection of past *actualities*, but which 73. never had been an *actuality*, is the way in which the horizon of *experience* can be thought by the *attentive reflection*.[89] *Experience* is inaccessible to *reflection* and this inaccessibility finds its

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[85] We are playing here on the possible (and intended) conflation of the proposed notion of *reflection* and reflection in the more common sense of the word. As suggested in §51, the two are almost the same – they have no structural differences but the difference of degree.

[86] W. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. IV:2;p.129

[87] Ibid. VI:footnote;p.168

[88] We are not trying to counter James' excellent, often phenomenological, descriptions. But they cannot suffice when we do not believe that everything can be reduced to and explained in terms of *actual experiences*. For instance, one of the first conditions for 'new experiences coming and looking back on the old ones' is "that the new experience has past time for its 'content', and in that time a pen [or whatever] that 'was'." [Ibid. IV:2;p.129] Adequate as it is, it does assume 'past' which is given in experience. Indeed, it is. One can rest satisfied with that, with describing "what can be experienced at *some definite time* by some experient [...] in some concrete kind of experience that can be *definitely* pointed out." [Ibid. VI;p.160; my emphasis] But we do not believe that everything can be found in such 'definite' moments.

[89] "This table bears traces of my past life, for I have carved my initials on it and spilt ink on it. But these traces in themselves do not refer to the past: they are present; and, in so far as I find in them signs of some 'previous' event, it is because I derive my sense of the past from elsewhere, because I carry this particular significance within myself."

very clear expression in *after*. Any act of *attentive reflection* is immediately self-aware of having arrived at the scene *after* its *object*. But this *after* is merely an expression of the change of level, of the *distance* separating *reflection* from the *experience* which never has been, and never will be, reduced to *reflective actuality*. One has to emphasise the 'purity' in the expressions like "pure past" exactly in order not to confuse it with a collection of other, though now past, *actualities*. *Experience* is not a collection, not even a *totality* of *experiences*; it is what precedes *experiences* and makes them possible. Preceding the differentiation into *experiences*, it also precedes time understood as succession, in particular, the possibility of past *experiences*, of *actualities* which are not *actual* now but were so some other time. Past thought of as past *actuality* is *founded* upon the *experienced* duration and the transition from this *experience* to *reflection*. This *foundation* remains around *reflection* as the 'pure past', which alone makes it possible for *actual experiences* to recede into past and thus turn into past *actualities*.

74.   This, we could say, establishes perhaps the dimension of the past, but what about the future? The future is, at least at this level, no different from the past. *After*, as the *trace* of the *dissociated nexus* of *experience*, as the relation connecting the *actually* given *object* and the background from which it emerged (or its *equipollent aspects*: the *subjective sign* and the *objective* content), is asymmetric and is experienced as such. The *actual sign* is *distinct* from what it signifies and, furthermore, it comes *after*. The *actuality*, this "strange crest of the time series"[90], appears as the point into which all *experience* converges, to use Bergson's image, as the tip of the cone of the whole past. This *after* means not only the *distance* separating the *reflective sign* from the *experience* but also its impassability – *reflection* can never re-capture the *experience*, because it always comes "post factum". This asymmetricity gives the time arrow its direction.

        The rest is uniformity by analogy – *after* is asymmetric: 1) *objects* are what is experienced through the *actual signs* of *reflection* which involves them in the relation *after*, but 2) *after is the same* relation as *before* – *reflection* coming *after* x means the same as x coming *before reflection*); 3) in a sense, *reflection* is the future of its *object* which is always past and *after* which it arrives; more abstractly, 4) future – and now it is the future of *reflection*! – is just what is *after* the *actual reflection*. It is to the *actual sign*, what this *sign* is to what it signifies, i.e., just like 'now' of *reflection* is *after* what it signifies, future is *after now* of the *reflection* – it is a point of *reflection* over the *actual experience* or, as the case may be with an *attentive reflection*, the point of *reflection* over actual *reflection*.

        This future which lies *before* is, of course, indeterminate, unlike the past *after* which *reflection* relates to a particular, definite experience. Past is something *actually reflected* and in this lies its definite, determined character. Future, established by mere analogy, has only the character of potentiality, of a possible *reflection*, it is a *reflection* which has not happened yet. This analogy by asymmetry determines the dimension of the future. It can be found in the *immediacy* of an *act* in the form of protention, *anschauliche Erwartung*, which presents (an aspect of) the object in some definite (as expected) form augmented, however, with a sign of indeterminacy, the possibility of unfullfilment, or else protention which anticipates the *immediate* action, like the electric potential which can be measured over the entire scalp a fraction of a second before a finger movement which one has already decided to perform. But future is not limited to the (affectively presented) *immediacy* of expectation. It can be found in the general sense of openness of the future of one's life and, eventually, in the abstract 'future of the world' in the objective time.

4.3.1.i. Objective time

75.   We have thus entered the dimension of *temporality*. But so far, *temporality* is not yet the objective time – it has the dimensions of *actuality*, *after* and *before*, that is, of present, past and future, but these are, so to speak, subjectively localised, centered around the *here-and-now*, which has become 'now'. Also, we have not established a uniform, global time. There may still be many different futures as there may be many different pasts and they may be only loosely (if at all) connected with each other. Even if they all pass through the unique 'now', *temporality* still allows multiplicity of time paths.


[M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. III:2] Bergson is probably the source from which Merleau-Ponty borrows the idea which later appears also in J. Derrida, *Différance*.
    [90]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. B:2.§26

Temporality is objective in the sense of being an *aspect* of the experience of *externalised objects*, but it isn't yet the objective time *dissociated* from subjectivity and its apprehension of things. It is still time of *an experience* of *objects*, that is, still *temporality* with a designated *actuality*, "the present time" of *here-and-now*. It shouldn't sound too implausible, if we said that such a *temporality* pertains to any being which has reached the level of discerning independent *objects*. A dog bringing me a ball and looking expectingly into my eyes, waiting for me to throw it away is, too, involved into *temporality*, just as it is when looking in the bushes for the ball just thrown.

Husserl describes two kinds of time consciousness: the consciousness of time as it unfolds in 76. the *actual experience* along the axis of retentions and protentions, and another, *uneigentliches Zeitbewußtsein*, which relates to the time of remote past and of lifeless recollections. "We could say: temporality stands against the inauthentic representation of time, of infinite time, time and time relations which are not recognised in experience."[91] The dichotomy is quite significant, so let us summarise briefly the main points.

The former is the time of immediate presence, of the *actual*, fresh retention (*primäre Erinnerung*) and the equally *actual* protention, the expectation of the immediate continuation (*anschauliche Erwartung*). The retention is aptly illustrated by the famous figure:
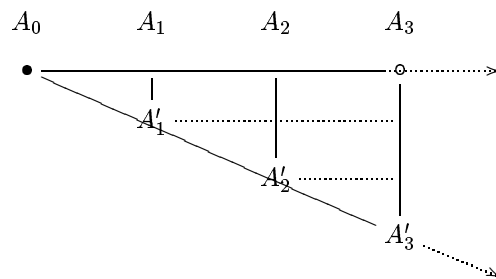
A_0 marks the initial point of the *actual experience*, the *Urimpression* of, say, an *object A*. The horizontal line indicates the objective time in which the *object* may undergo some continuous changes, indicated by the points A_1, A_2, A_3. (The discrete points are, of course, only means of suggesting the genuine continuity of the process.) A_1' represents the *actual* impression of A at the time-point 1, A_2' at the time-point 2. The point 3 may here represent the idealised *immediacy* of 'now' in which the impression A_3' corresponds to the actual appearance of the *object* A_3. The whole idea is that this impression relates not only to the *immediacy* of the *object*, A_3, but also to its immediate past. In a sense, it keeps and contains the whole line $A_0 - A_3'$ with the intermediary impression-points A_1', A_2', etc., as indicated by the horizontal dotted lines. The same happens at A_2', which keeps and contains the past A_1', etc., so that "each passing now retains retentionally all earlier layers."[92]

But now, there is also "inauthentic consciousness of time: a part of a perceived melody drained off 77. a longer time ago."[93] "We say, that of which I am retentionally conscious is abolutely certain. How

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[91] E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. A:1.1 §6 «Wir können auch sagen: der Zeitanschauung steht gegenüber die uneigentliche Zeitvorstellung, die Vorstellung der unendlichen Zeit, der Zeiten and Zeitverhältnisse, die nicht anschaulich realisiert sind.»

[92] E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. A:II.Beilage vi. «Jedes vergangene Jetzt birgt retentional in sich alle früheren Stufen.» Some 15 years earlier James makes essentially the same observations: "If recently the brain-tract *a* was vividly excited, and then *b*, and now vividly *c*, the total present consciousness is not produced simply by *c*'s excitement, but also by the dying vibrations of *a* and *b* as well. If we want to represent the brain-process we must write it thus: $_a b^c$..." [W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*. I:9.3] In a footnote, he remarks, concerning not only the retentional impressions, but the unity of a 'now' circumscribed by a horizon of gradually dissolving clarity: "The most explicit acknowledgment I have anywhere found of all this is in a buried and forgotten paper by the Rev. Jas. Wills, on *Accidental Association*, in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. XXI, part I (1846). Mr. Wills writes: At every instant of conscious thought there is a certain sum of perceptions, or reflections, or both together, present, and together constituting one whole state of apprehension. Of this some definite portion may be far more distinct than all the rest; and the rest be in consequence proportionably vague, even to the limit of obliteration. But still, within this limit, the most dim shade of perception enters into, and in some infinitesimal degree modifies, the whole existing state."

[93] Ibid. B:II.§27. «Uneigentliches Zeitbewußtsein: vor längerer Zeit abgeflossene Teile einer wahrgenommenen Melodie.»

does it now stand with remoter past?"[94] Analysing a continuous experience, like that of listening to a melody, one may still keep, towards its end, some living memory of its beginning, so that "when I re-enact [the tone] *c, d*, this reproductive representation of succession finds its fulfillment in the yet living earlier succession."[95] But consciousness of time stretches much further than that. *Attentatively*, we usually recall things which are not in any *actually* recognisable (*anschaulich*) continuity with the 'now'. Such a recollection intends the original (now past) 'now' of the recollected experience or object and is possible "thereby that against the flux of temporal withdrawal and of modifications of consciousness, there remains the object in its absolute apperceptive identity even as it appears to withdraw, the object actually experienced as 'this'. [...] It belongs to the essence of the modifying flux that this time point remains necessarily identical. The 'now' as the actual 'now' is the givenness of the actuality of a time point. As the phenomenon retires into the past, this 'now' retains the character of a past 'now', but it remains the same 'now', only that it emerges in the relation to the actual 'now' and temporary new 'now' as past."[96]

In addition to this *externality*, objectified identity of single *objects*, one last element seems indispensable to constitute the consciousness of the fully uniform and homogenous time of the objective world. "For the emergence of this time consciousness, reproductive recollection (intuitive as well as in the form of empty intentions) plays important role."[97] "Only in recollection I can re-enact an identical time object, and I can also state in remembrance that what was earlier perceived is the same as what is later recollected."[98] The reproductive recollection does not have the capacity to *actually* bring the original object or experience to life (*Anschaung*). It can only intend it, as if *positing* the objective identity across the time which broke the continuity of the experience of the object. Thus, the flow of time becomes a rather abstract succession of time-points which can be imagined as extending indefinitely. "The reproduced time field reaches farther than the *actual*. If we pick there a past point, the reproduction yields, through an overlap with the time field in which this point was 'now', further withdrawal into the past, and so on. This process is obviously to be thought as unlimited, although the actual recollection fails in practice."[99]

78.   We are far from questioning the ingenuity and adequacy of these phenomenological descriptions of both (or rather, as can be gathered even from the few included quotations, of several) levels/kinds of time experience. An *actual* object or event retires gradually into the past, dissolving eventually in the horizon, that is, *disappearing beyond* the *horizon of actuality*. Once that happened, we can no longer make it *actually* alive; we can only reproduce it, as if recalling it from beyond the grave. This broken continuity makes the two kinds of experiences so fundamentally different that one might perhaps legitimately ask what makes them both experiences of the same time? What does the time of retentional *actuality* and fresh remembrance have to do with the time of remote, dead and only revived recollections?

The persisting identity of an *object* may help to understand the continuous uniformity of the objective time but not its unity with the time of *immediate experience*. Husserl answers the question by refering to the double intentionality of time consciousness which, at every point, intends not only its (lasting, changing or even disappearing) object but also the very experience of this object. "It belongs to the essence of the phenomenological situation that each past can

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[94]Ibid. A:I.2.§22. «Was ich retentional bewußt habe, so sahen wir, das ist absolut gewiß. Wie steht es nun mit der ferneren Vergangenheit?»

[95]Ibid. «Wenn ich wiederhole [Tone] *c, d*, so findet diese reproduktive Vorstellung der Sukzession ihre Erfüllung in der noch eben lebendigen früheren Sukzession.»

[96]Ibid. A:I.2.§31. «dadurch, daß gegenüber dem Fluß der zeitlichen Zurückschiebung, dem Fluß von Bewußtsein-modifikationen, das Objekt, das zurückgeschoben erscheint, eben in absoluter Identität apperzeptiv erhalten bleib, und zwar das Objekt mitsamt der im Jetzpunkt erfahrenen Setzung als 'dies'. [...] Zum Wesen des modifizierenden Flusses gehört es, daß diese Zeitstelle identisch und als notwendig identisch dasteht. Das Jetz als aktuelles Jetzt ist die Gegenwartsgegebenheit der Zeitstelle. Rückt das Phänomen in die Vergangenheit, so erhält das Jetzt den Character des vergangenen Jetzt, aber es bleibt dasselbe Jetzt, nur daß es in Relation zum jeweilig aktuellen und zeitlich neuen Jetzt als vergangen dasteht.»

[97]Ibid. A:I.2.§32. «Für das Zustandekommen dieses Zeitbewußtseins spielt die reproduktive Erinnerung (als anschauliche wie in der Form leerer Intentionen) eine wichtige Rolle.»

[98]Ibid. A:II.Beilage iv. «Nur in der Wiedererinnerung kan ich einen identischen Zeitgegenstand wiederholt haben, und ich kann auch in der Erinnerung konstatieren, daß das früher Wahrgenommene dasselbe ist wie das nachher Wiedererinnerte.»

[99]Ibid. A:I.2.§32. «Das reproduzierte Zeitfeld reicht weiter als das aktuell gegenwärtige. Nehmen wir darin einen Vergangenheitspunkt, so ergibt die Reproduktion durch Überschiebunng mit dem Zeitfeld, in dem dieser Punkt das Jetzt war, einen weiteren Rückgang in die Vergangenheit usw. Dieser Prozeß ist evidentermaßen als unbegrenzt fortsetzbar zu denken, obwohl die aktuelle Erinnerung praktisch bald versagen ist.»

be transformed reproductively into a reproducing 'now', which itself has some past. This is the phenomenological foundation of all laws of time."[100] "We have in the flow of consciousness double intentionality. Either we consider the content of the flow with its form of a flow. [...] Or we direct the view to the intentional unity, to that which in the stream of the flow is intentionally given as unity: then emerges for us the objectivity of the objective time, the authentic time field against the time field of the stream of experience."[101] In terms of the figure from §76, this says that the moment A_3' involves both the actual apprehension A_3 of the object A (typically, with its temporal character) *and* the process of its continuous apprehension represented by the line $A_0 - A_3'$. Consciousness of a temporal object involves also, by its very nature, the consciousness of the very stream of consciousness. "This is the one, unitary stream of consciousness in which there is constituted the immanent temporal unity of a tone as well as the unity of the stream of consciousness itself. Obnoxious (if not contradictory) as the fact that the stream of consciousness constitutes its own unity appears, it is nevertheless so."[102]

This answer remains satisfactory only as long as we are willing to accept some compromises. 79.
For the first, we have to accept the phenomenological view and treat memories not as factually coming from the factual past, but as merely actual phenomena carrying a peculiar past time-stamp on them. This aspect of *epoche* seems particularly unpleasant to us involving the fundamental reduction to *actuality*.[103]

A closely connected issue concerns the two related, but also essentially different, aspects of the involved objectivity. Moving within the *horizon of actuality* one addresses only the unity of the aspects from figure §76, of the objective time of the *actually* apprehended *object* and of the time of its apprehension stretching between retentions and protentions which all belong to the *actuality*, an *actual* "covering of the reproductive with the retentional process."[104] But the break to which we referred arises between the unity (or totality) of such an *actual experience* and the one which has completely disappeared from the *horizon of actuality*, between the time of the *actual object* and the time of perhaps the same object as it is remembered from a year ago. The unity obtained here is only the unity of the *actual experience*, of the temporality of the *act* of remembrance $(A_0 - A_3')$ *and* the *actual*, that is, actually represented temporality of the content of this *act*, of the object as actually recollected (which is now the *actual object*, i.e., $A_0 - A_3$). It is not the unity which lets the (remotely) past time flow into the actual (experience of) time, but only one which lets the actual recollection of the past time be unified with the actually flowing time.[105]

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[100]Ibid. B:II.§23. «Zum Wesen der phänomenologischen Sachlage gehört, daß jedes 'Vergangen' reproduktiv in ein reproduktives 'Jetzt' verwandelt werden kann, das selbs wieder ein Vergang hat. Und das is das phänomenologische Fundament aller Zeitgesetze.»

[101]Ibid. A:II.Beilage viii. «Wir haben im Bewußtseinsstrom eine doppelte Intentionalität. Entweder wir betrachten die Inhalt des Flusses mit seiner Flußform. [...] Oder wir lenken den Blick auf die intentionalen Einheiten, auf das, was im Hinströmen des Flusses intentional als Einheitliches bewußt ist: dann steht für uns da eine Objektivität in der objektiven Zeit, das eigentliche Zeitfeld gegenüber dem Zeitfled des Erlebnisstromes.»

[102]Ibid. A:I.3.§39. «Es ist der eine, einzige Bewußtseinsfluß, in dem sich die immanente zeitliche Einheit des Tons konstituiert und zugleich die Einheit des Bewußtseinsflusses selbst. So anstößig (wo nicht anfangs sogar wiedersinnig) es erscheint, daß der Bewußtseinsfluß seine eigene Einheit konstituiert, so ist es doch so.» [As the stream of consciousness already here denotes the absolute subject (and will turn into the idealistic subject even more during later phases of Husserl's thought), we could really recognise here an *aspect* of the *nexus* of *awareness* which is *equipollent* with *self-awareness*, §47.]

[103]Husserl specifies that phenomenology does not aim at the ideal time-point. "That all reality lies in an indivisible now point, that in phenomenology everything is to be reduced to this point, these are downright fictions leading to absurdities. In phenomenology we do not deal with objective time but with the givenness of adequate perceptions." [Ibid. B:I.12. «Daß alle Realität in dem unteilbaren Jetzpunkt liegt, daß in der Phänomenologie alles auf diesen Punkt reduziert werden sollte, das sind lauter Fiktionen und führt zu Absurditäten. In der Phänomenologie haben wir es nicht mit der objektiven Zeit, sondern mit Gegebenheiten der adäquaten Wahrnehmung zu tun.»] And it is just the event of such a 'givenness' within the *horizon of actuality*, "an act which forms the *actual now*, "now" in the sense of the crest of the actual time field." [Ibid. B:II.26. «einen Akt, der ein jetzt Gegenwärtiges erfaßt, "jetzt" im Sinne des Gipfelpunktes der jeweiligen Zeitreihe»] which is an *act* of *dissociation*, that is, *reflection*. Phenomenology does not attempt reduction to an ideal time-point, but it is thoroughly reductionistic in that everything must be expressed in terms of an *actual experience* grasped in the unity of a *reflective act*.

[104]Ibid. A:I.2.§22. «eine Deckung des reproduktiven mit einem retentionalen Verlauf.»

[105]A:I.2.§23, concerning covering of the intended past by the reproductive 'now', achieves just that. The 'relation' between the actual and the past 'now' emerges as "Gegenbild der zeitkonstituierenden Intentionälitat" which, as far as we have seen, is always an event of pure *actuality*. More significantly, the two streams whose unification is supposed to yield the covering of the recollected by the recollection are the stream of reproductive modifications (recollections, $A_0 - A_3'$) and the parallel stream of the recollected moments $(A_0 - A_3)$. The peculiarity of the situation consists in that the later stream is itself a repetition of an earlier one – the experienced object is a past

The answer, however, need not be wrong, just because it does not fill all the imaginable gaps. It is, probably, as good and specific as the phenomenological method can allow; the unity can at most concern the *actually* given aspects, here: the *actual* consciousness of the time of a recollected event and the consciousness of the *actually* passing time. Thus, even if intended with respect to the totality of experience, the unity of the stream of consciousness remains confined to the limits of the *horizon of actuality*. And even when so confined, "this intention is unclear [impossible to fulfill, imperceptible], is an 'empty' intention, and its correlate is the objective time series of events, which is the dim surrounding of the actual recollection."[106] The 'empty intention' is the phenomenological way of taking into account things which can not be taken into phenomenological account. Often, like here, it refers to something which, although ingraspable and unverifiable in the *actuality* of any phenomenon, appears nevertheless entirely evident. Here, we would be tempted to say: something which is evident *exactly because* it for ever avoids any *actual* determinations, any appearance as a mere phenomenon. The dim surrounding of the actual recollection is, in fact, the dim surrounding of every *actuality* into which disappear also retentions on their way toward the remote and dead past.

80.   Founding the unity of time (experience) in the empty intention of the unity of consciousness is, perhaps, the only phenomenological possibility. It carries the germs of idealism of later Husserl which we certainly do not intend to share. For the moment, let us sketch our view of the unity of the two aspects of time – the immediate and the remote (past) – which phenomenologically have turned out to have so little in common.[107]

What seems a bit disturbing in the figure from §76 is the origin, the point A, the *Urimpression*. Such impressions appear spontaneously, like everything else in the stream of consciousness, but with the special role and effect of marking a new 'now'. Husserl notices that, as a matter of fact, even without any new *Urimpression* one experiences the flow of time; even to the point that the very lack of any new impression may become a new *Urimpression* marking a new 'now'. But 'now' has no beginning, no particular point at which it becomes a new 'now', as opposed to the (or rather, *a*) previous 'now'. I notice a pricking which has become so intense that I feel the difference between the moment now and a few minutes ago when no such pricking was felt or, in fact, even present. But once it has become irritating, I also realise that it has been there for a while before I noticed it, as if interleaved with its absence, its irrelevancy. The *Urimpression* is here, so it seems, only the peek which marks a new quality, but which radiates its gradual presence into the surrounding field of its increasing absence. 'Now' does not begin, it is *here-and-now*, especially when I *reflectively* notice it, but it only arises constantly from the past, that is, from the just past 'now'. It is, as Husserl always emphasized, a continuous process. "I can only define 'continuous' as that which is without breach, crack, or division"[108] – but not without *distinctions*. Continuity is like that of the waves; we can point to one and to another but never to where, exactly, the one ends and the other begins. Continuity means only that there are no sharp beginnings, for every beginning, except for the *original* one, is but a continuation of what has been before. 'Nows' are only points of marked intensity. Whether a hammer which misses the nail (and hits the finger instead!), malfunctioning tools which call for the attentive reflection, or else a beautiful view which makes us stop and gaze – the *attentively* registered 'nows' arise breaking the continuity of the flow of *experience*.
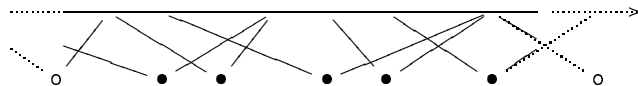
object/event with its past duration. Thus, we could expand the figure §76, with an additional objective stream $B_0 - B_3$, as if hidding behind $A_0 - A_3$ (which, by the way, may also reflect some of the meaning of the expression "double intentionality"). The double intentionality effects here, as elsewhere, the covering of the represented stream $(A_0 - A_3)$ by the representing one $(A_0 - A'_3)$. But it does not effect any unification with the stream $B_0 - B_3$, i.e., with the stream of the time of the original past event. This stream is now only represented/reflected/intended by/by the way of/behind $A_0 - A_3$, and it remains beyond the reach of the *actual* grasp, beyond any continuity and living contact with the *horizon of actuality*.

[106] Ibid. A:I.2.§25. «...diese Intention ist eine unanschauliche, eine 'leere' Intention, und ihr Gegenständliches ist die objektive Zeitreihe von Ereignissen, und dies ist die dunkle Umgebung des aktuell Wiedererinnerten.»

[107] Asking thus about the unity between phenomena so dramatically dissociated in the phenomenological description, we are not opposing its results. We are only filling in the 'empty intention', we are here, as most places elsewhere, constructing and not reconstructing.

[108] W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*. I:9.3

James suggests: "Let us call the resting-places [the •'s] "substantive parts", and the places of flight [between them] the "transitive parts", of the stream of thought. It then appears that the main end of our thinking is at all times the attainment of some other substantive part than the one from which we have just been dislodged. And we may say that the main use of the transitive parts is to lead us from one substantive conclusion to another."[109]

Indeed, such breakpoints, such 'substantive parts', mark only the particularly intense and *reflectively attended nows*. The *rest*, on the last drawing the lines leading to these points, are also part of the *experience*. We can even think of registered moments which do *not* constitute any 'now'.
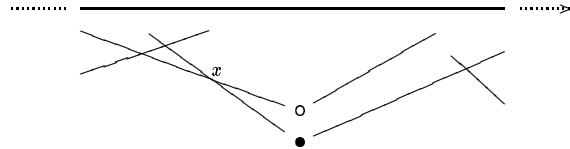
Sitting quietly and strolling with my eyes around the room I am beginning to anticipate that in a moment the quietude will turn into boredom which will annoy me. I am on the way towards an *actual* culmination, a point o where boredom would become marked and registered. However, before that happens, at the point x, the spider I have just caught in the edge of my eye enters the horizon (attracts my eye), so that the anticipated moment o does not occur. The expectation is overtaken by the new leitmotif and o – which might have marked a new 'now' – is suppressed underneath the quality of the actually emerged 'now', the dance of the spider in its web, the registered •. One leitmotif merges with and, gradually, replaces another, but even this continuity is only apparent for it is already cut with various *distinctions*.

It is, however, continuity for the level of *reflective dissociations*. The 'substantive parts' only break this (apparent) continuity further and more definitely, yielding the (apparently) discrete • after •. But they do not completely veil the underlying matter of *experience*; they are not any unfortunate accidents, any falsifications of the flow of 'true temporality'. They are *aspects* of the new level of *experience*, namely, of the *reflected experience*. Splitting of *experience* into multiplicity of *experiences*, splitting of *durée* of *temporality* into a succession of 'nows' is a necessary element, an *aspect* of the emergence of *reflection*. *Reflection* is the exact opposite of continuity, if one likes, it is the attempt to stop the flow, by extracting from it 'substantial parts'. As such, *reflective dissociation* is also what turns the flow into a succession and marks the new level of experience at which "[t]he mark of the mind is that there do not arise more acts of knowledge than one at a time."[110] The 'one act of knowledge', the *object* of a *representation* – in its *dissociated* and lonely unity – is the *aspect* constituting 'the scope' of the 'now'. Thinking two things involves, analytically, a succession, an *after*.[111] This does not exclude the possibility of the *actuality* of several things. Just as one can see several things simultaneously, one can also have them before

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[109]Ibid. [The color-phi phenomenon gives a good example. If two small spots in a close visual distance are briefly lit in rapid succession, a single spot seems to move. (This phi-phenomenon was originally studied in M. Wertheimer, *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung*, H. G. van der Waals, C. O. Roelofs, *Optische Scheinbewegung*.) This is, of course, what makes the movies move. If now the two illuminated spots are different in color, the spot seems begin moving and then change the color abruptly *in the middle* of its illusory passage towards the second location. (P. A. Kolers, M. von Grünau, *Shape and color in apparent motion*, D. Dennett, M. Kinsbourne, *Time and the observer....*) The effect depends, of course, on timing and many gradations of the conscious reactions are possible. Describing the phenomenon in terms of objective time and idealised now-points, one would tend to impute the subjects projecting the resulting 'change of color' back in time. In this language one would say that later 'now' can modify the immediately prior retentional image(s). But it seems much more satisfactory to dispense with any ideal now-points. As argued in D. Dennett, M. Kinsbourne, *Time and the observer...*, the change of color and its location is *really* perceived, just like movement is in the cinema. The temporal separation of the two events, if at all possible, happens far below the threshold of consciousness, at the time scale of cellular brain reactions but not of the consciously identifiable 'nows'. As the authors suggest, the time separating the two may happen to be too short even for the brain to bother to notice any difference – the phenomenon it constructs, which is so consciously perceived, is that of a moving point changing its color. A 'now', as in the figure above, can thus span several 'objectively' distinguishable events and points. In such 'objective' terms, the *dissociation* of 'nows' from *experience* can – probably, must – be considered, as in the whole tradition of empiricism, to be *really* an association gathering the impressions dispersed across the impossibly minute time-points into unified and lasting (if only briefly) wholes.]

[110]*The Nyaya Sutra*. I:1.16

[111]So much about the time as the dimension of inner experience (if only we take the latter phrase a bit seriously). Time thought objectively as a line is the dimension of *representation* and only equating *representation* with inner experience could suggest the idea that such a linear time has so much to do with it.

the mind's eye, one can think them. Indeed, only that then the several things turn into a *collection of* several things, which is the *object*, albeit a bit *complex*, of one's *actual* attention.[112]

81.   The analyses of the celebrated stream of consciousness, supposingly flowing uninterrupted in the all embracing unity of one flux, stop at the limits of one 'now'. The limits which are, as we have just admitted, impossible to draw *precisely*, the limits dissolving gradually in the *Umgebung* and disappearing in the fringe which marks equally a transition to another 'now'. Yet, the limits of phenomenological analyses are there and the analyses stop, shall we say, rather disgracefully, at these limits. One may rightly claim that "[t]he transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the *thought* than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood. It is a part of the *consciousness* as much as the joint is a part of the *bamboo*."[113] It certainly is but this does not change the fact that it still is a joint. The unity of the flow across such joints is certainly felt and experienced but it is of different character than the unity of the flow discernible by a purely phenomenological analysis within a single 'now'. This is the difference between retention and recollection, between *primärer und sekundärer Erinnerung*.

Recollection, fetching its content as if from a bottomless well of the 'pure past' (or, phenomenologically speaking, from nowhere – for it is not a phenomenological question whence the contents of consciousness might arise), opens an unlimited horizon. The process of positing earlier 'nows', "is obviously to be thought as unlimited, although the actual recollection fails in practice." Thus, one would like to continue the line $A - A_3$ from figure §76 not only indefinitely into the future beyond A_3 but also into the past, to the left and beyond A.[114] This would dissolve everything into a single line (or two parallel ones) and might greatly please the pupils of Cusanus but does not seem quite satisfactory to us. Instead, we would draw the whole (*the whole!*) process as in figure below, as a spiral emerging from the *origin...*
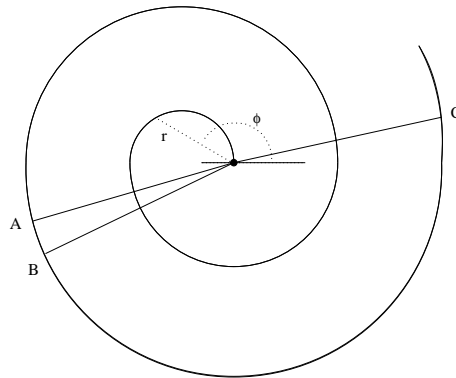
The figure can be thought of as enfolding of the original figure from §76 with the point A_0 of *Urimpression* collapsed to the origin of the spiral.[115] An *actual* point is anywhere on the spiral, and the lines linking such points to the *origin* correspond to the vertical lines $A'_i - A_i$ from figure in §76. The spiral traversed backwards, say, from B past A towards the origin, corresponds to the line $A'_3 - A_0$ of the collected past. An *actual experience* comprises a small segment of the spiral, say $A - B$. At B the *frische Erinnerung* of A is still present. As the 'now' of B moves forward leaving A behind, it loses gradually the later from its view. At some point, the line connecting the 'now' (e.g., at C but in fact much earlier) with the past A must cross the inner part of the spiral. One could take this as representing the point when A definitely left the span of retentional presence – from now on, it can only enter 'now' as a reproductive recollection. As we pass through more and more rotations of the spiral, the earlier points become screened from the view by ... the memories of the earlier ones. The point where the line from C crosses the dotted half-circle marked ϕ is inaccessible for direct introspection from C, it can be reached only through

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[112]As observed in footnote 56, it would be tempting to assign to the *horizon of actuality* (and here to a 'now') some objective time duration. But it helps little to measure brain processes and subliminal reactions, even if for most normal persons some average limits might be drawn. A person waking up after 3 years in coma learns that 3 years have passed but they are, in fact, only a single 'now'.

[113]W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*. I:9.3

[114]Let us observe that "unbegrenzt" may mean indefinitely as much as infinitely. In the former sense, at least, it can be easily viewed as an analogy of the indefinite extension of the experienced time into the past towards – but never reaching – one's *birth*.

[115]We ignore r and ϕ – they are included only for the sake of the footnote 117.

the memory of an earlier point – the memory represented by the line from C crossing the earlier rotation of the spiral. This happens with all events but, in particular, after the first rotation the *origin* becomes inaccessible getting gradually immersed under ever new and wider rotations. Thus memories emerge in the same process as retentions, one might say, are 'long distance retentions', but this very length of the distance amounts also to a change of nature.[116]

One will ask, of course, what happened to the 'objective' line $A_0 - A_3$. It seems that we have retained only the primed points of impressions. Almost. All 'objective points' collapsed to the one point of *origin*, the only *Urimpression* •. This may certainly seem worrying, though our development so far should have made it less so. One possibility would be to say that *any* point circumscribed by and 'within' the spiral so far, any point between the current 'now' and the origin, as well as the whole spiral can be taken to represent possible objects. But we prefer to say yes, in a sense, there is only *one*. All we ever do is to *distinguish* and thus, even if only indirectly, address the *indistinct*. Yet every point on the spiral is a distinct perspective from which the *one* is experienced and, moreover, is involved into different, steadily accumulating past which modifies or even screens earlier experiences.[117]

Every single *object* is *distinguished* from and in the *indistinct* and, as the limit of *distinctions*, is endowed with its (relative) identity and relative time. This *dissociation* of independent *objects* endowed with some residual and lasting identity is *equipollent* with the experience of the time of these *objects*, the time in which the 'now' of *reflective actuality* becomes confronted with its own past and future, as well as the past and future of the *objects*. But even this is not yet the ultimately objective time. That time – the 'time of the world' – appears through further abstraction of *attentive reflection*. First, one has to dissociate the relation *after* from its context of *representation* and allow it to connect arbitrary objects. And second, one has to remove the designated *actuality* of 'now', the 'now' which is *my actuality*. Purely objective time emerges as

82.

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[116]We will discuss memory in II:2.2.3.i, but let us notice here briefly that one would like to allow for something more than mere dead, reproductive recollections. One would also like to allow for the living memories arising, like with Proust, not as mere images but as revitalised moments. The current abstraction does not make such fine distinctions, but it does not exclude them either – simply, because fresh, retentional memories are not qualitatively distinct from remote ones. Retentions and protentions can be (mis)understood in two complementary ways. On the one hand, they can be interpreted as modification of actual contents, as noemata fading gradually into the immediate past or emerging gradually from the immediate future. On the other hand, they can be interpreted as characteristics of the acts of apprehension/perception, which present the content in a (temporally) modified fashion. As I turn my head left, the cup on the table disappears on the right, but it remains present in the retention. *What*, actually, remains so present? The content-interpretation would claim that it is some hyletic content which fades away, gradually dissolving on the right border of my visual field. The act-interpretation would claim that it is only the intensional correlate, the cup itself, which is no longer given really (*reell*) but only retained as the immediate awareness of the 'cup having-just-been/still-being there'. This later interpretation seems phenomenologically more adequate and even if Husserl's formulations might, occasionally, suggest the former, it seems that he had the latter one in mind.

But the distinction need not be an opposition, in particular, if we consider that although noemta are distinct from noesis, they are inseparably bound together, although what is distinguished is distinct from the (f)act of distinguishing, the two can not be *dissociated*. The 'cup just disappeared on the right' is, certainly, another content of the *immediate* experience than the cup which was seen there a second ago. It is, indeed, the same cup but now presented in a new modus. If only the *immediate* hyletic data are taken as real, then such a cup is already turning into an ideality, even if it still remains within the *horizon of actual experience*. On the other hand, fading away of the cup from the perceptual horizon, involves equally *recognition* (though not *attentive reflection*) of this fading-away and as such a new act. One can posit contradictions but, using the phenomenological language (pregnant with all the paradoxes of reality reduced to *imemdiacy*), we would rather understand "fading away" as simply such a gradual transition into a merely intensional presence (though often it can be accompanied also by the actual fading away of the perceptual contents), as sliding away beyond the limits of the *horizon of immediacy*. Seen in this way, already the most recent memories carry the element of 'ideality' which in experience accompanies only the more remote ones.

[117]My *birth* is not accessible to my memories, yet there is no particular point which marks the beginning of memories. One may legitimately insist on the possibility of indefinite extension of time experience into the past, where indefinite is not to be confused with infinite. As a simple model, we would first postulate some formula for a spiral, say, the Archimedes' spiral described (in the polar coordinates) by the equation $r = c \cdot \phi$, where $c > 0$ is some constant, ϕ is the angle growing indefinitely (i.e., one rotation is 360°, while two 720°, etc.), and r is the radius from the origin at the angle ϕ. The distance, or a time step, between some earlier point ϕ_1 and a later one ϕ_2, is then relative to the angle and approaches infinity as ϕ approaches 0. E.g., letting this distance be $d = \frac{1}{\phi_1} - \frac{1}{\phi_2}$, would make any point $\phi_2 > 0°$ infinitely far away from the origin $\phi_1 = 0°$. Also, the older one gets, the smaller becomes the distance between, 'objectively speaking', equidistant events. If one day corresponds, 'objectively', to the angle of 10°, than for one who is one day old it will correspond to the distance $\frac{1}{10} - \frac{1}{20} = \frac{1}{20}$, while for one who is 100° old to $\frac{1}{100} - \frac{1}{110} = \frac{1}{1100}$. Although it may be true that days are quite long for children (yet always end too soon) and short for old people (yet often end too late), we do not want to misuse such images.

the next stage of differentiation, as a consequence of 'abstracting oneself away', of recovering the uniform time of the world of *externalised objects* from the *unity* of the *experience* of temporal *existence*. This happens with *positing* the *totality* of *objects* as the *actual object*, 'the world'.

Although *reflection* is determined by *representing* one *object* at a time, it is, of course, conscious of other *objects* and, not least, of perceptions – it is involved into *experience*. Likewise, the one *actual object* may be a *complex* involving several *objects*. Any simultaneity, and such a co-presence in particular, is *spatiality*. It *founds* also the image of 'the whole world', namely, simultaneity of all *objects posited* itself as an *object*. (Although such an *object* is only an ideal *reflective* construction and, according to relativity theory, even an impossiblity, there is nothing impossible with *positing* is as an *object*.) Combined with the idea of *actuality*, it yields something like 'the totality of the whole world at this particular point of time' – the 'now' of the world. The relation *after* applied now to this *object* – the whole world – leads to the time of the world.[118]

83. It is isolation of *one object* which leads to the total, linear order of time. And it is the totalisation, *positing* everything under one *sign*, the *representation* of the ideal 'whole world' as one *object*, which yields the one uniform and linear time of this world.

Temporality has many pasts and many futures. This is so because it unfolds surrounded by *transcendence*, by the possibility (lived and experienced) of something else, something more, something different. My *temporality* is interwoven into the *temporality* of all things and other people. But if something is considered as an independent 'whole', as an isolated *object*, that is, if we, so to speak, suspend the *transcendence*, then there is nothing which can bring in the variation of multiple futures. The future of an isolated *object* may still be indeterminate but it will be unique. There may be internal changes and states of this *object*, but not a multiplicity of other, alternative *objects* and their time paths. Such an abstract 'now' – actuality of an isolated *object* – has only one, unique *before* and only one, unique *after*: these are just stages of the isolated *object* which, being one and alone, can only be in one stage at a time. In case of the 'world time', what is *posited* as an independent *object* is the postulated, ideal *totality* of *objects*. It then "includes" the times of all the objects it "contains", as particular intervals, projections of its own, global, objective time.

Linearisation of time would take place if we *dissociated* any single being from its relations with *transcendence*. In particular, in order to think 'my time' as linear, I do not have to think of myself as an *objective* being, a thing in the world – this would never give '*my*' time'. On the contrary, I have to isolate myself, so to speak, relativise everything to myself. As we know, this is an abstraction – I have multiple pasts, depending on the contexts in which and depth to which I consider myself and, in the same way, I have multiple futures, all of which are in addition indeterminate.

As the final step, after *positing* the *totality* of *objects* as one 'world' and endowing it with its own 'now', one can perform the final *dissociation*, that is, the ultimate abstraction with respect to time. It took quite some time before European thought arrived at the idea of empty 'time in itself', flowing independently from any things and events.[119] It appears as the ultimate abstraction and, as it seems, even modern science does not need it any more, and so we will not be occupied with it at all.

84. Summarising briefly: *dissociation* of an *object* involves *reflection* into the relation of being *after* the *object* and, as a matter of fact, *after* the whole *experience*. The *reflective* project of *dissociating*

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[118]The 'objective time', the abstract time of the abstract world-object, is characterised by this paradoxical removal of the *existence* which is the site of *actuality*, of 'now' and, at the same time, retaining some abstract 'now' of the world-object. One can see here the analogy to the transition from the temporal A-series (expressed in terms of past, present and future) to the temporal B-series (expressed in terms of the 'objective' and unchanging relations of earlier-than, simultaneous and later-than) introduced by J. E. McTaggart, *The Unreality of Time*. In fact, McTaggart contends that B-series as such does not seem to have anything temporal about itself except our tendency to endow a mere total ordering, his C-series, with some temporal character imported from the experience of A-series ("all change is only a change of the charatcteristics imparted to events by their presence in the A-series.") A few more words on McTaggrt's 'proof' will be said in footnote 123.

[119]Although Zeno's arguments assimilated time to a geometrical line, it was still relational time of events, the "numerical aspect of motion with respect to its successive parts". (Besides, Eleatic Being was timeless anyway.) Nicolas Bonnet in the XIV-th century, Bernardino Telesio in the XVI-th, Francisco Suárez, all involved still in one way or another into Aristotelian physics or cosmogony, postulated true mathematical time in one form or another. The immediate predecessors of Newton, proposing independent time not requiring motion or any objects, were Pierre Gassendi and Newton's tutor Isaac Barrow.

things is thus the same as the project of stretching across the *distance* of *after* which separates *reflection* from its *object*. It is thus the project of 'freezing' the *objects* in the *immediacy* of *reflective acts*; 'freezing' which, because it never finally succeeds, makes the flow of time the more transparent. Perhaps a bit paradoxically, the *foundation* of the experience of time marks also, at the same time and by its very nature, the attempt to erase time, the thirst for the ever escaping entities 'beyond time'.

Objective time, the time of the whole world, arises as the ultimate abstraction of this *reflective* process. As Bergson constantly repeated, this objective, 'spatialised' time, is only an image of the genuine *temporality* of *existence*. But we would not, for this reason, consider the one authentic and the other not, the one *eigentliche* and the other not, the one legitimate and genuine while the other only a result of inauthentic mode of existence or of tradition "engulfing all [the] delicate idiosyncrasies in its monotonous sound."[120] We would not consider the time of the world as a mistaken redundancy falsifying the true temporality. We only observe the difference in the matter of *experience*, the difference between the lived *existential temporality* and the dead time of the *objective* world. The latter is an *aspect* of recognition of *objects* and of *reflective experience* – the reason for diminishing its importance are as many as for making it the only measure of absolute truth, that is, none. In fact, the identities of the *objects* and the *posited objects*, like the *totality* of the 'world', contribute significantly to the *reflective experience*. Establishment of the objective time (and objective world; not only a single *object*) is what extends the horizon of our *experience* beyond the mere lived *actuality*, beyond the mere horizon of retentions and protentions, beyond the unity of a single *act* which reaches its end in the same moment in which it leaves its origin. Relations to the world and life are not exhausted by the contents of *immediate experiences*, by the merely *actually* given, and the *actually* remembered and expected. Restricting them to such *actualities* amounts to a reduction, perhaps, to the level of animal experience of time which, true and genuine as it certainly is, does not probably reach the long term memories and abstract recollections of forgotten past. This reduction, like every other (in particular, also the reduction to mere objectivity), is an impoverishment of life. The objective time and world are the reminders, the *traces* of the *original unity*, and then also of the *unity* of *existential confrontation*, retained in the midst of *reflective dissociations*.

4.3.2. Space

And now, what about space? As mentioned in §19, the element of *spatiality* – as simultaneity – emerged already in *chaos*. *Temporality* is like stretching out this simultaneity along the dimension *before-after*. But the emergence of *temporality* amounts to a sharper *distinction* of *spatiality*, too. In fact, only isolating from the *here-and-now* the element of *after* allows the element of simultaneity (that is, neither *after* nor *before*) to be isolated as well. The latter remains as the residual rest, as the simultaneity which remains from the *virtual spatio-temporality* of *here-and-now*, after things started to enter also the *temporal* dimension. *Spatiality* amounts then to *distinguishing* the *here* – from *here-and-now*– as the place distinct from other, but simultaneous places, just like 'now' has been *distinguished* – from *here-and-now*– as the place (one would, probably, prefer to say the "point of time") distinct from the places which come *before* and *after* it.   85.

There is thus a complementary duality: things have the *spatial* aspect to the extent they are seen as simultaneous, or else the *temporal* aspect to the extent they appear *after* each other. The final dissociation of *spatiality* from *temporality* happens when this complementary duality gets *distinguished* into exclusive 'either ... or ...', when we begin to conceive things separately either as simultaneous or as ordered along the *before-after*.

Analogous process to the one from §82 leads to objective space. First, *spatiality* must become the spatiality of (arbitrary) *objects*, and then lose its designated *here*. The first thing happens naturally, since *reflection* sees the world as a collection of *objects*. In principle, any of them might be given simultaneously.   86.

One has thus to conceive an abstract *here* of 'the whole world', an abstract simultaneity of all *objects*. Such a *here* does not any longer stand in relation to others, it becomes an abstract, that is, *dissociated* and isolated 'here'. (Yet, the questions creating the first antinomy, like "What is outside the space?", are most naturally asked, indicating precisely that the 'objective' space

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[120]W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*. I:9.3

arises from a 'subjective', i.e., limited and situated place, *here*.) This lack of 'outside', of any transcendence is, in fact, just the opposite side of the idea of its emptiness. Consequently, its spatiality is exhausted by the spatiality "within it", the spatiality of the *objects* which have only been abstractly gathered in the totality of world's 'here'.

The *spatiality* centered around an *actual here* has infinitely many dimensions: any *object* marks a possible dimension (if you prefer, a direction for a course of action). Things like below, above, in front, behind, etc., are already further abstractions. The celebrated three dimensions of space are but a further, highly convenient abstraction. But the fact that localisation in objective space can be *represented* by a choice of a reference point and three coordinates seems a very bad reason to postulate them as the original truth of ontology, epistemology, perception, apperception or whatever. They are just that: a convenient *representation*. In and by themselves, they do not follow from the original character of *spatiality* or even of the objective space. As we well know, completely different systems of coordinates may be used which might be much more appropriate for animals with different sensuous mechanisms.[121]

87. We have thus removed the designated *here* and established objective space. But, one may wonder, where is the extensionality? This, after all, is taken to be a constitutive aspect of spatiality; *objects* in space are exactly the ones which have extension. The answer is: extension is precisely what we have termed simultaneity, once the space has been *dissociated* and then re-filled with the *objects*. It is not something that *explains* possibility of co-existence, of simultaneous presence of distinct *objects* – it *is* this very simultaneity. An extended *object* is one which has some (more or less sharp) boundaries separating it from the surrounding. These boundaries are, in fact, cut from the *object* itself, *distinctions* made within (or around) the *distinguished object* itself. The extension of an *object* is the very simultaneity of its boundaries (left, right, lower, upper, etc.) Distance is just another way of saying extensionality. It only depends on where we draw boundaries, how we make the cuts. We want to focus on an independent *object* – the simultaneity of its aspects is called "extensionality"; the simultaneity of different *objects* is called the "distance" between them.

If we imagine the boundaries of an *object* collapse, we obtain a point. A point has no extension. Is it in space? Yes, but only if we imagine it there, that is, only if we imagine it co-existing with other points (or system of coordinates, or its surrounding, or any other things posited as co-existing along with it). It may be a bit too advanced a gymnastics of imagination to try to think a single point, but it is possible. Such a point is then not in space, it has no spatial aura – precisely because it is thought in complete isolation, without any simultaneous counterparts.

88. Finally, there remains the idea of homogeneity which is the same as infinite divisibility. It applies equally to space and to time.[122] Homogeneity results from the two steps of the constitution of objective time and space: applying the respective relations (*after* and simultaneity) to arbitrary *objects* and then removing the *actual* 'now', respectively, *here*.

The first 'fills' the whole (time or space) with homogenous *distinctions*, which, although in themselves highly unlike and heterogenous, by the fact of having been viewed as mere *objects* acquired also the homogenous character of isolated, independent *actualities*. In the extreme, most abstract sense, an *object* is a mere indication of 'independence', of an isolated, substantial entity, of a mere fact of its being, in short, a point. (This abstraction of a point, however, like the other abstractions we are addressing at the moment, is not something which requires a conscious effort. It is given along with *pure distinction*. Conscious effort is needed only to bring it to *actual* consciousness, to establish it as an explicit *representation*.)

The second step removes the designated point of reference thus effecting a true uniformity, 'equivalence' of all points spread along the time line, respectively, in space.

The idea of infinite divisibility emerges now quite naturally. On the one hand, there is the *experience* of divisibility, the potential of making always new *distinctions*. This, however, does not in itself account for infinite divisibility of objective time and space. At every stage, one has made only such and such, so and so many *distinctions*, and one lives through these – not through the possibility of making more. The lived process is a process of *distinguishing* but not of infinite

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[121] A vision system, like that of cattle, allowing one to see (almost) 360° might naturally lead to the use of polar coordinates with the additional indication of hight and distance from the reference point.

[122] Bergson attributed it exclusively to space and was talking about "spatialised time", a degenerated duration, in order to account for this. It should be clear that, although our development is very intimately related to his, space and time are for us equiprimordial and develop in parallel from the virtualities of pre-temporal simultaneity and spatio-temporality.

distinguishability. With infinity of objective time and space we are by far in the realm of ideality. Their very foundations – the objectified *totality* of the world of *objects*, its postulated 'here' and 'now', the homogenous points filling them – all these are *posited* abstractions, that is, not *representations* of lived *experiences* but their ideal limits. Infinite divisibility is just the equally ideal limit of *distinguishing*, posited for the homogenous totalities of objective time and space.

4.3.3. Objective or constituted?

It is identity, solidified and sedimented in *objects*, that transforms the original *temporality* into   89. time and *spatiality* into space. But we should state clearly: time and space are not the conditions of possibility of the *objects*, nor other way around. They are *equipollent*. There are no *objects* without space and time. But neither could we arrive at time and space, if we didn't also reach the *representation* of *objects*. Instead of conditions of possibility we rather speak about the order of *founding*, and there it is the continuity of *proto-experience*, timeless as it is, which precedes both spatio-temporality of *horizon of actuality* and *recognitions*, and which, in turn, precede space, time and *objects*.[123] To be sure: we are not doing here the impossible, we are not constructing *objective* time nor space – only a *representation* of objective time or space. More precisely, we are constructing a *representation* of *spatiality*, that is, of simultaneity of different objects and of their *temporality*. *Spatiality* and *temporality* are still *aspects* of un*dissociated experience* and thus can be concretely experienced in the simultaneity and flow of *distinctions*. They can not, however, be reduced to any concept. When we attempt to *represent* them, we arrive at the objective time and space which, in terms of *experience*, are indeed only empty concepts of empty containers. These, conversely, can not be *experienced* but only constructed, these *are* constructions. Flow and simultaneity are *aspects* of *experience equipollent* with its *founding* element of *actuality*; the successive ordering of world's (or any *object*'s) stages and the simultaneity of the *totality* of all *objects* are conceptual constructions of *reflective* thinking, are extrapolations of the categories of *actual experience* to *posited totalities* which are never *actual objects* of experience.

So, after all, we have not obtained any objective time or space but merely 'subjective' *represen-*   90. *tations*? For, do we not reduce the objective time to its phenomenal constitution, that is, do we no strip it of its 'objectivity'? Does not, after all, the whole process of *distinguishing* and gradual emergence of time and space happen already within time and space, within 'objective' time and space?

Well, we certainly want to emphasize that the time as we experience and understand it is relative to our ... experience and understanding. Constructions need not be false or unreal because they are constructed – but they *are* only to the extent they are constructed. The shortest meaningful unit of time is relative to the minuteness of objects which we are able to distinguish and relate. It is conceivable that a consciousness "could live so slow and lazy a life as to take in the whole path of a heavenly body in a single perception, just as we do when we perceive the successive positions of a shooting star as one line of fire."[124] The world, and the time of such a consciousness would be expressed in very different way than ours. A being living for only a fraction of a second, whose whole life consisted of a single event, say a division in two beings, might have an extremely poor experience of time.

But one would say that the differences here concern only different time-scale, not the time itself. All these beings can be considered as living in the same, 'objective' time. Indeed, they can but to the extent they are so considered they are placed within not so much my or your *experience* as in, well, 'objective' time. And every *object*, with the most abstract and *posited* 'objectivity' included, assumes and requires an *existence* which *distinguishes* it. And so is it with

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[123]The assumption of 'givens' is the crux of McTaggart's proof of the unreality of time, of A-series (cf. footnote 118). The past, present and future are not there any *aspects* of primordial *temporality* (as *actuality* or 'pure past' from §73), but only time-stamps of objectified particulars. "The terms of A-series are characteristics of events. We say of events that they are either past, present, or future." Indeed, we say so, but reducing understanding to the average ways of speaking is a dubious buisness. As we have elaborated, to *dissociate* anything (a thing or an event) as an independent object, is *equipollent* with its involvement into time. Trying to account for time using the assumption of prior givenness of *dissociated* (series of) objects or events is indeed circular and this circularity will appear vicious whenever the goal is to reduce one *aspect* to another. Common sense will admit that saying "a series of events" one has already said "time". But one has said "time" already when saying "event" or "thing", even if to recognize this *equipollence*, one has to step beyond the common language usage.

[124]H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. III;p.195

time. "When I say that the day before yesterday the glacier produced the water which is passing at this moment, I am tacitly assuming the existence of a witness tied to a certain spot in the world, and I am comparing his successive views: he was there when the snows melted and followed the water down [...] The 'events' are shapes cut out by a finite observer from the spatio-temporal totality of the objective world,"[125] eventually, from the *unity* of the *indistinct*. "Time presupposes a view of time."

91.   But is not this last claim an (intended and idealistic, if not merely unfortunate) inversion of the famous phrase, according to which exactly the opposite is the case, namely that "perception of succession presupposes succession of perceptions"[126]? This observation could be twisted into a claim about some 'objective' time, as if a view of time presupposed time. But this would be a misinterpretation. The phrase (like the whole paragraph, and the whole book) concerns the unity of *consciousness* of time, with its double intentionality in which reproduction of a past event in the present 'now' is itself involved into the flow of time involving this very 'now', §§78.-79. The 'succession of perceptions', which might be misunderstood as meaning some 'objective succession', refers only to the transcendental level which constitutes the actual consciousness of succession.

We have suggested that reducing everything to the mere *actuality* of *reflective acts* seems unsatisfactory to us and that we would rather avoid the danger of ending in idealism (which is equally imminent in phenomenology as in empiricistic nominalism) with its subjectivistic flavour. But we do recognise relativity of all *distinctions* to the *existence*. Where is the difference? Only in *one*. We do not constitute anything, we *distinguish*, which in the last instance means: discover. True, what we discover is only our view and perception of the world, our ways of *distinguishing* the *indistinct*, but this is also what for ever keeps the hammer of some indefinable 'objectivity' over all sorts of subjectivistic reductions. We did not constitute objective time – only its *representation*. And this *representation* is 'true' because it actually constitutes its own object, because objective time is nothing more than objectified temporal *experience*, than succession viewed in abstraction from the *experiencing existence*, which eventually leads to succession without anything successive. Having once arrived at this objectivisation, it is impossible to turn around and pretend that it is not there. Any *distinction*, once made, remains forever – it is what lies in its nature of making a difference. Time is there, as a necessary *aspect* of the experience of 'objective world'. It is an *aspect* of the conscious *actuality* which, emerging *after* its *dissociated objects*, discovers in this very *act* both its temporal relation to these *objects* and their temporal character.

The fact that an experience is relative to the experiencing being does not in any way diminish its 'objectivity', here, the 'objectivity' of time. Every *distinction* is relative to the *distinguishing* being, but it is a *distinction in* the homogeneity of the *indistinct*, drawn *through* or *from* the heterogenity of the background *chaos*. As such, a *distinction* made by you is as 'objective' as a *distinction* made by an ant. The human experience of time is as 'objective' as the experience of an ant, even though the latter probably does not go as far as experiencing the objectivity of time. But objective experience does not require *an experience of* this very objectivity. Experience *of* the objectivity of time requires a *reflective dissociation* of the *experience* into *external objects*, and ants probably do not reach this level. Yet their *experience* involves *distinctions* and time which are equally 'objective' as ours. For objectivity does not reside beyond and independently from any (form of) *existence* but only in *experience*, actual or possible, and, at most, beyond particular *experience* of a particular *existence*.

Experience of objective time, as of *objectivity* in general, arises through *externalisation*, through gradual abstraction from the relativity to the experiencing being. The ultimate objectivisation would thus abolish all *distinctions* and to prevent such a collapse into *indistinct*, some elements must remain recognisable. Objectified succession and co-existence, time and space emerge as objective since they are not relative to any *particular* human being or existence. Of course, once I die, other people will continue living in the same time. But speaking about time or space without any *existence* and its ability to differentiate the *indistinct*, is to project *distinctions* into the *indistinct*, is to forget the differentiating *existence* in the very moment of making the claim of its irrelevance. Experience of objective time not so much presupposes 'objective' time as reveals it, brings it forth, just like any *distinction* brings forth whatever it *distinguishes*. And it is *founded* in the ultimate *unity* of *existence* which precedes both the *temporality* of *experience* and

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[125]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.* III:2
[126]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time.* B:II.20

the experience of time. The experience of time, like every other experience, is *both* a discovery *and* a creation. Neither is possible without the other; every "[a]pprehension is not only a reflection but also a creative transformation."[127] This experience involves much more than mere registration of the 'objective passage of time' – there are modes, as well as levels, of *experience* which do not involve objective time and which, so to speak, suspend the validity of its flow. Thus, even if the whole setting can remind about Kantian forms of intuition, the analogy is restricted to the level of *reflective experiences* (which, discovering 'objective' time is already involved into *temporal experience*). In fact, the *a priori* of our *existence* reaches deeper than the actual flow of time to the mere fact of *distinguishing* and, eventually, of the *confrontation* with the *indistinct*. Every experience is experience of experiencing – and although one would like to say "is also" we would rather say "is only"! We 'discover' objective time but, of course, this 'discovery' is conditioned by the structure of our being which brings the *original nothingness* and *chaos* to the level of *reflective dissociation*. Its objectivity amounts first to the fact that it is time of the *objects* and objective world. More significantly, it amounts to the fact that it is not relative to any particular existence alone, that it reflects the objectivity of the very *subject-object* relation, that the *actual experiences* of *dissociated objects* cannot happen otherwise than in time. But neither can time happen without such *objects*. Time is not any prior form of our intuition imposed subsequently by our mind on some reality possessing, perhaps, its own kind of time or no time at all. It is the very relation between *actual subject* and *actual objects*, where the two poles arise by *dissociation* of deeper layers of *experience*. Consequently, time's objectivity amounts to the fact that temporal experience is not limited to the *subjective immediacy*, to the mere appearance of time, but that time, the same time I or you are experiencing, will continue to flow as long as there is an *existence* which, through its *reflective experience*, will *confront* the *indistinct* through *temporality* reflected, eventually, in the experience of the objectivity of time.[128]

It is this fact, that we discover and not merely constitute time, which accounts for the natural and obvious interweaving of our *experience* of time with the objective time. These are not *experienced* as two different times – simply, because they are not two. On the contrary, the *temporal experience*, when arriving at the experience of objective time, finds itself already not only in the prior *temporality* but also 'in' this, just discovered, objective time – the two are but two views of the same. Our 'constitution' of time is not transcendental in which case one is immediately "referred back to the crucial problem, that of time of transcendental constitution. According to which time does it take place? Is it a time itself constituted by an atemporal subject? Is the subject itself temporal?"[129] Our order of *founding*, once the objective time has been discovered, is seen to have evolved in this objective time, because what has been constituted is not this time 'in itself' but only its *reflective experience*, an *experience* of *temporal experiencing*. It is the objective time, *dissociated* from the *actuality* of this *concrete experience*, which arises then as exactly the time in which this *reflective experience* has been constituted.

5   Reflection and Experience

Words, the paradigmatic *signs as signs*, the *signs* of *reflective dissociation*, make something transcending *actuality* present. Nevertheless, the constitutive feature of *reflection* is *dissociation* of its *actual object*, *positing* it in its isolated independence from the non-*actual* surrounding, from the wider context of *experience*, eventually, from all the *non-actual rest*. Thus *reflection*, nourishing itself on the *experience* and, in particular, its *non-actual aspects*, performs its function in an apparent opposition and, in the extreme cases, perfects its function in a direct opposition to it. The present section is devoted to this tension and to suggesting some of its possible consequences which we will try to avoid later on.

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[127]N. Berdyayev, *I and the world of objects*. II:1

[128]The attempt to explain 'subjective' *temporality* exclusively in terms of the 'objective time flowing in itself' is to turn the order of *founding* up side down, to try to account for the more primordial *unity* in terms of later *dissociations*. But trying to start with 'objective time', it already assumes *temporal existence* and can not succeed. (Cf. McTaggart's B-series assuming A-series, footnote 118.) This issue will return in a more general form in 6.3.1.

[129]J. Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis....* I:2

5.1   Actual and non-actual

92.   In the Hebrew language (of Old Testament) one did not distinguish clearly between word and
thing. From the primitive root "amar" (*rma*), meaning 'to speak' or 'to say', there derives the
word "'imrah" (*hrma*), meaning 'word', 'speech' and, in particular, 'word of God' as a command
and what is commanded. From the primitive root "dabar" (*rbd*), meaning 'to speak' but also
'to converse', 'command', 'promise' or 'warn', there derives the noun "dabar" (*rbd*) which means
'word', 'speaking' as well as 'something' (spoken of), 'thing', 'act'.[130] The creative power of the
Word which was in the beginning need not be taken so literally.[131] Nevertheless, words do 'create',
and it is creativity of *reflection*. They 'create' by fixing in an *actual* – and that means, in particular,
graspable and repeatable – form of a *sign* the flux of *experience* and of the *experienced*. Word has
the power of 'freezing' something which, if unsaid, might pass almost unnoticed. As long as I am
engaged in an undisturbed (though not necessarily uneventful and indifferent) course of *experience*
without talking about it, I am actually engaged in a flux where things, although identified and
recognised, do not stand out sharply from the background. To *experience* is to *participate* in this
flux. But if I pause and observe, saying "Look at *this*! It is so-and-so but also a bit like that,
consider this, reflect over this...", I am giving it a more definite shape, I am *dissociating* it in order
to bring it to my or other's attention. Such an *act* may give more intensity to this *actual experience*
but at the same time, almost paradoxically, it also diminishes the quiet sense of *experiencing*: by
isolating *this* one element, it removes it from the *rest* in which it lives. Of course, this *dissociation*
needs no words but words make it sharper, they express (the possibility of) a definite *dissociation*
in which the *sign as a sign* points ostentatiously towards '...'. This '...' towards which it is
pointing may still be *imprecise* and not well defined. Yet, the very *act* of pointing and the very
actual, precisely limited *sign* create the context where something has been definitely *dissociated*,
even if not clearly identified. An *objective* center, an axis around which attention may rotate is
established – an *act* of *reflective* cut from *experience* has found place, the flux has been frozen
leaving the sediment of the *actual* content, an *object* or *objective* constellation.

        Words bring forth something which has already been *experienced* and *recognised*. But, in
addition, they give it a special status, a more definite form, which makes up a qualitatively new
character of *an experience*. Even if they create only by focusing, they still create; they bring a
new order into *experience*. "It would be odd to say: «A process looks different when it happens
and when it doesn't happen.» Or «A red patch looks different when it is there and when it
isn't there – but language abstracts from this difference, for it speaks of red patch whether it is
there or not.»"[132] Words put the definitive end to the uncontrolled flux of *experience* providing
a system of *signs* which, by their nature, stand beyond and above this flux. Quite a long-termed
linguistic analysis is needed to establish the changes and flux of the language itself. Such changes
may involve mere 'sliding' of the semantical fields of various words but also, and perhaps even
typically, their gradual differentiation resulting in more *precise* meanings.[133] But in the *experience*
of an individual, words are *signs* which by their external, extra-temporal character provide the

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[130]There are numerous examples – like that in Gen. XV:1, "After these *things* the *word* of the Lord...",
Gen. XXVII:42, "And these *words* of Esau...", Gen. XXX:31, "And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any *thing*: if
you wilt do this *thing* for me..." – where both "thing" and "word" translate "dabar".

[131]Especially, considering that *logos* of St. John seems to carry enough of the influences from Philo to be taken
the way the tradition has taken it, that is, in a much more Greek sense of, say, providential reason, soul of the
universe or primordial cause.

[132]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:446

[133]Multiple examples of such refinements exist. One can mention German "*weil*" which, in the XVI-th century, was
used rather indiscriminately for "because" *and* for "so long as". A famous – because of the resulting controversies
– case is found in the Torgau declaration: "... we have at all times taught that one should accept and uphold
the validity of temporal laws in what concerns them *weil* the Gospel does not teach anything contrary..." [after
W. D. J. C. Thompson, *Luther and the right of resistance to the emperor* p.185] The idea of cause or reason (in the
strong sense of efficient cause or sufficient reason) and the idea of, say, accidental co-occurence "created" mutually
each other (at least as far as the German vernacular is concerned) out of the *nexus* of *weil*. Multiple examples
can be found in anthropological literature. E.g., quoting Holmes, Mauss mentions Papuan and Melanesian dialects
which have "one single term to designate buying and selling, lending and borrowing." [M. Mauss, *The Gift*. II:2]
The exchange of goods is still involved in the *nexus* of "total services", the distinct aspects of which have not
yet become dissociated. As another example, he notes that "the farther one goes back in Antiquity the more the
meaning of the word "*familia*" denotes the '*res*' that are part of it, even going so far as to include food and the
family's means of subsistence. The best etymology of the word "*familia*" is without doubt that which compares it
to the Sanskrit "*dhaman*", 'house'." [Ibid. III:1]

means of sedimentation and identification, of *dissociation* of *experience* into *experiences*. Learning a language one adopts (and adapts!) the distinctions and identities stored in its words and ways of using them. It is a unique (albeit not the only) entrance into the world of *reflective experience*.[134]

Reflective dissociation means setting the limits, definitely and *precisely cutting* off and thus enhancing (if not establishing) the identity of whatever is named or denoted. 'Freezing' endows thing with a permanence, by dragging it out of the *chaos* and *experience* it establishes it as an independent – because isolated and permanent – element. As the expression of establishing the identity (proper names being the ultimate examples), words 'give souls' to things, like Adam who not only arranges but in fact enlivens all the things and animals by giving them names. Naming used to have a magical character and pronouncing a name could amount to contacting the transcendent dimension of the soul of the named person or spirit. The God of The Old Testament is quite busy with giving names (or new names) to his people expressing their (new) identity.[135] 93.

By this very token, by freezing, isolating and bestowing identity, words mean also power. The primal power of God's over his people is expressed clearly by (if not simply *equipollent* with) his power to name them. Solomon, knowing the names of all the spirits, held them subject to his will.[136] A spirit, a thing named, that is 'frozen' and *dissociated* from its surroundings, becomes subordinate to the one who so *dissociated* it: gaining independent identity it also becomes vulnerable. Even though it must appear in a wider context in order to be purposefully manipulated, its isolation is the first step necessary for inclusion of *this* thing into its *complex* context, and thus for manipulating *this* thing. This is quite a fundamental aspect of the almost embarrassing triviality that in order to control X, X must be there, one must be able to distinguish X at all.

In the most specific sense, the power of words is the power of *reflection*. To 'freeze' and set the limits, to *externalise*, means to objectify and to objectify means to make *visible*. ("To see means: to give preliminarily an object as an object. [...] seeing has the meaning of making available (of something object-like) in the distinctive sense of pure acquainting (with things)."[137]) The structure of *visibility – object*'s identity, independence from the background and, above all, its limitation *within* the *horizon of actuality*– places *object* within the horizon of our control. *Dissociating* contents from their origin, externalising them as *objects* independent from the background to which they belong, we gain power.

The creative power of actual words reflects the processes of distinguishing and recognising the identities. Eventually, and in most generous sense, it is the power of dissociating and connecting, of setting (some of) the *actual* limits. But the power of *reflection* is, in another sense, only illusory. This power is only over that which enters the *horizon of actuality*, over the *actual signs* and not, in any case not always and not without much further *ado*, over what these *signs* may possibly point to! *Reflection*, taken in itself, gives power over *signs* and only *signs*.[138] But the *distinctions* and the world of *experience* are much more than the *actual objects* which can be grasped, not to mention fully exhausted, within this horizon. And these *distinctions* find also their expression in words. 94.

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[134]On the individual scale, this is the same kind of gradual refinement as the process of refining the sedimented meanings of words on the social scale referred to in the previous footnote. A child typically starts by using the same word or construction for what the adults recognise as different meanings or intensions. It may say "Like daddy" and "Like ice-cream", which we recognise as meaning "I love my daddy" and "Now, I would like an ice-cream". But one should not therefore assume that the child has reached the level of distinguishing the two kinds of 'liking'. Both can still be in the same *nexus*, where neither the different temporal scope of each (lasting continuity of attachment versus minuteness of an impulse), nor the more reactive character of the former and the active, volitional aspect of the latter, are distinguished.

[135]"[N]either shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; [...] As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. [...She] shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac." [Gen. XVII:5-15-19] There is more to this aspect of naming a person to which we will return in Book III. Here we are concerned only with the identity resulting (in the case of things and objects) from *dissociation* and reflected in the *acts* of naming or, generally, of using *signs*.

[136]In a Hebrew myth written down around IX-th century, the revolt of Samael's is preceded by his defeat in the competition with Adam according to the rules set by God: "I created animals, birds and reptiles. Go down, place them in a row and, if you are able to give them names which I would give them, Adam will revere your wisdom. But if you fail and he succeeds, you will have to revere his." [*Bereshet Rabbati*. p.70]

[137]M. Heidegger, *Augustin and Neoplatonism*. §14.b.

[138]Instead of control and power, we could speak here (and elsewhere when only *reflection* is concerned) about manipulation. Its Latin etymology reflects the fact of being graspable, fitting into the hand (*manus*), and being underlied the authority of one's commands, like a small company, a handful of soldiers (*maniple*).

Beyond actuality

95.　"I spent two weeks in Prague with my girlfriend." What am I talking about, what am I referring to by this "two weeks"? A *concept* 'two weeks'? Hardly, and if so my girlfriend wouldn't be pleased. What I mean by this phrase is what the phrase is pointing to, namely, *this experience*. I am referring to *these particular* two weeks, to all the moments, events, moods I experienced during these two weeks but, above all, to the whole experience of these two weeks. Whoops! "the experience of two weeks"? What is that? Isn't experience something which always happens *here-and-now*, within the *horizon of actuality*? I can experience the table in front of me, the window to the left, the present situation – but two weeks? What kind of thing is 'two weeks' that I can experience it? For, to be honest, I must tell you that I did experience it, not only as a sum of single moments but as a one whole.

　　　I see – perceive – a detail of a building. In itself it would hardly pass for an experience anywhere outside the philosophical tradition, but since this, too, can be a source of the unexpected, let it pass. I watch *Vltava* from *Karlův most* enjoying a gentle breeze. I do it both – simultaneously or interchangeably – being aware and unaware, conscious and unconscious of this experience. In a while the pleasure of the moment becomes so clearly intensified that I am actually beginning to half-*reflect* over it, perhaps recalling other similar moments, perhaps just staying in this one with full – *reflected* – appreciation. During the walk uphill to *Hradčany*, the breeze and *Vltava* got imperceptibly lost in the labyrinth of the narrow streets, but nothing has broken the continuity of the experience. The same moment from the bridge is now extending to the *chrám sv. Mikuláše*, the buildings around *Malostranské náměsti*, the steepness of *Zámecké schody*. It is *the same experience* furnished by a more variation in the material of the world. When I meet my girlfriend at the portal of *Katedrála sv. Víta*, we have a brief recollection of a quarrel from this morning which changes the mood. But neither of us is really up to a quarrel in such a nice weather and place, and we start enjoying the surroundings together. It isn't any more exactly the same experience from the bridge and to the cathedral. But it is now the same *experience of being together* in Prague, furnished by yet more variation in the material of the world, perceptions, moods and feelings.

96.　Just like the whole walk, the whole morning, the whole day is *experienced* and can be *an experience*, so are the whole two weeks. But one might say: I only *know* that I was there for two weeks but what I experienced were only single moments. This certainly does not have to be so. Surely, a lot of different things happened and I do remember some of them. I have encountered various moods, ups and downs, different weather, places, people, etc. But all these variations were underlied by a constant mood, the feeling of congenial surroundings and company, which persisted through – above or below – all the moments of different small experiences. When I say "I spent two weeks in Prague with my girlfriend" I recollect my girlfriend, Prague and this mood. Another two weeks in Prague will necessarily be different because, even if they be accompanied by the same mood, it will be modified by the remembrance of the first experience.

　　　But, suppose that no such underlying mood was there, that I only experienced and remember different days, different people, different places. I still have been in Prague for two weeks and while I have been there I was experiencing not only separate moments but also my stay. On the last day I had a definite feeling that the two weeks have ended, that they, perhaps, weren't what I had expected them to be, that I was disappointed by their character, or else, on the contrary, satisfied in spite of the lack of some unifying impression of the whole. The whole 'two weeks' are experienced here as well, only, in a poorer, less meaningful way. Poorer and less meaningful because now their *unity* gives place to a mere *totality*, to the mere matter of a definite time span, that is, because it is a cut from *experience* effected by an arbitrary criterion utilising the determinations of objective time – not by any unifying *original sign*.

　　　In either case, the phrase "two weeks in Prague with my girlfriend" refers to some *totality* (perhaps even *unity*) of *experience*; not to any concept but to a concrete *experience*. Obviously, this experience is not fully contained in what is being said. But the phrase does not abstract anything from it, it does not convey any 'conceptual' or 'propositional content' distinct from and alien to the *experience*. The phrase only refers to or *points towards it.* It is an *actual* – and abstract – *sign* of something which, in its *concreteness*, lies beyond *actuality*.

97.　When I say "two weeks in Prague with my girlfriend" I recollect my girlfriend, Prague, and this mood. It would be strange if the phrase meant the same to my girlfriend and to you but, as words

in general, it carries enough meaning to establish some degree of common understanding among all who hear it. Now, what does it mean that I recollect Prague, what does the word "Prague" mean? Well, if I had never been to Prague, it would be just a word for some place I have heard of, a point on the map, an abstract *object*. But what 'place', which place? What is a 'place'? If this building is a place, and this square is a place, is also this-building-and-this-square a place? and when I was there, saw and experienced the city? Even more, if I was born there and it was the first city I ever saw. It did not happen at any point, it simply took time to develop – not the concept, but – the *experience* of my home-city. And what is it? What is a city, what is *an experience* of a city? Where does a city begin and where does it end? What can it mean "to experience a city"? I walk around and see buildings, streets, people. At what specific moment do I experience the city Prague? At none but, at the same time, at all. Each moment is *an experience* of an aspect, a part of the 'city experience'. But there is no one in which I can say "Now I am experiencing the whole Prague", there is no single, *actual experience* of Prague.

98. One might ask, if not only single moments, then why two weeks? Why not two years, twenty years? Why not the whole life? Indeed, why not? The experiential limit of *unity* is my whole life, and all particular *experiences* are only *actual* modifications, manifestations of this fundamental *unity*.[139] Some might resist the idea that we *experience totalities* which go far beyond any particular moment of time, beyond the *horizon of actuality*. Yet, it is quite natural to speak not only about "experiences gathered during my stay in Prague" but also about "my experience of Prague", not only about "what different things I have seen there" but also about "what Prague was like". It is so natural because, indeed, *experience* does not consist of a *totality* of more or less minute *experiences*, is not a sum of some 'objective' intervals marking separate *experiences*. An *experience*, a *reflective dissociation* of some *totality* from the horizon of *experience* happens only on the basis of the continuity and *unity* which precedes and *founds* the possibility of such a *dissociation*. *Experience* is a mode of being which is not restricted to the pure *actuality* of here-and-now, but which develops in a temporal continuity exceeding any *actuality*.

Experience exceeds the horizon of actuality, and any particular experience may exceed this horizon. The unity of experience is not obtained from a totality of minute actualities but, on the contrary, founds such a totality.

Not concepts, not phenomena

99. The *experience* in this sense has little to do with the traditional, least of all empiricists' or pragmaticists', notion of experience. What corresponds to such a notion is *an experience* and a multiplicity thereof. Our concept tries only to keep with the common usage of the term. However, with such an all-embracing idea, is there anything that is not *experience*? I haven't been to Australia, and yet, Australia is something which definitely is *distinguished* in my *experience*. Every particular, *distinguished* thing (this table, Prague, Australia, anger, love) are elements of *experience*. On the other hand, there are *aspects* accompanying all *experience* which themselves can not be *objects* of *any experience*. Yet every *aspect* of *an experience* is itself *experienced*, even if it never happens to be an *object* of experience. The sphere of the un-*recognised* contents, the *chaos* of *proto-experience* and *nothingness* are not any *experiences* but are, nevertheless, *experienced*. To reduce their *experience* to merely *actual experiences* is to completely misconstrue their nature, usually, to deny them any reality.

100. *Experience* and what is *experienced* comprises much more than phenomena. When a phenomenologist analyzes a phenomenon of, say 'life', or 'his life' or 'world', he does not analyze anything which *actually appears* in his consciousness when he thinks (anschaut) 'world'. In the moment

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[139]Quoting and referring extensively to W. Stern, *Psychische Präsenzzeit*, Husserl recognises the *unity* of an *act* which extends beyond the ideality of a pure 'now'. "That a mere succession of tones gives a melody is possible only because the succession of the psychic processes 'simply' unifies itself in one total form. In consciousness they follow after each another but they fall within one and the same total act." [E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time.* A:1.2.§7] The 'now' becomes an *extended* interval which imperceptibly emerges from the previous one, becomes the next one and, eventually, dissolves in the horizon (of *actuality*?). In a sense, we only extend this image of continuity and unity of the Husserlian 'now' to the temporal *unity* of the whole *existence*. On the other hand, we invert the perspective and do not ask about the constitution of unities from the *actual* data, but only about the emergence of *actualities* from this prior *unity* of *existence*.

when I think 'world', *nothing specific* appears for me, because what I know about, mean by, experience of the world cannot be given within the horizon of any single *act* of consciousness. What he does is searching his *experiences*, is following a chain of associations, looking for the aspects, properties which he finds related to the 'world'. In particular, he follows this chain beyond whatever is present in his consciousness *in the moment* when he says "world". What is its intentional object supposed to be? The best one can say is that "it is something – everything? – out there, but we have no clue what". What is its essence supposedly resulting from the eidetic reduction? And if you find any then how long did you spend looking for it, and how much more – or less – would you find if you looked 2 more years? Likewise, is there any phenomenon *of* 'life'? The intentional object of 'my life' is my life but it is a again "something which I do not know *precisely* what is", and there is nothing to indicate that the situation might ever change. We do not have *any experience of* life, life is not anything one can experience at any particular moment. But we *experience* life all the time, in a sense, to live is to experience, and so just as we *experience* our *experiencing*, we likewise *experience* life.

'Life', 'beauty', 'meaning', 'God' and most other things of significance are not reducible to phenomena, are not reducible to *actual* contents of consciousness. These, however, are aspects which truly matter – whenever *present* in *experiences*, and even more so whenever absent from them. No such things can be analyzed by looking at the *actual* contents of consciousness alone. If I start thinking about them I will almost for sure arrive at different essences than you. And this is so because their meaning, transcending *actuality*, is a derivative of the form of *existence*, and then of *experience*. They are different from each other and they are *recognised* as such; saying "world" we do not mean "my life". But this difference cannot be defined, spelled out, cannot be expressed fully and adequately in *precise*, that is, *actual* terms. 'World' and 'life' *transcend* any *actuality* and even the posited *totality* of all *actualities*, and a definition must fail because it attempts to appropriate *experience*, to *actualise* the essentially *non-actual*. *Experience* constitutes a *unity* not reducible to any *totality* of *actualities* and *actual signs*. And *signs* which forget that they are only *signs* turn into mere words.

101.   *Experiences appear for reflection, within the horizon of actuality only as signs, e.g., as words which refer to them. These signs are the immediate, actual data of reflection.*

Everything transcending *actuality* can enter it only by means of a *sign*. "Two weeks in Prague" is a *sign*, and so is "red", "square", "my life", etc. But to be comprised under such an *actual sign*, the corresponding cut from *experience* must happen in advance – not necessarily in the order of time, but at least in the order of *founding*. These prior cuts constitute *unities* – not *totalities* – which get differentiated into more *actual* contents and *experiences*. 'Two weeks in Prague' is not a *totality* of single moments but their *unity*. *Experiences* are interwoven into the continuous texture of *experience*. Only *reflective dissociation* establishes them as independent *objects* and then, their definite sharpness is just the *actuality* of the *sign* through which they appear.

The question about such individuals – which transcend *actuality*, cuts which traverse *experience* above the *horizon of actuality* – is much more fundamental than the question about universals (which we will address in Book II). Although, like universals, not limited to any *actual* moment, they are the most individual and concrete things: we were talking not about any 'two weeks in Prague' but about 'these two weeks', not about some 'world' in general, but about this very world we are living in, not about 'life' but about 'my life'. In this, and only in this, consists a possible similarity to phenomena. But they differ in that 'Prague' or 'these two weeks', whenever made into *objects* of *reflection*, appear at once at a *distance* from the *actuality* of the phenomenon, announce at once the inadequacy of whatever *signs* are used to describe them – speaking Husserlian, they make adequate intuition an impossibility. I may have no concept whatsoever of 'Prague' or 'these particular two weeks' when I am relating my *experience* of them. And truly, *experiences* and *distinctions* like these become associated with words and phrases in such a free manner, that each time talking about them I may use different formulations. For their character and *unity* is not constituted by words or other *actual signs* but, on the contrary, *founds* the possibility of giving any coherent description.

Confrontation with transcendence

102.   *An experience – a reflective confrontation with experience – is the source of novelty and surprise.*

It always *comes to reflection* and is never brought about by *reflection*. Sure, I can make all kinds of plans and preparations in the attempts to provoke some experience. I may anticipate its character and help it occur. I can decide to, book and go for a trip to Prague and spent two weeks there. But to the extent 'Prague' and these 'two weeks there' are *experienced*, they emerge as something independent, they offer themselves to me in their expected and unexpected richness, in their concrete forms which I sought but did not cause. *An experience* is always given and never taken. When it occurs it does so from its own source, it brings me all that I, on my own, could not produce – which was the reason that I could only attempt to *provoke* it in the first place.

The aspect of *transcendence* is not, not even primarily, limited to *externality* of *actual objects*. Like every *actual sign* is permeated by the *distanced presence* of *non-actuality*, so an *act*, limited to the *horizon of actuality*, encounters not only an *external object* but also the context of *experience* reaching beyond this horizon. Words can refer not only to *experiences* but also to the *experienced*, eventually, to all levels of *experience*. As we will see again and again, the deeper layer of life, the more constant it is but also the more ephemeral, because the less fixed, are its *actual* manifestations. Furnishing the *signs* for these deeper layers, words endow the ingraspable and *non-actualisable* with the character of recognisable and repeatable permanence. Although the *distance* separating such words from what they express may be infinite, they nevertheless bring thus the most fundamental, the least expressible *aspects* of life closer to the *actuality* of *reflective* consciousness. Their 'creative' character consists here in the fact that the form of manifestation of the *transcendent* is almost totally dependent on the choice of the *actual* expression, on the used *signs*. In the extreme cases, the *signs* which became mere signs, mere words may even obscure its *presence*.

Reflection meets always only things which, in some sense, are already familiar, which have already been there, *distinguished*, *recognised* and *concrete*, that is, merged in the continuity of *experience*. *Precise visibility* of a *reflected object*, clarity of a *reflective* thought is achieved by *dissociating* an experience from this continuity which, for *reflection*, remains vague and inaccessible, unattractive and yet fascinating. For *reflective* thought, *experience* furnishing all its *objects*, phenomena and novelties is the horizon of *transcendence*. It remains 'outside', *reflection* can never appropriate it but, at most, conform to it in the constant dialectic of domination and subordination. Nevertheless, this *transcendence*, this *presence* is the constant fact of *reflective experience* which surrounds the variety of changing *actualities* with the *unity* which is as certain as it is undefinable. "For the intellect, the unity is only a postulate, an act of faith. For the spirit, the harmony is the experienced reality."[140]

Experience is a gift of transcendence. It is an experience only to the extent it confronts reflection with transcendence.

Thus, after all and unlike what we said in §§92.-94, words do not give power. *Reflection dissociates* 103. *experience* but does not create, it exercises its power only by means of *signs*. These *signs* are neither arbitrarily chosen nor voluntarily generated, they are only the *actual* expressions of the *non-actuality* which, perhaps, can never be reduced to the *actual* categories, can never be underlied the *objective* determinations of *reflection*.

We do, however, encounter *reflection positing* an *object*, in particular, in the attempts to appropriate *transcendence*, to bring something *non-actual* to the level and categories of *actuality*. The 'whole world' as the *totality* of all *objects* is, indeed, something *posited* – it has no counterpart in *any experience*. Speaking about 'two weeks in Prague', I may lean toward closing this experience entirely within the *horizon of actuality*, I may attempt to *actualise* it, for instance, by expressing its essence, appropriating it as a concept. But also such attempts are perfectly aware of their inadequacy.

There is only a difference of degree between the two, both amount to *positing* an *object*. *Positing* amounts to not only deliberately choosing an *object* of *reflection* but also to actually constructing it. There are two fundamental kinds of things which may require such a constructive *positing*: ideal objects (in the sense of pure phantoms, constructed from *dissociated* bits and pieces of earlier *reflections*), and aspects of *experience* which by their nature cannot be fully comprised within *horizon of actuality*. The latter, like the 'whole world' or the 'totality of time', although corresponding to some *aspects* of *experience*, are not experienceable in the form in which they are

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[140]S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*. III:7

posited as *objects*. Typically (*representation* of) such an object is *posited* as an ideal limit, as a *totality* trying to *reflect* the suspected *unity*. "*Positing*" will be used equivocally about all three kinds of *acts* (*dissociating* an *object*, constructing an abstraction and reconstructing an *aspect* of *experience*) and the intended meaning will, hopefully, emerge from the context.

5.2   Some problems of reflection

104.   Abstractly, *reflection* is a simple observation 'that ...' It merely realises and *externalises*. Every thought can be preceded by such an "I think that...", but this leads only to a formal notion of reflection which captures only part of its nature but completely misconstrues its potential and significance. Such a 'that ...', the explicitly formalised *attentive reflection*, is only repetition of a *reflective experience*. It repeats, in any case, attempts to repeat, *an experience*. When I thus reflectively refer to some situation or thought, I merely try to revoke it in order to bring forth some side of it. But in order to do that, the situation, the thought must have already been isolated in a prior *reflective experience*. This purely repetitive character is what makes such an abstract *reflection* entirely contentless, a mere 'that' which leaves all its content in the '...'. The lack of content goes however hand in hand with some element of necessity. There is something strict and structurally unavoidable in such an imagined process of that-ing, even if nobody ever carries it more than two, at most three steps (cf. footnote 84). This may attract attention of formalisers but, concretely, has nothing to offer.

Concretely, *reflection* is not a mere observation 'that ...' but an observation of the actual '...' – an act of isolating *a particular experience* but also of careful attention paid to its actual *object*. It is intimately involved with this *object* and its problems are related exclusively to that: the choices of its *objects* and the motivations for these choices. Such choices appear easily as arbitrary. In fact, among the *dissociated* alternatives, all appear equally good (or bad) – dissolution into atoms, as independent as unrelated, is an *aspect* of *dissociation*. Theoretically, one can try to explain the reasons for this rather than that choice but it is only the final result of a series of concrete *reflections* which may, eventually, reveal their motivations and reasons. To start with such a choice would be an impossibility if *reflection* were not anchored in the deeper layers of *existence* capable of lending it some pre-*reflective* guidance.

The lack of any proof of the universal validity of its choices is a possible expression of the problems of *reflection*. In a sense, *reflection* does something inappropriate, it violates the order of things by *dissociating* something from the *rest*, positing it as independent entity and bringing it under *reflective* control. Sometimes and somehow this seems simply to desecrate the innocence of *experience*, and the *reflective subject* begins to thirst for the return to the 'original truth' (which can be almost anything: the original state of nature, obviousness of senses, certainty of immediacy, frenzy of an orgy, strength of a violent will, feelings, authenticity,...). Also, and in the midst of the thirst, *reflection* is *aware* of its insufficiency. It comes always too late. The confronting *transcendence* makes it impossible to forget that the *reflective act* is only embracing a mere *sign* of something which forever evades the look, let alone the grasp. The *subject* of a *reflective act* is as isolated as is its *object* – both are not only *dissociated* from each other, but primarily from the *rest* from which they arose. When limited to the *precision* of *immediate visibility*, in the constant *attention* paid to all the details of encountered objects and situations, *reflection* can not eventually find any other form of higher *transcendence* than narcissistic *self-reflection*. But "I swear, gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness – a real thorough-going illness."[141] Such remarks became very common with all the psychologists of the Victorian times and, in particular, with those who – like Dostoevsky, Nietzsche or Kierkegaard – opposed the primitive psychologism. They express certainly a characteristic of that time, but also show a genuine possibility of *reflection*. Let us look at some expressions of this possibility.

5.2.1. The original truth

105.   Much of our *experience* passes without any *attentive reflection*. "And even in our conscious life we can point to many noble activities, of mind and of hand alike, which at the time in no way compel our consciousness. A reader will often be quite unconscious when he is most intent: in a

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[141] F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*. I:2

feat of courage there can be no sense either of the brave action or of the fact that all that is done conforms to the rules of courage. And so in cases beyond number."[142] But a lack of *attentive reflection* is not the same as a total lack of *reflection*, not to mention, of *(self-)awareness*. *Attentive reflection*, especially when carried over the edge of its plausibility, thirsts for the immediacy of being in which it could 'lose itself'. Trying thus to lose itself, it often would like to lose *reflection*, or even consciousness, from which it differs only by degree.

"How is the immediate belief in the independent existence of the world pertaining to the natural attitude possible?" The 'natural attitude' is probably something to be found outside the philosophical study chamber. But the sensed inappropriateness of exaggerated *reflection* would like to see in it some completely irreflective, almost animal being-in-the-world. The apotheosis of experience, like any other apotheosis, can yield only a caricature.

But even assuming that such an irreflective, purely experiencing being existed, does it make sense to ask about its "beliefs", "certainties", "attitudes"? Such a being might act in its world and arrange it but here any contact *reflection* may establish with it ends. The very fact that one seems forced to use the words like "belief", "attitude", etc., proper for a *reflective* being, witnesses to the dubious character of the irreflective pole of the opposition. Unless one is willing to maintain merely metaphorical sense of these words and act as a behaviorist. Eventually, this means to turn into a student of purely *external* realities, to restrict all the attention exclusively to the *objects*, *dissociated* not only from each other but, primarily and most strongly, from the very *acts* of *reflection* in which they are encountered. In short, unless one is willing to become a scientist.

Of course one does not, but one would nevertheless like to make a point for scientism. Eventually, in the long run, science will uncover all the secrets of the world and life and then it will turn out that our experience, our *subjective* experience is only a particular instance of some general, *objective* laws. Really? We leave such projects to those who are able to believe in them. Let us, however, for the moment assume that some scientific philosopher manages to reconstruct the whole reality from his objectivistic assumptions. He managed to eliminate all the *qualia* and impressions and demonstrated that "we are all zombies", he managed to *prove* that freedom is a subjective illusion and that, in fact, everything is really governed by inviolable laws of nature. Besides causing some confusion in various intellectual circles, this would probably give us powerful means of influence and control. Yet, would it really eliminate all the aspects of our existence which were thus reduced to some inviolable principles? Would I change anything in my way of viewing and reacting to people and situations, in my preferences and values, in my hopes for life? Well, I could, perhaps, if I didn't like a concert, take a pill and feel I liked it after all. Still, I would take it *only because* I did not *like* the concert!

The projects of a total reduction, and reduction to scientifically determinable *objects* in particular, have been around for long enough to suggest that those who claim their all-embracing and universal possibility should demonstrate their factual relevance and truth. There is first the great 'if' concerning the very possibility of such a reduction. Even if this turns out to be possible (does anybody believe this?), there remains the second, even greater 'if': would it actually give us the control over all the aspects of our existence. We are not even able to control fully the processes of society which is, so it seems, fully human creation. Until these millennia old 'ifs' obtain positive solutions, their champions can be safely left for themselves as the victims of the *reflective* sickness to the original and irreflective truth, that is, to the lack of *self-reflection*. Every explanation is a reduction and reduction is *the* means of all science. However, when proposed as the ideology of scientism, that is, when seen as a (never ending) attempt to overcome the *dissociation* by ignoring one of its *aspects*, it represents simply the outermost limit of irrelevance to our considerations.

The 'original truth', whether imagined as a pre-reflective state of nature and innocence or else   106. an *external object* of scientific *reflection*, is not only a *reflective* construction. *Reflection* comes always too late and it knows it. "Philosophy, following after the world, after nature, life, thinking, and finding all that as constituted earlier than itself, asks precisely this earlier being and asks itself about its relation to it. It is a return to itself and to all things, but not a return to immediacy, which withdraws to the extent philosophy tries to approach it and melt with it."[143] *Reflection* can not forget itself, not to mention eliminating itself. The vaguest attempt to think in this direction shows that the attempt has already been undertaken and leads invariably to the situation in

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[142] Plotinus, *Enneads.* I:4.10
[143] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible.* Inquiry and intuition;p.129

which one cannot avoid being "firmly persuaded that a great deal of consciousness, every sort of consciousness, in fact, is a disease."[144] But despair is only a *reflection* of the attempt to reduce the whole *experience* to the categories of *objective visibility*, that is, of *reflection*. Such attempts encounter *reflection* at every step and cannot pretend that it is not there; they must ask the question about *reflection*'s (and that includes their own) relation to the *rest* of *experience*. "When this question of second order was once asked, it can not be eradicated. From this moment on, nothing will be able to exist the way as if the question never occurred."[145] But, let us repeat, this breeds despair only if one identifies one's being with this impossibility of coincidence, and starts suffering the presence of *reflection*. And then, as soon as one has constructed a 'solution', a pre-reflective and irreflective being explaining everything, *reflection* finds itself missing and cannot rest satisfied with a result where it is not taken into account. And now, one suffers the absence of *reflection*.

107.   In a bit more sober way, one starts with the acceptance of the *reflective* dualism, in a sense, one admits the finitude of *reflection*. The danger, however, remains, namely, the danger of identifying one's own being with *reflection*, in which case it seems that this very being is thoroughly and fundamentally dualistic. And thus, although accepting the *reflective* dualism, one does not accept it after all. This aspect has innumerable forms, so we mention only a few examples.

The *subject-object* dualism is involved into the *traces* of their original *nexus* which, however, in terms of the *reflective* categories are at best expressed as some kind of relation(s) between the *dissociated aspects*. The standard picture

$$ s \xrightarrow{\quad r \quad} o \qquad\qquad\qquad \text{(i)} $$

involves one immediately into the self-*reflective* regress. For r is itself a relation observed by the *subject* and so can be, and in the moment of being addressed in fact is, a new *object*. This is nothing but the contentless irrelevance of the 'I think that I think that I think ...' The regress is an effect of the *dissociation* of the *act* from its *object*, according to which 'that' of an *act* 'that ...' is distinct from its '...' and, consequently, can constitute a new, higher-level object of next 'that 'that ...'". As we observed in §69, the empty formality of this operation does not apply to *(self-)awareness*. The *equipollence* of *awareness* and *self-awareness*, which *founds reflection*, makes such a regress if not impossible so, certainly, unnecessary for the phenomenon of self-consciousness. Every moment of *awareness* (of an object o) is, by its very nature, also a moment of *immediate self-awareness* (of r, and hence also of s). But this *equipollence* of *awareness* and *self-awareness* is not easily recognised by *reflection* which emerges only from their *dissociation*.

108.   As a result of this *dissociation*, and as a medicine against the possibility of infinite regress, there appear meta-considerations and meta-modeling. In the most simple and *precise* formulations, like Tarski's hierarchy of meta-languages or Russell's theory of types, the meta-levels are continued indefinitely. In the more philosophical settings, one terminates the regress by postulating (or discovering) just one (or only a few) level(s) above the basic one from §107.(i), whether it is the level of intelligible forms above the material contents, or else of transcendental subjectivity above the empirical ego. Of course, we do not want to simply conflate all, often very different, variants of this basic idea. But we do claim that various appearances of 'meta' (or 'trans') originate eventually in this basic element: the need of relating *dissociated* entities. Consider, as an example, a simplified hylomorphism. The relation §107.(i), where r is taken epistemically as something like 'knowing' or 'understanding', is prevented from regress by isolating the intelligible 'form', which reaches directly the *subject*, from the merely perceptible 'matter' which remains on the side of the *object*. The relation r becomes thus more refined, say, something like:

$$ s \xrightarrow{\quad form \quad} \| \xrightarrow{\quad matter \quad} o \qquad\qquad \text{(ii)} $$

Unlike in the simple-minded case §107.(i), attempting now a self-application of the schema becomes, mildly put, problematic. The problem which is addressed with the form-matter distinction begins with the *dissociated subject* and *object*. The distinction itself, in a sense, prevents one from

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[144]F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*. I:2
[145]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*. Inquiry and intuition;p.126

asking about self-application and infinite regress. And it does so by providing the meta-categories of 'form', 'matter', etc. which, remaining fixed, solve the initial problem.[146]

The most standard version of this distinction assumed the form of the duality of essences, intelligible aspect belonging to the objects, and their reflection as actual concepts in the mind. It made, however, very difficult for the two elements to meet again (unless one sneaked in some form of pre-established harmony between the two.) The solution came with the return of the postulate of unorganised and pure matter, which only mind could endow with any rational form. The subject becomes now (with Kantian idealism) transcendental and responsible for all the formal/rational aspects, leaving on the object side merely sensuous matter (and the purely conceptual, negative rest of a disappearing point, noumenon). It is the above schema (ii) pushed to one extreme:

$$s \xrightarrow{\quad form \quad} \mid matter \qquad\qquad \text{(iii)}$$

The forms (of perception, understanding, reason...) by definition require matter and hence are not self-applicable. The meta-level of transcendental subjectivity giving form to all appearances liberates the original relation r to the *external object* from the problems of self-reference and infinite regress.

In short, meta-modeling emerges naturally in the *reflective* attempts to avoid infinite regress, which is only another side of reaching toward the *dissociated, actual object*. However, the very notion of a meta-level is constructed on the top of the *dissociation* and, consequently, can never bring the *dissociated* elements together. The problem returns always with the increased force (even if with less impact) with respect to the meta-level. For if understanding requires sensuous matter, how is it at all possible to understand the very relation of understanding? What is the matter of and what are the categories used in the understanding of the role of the transcendental subject in the process of understanding/constitution? Thus, bringing together subject and object through a meta-relation which, to avoid infinite regress is not self-applicable, introduces the dualism of understanding and non-understandability of this understanding.

The thirst for rest, the rest in the otherness of an *object*, unsatisfied by *externality* of any single item, turns easily into superficiality, 'bad infinity' which replaces 'better' by *more*. Perhaps, in order to be satisfied, *reflection* has to embrace everything (whatever "embracing" might mean). But nobody can believe that finite *reflection* can grasp the whole richness of the world and all its distinctions. Without admiring Bataille's vocabulary and metaphors, one can nevertheless easily accept the point that every system must leave some, perhaps even some most significant aspects 'outside'. Collecting everything into a *reflective totality* is a simple impossibility. The intellectual bias, which accepts only *reflective precision*, together with the associated thirst for the all-embracing universality, turn this intuition into despair, but a despair which is much stronger than that which emerged from the thirst for the 'original truth'. Now it is almost purely destructive: *reflection* cannot embrace everything – consequently, get rid of *reflection*. This *reflective* hostility to *reflection*, and perhaps to rationality in general, is but the intellectual form of *reflective* self-despair, the utmost consequence of the search for rational *precision* and systematic *totality*, which to mere historicism seem to disappear in the past of modernity.

In our language, this argument from finitude amounts to the first aspect of *externalisation*. Just like *distinctions* never reach *nothingness* and *recognitions* never embrace *chaos*, so neither can *reflection* ever stretch as far as (the whole) *experience*. *Reflection dissociates* an *object* from its background; it is its constitutive *aspect* – not a mere accident. By its very nature, it is finite in this sense: its *object* is *dissociated* from the *rest*. A *reflection* embracing everything in one *act* is a self-contradictory notion. And thus, if its goal is to account for all the details of whole *experience*, *reflection* becomes an unbearable burden, which either has to be *aufgehoben* or else to despair over its insufficiency. If one is not willing to write mere amendments to past and introductions to further investigations, one can be tempted to stop writing in an understandable way and start 'writing otherwise'.

109.

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[146]We view, of course, the distinction itself as a mere consequence of the *dissociation* of *subject* and *object* and would limit its validity (if any) to the sphere of *reflective dissociations*. D. Davidson, *On the very idea of a conceptual scheme* argues against this distinction, the 'third dogma of empiricism', proceeding similarly from the holism which negates the validity of the distinction between the subjective and objective (elements of knowledge). We do not, however, claim the unreality of the subject-object distinction as such, but only its non-absoluteness, its relativity to the sphere of *reflection*.

One can, indeed, start thinking that *reflection's* only goal is to eradicate itself, is to cease think-
ing in systematic, logical, understandable, representational, communicable – in short, *reflective* –
terms. Instead, renouncing itself, reflection should open itself onto all that any system must leave
'outside', onto all 'otherness' and even 'otherness as such', without any presumptuous attempts
to control and organise it. Instead of thinking in the old, reflective way, to 'think otherwise', to
let the absolute 'otherness' embrace one in an ecstatic fusion of multiplicity, that is, as everything
seems to suggest, of cacophony. This delirium is, as a matter of fact, only the final, disappointed
stage of the failed search for the 'original truth'. Since the detailed richness of *experience* cannot
be *reflected* in a *totality* of a system, and since system anyhow is alien to our life, stop thinking
system and start 'thinking otherwise'.

110.   The sensed inadequacy of distinguishing 'form' from 'matter', 'act' from its 'content', turns into
a fashionable habit of identifying 'truth' with the 'expression of truth' which, in turn, introduces
the ambiguity as to whether one denounces the former or the latter; whether one wants to say
that "there is no truth" or "there is no proper expression of truth". In the first case one gets a more
existential despair of nihilism which, apparently, does not attempt to look for the lost innocence.
In the latter, one would be more consistent staying quiet rather than shouting. In any case, one
does reject the gullible simplicity of the system in favor of 'supra-reflective' and 'extra rational'
ecstasis. Yet, it is hard (and we would claim, impossible) to assume the existential attitude of
'there is no truth' and those who seem to have assumed it, seem also to have done it because they
cannot find any 'proper expression of truth'.

And indeed, lacking any proper expression, we hear many calling us to 'speak otherwise' and
'think otherwise'. But isn't this call, this attempt to break the barriers and reach beyond, actually
very similar to the search for the original truth of lost innocence? The thirst to "get rid of one's
personal ego and become embraced by the otherness which one believes to be one's essence"[147]
is, according to Durkheim, a characteristic sign of the 'altruistic suicide'; a suicide committed
with the best intentions for the others' sake and good, but still only a suicidal self-destruction.
Although one may suffer from various forms of *alienation* and attempt to overcome them, such
attempts may often turn into even more advanced forms of estrangement, especially, when their
goal is to overcome *every distance* separating one from others and to immerse *reflection* completely
into the 'otherness' of ... its world-object.

111.   Now, "one may believe that authentic time is an ecstasis; yet, one buys oneself a watch." One may
believe that the depths of our being (or non-being, as nothing really is, or ~~being~~) are permeated
with uncontrolled and inexpressible openness; yet one goes around *one's own* business and tries
to express *one's own* needs and thoughts in a comprehensible way. For even if the *foundation*
of communication rests in the *invisible* depths, the communication itself happens *hic et nunc*, in
the midst of plain *actuality* or ... not at all. There may be some religious or mystical truths
inexpressible in the plain language. But to speak such a language one better have some such
insights to communicate.

There is no such thing as 'thinking otherwise', there are not different kinds of thinking just
like there are different kinds of formal logics. To be sure, there is non-thinking; there are also
other modes of approaching reality, perhaps, with their own logic. But whenever we encounter a
human being with whom we can communicate, we can also understand, even if only imperfectly,
his thinking – and that *not in spite of* it being 'his' but *because* it is 'thinking'. There is always
a space for failures and misunderstandings, and there is always, even primarily, a space for other
forms of communication. But anthropologists also do understand *thinking* of strange tribes, just
like a German can understand *thinking* of a Chinese.[148] Speaking otherwise, thinking otherwise,
writing and acting otherwise may be, indeed, *egotic* needs of adolescence trying to find and mark
its place in the world. Among the adults, ecstatic intensity, like the intensity of madness, may be

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[147]E. Durkheim, *The Suicide.* IV:1

[148]Say, Eliade did understand something of the 'primitive' religious *thinking* and even made some of us understand
something of it, that is, understand that it is not primitive but that it, too, is thinking. We need not, though of
course we would like to multiply the quotations from Lévi-Strauss like that "the savage mind is in my intention
only a meeting place, a result of an attempt to understand taken up by 'me' putting myself in 'their' place and
by 'them' put by me in 'my' place." [C. Lévi-Strauss, *Résponses à quelques questions.*] Referring to the study of
South-American mythology in C. Lévi-Strauss, *From Honey to Ashes*: "it concerns understanding how the human
mind works. [...] If the method is worth anything it will also allow one to exceed the South-American limits and
reach a general experience." [R. Bellour, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss.*]

seen only, and only at best, as an attempted medicine. Against what? As it appears here, against its own nature which having become unbearable, tries to become something 'other'. But there is no otherness without sameness and without self-respect one is unable to respect anybody else.

5.2.2. The objectivistic attitude, the subjectivistic illusion.

A disease attacks and eventually affects only those whose constitution exposes them to its effects, a virus deadly to humans may happen to be harmless to monkeys or rats. Various diseases of *reflection* have a sound basis in human being, in the very emergence of *reflection* as such, and in its relation to the deeper levels of *experience*. The primary problem of, and then also for, *reflection* is that it tends to conflate its own mode with the being of the human person and thus, for instance, consider all the relations to the world as if they were simple (though *reflectively* always inexplicable) relations of the *subject-object* kind.

The unlimited power of *reflection* consists in the universal *possibility* of turning anything what-   112.
soever into an *object*, of using a *sign*, often just a word, in order to bring something within the *horizon of actual* observation and inquiry. It is possible for the 'I think that ...' to be added to all my *recognitions*.[149] It is possible to turn every *recognition* into an isolated *representation*, to *posit* every *aspect* of *experience*, even one which never is a thematic *object* of *any experience*, as the *actual* theme of *reflection*.

This power, due to its universality, lies however at the bottom of *objectivistic attitude* or, equivalently, *subjectivistic illusion*.[150] It consists in mistaking the universal possibility for the universal reality: that 'everything can be made into an *object*', that everything can, as a *sign*, appear within the *horizon of actuality*, is replaced by 'everything *is* an *actual object*'. The horizon of *experience* is identified with the horizon of *reflection*, the entire world becomes merely a *totality* of *objects*, its multiple levels and dimensions are reduced to the *objectivity* appearing in *reflective dissociations*.

The non-*actual* aspect of an *object* has itself an *objective* character. If I see a building, while   113.
actually I am only seeing its front-side, its back-side is also meant (*gemeint*); and it might be my *object* too. What distinguishes here the given *sign* from its rest, the front-side from the back-side, is the mere fact that the former is actually within the *horizon of actuality*, while the latter is here only possibly – actually it is not, but it might be.

But is it? Its possible *actuality* is, as a matter of fact, its present non-*actuality*. As Husserl shows, it is there, is an integral part of *the experience*, but it is there in a different way than the *actual* aspect. Turning the non-*actuality* of the building's back-side into a 'potentiality', we have already assumed the *objectivistic attitude*, we have already falsified the way in which it is given and projected into it the assumed *objectivity*.

It is, however, obvious that the back-side of the house, although not actually given now, can be so given if I only go round the house. It is non-*actual* now but it is not *essentially non-actual*. The situation becomes more dramatic when I try to *reflect* over the world, God, love, life, even only the two weeks in Prague. It isn't common to call such things "objects" because, as a matter of fact, they are not. They make me acutely aware that what I am positing and grasping is a mere *sign*. It is hard to imagine that the 'missing parts' can ever be given in full *actuality*; to begin with, it is completely unclear what they possibly might be. The *objectivistic attitude* will nevertheless stick to the conviction that they, too, are *objects*; that if we only travel enough, we will see all that is to see of the world, if we only analyse enough, we will embrace everything into our *representation*, if we only think and reflect enough, we will eventually discover all the hidden aspects of love, meaning, hate. And if they are not themselves *objects*, then they are at least amenable to an *objective* description, they are *subjective* categories (impressions, experiences, illusions) which are reducible to the *objective* ones.

Visible *objects*, "reasons, seen from afar, appear to limit our view; but when they are reached,

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[149]It is only possible because this amounts to an *act* of *reflective dissociation* which constitutes *representation*. This 'I think' is thus not the 'primitive apperception' which "must accompany all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought;" [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2.I.1.2.2.Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts... (edn. B)]. Kantian apperception corresponds rather to our *(self-)awareness* which *founds* the possibility of the *reflective* 'I think'.

[150]Sure, one may use phrases like "forgetfulness of Being" or "metaphysics of actuality".

we begin to see beyond."[151] The process of analysis and reduction is even by its proponents recognised as potentially infinite. All the declarations of infinity of the process of analysing and gaining knowledge, all the mere 'prolegomena' and 'introductions' one keeps writing in the hope that others will carry on the research, are expressions of this attitude attempting to view the whole world and experience as a mere *totality* of *visible actualities*.

One might think that we are not looking for 'all possible aspects' but only for the eventual 'essences'. This, however, is the same and no better. *Objectivistic attitude* postulates the 'essences' as surrogates for the missing *objectivity*. Unable to grasp higher things (nor, for that matter, the source of *objects'* identity and independence) under the *actual* spell of its *objectivistic* look, it tries to replace them with something which would be eligible to such a look and treatment. 'Essences' or 'concepts' are means of doing that (and we will say more about them in Book II:1.2.2). Intelligible object turns into essence, matter turns into form, and in the midst of the triumphant *objectivity* there emerges again the *subject* which, as a matter of fact, has never disappeared. Total 'objectivism' and ultimate 'solipsism' are distinguishable only on the basis of the *reflective* dualism from which they are projected. Each sacrifices one *aspect* for the other and the border between the two is easy to draw only in the most abstract terms when one does not ask about any consequences. In fact, both live only by negating the other *aspect* and are but absolutisation of the dualism from which they arise: both see only *actualities*. We will therefore use the expressions "*objectivistic/subjectivistic attitude/illusion*" interchangeably.

The search for *more* experiences and for *more* intense experiences driving one around the world is, at bottom, the same as the search for *more* knowledge of particular things, places, peoples, even of scientific results. As far as they search for *more*, whether in the *objective* or *subjective aspect*, they assume that all that is is a *totality* of things from which one gets less unless one grasps for *more*. Insatiability – this intellectual (but also quite practical) equivalent of avarice – is a cardinal sin because it treats the world in a flattened, purely extensional manner, where *more* becomes equivalent with better. And, as already Greeks taught, *hubris* is always followed by *nemesis*.[152]

114.   The power of *subjectivistic illusion* has a firm grounding in the *actuality* of *reflection*. Wherever I travel in the world, I do not encounter new unexpected modes of vision – whether in Paris or London, I encounter new buildings, new people, new roads. Well, I may encounter new ways of seeing the world and new attitudes, but they all are of the same character as the ones I could, at least in principle, contemplate at home (a German can understand a Chinese). And *reflection* will only encounter new *objects* even if it in fact searches for something else. "Life is, however, rich enough when one only can see; one need not travel to Paris and London – and that does not help, when one can not see."[153] No matter how long one thinks and *reflectively* analyses a phenomenon, one does not encounter any *qualitatively new* modes of presentation. All the new aspects and observations one encounters are of the same character – they present one with new *objects* (*subjective* feelings and mere *actual* impressions are, at bottom, *external objects* and in any case never bring one out of the circle of *reflective actuality*). They leave one, perhaps pleased, but deeply unsatisfied. The more intensely *reflection* tries to grasp the 'essence', the more it gets entangled into the *objectivistic attitude*. Analyses become longer and longer, books thicker and thicker and the essence more and more evanescent.

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[151]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. IV:262

[152]Intellectual insatiability finds also its expression in the more direct thirst for power. Plato's state of philosophers is an invention of *reflection* dreaming about its own power (in a way one might expect from a failed and disappointed politician). Faustus, realising that the ultimate power does not reside in the books of Aristotle or Galen, of physics or medicine, renounces them for magic, necromancy and Mephostophilis' promises – only there he can still expect the "world of profit and delight,//Of power, of honour, of omnipotence." [C. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*. I:51-52] Elderly professors seeking political, or at least academic, power and influence can be probably mentioned, too. Possible differences in the ethical evaluation of so unlike phenomena notwithstanding, one can discern in all of them an element of reflection and intelligence seeking universalisation of its own principle, seeking power.

[153]S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*. p.109. "Traveling on every path, you will not find the boundaries of soul by going – so deep is its measure." [Heraclitus DK 22B45] "An ass which turns a millstone did a hundred miles walking. When it was loosed, it found that it was still at the same place. There are men who make many journeys, but make no progress towards any destination. When evening came upon them, they saw neither city nor village, neither human artifact nor natural phenomenon, power nor angel. In vain have the wretches labored." [*The Gospel of Philip*.] Hysterical tourism, search for the 'exotic and undiscovered' corners of the world, are only common modern forms of the attempts to fill the emptiness of *objectivity* and boredom of *subjectivity* through *more* 'openness to otherness'.

5.2.3. Antinomies of actuality

The *objectivistic attitude*, viewing every *non-actual unity* as a mere *totality*, gives rise to innu- 115.
merable antinomies or, at least, illegitimate questions resulting from applying wrong categories
in wrong contexts. These are analogues of the limitations of pure reason expressed in Kant's
antinomies.[154] In our case, these are antinomies of *actuality*, of applying the categories of *actual
representation* to things, *experiences* and *aspects* of *experience* which can not be compressed to
fit into *horizon of actuality*. The danger for such antinomies arises whenever *reflection* posits an
ideal *object*, in the sense explained in §103.

According to Kant, antinomies arise because one posits a possible series of experiential dis-
tinctions as unconditionally complete. Applying his machinery, he makes us "select out those
categories which necessarily lead to a series in the synthesis of the manifold,"[155] arriving at the
four cosmological ideas of absolute completeness with the respective antinomies of: composition
(limited vs. limitless world in time and space), division (infinite vs. finite divisibility of any sub-
stance), origination (determinism vs. freedom in the universe) and dependence (existence vs. non
existence of a necessary being).

In our language, all these can be seen as examples of *positing* as *object* something which
inherently isn't one, *positing* something non-*actual*, or even *non-actual*, as *actually* given.[156]
Moreover, what is so *posited* is, at the same time, itself thought as a collection or series of *objects*.
Thus something which in *experience* arises before the *reflective objects*, is attempted thought in
terms of the *objective* categories, a *non-actual unity* is attempted modeled as a *totality*. The
unavoidability of antinomies is just an effect of the universal possibility of turning anything into
an *object* of *reflection*. Kant makes the absolute distinction between appearances and 'things in
themselves' to make illegitimate the questions leading to the antinomies. We only say: there are
other modes of *experience* than the *objective*, *reflective* one. The *totalities* postulated as here
objects often do have some counterparts in *experience*, but not in the *objective experience*.

Kant insists that these four are all and only antinomies – this fits nicely the table of categories. 116.
But antinomies, more or less similar to the above ones, are not limited to *positing* the ultimate
totalities, to the paradoxes of the absolute limits and the associated self-reference. They arise
whenever we try to *posit* an inherently *non-actual* reality as an *object*. Its *non-actuality* becomes
then a collection of other *objects* and the *posited object* itself a perplexing one-many.

Posit any feeling as an *actual object*. Is it determined or is it free? Both and neither (it is
not completely without reason but any reason one might find is not sufficient). Is it one thing
or many? Both and neither (it is this feeling and not that, but it also comprises other feelings,
more specific moods, moments, perceptions). Did it have a beginning or not? Both and neither
(it must have started some time because it did not last always, but it did not start at any definite
moment). All other kinds of unanswerable, that is, *objective* questions are possible. Is it or is it
not the same feeling as I had two weeks ago? Which x makes it different from that other feeling?
Where does the one end and the other begin? Countless antinomies can be produced, once it is
assumed that all that is are *objects*.

The very antinomy of subject-object arises from the attempts to think the underlying *unity*
in terms of the *reflectively dissociated* poles. One first *posits* a subject and an object as two
completely *dissociated* entities – both, in fact, imagined as *objects* – and then scratches one's
head over the question how they possibly might have anything to do with each other. Beginning
with the *dissociated* poles, one can only end up reducing one to the other – any unity respecting
the genuine distinctness of the two must appear as *transcending* the *dissociation*, that is, as

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[154]As usual, the story is old and long. The relativisation of reason to the visible world became quite explicit with
neo-Platonism and the confrontation of Judaic and Christian faith with the Greek rationalism in negative theology.
Maimonides, Albert the Great, Aquinas considered reason incapable not only of grasping God but also of answering
the question about the creation of the world vs. its eternal existence. A bit earlier, Al-Ghazali denied reason's
ability to deal with things outside the horizon of our experience.

[155]I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. A415/B442

[156]It might seem that this is opposite to Kant's diagnosis, according to which antinomy "arises from our applying
to appearances that exist only in our representations, and therefore, so far as they form a series, not otherwise
than in a successive regress, that idea of absolute totality which holds only as a condition of things in themselves."
[I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2nd Division.2.Book 2.2.7 [A506/B534]] But *positing* as *object* can be equally
described as such an application of *unity* to a mere *totality*, in fact, the very *totality* itself is already such an
application.

something 'mystical' beyond the admissible categories. Most generally, antinomies arise as a result of applying the categories, that is, *distinctions* of lower levels to various higher *aspects* of *experience* – eventually, the categories of *visibility* to the sphere of *invisibles*.[157] We look at a couple examples which will also be of some relevance for later considerations.

5.2.3.i. Matter vs. spirit

The *dissociation* of *subject* and *object* draws its pervasive power from the obvious *experience* of the duality, perhaps even opposition, of mind and body. But when pushed to the extremes of metaphysical principles, it turns into an irreconcilable dualism of spirit vs. matter, and of the associated 'attributes', like active vs. passive, eternal vs. temporal, higher vs. lower, etc., etc...

117.   Plato takes probably the first place, *dissociating* the world into the sensible and the intelligible when following the Orphic and Pythagorean tradition of opposing body to soul.[158] But Plato carries the *dissociation* of moral character into the metaphysical opposition of the 'material' and the 'spiritual'.

"Suppose a person to make all kinds of figures of gold and to be always transmuting one form into all the rest – somebody points to one of them and asks what it is. By far the safest and truest answer is, That is gold; and not to call the triangle or any other figures which are formed in the gold "these", as though they had existence, since they are in process of change while he is making the assertion; but if the questioner be willing to take the safe and indefinite expression, "such", we should be satisfied. And the same argument applies to the universal nature which receives all bodies – that must be always called the same; for, while receiving all things, she never departs at all from her own nature, and never in any way, or at any time, assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her; she is the natural recipient of all impressions, and is stirred and informed by them, and appears different from time to time by reason of them. But the forms which enter into and go out of her are the likenesses of real existences modeled after their patterns in wonderful and inexplicable manner."[159]

This is a perfect example of 'analogical reasoning', or perhaps just 'analogical modeling'. The trivial *distinction* of *actuality* between the material from which a thing is made and the thing itself, is applied to the 'universal nature', which is *posited* as an indistinct substratum *receiving* possible forms; the *dissociation* of purpose and achievement, plan and its execution, which is close to constitutive for the daily acts and activities, is elevated to the principle of the highest level. Thus 'matter' becomes "formless, and free from the impress of any of these shapes which it is hereafter to receive from without. For if the matter were like any of the supervening forms, then whenever any opposite or entirely different nature was stamped upon its surface, it would take the impression badly, because it would intrude its own shape. Wherefore, that which is to receive all forms should have no form;"[160] And due to its passivity and receptivity, it is in a bad need of something else, of an external principle, "that of which the thing generated is a resemblance."[161]

118.   Students of Aristotle are well acquainted with the difficulties to sort out what the Philosopher actually says in *Metaphysics*, *Physics*, *Categories* concerning matter. There seems to be a difference between 'matter' and the 'ultimate substratum' (*materia prima*), though it is not clearly articulated.[162] Matter is supposed to individuate the forms but, on the other hand, being com-

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[157]We do not distinguish 'categories' from 'concepts' or, for that matter, 'patterns of understanding' from 'understanding particular things'. We will say a few words about the issue in Book II, but all such forms are just particular cases of (drawing) *distinctions*.

[158]E.g., Plato, in *Cratylus* refers Orphic views: "Some say that the body is a tomb of the soul, as being buried in it for the present life. And because the soul expresses (*semainei*) by this body (*soma*) whatever it may wish to express, so it is rightly called a tomb (*sema*). The Orphics, in particular, seem to have given it this name, as they think the soul suffers punishment for its misdeeds." Pythagorean Philolaus quoted by Clement: "The ancient theologians and seers testify that the soul is conjoined to the body to suffer certain punishments, and is, as it were, buried in this tomb." [DK 44B14 [after St. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*. III:3.17]]

[159]Plato, *Timaeus*. 18

[160]Ibid.

[161]Ibid.

[162]Thus, for instance, "The matter comes to be and ceases to be in one sense, while in another it does not. As that which contains the privation, it ceases to be in its own nature, for what ceases to be – the privation – is contained within it. But as potentiality it does not cease to be in its own nature, but is necessarily outside the sphere of becoming and ceasing to be." [Aristotle, *Physics*. I:9] The quotations supporting either view could be multiplied. For us the relevant thing is not which one is correct but that it is impossible to agree on that. The

pletely formless it is itself in a dear need of being individuated – it "desires the form". Living beings are unquestionably substances, but then, as composed of form and matter, some more basic substance should be present as well. It is common to consider for instance *Metaphysics* VII:3 as denying substantiality to matter[163], but one can also present reasonable arguments for the opposite view according to which Aristotle, at least in some sense, considers (the prime) matter to be substance.[164] Distinguishing subjects of change from subjects of predication (or logical subjects) does not help much because matter seems the ultimate subject of change, and such subjects are also subjects of predication.

The history of 'matter' in the following philosophical tradition is a continuation of this 'analogical 119. thinking' which establishes a relative *distinction* as something ultimate. 'Matter' is always an ideal *posited* by *objectivistic illusion* on analogy with the 'stuff from which physical things are made'. But when extrapolated beyond the limits of *actuality* as the primordial substance and first principle of the universe, the matter becomes "an incomprehensible somewhat, which hath none of those particular qualities whereby the bodies falling under our senses are distinguished from one another"[165] or, for that matter, from anything else.

To be sure, 'spirit' as the similarly ultimate principle opposed to 'matter', is an equally empty result of the same absolutisation of relative *aspects*, of raising some properties of the *actually dissociated subject* to the level of the ultimate principle. We can admire Berkeley's arguments but not the attempts to reduce the opposition to one of its terms. Granting primacy to 'spirit' over 'matter' is as good as doing it the other way around. In either case what is left is only some contentless and propertyless void, while one remains involved into the dualism – if not of the claimed elements, so in any case of the used concepts, of 'spirit' opposed to and abolishing 'matter' or vice versa.[166]

'Matter', when *posited* as anything more than the physicality (*externality*) of particular *actual* 120. *objects* perceived by the senses ("designate matter" as some Scholastics would say), simply dissolves losing all its supposed 'intrinsic', 'objective' qualities. "For my definition of matter is just this – the primary substratum of each thing, from which it comes to be without qualification, and which persists in the result."[167] To save such a vacuous residuum from total non-being, one has to take recourse to very special distinctions. For instance, "we distinguish matter and privation, and hold that one of these, namely the matter, is not-being only in virtue of an attribute which it has, while the privation in its own nature is not-being; and that the matter is nearly, in a sense is, substance, while the privation in no sense is."[168] Perhaps privation is just 'stripping off' while matter is what remains when "all else is stripped off", but "being nearly", "being in a sense" substance, etc., (without actually being it) suggest, if nothing more, then at least that language reaches its limit in expressing the difference between the primary substratum and the pure negativity.

A more empirically minded might ask: is matter (composed of) atoms, elementary particles, quarks? The recent word in the chain is "strings".[169] But then one also knows that $E = mc^2$, that matter is exchangeable with energy, is but a form of energy. So what is energy...? We won't say that it is the "secret fire of the alchemists, or phlogiston, or the heat-force inherent in matter, like the 'primal warmth' of the Stoics, or the Heraclitean 'ever-living fire', which borders

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very question whether Aristotle is committed to assume a characterless *materia prima* or not is impossible to settle (e.g., F. A. Lewis, *Substance and Predication in Aristotle* argues for, while M. Furth, *Substance, Form and Psyche: An Aristotelean Metaphysics*, T. Scaltsas, *Substances and Universals in Aristotle's Metaphysics* against his commitment to such a notion.)

[163]E.g., R. J. Blackwell, *Matter as a subject of predication in Aristotle*, R. Rorty, *Genus as matter: a reading of Metaphysics Z-H*, V. Chappell, *Matter*

[164]E.g., J. Kung, *Can substance be predicated of matter?*.

[165]G. Berkeley, *A Treatise....* §47

[166]The remark applies also to somewhat ingenious construction offered by the Stoics who, denying any transcendent principles and spiritual entities, distinguished two aspects – or perhaps kinds – of matter: the active and the passive, the forming and the formed one. "In themselves both are the same; it is the same being of which a part assumes the form of the world, while another retains its original form and in that shape appears as the moving cause or the Deity." [E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*. [after W. Szczerba, *The Concept of Eternal Return....*]] We could probably find here quite a few analogies to our presentation if only we were willing to ignore the ever present and dominating opposition of the two aspects.

[167]Aristotle, *Physics*. I:9

[168]Ibid.

[169]The word goes that strings as if vibrate, with different amplitudes – doubtlessly, to an extreme delight of neo-Pythagoreans.

on the primitive notion of an all-pervading vital force, a power of growth and magic healing that is generally called *mana*."[170] No, we won't say that. But what shall we say then...? We are not trying to ridicule the hard and thorough attempts of the physicists' to mathematise physics. Their relevance to our philosophy is nil any way. But they, too, end up dissolving 'matter' in something entirely un-matter-like.

121.   'Matter' is an image, a *symbol*. Of what? Ha! It intends to stand for the *external objectivity* raised to the level of the *absolute*. But then it turns into the truly *absolute indistinctness*. On the one hand, it resides in every *external object*, so one asks more and more specific questions – atoms? quarks? strings? – in search for the limit of the *distinctions*, for the most *immediate* in the hierarchy of Being: the simple and indivisible. On the other hand, as the universal substratum, the always formed formless, it is, again, the limit of *distinctions*, namely, the ever *indistinct*. The two limits seem to coincide, for beyond the limit of *distinctions* there remains only the ultimate *rest*, the *indistinct*.

If one can form any *concept* of 'matter' at all, it is simply that of the *indistinct*. As the formless, confused, *indistinct* it is, indeed, the principle of individuation simply because it is the same as the *origin*, the *one*. It must not be confused with any particular *distinctions*, whether quarks, energy, or *actual* material things. As Berkeley argues, ascribing any properties to some *posited* 'outside', some independent 'matter', brings it immediately into the relativity to the one who performs such an ascribing. All particular properties (of matter or whatever) arise from the *origin* through the *invisible* process of *creation* which, gradually, takes more and more familiar, human form.

The image of something "which remains when all else is stripped off"[171] is as easy to *posit* as difficult to maintain. In the language of substances and accidents it must, indeed, emerge as the ultimate substance. But substances have been earlier given the status of independent – and, in particular, individual – existents. Such 'something' – an individual, independent existent above all temporal distinctions – might perhaps be thought of not as 'matter' but rather as ... well, 'spirit'. The primordial *distinctions*, the first acts of creation, do not introduce 'matter' as opposed to 'spirit', 'body' as opposed to 'mind' – *birth separates self* from the *one* and the following *chaos* of *distinctions* does not single out any of them as more basic, more fundamental; it does not even oppose one to another. So far, that is all; there is as yet no structure, which the *distinction* 'matter'-'spirit', not to mention 'body'-'mind', presupposes. Before *subject* gets *dissociated* from the *object*, before 'spirit' gets *dissociated* from 'matter' and 'mind' from 'body', there is still only the *nexus* of *chaos*, where Being and Thinking are not two different things, not even two different things which mysteriously happen to coincide, but just one, as yet undifferentiated *nexus*.

If one wanted to discern some 'materialism' here, it would amount simply to saying that the stuff from which 'mind' is made is the same as the stuff from which stars and galaxies are made, 'mind' and 'body' are made from the same *one*. But in the moment one thinks of the *one* as 'matter' (whatever one might mean by that) which is distinct from, perhaps even opposed to anything whatsoever, one has already gone too far, for one has projected some *distinctions* onto the *indistinct*. If, on the other hand, one says that 'matter' is the same as *one*, then one has said nothing about the 'matter' and merely used a hardly appropriate name for the *one*.

122.   Perhaps, what we have described as the "antinomy" of spirit-matter is but a special case of Kantian fourth antinomy. If a Kantian wishes, he probably might see it this way. But there seems to be a significant difference between our use of the word "antinomy" and its Kantian version. An application of lower *distinctions* to higher spheres of Being need not, by necessity, result in a conflict of reason as sharp as Kant illustrates it. *Dissociation* of spirit and matter, natural and easy as it is at the level of *reflection* and *experience* may be turned into an apparent contradiction when transferred to the level of *chaos* or *nothingness*. But there are other ways of coping with *dissociated* oppositions. The simplest is just admitting the existence of incompatible metaphysical entities, although a more common is to admit only one and refuse the other. Whether such solutions are satisfying – to one's reason – will depend on how one wants to define reason. But answers, if any, can hardly be given in terms of *dissociated objectivities* which are exactly what is responsible for the antinomic character of the questions. Calling them "antinomies" suggests that they need not be considered true problems but rather results of a category mistake, of applying

[170] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. I:68
[171] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. VII:3 [modified]

right *distinctions* in wrong context. But to accept such a suggestion, *reflection* has to admit that its *objective* categories and plain *visibilities* do not exhaust the field of meaningful answers, that it "is benefited by the examination of a subject on both sides, and its judgments are corrected by being limited. [...] For it is perfectly permissible to employ, in the presence of reason, the language of a firmly rooted faith, even after we have been obliged to renounce all pretensions to knowledge."[172]

5.2.3.ii. God vs. matter

The opposition can be pushed even further into the transcendent sphere where no longer 'spirit',   123. but the ultimate God or One stands on the other side, opposing matter. It is really only a continuation of the previous antinomy but it makes the 'matter'-'spirit' equivocity, which creeps in with a recurrent insistence, painfully clear and deeply unpleasant.

"By X I mean that which in itself is neither a particular thing nor of a certain quantity nor assigned to any other of the categories by which being is determined.[...] Therefore X is of itself neither a particular thing nor of a particular quantity nor otherwise positively characterised; nor yet is it the negations of these, for negations also will belong to it only by accident." It would not be offending to negative theologians if both X's were replaced by "God". In the text "matter" stands for the first and "ultimate substratum" for the second one.[173]

Plotinus on The One: "The One, as transcending Intellect, transcends knowing: above all need, it is above the need of the knowing which pertains solely to the Secondary Nature. Knowing is a unitary thing, but defined: the first is One, but undefined: a defined One would not be the One-absolute: the absolute is prior to the definite. [...] Thus The One is in truth beyond all statement: any affirmation is of a thing; but the all-transcending, resting above even the most august divine Mind, possesses alone of all true being, and is not a thing among things; we can give it no name because that would imply predication"[174] The image of matter is more familiar: "We utterly eliminate every kind of Form; and the object in which there is none whatever we call Matter: if we are to see Matter we must so completely abolish Form that we take shapelessness into our very selves."[175] It is hard not to see the analogy, and so the fragment continues: "In fact it is another Intellectual-Principle, not the true, this which ventures a vision so uncongenial." Matter is 'not the true' first hypostasis but almost, it is not being but "By this Non-Being, of course, we are not to understand something that simply does not exist, but only something of an utterly different order from Authentic-Being."[176] It seems that, if nothing more, then at least the language reaches its limit in expressing the difference between the absolute One and the pure negativity of matter (cf. §120). But why should language express differences which cannot be thought and which, perhaps, simply do not obtain?

Just one more example. The tension – of analogous descriptions of preferably opposite extremes – was clearly observed by Eriugena: "there are two, and two only, that cannot be defined, God and matter. For God is without limit and without form since He is formed by none, being the Form of all things. Similarly matter is without form and without limit, for it needs to be formed and limited from elsewhere, while in itself it is not form but something that can receive form."[177] "And this similarity between the Cause of all things [...] and this unformed cause – I mean matter [...] is understood in contrary sense. For the supreme Cause of all things is without form and limit because of its eminence above all forms and limits.[...] Matter, on the other hand, is called formless by reason of its being deprived of all forms. For by it nothing is formed, but it receives different forms."[178] This opposition notwithstanding, there is even a further similarity. "Matter itself, if one examines it carefully, is also built up from of incorporeal qualities."[179] "Formless matter is the mutability of mutable things, receptive of all forms."[180]"[...] I think, that if it can be understood at all, it is perceived only by the intellect." The 'intellect', let us emphasize, not in the derogatory

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[172] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. II:1.2 [A745/B773]

[173] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII:3

[174] Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:3.12-13

[175] Ibid. I:1.10

[176] Ibid. I:1.3

[177] J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. I:499D;499-500A

[178] Ibid. II:167-169

[179] Ibid. II:133

[180] after St. Augustine, *Confessions* XII:6

sense which it often obtains in the modern expressions like "mere intellectualism" or "intellectuals", but in the sense of *nous* or *logos*, in the sense which it acquired from neo-Platonism, through the Church Fathers to the Scholastics, as the highest faculty of the soul which remains in the closest vicinity of Godhead and perceives the immediate works of God, the first stages of creation, the primordial causes.[181]

124.   In short, 'matter' which "is negatively defined as not being any one of the things that are"[182] is very hard to distinguish from "the One which is beyond thought [and] surpasses the apprehension of thought, [...] the Universal Ground of existence while Itself existing not, for It is beyond all Being."[183] Conceptual *distinctions* can be *posited* to maintain a kind of orthodoxy or good conscience but both opposites turn out to be just... *nothing*. The apophatic language of the divine, just like the negative descriptions of the ultimate substratum, leave only the all-transcending, indefinite and *indistinct*. Indeed, as the 'analogical modeling' of God never managed to go beyond the image of a handyman busing himself with transforming raw materials into more or less pleasing and useful artifacts, the two – formal and material cause – had to be found also in the *indistinct*. (Attempts to philosophise over the divine Triunity might easily lead in the same direction of differentiating the *absolute*.) One had to distinguish the indistinguishable.[184]

As we saw in the quoted passages, 'matter' is in all respects like 'God' – only with a huge negative sign making it actually the opposite of 'God'. The experience of the *actual dissociation* of *subject* and *object* and extended to the opposition 'spirit'-'matter' finds the anthropomorphic, in the most negative sense, expression in ascribing 'power', 'activity', 'spirituality' and 'universality' or the like to 'God' and, on the other hand, mere 'potency', 'formlessness', 'materiality', confusion and on the top of that – at least until Duns Scotus pointed clearly out the involved impossibilities[185] – the 'individuating' potential to *materia prima* or, as the alchemists would say, *materia confusa*.

125.   This dualism projected into the *indistinct* carries moral dimension. Certainly, the calmness of humble and dedicated contemplation can easily be opposed to the abruptness of sudden passions, the certainty of deep convictions to the unrest of hollow feelings. In an exaggerated and simplified form, the goodness of the soul is opposed to the corrupting influences of the body and, stretching this movement 'upwards' and 'downwards', one ends with the ultimate 'Good' on the one hand and the ultimate 'Evil' on the other. As God becomes a mere limit of perfections, the 'most eminent', 'more-than-...', the active supra-Cause, an incomprehensible *totality* of positive aspects

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[181] One should always be wary of the distinction between these two kinds which both may be called "intellect": "It is our separating habit that sets the one order before the other: for there is a separating intellect, of another order than the true, distinct from the intellect, inseparable and unseparating, which is Being and the universe of things." [Plotinus, *Enneads.* V:9.8]

[182] J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* II:141

[183] Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names.* I:1. Thus, Eriugena identifies matter with the primordial causes which constitute the first stage in the creation of the world. Primordial causes, although differentiated are, in a sense, indistinct, "while they are understood as stationed in the Beginning of all things, viz., the only-begotten Word of God, are a simple and undivided one; but when they proceed into their effects, which are multiplied to infinity, they receive their numerous and ordered plurality. [They are] established around and after the one universal First Principle [and] were made eternally at once and together." [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* III:1/3/5;p.129/137/143] They are what Scripture calls "formless matter": matter, because it is the beginning of all things and formless because it is nearest the *indistinctness* of the *origin*.

[184] The story is both long and has many turns. One of the more interesting may be found, as indicated by the above quotations, in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*. According to the different ways of predicating being or non-being listed in the opening sections, God is nothingness – but on account of excellence or infinity, *nihil per excellentiam* or *per infinitatem*, while matter is nothingness through privation, *nihil per privationem*. In the platonising school of the XII-th century Chartres, Clarembald of Arras had to stress the distinction between two senses of the "indistinct" (or "indifferent"): it can be understood "in one way as possibility, in another as the unity of substance" [Clarembald of Arras, *The Gloss on Boethius' "De Trinitate"*. I:§§19-23], i.e., either as the mere potentiality of formless matter, or as the ultimate simplicity of God which also unites things. Others had to distinguish, for instance, the 'negatively undetermined', that is, incapable of being determined transcendence of God, and the 'privatively undetermined', that is, the general concept of a (created) 'being' which is abstracted by the mind but is determinable and always exists only in a more definite form [Henry of Ghent, *Summa Theologica* XXIV:q6. Henry considered nevertheless the two to be completely distinct concepts, confused only by the mind due to their similarity.]; the 'simply simple', the indivisibility which is not resolvable into essential elements, like *materia prima*, and 'not simply simple' or 'most highly simple' which, as a perfection of unity belonging to God, must admit also other perfections. [St. Bonaventura, *Commentaries on the Four Books...* I:d7.2.q1, J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* II:d3.1.q6.]

[185] J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* II:d3.1.q5-6. A bit earlier, Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* V:8, objected to viewing matter as the principle of individuation and suggested a property of *suppositum*, i.e., individual, which however was not any positive reality as it were to become with Scotus. It was only a negative property and proximate cause of individuation, distinct from matter which still was the ultimate (or remote) cause of multiplicity.

and predicates, so there arises a deep need for the corresponding negative principle, and 'matter' fills this need. "As necessarily as there is Something after the First, so necessarily there is a Last: this Last is Matter, the thing which has no residue of good in it: here is the necessity of Evil. [...] Matter becomes mistress of what is manifested through it: it corrupts and destroys the incomer"[186].

Certainly, the Orphic-Platonic dualism, Christian ascetism, in the extreme forms obsessed with "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,"[187] the suppression of body and senses – all that may have very particular and *actual* reasons representing a response to real dangers. But the fact that the reasons are real does not, in and by itself, justify the reaction. We do not intend to resolve here the opposition between 'Good' and 'Evil' but notice that its association with the opposition between 'God' and 'matter' is of a very dubious value. So far, we have not registered any opposition of the latter kind. 'God' and 'matter', in so far as their ontological characteristics are concerned, seem to be indistinguishable – they both function as *symbols* of *one* and the same.

Viewing the *indistinct* as the place of *birth* and the ultimate *origin*, that is, identifying the negativity of 'matter' and 'God', we are, perhaps, maintaining a heresy. Pantheism always threatens the back-rooms of neo-Platonism and its associate – negativity of the absolute.[188] We do not, however, propose any pantheism. Neither do we *identify* 'God' with 'matter': the latter simply has no significant meaning and there is only *one indistinct* which is not identified with anything. Thinking of it in any specific way is already a mistaken projection, and identification of God and matter is only a resulting temptation. For the time being we will take the risk of offending some theological sensibilities and put the issue to rest. It will return again in Book III, while more detailed remarks on pantheism will be made in 6.3.3.ii.

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[186]Plotinus, *Enneads.* I:1.7,9 [The image of matter as a harlot is also invoked by Maimonides: "How wonderfully wise is the simile of King Solomon, in which he compares matter to a faithless wife: for matter is never found without form, and is therefore always like such a wife who is never without a husband, never single; and yet, though being wedded, constantly seeks another man in the place of her husband: she entices and attracts him in every possible manner till he obtains from her what her husband has obtained. The same is the case with matter [...] the substance of dust and darkness, the source of all defect and loss." [M. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed.* III:8]. One should only be very wary of concluding from such metaphors total depreciation of body and senses. For Plotinus, body is close to matter, but only the latter and not the former, is the cause of evil. For "if body is the cause of Evil, then there is no escape; the cause of Evil is Matter." [Plotinus, *Enneads.* I:1.8] Maimonides does preach restrain and warns against sensuous pleasures, but he also treats body with outermost respect, as witnessed if not by particular texts so by his life-long occupation with medicine. (S. Pessin, *Matter, metaphor, and privative pointing...*, proposes to view the indispensability of the material particulars and their epistemic role in establishing a contact with the active Intellect, as a positive counter-balance to rather harsh and ascetic treatment of the moral and soteriological aspect of body in the *Guide*.)]

[187]after Gal. V:17

[188]Usually not because it is there, but because it can be read there. Theological reservations against aspects of Pseudo-Dionysius (in the times before the first serious doubts concerning his claimed identity as the convert of St. Paul from Acts XVII:34, Dionysius the Areopagite, were raised by Laurentius Valla in the XV-th century) concerned the sense of creationism and possible pantheism. It seems (as far as we know from few remarks and the records of condemnation of now lost texts) that David of Dinant identified God, Demiurge (intellect) and matter "by arguing logically on the 'God non-being' of Denis and Erigena. God is non-being, matter is non-being, therefore God is matter or matter is God." [E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy....* VI:1;p.242] The identification was called by Bett "a reckless development of Erigena's doctrine" [H. Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena.* [after D. Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena.*]] and, indeed, it seems that condemnation (of *Periphyseon* in 1210 and 1225) was based not so much on a thorough consideration of the text as on the *mere possibility* of extracting from it elements of pantheism. Statements in *Periphyseon* II:546B/545C which might suggest pantheistic reading, are pronounced by the *Alumnus*, are discussed earlier in part I, and are refuted almost immediately by *Nutritor*. In general, Eriugena is rather clear on the double aspect of divinity. "[...] God is both beyond all things and in all things [...] and while He is whole in all things He does not cease to be whole beyond all things, whole in the world, whole around the world [...]" [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* IV:759a-b] " 'And so God is all things and all things are God.' Such a judgment will be regarded as monstrous [...]" [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* III;p.162] The favourite phrase concerning God as well as any substance, that "we can only know *that* it is, but not what it is", fits well precisely to the *indistinct* as such, whether transcendent God or inaccessible 'matter'. Pantheism was read also into the texts of the Chartres school, though the accusations can be met plausibly as was done, for instance, in E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy...* IV:3.2. footnote 78. Condemnation of Eckhart, in the Bull *In agro dominico* of 1329, lists several articles which allege that God and man are one and the same (identification of Creator with (some part of) creature was the most typical version of pantheism, before the term was coined by John Toland in 1704-5 and acqiured the pejorative connotations later in the XVIIIth century). Cusanus countered rather sucessfully similar attacks from the Heidelberg theologian Johannes Wenck, in *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*. D. Moran, *Pantheism in Eriugena and Cusa* gives a good overview, at least, with respect to the two authors mentioned in the title.

126.   Reflection is driven by a hunger, it searches. For the truth? For a totality? For God? For its own
eradication? To begin with, it does not know. Goals remain hidden until they are reached.

   It might seem that *reflective* thinking is doomed for dwelling in its antinomies. On the one
hand, to leave *subjectivity*, to entirely forget *objects* – in order to traverse the *distance* separating
the two and achieve an ecstatic union – is impossible. Drugs pacify only for a moment. *Reflection*
will always be aware of this table, of that tree, of any *object* as distinct from itself. One can not get
dissolved in an ecstatic unity of the *indistinct* and still be oneself. Such a dissolution, abolishing
the *separated* terms, amounts to impossibility not only of thinking and feeling, but of any form
of relation whatsoever. In short, it amounts to a new form – perhaps universalised, perhaps
depersonalised, but still only a form of – solipsism or, in more pathological cases, of escapism.
It helps little to pronounce 'the end of the subject', 'the end of discursive thinking', the end of
whatever one feels does not suffice, hoping that thus one will reach the 'otherness'. Otherness,
like any relation, presupposes *distance*. To *exist* means to be *confronted* with the *non-actuality* of
experience, with *chaos* and the *indistinct*; in the most *actual* form, this *confrontation* is expressed
as the *reflective distance* to the *external object*.

   On the other hand, the projects of *reflective* reconstruction or conquest are, as it seems,
doomed to failure. Perfect *mimesis* (whether in the artistic form of ancient sculpture or academic
painting, or else as the scientific fantasies of doctor Frankenstein, AI, robotics or genome research)
appears, indeed, as one of the strongest driving impulses. It is, however, only an expression of
the *reflective thirst* for the coincidence with – by the re-creation of – the original truth. This
original, however, vastly *transcends* the perspectives of *objectivistic illusion* and its possibilities.
Consequently, neither any absolute conquest is to be expected. For such a conquest requires
reduction of whatever *transcends* the *actuality* of *reflective acts* to the *signs* which, nevertheless,
can be grasped within the *horizon of actuality*. In short, it requires reduction and, as the higher
levels are not accessible in terms of lower *distinctions*, the reduction can never happen to be
complete. Collecting the building-pieces and putting stone next to stone never finishes. And "[t]he
stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."[189]

   The suggestions of dissolution, just like the search for *objectivity*, reflect the *thirst*, the search
for intimacy with reality. In either form, such *reflective* projects aim at abolishing the *distance*
between the *actual* and *non-actual* which, eventually is the *distance* constituting the very *reflective*
being. Abolishing it, even if it were possible, could not satisfy *reflection* leaving it alone in a
solipsistic universe.

127.   Being a *subject* of *reflective* thinking, one is also much more than that. *Reflection*, one's *sub-
jectivity*, is not doomed to suffer for the reason of involvement in *actuality* which, after all, is its
constitutive feature. *Externalisation* is not the same as *alienation* in the middle of an estranged
world. It becomes so only under the spell of the *objectivistic illusion* which absolutises the *actual
dissociations*, in particular, of *subject* and *object*.

   Concrete reflection is still *reflection*, it still operates with *actual distinctions*. But there is a
big difference, even if no sharp border, between the two modes of *reflection*. One retains the *signs*
trying to hold on to its *objects*, attempting to conquer time and stop the flow by the spells of its
objectivistic illusion. The other trades control for enjoyment and, merely noticing, allows things
merge back into their element. It does not absolutise the *actuality* of its *signs*, it does not create
an *idol* from its way of thinking, from the *externality* of its *objects* and the associated *precision*
of the most rigid *distinctions*. Admitting its situation, it admits only its own nature; instead of
the impossible attempts to abolish the *distance*, it simply acknowledges it. Only *distance* makes a
relation, and hence community, possible. And to keep the *distance*, one has to be oneself, one has
to respect oneself, also in the midst of one's openness, receptivity and new encounters. Although
reflecting person is aware of something more than the *actual object*, *reflection*'s ability does not
extend beyond it. It does not even extend beyond the *sign* under which the *object*, or whatever
else might be, appears. The surrounding *invisibility* can be made *present* through the *signs*, but
never enslaved. Admission that its only power is over the *signs*, its *actual objects*, won't make
reflection impotent. On the contrary, like all true humbleness, it makes stronger, that is, more
real. Goals remain hidden until they are reached – "What seems at first a cup of sorrow is found

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[189]Ps. CXVIII:22

in the end immortal wine."[190]

5.2.4. Two modes of 'givenness'

We have made occasional references to 'empiricism'. Let us explain briefly the intention behind
such references. By "empiricism" we mean, generally and rather indiscriminately, application of
the principle that "all things that exist are only particulars"[191], that

> whatever can be distinguished *is* distinct; eventually, there are only mutually distinct,
> but inherently indivisible and simple 'atoms'.

Obviously, this comprises much more than what is traditionally called "empiricism".[192] In fact,
"realism" might be almost equally good label, in so far as it expresses the conviction about the
real – independent – existence of particular things. Of course, only *in so far*, and not in the
sense it obtained during the discussions about the universals. As witnessed for instance by the
example of Ockham, "nominalism" may also fall under this heading as it insists on the exclusive
reality of dissociated individuals, for which "atomism" might be an alternative name. The tendency
culminates perhaps in "phenomenalism" with its epistemologically motivated attempts to find the
irrefutable certainty in the ultimate immediacy of the simple data. We may occasionally use such
other labels, but in every case it is the above principle which underlies the more specific meanings
of various names.

From our perspective it seems namely natural to distinguish this general tendency from another
one which, for the time being and in the lack of a better term, we will call "idealistic". It recognises
that "what in empirical science are called *data*, being in a real sense *arbitrarily* chosen by the nature
of the hypothesis already formed, could more honestly be called *capta*. By reverse analogy, the
fact of [for instance] mathematical science, appearing at first to be arbitrarily chosen, and thus
capta, are not really arbitrary at all, but absolutely determined by the nature and coherence of
our being."[193] Roughly, this opposite thesis would be:

> whatever can be unified *is* one; the highest unity is reflected in the laws, structures
> and organisation of the manifold of differentiated contents of experience.

Both theses are stated in an exaggerated form and probably no philosophy has ever been built
exclusively around any single one of them. Often, they might be present within one and the same
system of thought. Also, they can appear in more ontological or more epistemological variants (the
latter would go in the direction of replacing the "*is*" with "is to be considered"). We certainly do not
intend to play the rough terms of such a crude opposition against each other – the actual question
for any representative of any one of them is how far the application of the principle can be pushed
and where it must stop. They only try to capture some general tendencies which can be discerned
either in the totality of a particular system, or else in some of its aspects. The empirical tendency
is to look for the ultimate atoms (whether in nature or in experience) and build everything in a
bottom-up manner from these. (This comes close to our *reflection*.) The idealistic tendency is
to view experience as perhaps differentiated, yet in itself hardly organised matter which receives

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[190]*The Bhagavad-Gita.* XVIII:38

[191]J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* IV:3.6

[192]"Berkeley's nominalism, Hume's statement that whatever things we distinguish are as 'loose and separate' as
if they had 'no manner of connection'. James Mill's denial that similars have anything 'really' in common, the
resolution of the causal tie into habitual sequence, John Mill's account of both physical things and selves as composed
of discontinuous possibilities, and the general pulverisation of Experience by association and the mind-dust theory,
are examples of what I mean." [W. James, *A World of Pure Experience.* I] But also the radical empiricism's
statement that it "must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor
exclude from them any element that is directly experienced" [Ibid.] qualifies – by narrowing the focus to the
actuality of direct experience – for inclusion under our heading of empiricism.

Other examples abound, as do possible distinctions. In the 'Suspended Man' passage, Avicenna says something
like "If it is possible to conceive x without y, then x and y are *really distinct*; each has its own being independently
from another." We do not discuss whether "conceiving x without y" means conceiving consistently, admitting only
logical or also real possibility, merely 'conceiving without' or, perhaps, 'conceiving x without *conceiving y*', etc.
– we only register the tendency. Arguing against Scotus' formal distinction between an individual nature and its
individuating difference, *haecceitas*, Ockham contends: "If, therefore, some kind of distinction exists between this
nature and this difference, it is necessary that they be really distinct things." [W. Ockham, *Summa totius logicae.*
I:c.xvi]

[193]G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form.* Introduction;p.xxvii

structure only, or primarily, through the higher laws, as if in a top-down process of confrontation of the unifying forces (whether of mind or nature) with the lower manifold.

Materialism and idealism can often represent the (ontological) extremes of, respectively, empirical and idealistic tendency. Matter has to be seen as discrete in order to provide an empiricist with the building blocks for higher structures. For an idealist, on the other hand, it may easily become an undifferentiated *materia confusa* which obtains a structure only from the constitutive laws of spiritual or transcendental character. (Recall figure §108.(iii) – its dual could represent materialism.)

129. Both tendencies share one basic assumption, namely, that the lowest data of experience are, in fact, differentiated. This originates from the conviction that at the bottom of everything are *immediate* sensations and that experience is eventually what is or can be sensed, i.e., from the Aristotelian principle that nothing obtains in the intellect unless it was prior given to the senses. Empiricism models this as some basic ideas, impressions, perceptions or other atoms assumed *given* in *actual experiences*. But to access and manipulate it, one has to postulate more than mere sensations. In fact, it seems that the ultimate atoms of sensations are needed only in order to specify mental structures which enable one – subject – their arrangement and control. Rationalism takes over roughly at this point, postulating some 'mental' atoms, clear cognitions or precise intuitions which, at a closer look, also come from experience, though not (exclusively) from sensations or perceptions. On the other hand, it will almost always speak about 'substances', some unitary, even if complex entities, which empiricism attempts to dissolve in, and then reconstruct from, the flux of its atoms. Thus in either case, the 'givens', ideally of purely sensuous but typically also of some mental character, are there as the starting points – the starting points for philosophical *reflection* and, as it always turns out, for whatever this *reflection* is trying to describe. In particular, the 'givens' have thoroughly *actual* character tending towards pure *immediacy*.

This assumption of 'givens' has deeper roots. It results from the posited difference between two primary poles: higher and lower, unified and dispersed, organised and chaotic, one and many. Or, in more familiar terms: subject and object, mind and body, spirit and matter. It is this initial dualism which requires some differentiated or even structured 'givens' in order to allow the two *dissociated* poles meet again. As we have seen, when pushed to the metaphysical limits, both dissolve in the homogeneity of indistinctness.

The problems with specifying the 'ultimate givens' make us attempt to speak in a way relatively independent of what, possibly, might be considered to be such 'ultimate atoms'. This Book has thus described the process which, starting with the *absolute indistinct*, leads to the very appearance of 'givens' in the sphere of *actual experiences*. The fact that *reflection* and its 'given', *dissociated* contents are only result of this process, will not make us imply that they are in any sense 'unreal', dispensable or arbitrary. Appearing for *reflection* does not mean to be constituted, not to mention, created *by* it. 'Givens' are given exactly because they are discovered and not constructed. Only that this discovery, even when true, is not *absolute*. It is relative to the discovering *existence* as well as to the discovered contents.

6   In a few long words...

" The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own." Heraclitus, DK 22B89

This section was supposed to summarise the development in the current Book. However, it has expanded beyond the limits of a reasonable summary. So, probably, it is a bit more than that...

6.1   Separation

130. *Birth* is *separation* from the *origin*, from the *indistinct nothingness*. It is the fundamental, in fact, the only ontological event, the first hypostasis. *Separation* is not alienation, it does not establish a being which is now exiled and doomed to loneliness. On the contrary, only *separation* makes it possible for a being not to be alone. Only by being *separated* can a being be confronted with something else, something it is not. "To be united is divine and good; so whence this

obsession//Among people, that only one and oneness should exist?"[194] The original *separation* establishes the ultimate *transcendence confronting* the *separated* being, and *existence* is this very *confrontation*.

In fact, *separation* is a generic concept comprising the structural similarities discernible in all 131. subsequent hypostases – the second one from the *originally separated existence* to the *distinctions* of the limitless *chaos*, the third one from *chaos* to the *recognisable* world of *experience*, and finally, from *experience* to the objectified world of *reflective experiences*.

At each level, *separation* happens against the background of the previous level, and it happens through the emergence of more *actualised aspects* distinguished from the *nexus* of the preceding level. The emerging *actuality* is now confronted with the background from which it emerged and which recedes into *non-actuality* and, on the other hand, with the non-*actuality* of 'the rest' of the things *distinguished* at the same level. This event establishes a new level; the background withdraws giving place to a new differentiation which will become the background for the next stage.

Separation creates a *distance* which is manifested through *signs* (except for the very first stages, where it is a mere *signification*). *Sign* points primarily to the background from which it has been extracted, and secondarily to the signified *distinction*, eventually, to the *external object*. A *sign* has thus always this twofold direction of pointing towards something and also towards the background of this something. In the Heideggerian language we could say that it reveals as much as it 'hides', it brings forth the *actual* and, by this very fact, it 'veils' the *non-actual* background of this *actuality*. *Sign* relates not only to the signified but is also the means through which the *separated* being *recognises* the limits of its *actuality* and thus confronts the *non-actuality* surrounding it.

Transcendence is what exceeds *actuality*, and *signs* are the means by which the latter is confronted 132. with the former. *Signs* are given tokens, terminal points of *traces* stretching, eventually, from the *transcendent origin* to the midst of *here-and-now*. Although *signs* are purely *actual, dissociated* tokens, their *traces* carry nevertheless the *non-actual aspects* which thus remain *present* around the *horizon of actuality*. *Non-actuality* does not exclude *presence*, and so *transcendence* does not mean any absolute isolation of the poles which one might attempt to overcome on the way towards some coincidence. It means the *distance* which, separating the poles, is a necessary condition of any relation between them. As Merleau-Ponty says, both search for ultimate, exact essences *and* attempts to achieve coincidence (of subject and object) are failed, in fact, misunderstood ways of accounting either for experience or even for the philosophical project. For "every being appears in a distance, which is not an obstacle for acquaintance [*Erkenntnis*], but on the contrary – makes it possible. [...] Independently whether one claims infinite distance or absolute proximity, negation or coincidence – our reference to Being remains equally unrecognised. [...] One forgets that this frontal being before us, whether constituted by us or constituting itself in us as being constituted, is in principle secondary, is cut against a horizon which is not any nothing and which is not itself through any co-constitution."[195]

Primarily, this *distance*, the constant and only implicit 'reference to Being', is the *vertical*, qualitative *transcendence* of the background. Differentiation makes the background withdraw but not disappear; it acquires a new character of differentiated, and ideal, *totality*. Trying to account for the background from a lower, eventually, *reflective* level, one naturally projects into it the character of the *actual* objects. This gives rise to another form of *transcendence*, the *horizontal*, quantitative *transcendence* of the signified – a mere *more* of objects which are not *here-and-now* but *there-and-then*, 'outside actuality'. At the level of *reflective experience*, this was identified as *objectivistic illusion*.

Separation is not a simple, mechanic dissociation; creating *distance* it *confronts*, and thus is also 133. *self-awareness*. To be confronted means to encounter *transcendence*. Encountering something distinct is, analytically, inseparable from encountering oneself: confronting the *transcendence* of '...' means the *awareness* of '...' being distinct from oneself, *eo ipso*, the *awareness* of oneself being distinct from '...'.

This structure is present from the very beginning, from *birth*; the only aspect varying from one

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[194]F. Hölderlin, *The Source of All Evil.*
[195]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible.* Inquiry and intuition;p.133.

level to another is the degree of its sharpness. The primordial ontological event, *separating* a being from the *nothingness*, is the ultimate site of individuality, *haecceitas*. *Distinction* confronts this being with the *chaos* of *distinctions* – the individuality acquires *(self-)awareness* of own finitude. *Recognition* confronts *actuality* with *experience* – *self-awareness* becomes a more confident feeling of predictability, of being at home in the world and, at the same time, of not being the world. Finally, *reflection* confronts one with its *object*, with *an experience* in which *self-awareness founds* the possibility of *dissociated acts* of *self-reflection* which, focusing on the internal, *subjective aspect*, reach towards the *external objects*.

This is the general structure of *separation* and, in fact, the totality of the concept of *experience*. As we have seen, the successive stages bring about a gradual refinement of the *distinguished* contents and of the character of *actuality*. The further we proceed, the more definite become the objects and the more involved into spatio-temporality. This involvement is only a side-effect of the fact that also spatio-temporal *aspects* became *distinguished*. As the *distinguished* contents acquire sharper boundaries leaving more and more layers of *non-actuality* behind, the *actuality* itself becomes more clearly *dissociated* and, by the same token, confronted with *externalised objects*. At the level of *reflective experience*, this results in discovering the *objective* order of the world organised along the complementary dimensions of the *objective* time and space.

The *confrontation* with *transcendence*, the uniqueness of the event of *birth* and, consequently, of the whole *experience*, is what constitutes *unity* – not *totality* – of *existence*. It is individuality irreducible to any 'this' or 'that', 'why' and 'how'. It is individuality established by the primordial ontological event, by the first hypostasis; individuality which, in the face of the unique world, stretches beyond its horizon, as well as beyond the horizon of time and temporality. What makes up this singularity, *haecceitas* is "neither matter nor form nor the composite thing [...] but it is the *ultimate reality of the being*."[196] We will eventually return to this aspect, in II:2 and in III.

6.2 One – not Many

Chaos is a pure manifold, where "pureness" denotes the lack of any internal relationships, the mere heterogenity of *distinctions*. One might claim that it is easier to imagine than the *nothingness* of the *one*. Why do we start with the *one* then? Why not start, as many would, from pure manifold? Why Parmenides and not Heraclitus, perhaps, Plato rather than Aristotle, Spinoza rather than Descartes, monotheism and not polytheism, idealism and not realism?

134.   For the first, *positing* chaos of differences is an act of exactly the same kind as *positing* the *one*. It is neither easier nor harder, it is neither closer to experience nor further from it. It is an *act of positing* – in one case, of the *unity*, in the other of the *totality* reaching beyond the *experience*. If we accept *indistinctness* of the *one* as the *origin* of *distinctions*, then there is hardly even a possibility left for claiming any primordial plurality – any plurality requires a *distinction*, and any *distinction* involves plurality, "for all distinct things are two or more, but all indistinct things are one."[197] 'Two *indistincts*' is an impossibility, and we do not even need Ockham's razor to complete the traditional proof of the uniqueness of the first beginning.

On the other hand, "[a]ll multitude participates in a certain respect of The One. For if it in no respects participates of The One, neither will the whole be *one* whole, nor each of the many of which the multitude consists; but there will also be a certain multitude arising from each of these, and this will be the case to infinity. [...] All multitude is posterior to The One."[198]

One can not *posit* pluralism without *positing* a pluralistic *universe*. Examples might be multiplied *ad infinitum* so let us quote only a few. *Positing* a chaos of differences one is forced, sooner or later, to perform the common trick – start talking *as if* it were one. "*The collection of all* effects is

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[196]J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense.* II:d3.q6

[197]Eckhart, *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom.* (Ws. VII:27a) [after B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart....* p.167] Indistinctness appears as the univocal concept of Being already with J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* I:3.1.2.44,57; II:1.4-5.15 [after R. Heinzmann, ed., *The Medieval Philosophy.* p.232]

[198]Proclus, *Elements of Theology.* §1/§5 [my emph.]; also §69. "But there must be a unity underlying the aggregate: a manifold is impossible without a unity for its source or ground, or at least, failing some unity, related or unrelated. This unity must be numbered as first before all and can be apprehended only as solitary and self-existent." [Plotinus, *Enneads.* V:6.3, also VI:6.11.] In a phenomenological version: "Every genuine irreducible «sphere» of being is an eidetic unity which is *given* as a «background» *before* positing reality [«Realsetzung»] of any entity which is possible within it and, consequently, it does not form a mere sum of all accidental facts." [M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy.* C:II]

itself an effect; hence it is an effect of a cause which in no way is an element of this collection..."[199] Or else "Eternal Return is the being of *this world*, the only The Same which can be predicated about *this world*, excluding from it any prior sameness."[200] James' radical empiricism, with its generous pluralism, starts with something like: "Nothing shall be admitted as fact, except what can be experienced at some definite time by some experient;"[201] But very shortly after we read: "though one part of our experience may lean upon another part to make it what it is in any one of several aspects in which it may be considered, *experience as a whole* is self-containing and leans on nothing."[202] At what 'definite time' is this 'experience as a whole' experienced? OK, let us admit that there may be special *actual experiences*, as rare as they are important, which seem to address the whole – of our life, of our world, of the world. But is 'all my life' experienced only at some 'definite times'? Is it not also experienced all the time, as if, underneath the particulars which furnish and exhaust the contents of *actual experiences*? If it is only a matter of particular *actual experiences* then what makes just these ones so special, so much more important than all the other *actual experiences*? It seems, it must be their content, not mere *actuality*. It seems that they address something special, very special, something which is in fact the aspect along which and around which all the *actual experiences* are structured. *Any experience* is only a part, an aspect of one's life. But a pluralist has always tremendous problem with accounting for the fact that not all experiences are of the same order, not all are pieces of equal value. He, too, is bound to end up with some kind of structure, some 'totality of all causes', some 'Eternal Return as the only The Same', or what not, which either is *posited* implicitly and sneaks in through the back-door, or else leans towards mere associationism (what else could it be in a universe of essentially equivalent pieces?). Or he may turn a bit more rationalist and start discerning some structure in the experience itself, but then he is already on the way out of *chaos. . .*

"Since the acquisition of conscious quality on the part of an experience depends upon a context coming to it, it follows that the *sum total* of all experiences, having no context, can not strictly be called conscious at all. It is a 'that', an Absolute, a 'pure' experience on an enormous scale, undifferentiated and undifferentiable into thought and thing."[203] James, though methodologically biased by his pragmatism and empiricism, remains nevertheless always honest and acute in his descriptions. It is not the lack of intuition but the ghost of a 'pluralistic' universe of 'experiences' which – confronted with the emptiness, unconsciousness and apparent pragmatical irrelevance of such a 'totality' – deters James from deeper consideration, allowing him to confuse it with the 'Absolute' and to rest satisfied with a mere phenomenological description of religious experiences.

In short, considering the chaos of differences, the plurality of distinctions as primordial, one still has to turn it into a 'one', even if one resists making it *one*. Speaking about 'pure manifold' one is already speaking about the *one*, one *posits* the totality of *distinctions* as something one wants to speak about - "for you cannot conceive the many without the one."[204] But this is merely a necessity of speaking, one might say. Yes it is, but it is also what we are doing – speaking. 135.

If one denies the *unity*, and claims merely the 'totality of all differences', then what makes one so inclined to turn it into *a* 'totality'? Is it only because the listeners demand something like that? It may be just the way we speak and use our language, but such 'therapeutic' gestures have hardly any serious appeal. Totality simply can not be thought without a unity, the idea of unity is a priori condition for the idea of totality. One might nevertheless insist that this concerns only the order of ideas and thinking, but that 'out there', 'in reality', things are actually other way around, scattered and independent from each other, without any unity except of being placed in ... well, not *one* world, but just scattered around. To such empirically oriented and grounded suggestions there is one main question: what *multiplicity*? Why not *multiplicites*?

We think that, no matter how paralogical and antinomous, the idea, the need to comprehend 136. *all* things in form of some *unity* (and not merely a *totality*) is more than a mere illusion. It

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[199] J. Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as First Principle*. 3.13 [my emph.; Aquinas, with his insistence on the difference between the events and mechanisms acting 'within the world' and acts of God addressing 'the totality of the world', might be quoted extensively here, too.]

[200] G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. p.338. [my emph.] This Eternal Return is, perhaps, not exactly the same but still very similar to our *chaos*.

[201] W. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. VI;p.160

[202] Ibid. VII:1;p.193 [my emph.]

[203] Ibid. IV:4;p.134

[204] Plato, *Parmenides*.

is a reflection of the *unity* of *existence*, not only of reason and *actual* apperception, but of the individual *existence* whose *unity* is established by the primordial *separation* from the *origin*. It is much more than a mere application of *reflective* thinking in terms of *dissociated objects* to the *totality* of everything. Such an application is merely a source of antinomies and impossible questions. However, the *one* is not a 'one', is not an *object*, and *reflection positing* it as such for the purpose of discourse must remember that. It is not an *object* whose identity has to be established and whose differentiation needs a proof. It is the *indistinct*, that beyond which no *distinction* is possible, because everything *distinguished* enters by this very token the world of *distinctions* leaving the *indistinct* behind. As the limit of all *distinctions*, the indistinguishability-as-such, it is the very essence of *unity* and identity. As the *origin* of both identity and differences, it comes before them and hence cannot be explained in their terms – either we start with it, or else we will never reach it.

137.   The fact that we can not think *chaos* without thinking it as one *chaos*, might be an argument, but it would be *only* an argument, an attempt to reduce something *invisible* to the plain, all too plain, categories of *reflection*.[205] It is not one which is opposed to many and it does not contain multiplicity *within* itself. It is not a Maximum, not any *plus quam ...*, *ens realissimum*, *omnitudo realitatis* – as Heidegger would repeat after negative theologians and Scholastics, it is Being, not *a* being. It is a pure *virtuality*, like a single cell is a virtuality of a living being, like (according to some theories) a single γ-ray is a virtuality of the whole universe. It contains everything that follows – not *actually*, however, not potentially (which is but a form of *actuality*), not 'within itself', but only *virtually*, as the *nothingness* of a true beginning contains all that follows, as the indispensable condition contains everything it makes possible.

       An empirical pluralist, a lover of manifold, is afraid that *one* would take from him the glorious variety of *actual* multiplicity. The liveless monotony of a de-concretised 'one', just like that of an over-rationalised universe of rules and laws is certainly something nobody wishes. But *one*, being the *virtual origin* of manifold, does not negate it, does not oppose it, does not abolish it – it only remains *invisibly present above* it. In fact, as a pure *virtuality*, it becomes *present* only through *chaos*, only through differentiation. It only stays beyond and *above* it.

6.3   To be is to be distinguished

138.   *Birth*, the original *separation* is *the only* ontological event. But do not later *distinctions* have any ontological significance? Certainly they do: to be is to be *distinguished*, that is, to make a difference.[206] This is the ground on which the general association of 'being' and 'independence' rests. Independence, as being *distinguished*, is not a property of something that is – it is what makes it be. This association can be, and was, pressed to the ultimate limits by claiming that only particulars 'are' – particulars, that is, the most definitely *distinguished* entities, eventually, completely *dissociated* ideal substances, prone to enscription within the ideal limit of the horizon of *immediacy*, in a single point. But being is not only the event of the utmost *actuality*; it begins at the very beginning.

       Distinction involves two *equipollent aspects*: the fact of *distinguishing* and the *distinguished* content. Distinguishing anything, we focus naturally on the distinguished content but along with it, we also experience the mere fact *that* we distinguish, *pure distinction*. This contentless and universal fact is the univocal emptiness of the (im)possible concept of 'being'. The latter, the *distinguished* 'what', is the content which can be further refined and underlied, eventually, *actual* determinations. It *founds actual* characterisations of various distinguished things and the conceptual differences between them. These two *aspects*, present and discernible in everything that is, determine the two main lines of considerations on 'being'.

139.   "'Being' is obviously not a real predicate; that is, it is not a concept of something which could be

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[205]This might, indeed, trouble many for what proof, or at least an argument, could we offer? None. If one wants proofs, one better study mathematics; while the only value of arguments is that they possibly may help to clarify what one means.

[206]We can claim here some support of etymology which constructs "existence" (not only in our, but also in the general sense of being) from *ex* = 'out' and *stare* = 'stand', i.e, as 'standing outside', 'being separated' or 'exiled'. This may but need not be made different from the interpretation making existence into 'standing outside itself', for 'being separated' is just 'having outside', and 'standing outside' means also to 'to be (through) what one is not'.

added to the concept of a thing."[207] Indeed, logically, 'being' does not seem to be any real predicate – it is conceptually empty, as is, logically, any predicate which can be applied indiscriminately to everything. But, 'unreal' as it seems, it has the fundamental function, for there is a big difference between 'positing' something as being and 'positing' it as not-being. "It is merely the positing of a thing, or of certain determinations, as existing in themselves."[208] This 'mere positing', conceptually negligible as it perhaps is, expresses the most fundamental fact, "the first act, the first division,"[209] the primordial recognition of being.

" 'Being' is something fixed and restful in being(s)."[210] Being (*esse*) is, with Aquinas, something more than the mere thing which is (*quod est*) and its form which makes it what it is (*quo est*). It is a pure divine act, above the duality of essence-existence and form-matter, which endows a 'what' with actual existence. (Although conceptual distinction had to be maintained, its proximity to *actus purus*, as Alexander of Hales characterised God, is unmistakable.) It is "the most perfect of all things, for it is compared to all things as that by which they are made actual; for nothing has actuality except so far as it exists. Hence existence is that which actuates all things, even their forms. Therefore [...] it is not compared to other things as the receiver is to the received; but rather as the received to the receiver. When therefore I speak of the existence of man, or horse, or anything else, existence is considered a formal principle, and as something received; and not as that which exists."[211]

Duns Scotus pointed out that we can grasp that something is without grasping whether it is a substance or an accident, or let's put it more generally, without grasping what it is. The ultimate Being, conceptually as empty as rich in the existential possibilities of beings, seems to rest at the bottom of all metaphysics, not only according to Scotus. "For all beings participate in Being. Therefore, if participation is removed from all beings, there remains simplest Being itself, which is the essence of all things."[212] It can be, indeed, very difficult to imagine in what sense this eventual abstraction manages to be the essence of all things, for "when I mentally remove all the things that participate Being, nothing seems to remain."[213] There seems to remain nothing and yet, it is Being, and so Heidegger still asks: "*Was ist das 'es' das gibt?*"[214] What remains is the 'first event', the mere beginning, the *distinction* which breaks the silence of *nothingness*. As an almost plain and *visible* illustration consider, "for instance, when somebody, approaching from a distance, causes in me a sense-perception with the help of which I can judge only that what I see is an existent. In this case it is clear that my first abstractive cognition (first, that is, in order of origination) is the cognition of existence, and of nothing less general; consequently it is not a specific concept nor a concept proper to a singular thing." The example illustrates well the intended meaning of *distinction* as 'the first', perhaps *vague* and indefinite, and yet *clear* apprehension of 'something being there'.[215] This 'something' is as yet unclear, its particularity remains still veiled in the barely discerned fact of existence. But its individuality is already fully transparent. And thus, the abstract generality of Being is, in fact, the most specific individuality of particular beings.

Quoting Ockham, however, we seem to be moving in a completely opposite direction. Along this first line, following the intuition of the ultimate *that*, Being emerges as a univocal and distinct principle lifted above and transcending all particular beings. But its conceptual emptiness can

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[207]I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2nd Division.3.4, A598-599/B626-627

[208]Ibid.

[209]Eckhart *Latin Sermons* Ga.III:16-22. [B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart... XXIX, God is one*]

[210]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*. I:20.4, «esse est aliquid fixum et quietum in ente»; Gilson p.368

[211]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. I:q4.a1.ad3

[212]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:17.51

[213]Ibid.

[214]"*Es gibt*" is the German 'There is', which literally says "It gives". One can be led by this German phrase towards something '*that* is' (and gives) easier than by its English equivalent.

[215]W. Ockham, *Quodlibeta* I:q.13. We certainly won't follow Ockham in his insistence on the merely 'abstractive' character of this 'cognition', that is one "by which it cannot be evidently known whether a contingent fact exists or does not exist" [W. Ockham, *Ordinatio*. Prologue:q1]. The example seems, on the contrary, to indicate that it is 'intuitive cognition', i.e., one "that enables us to know whether the thing exists or not" [Ibid.] This latter 'cognition' seemed to require a precise grasp of the 'individual thing', and our point is precisely the opposite – the existence of a thing, its *that*, although actually not preceding its 'what', is nevertheless logically prior and remains *above* all more precise determinations of its nature, character, or properties. 'The cognition of existence' in the example is, perhaps, very 'general' but only in so far as merely cognitive content is concerned. It is, on the other hand, the most specific experience of something particular being there.

cause some worries, especially, for the epistemologically oriented (whether nominalism, empiricism or linguisticism), for which it amounts simply to bare emptiness. Indeed, how can we claim any significant difference between being and that which is, between existence and essence? After all, there is only that which is, 'to be' is necessarily 'to be something': "essence and existence are not two things. On the contrary, the words "thing" and "to be" signify one and the same thing, but the one in the manner of a noun and the other in the manner of a verb [...] there is no more reason to imagine that essence is indifferent in regard to being and non-being, than that it is indifferent in regard to being an essence and not being an essence. For as an essence may exist and may not exist, so an essence may be an essence and may not be an essence."[216] This identification of *essentia* (and *esse*) with *existentia* is a general tendency of the empirically and also analytically oriented philosophy (the difference being only that the former renounces Being (if not also essences) on the grounds of atomistic ontology while the latter for its irresolvable involvement into more specific conceptual and linguistic contexts.) "There are as many kinds of existential statements, as there are kinds of the objects of discourse."[217] Why not follow such a line of thought all the way and say: "There are as many kinds of existential statements, as there are [] objects of discourse." Now, the kinds seem to disappear and we are left with: "There are as many existential statements, as there are objects of discourse." A tautology? Not really, for it reflects only the tendency to dissolve Being into atomic existents, once existence ceases to have any *transcendent aspects*, in particular, when Being is reduced to 'being something', i.e., existence is reduced to essence and, eventually, to the mere empirical fact of distinctness of *actual* things.[218] An almost equivalent formulation might be: "[b]ecause singularity immediately befits that to which it belongs, therefore it cannot befit it through something else; therefore if something is singular, it is singular by itself."[219] Of course, assuming only particulars versus their kinds may be the distinction between nominalism and (some form of) conceptualism which does not interest us. In either case, the tendency is the same: as being means being a particular individual, Being has no meaning except, perhaps, as a totally equivocal abbreviation. Yet, no matter how many *kinds* of existential statements one manages to postulate or even identify, they will be all kinds of *existential* statements.

141.   Where does it lead us? For we do not want to follow the (im)possible variations of these two tendencies, where concepts become mere words or else 'internal' reflections of essences, *quiddities* disappear or else become only visible reflections of exemplars, the eternal exemplars are divine ideas which, perhaps, are thoughts co-eternal with God's being or else are only results created by His thinking, etc., etc. The distinctions and ever new intermediary stages which, like in the third-man argument, seem to be required by the initial dualism in order to create an impression that the dissociated poles nevertheless meet. The *dissociation* is, as usual, that of *object* and *subject*, only here it appears under the aspect where the 'objective' existence seems a bare *that*, while the 'subjective' conception is the actual content, the 'what'.

The two, apparently contrary tendencies, are elaborations of these two *aspects* of the unitary event of *distinction*. For 'to be' is to be *distinguished*. As soon as you *distinguish* something it is; it *is* even if it remains *vague* and *unclear* 'what' it is. On the other hand, if something remains *undistinguished*, it is not even a 'something', it is not even an 'it' – there remains *indistinct*, but it is not 'it' that remains *indistinct*.[220] "To be" signifies nothing determinable because it merely places whatever is *distinguished* in its *indistinct origin*. The copula lends its subjects the universal privilege of participation in Being, of being *distinguished*. *Distinction* is only secondarily a *dissociation* of *a* from *b*; primarily, it is *distinction* of *x* from the indistinct background, and *traces* of this *aspect* mark all *actuality*. The universality of ... – the concept? the idea? the intuition? – no, of the *experience* of 'to be' is coextensive with the universality of *distinguishing*, that is, with all life. Brought to the level of language, there is, of course, no need for a particular form, a particular verb. As Derrida, quoting Benveniste, observes discussing the transcategoriality of "to

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[216]W. Ockham, *Summa totius logicae.* III:II.c.xxvii

[217]N. Malcolm, *Anselm's ontological arguments.* III

[218]We are deliberately ignoring here the distinction between the postulated essences and their conceptual, that is, mental counterparts. This issue will be addressed in II:1.2.2, in particular, §§25.ff

[219]W. Ockham, *Ordinatio.* I:d2.q6 §85 [translated by John Kilcullen]

[220]We will not reduce this to a mere 'formal concept' (an act of mind or a concept merely representing an object), as opposed to 'objective concept' (the represented objects), for this distinction arises only as a consequence of the *dissociation* of 'subjective object' (thought or formal concept) from its 'objective object' (or objective concept). To be *distinguished* is not to be a formal or other concept, a mere mental accident – it is to *be*.

be": "the strangeness is in the facts – that the verb of existence, out of all verbs, has this privilege of being present in an utterance in which it does not appear."[221] It is there, and it is everywhere, because every word and gesture brings in a *distinctions*, while without *distinctions* there would be no world and, consequently, no words.

The celebrated equivocity of "is", of "to be", is only the equivocity of *distinction* – *distinguished* contents may have nothing in common, no common genus, no links of similarity, except for being *distinguished*. The equivocity is the possibly unlimited differentiation of the distinguished contents. In fact, "the difference between the existence of chairs and the existence of numbers seems, on reflection, strikingly like the difference between numbers and chairs. Since you have the latter to explain the former, you do not also need 'exist' to be polysemic."[222] There is what is *distinguished* and, beyond that, only the *indistinct*.

6.3.1. Relativity and objectivity

But wait, is there anything which we do not *distinguish*? Does it mean that *everything* is? Yes, it does. And dreams, and square circles, and Pegasus? OK, we would say "Pegasus is a horse with wings" or something like that. A cheap, grammatical trick would be to point to the "is" in this sentence, but we do not rely fully on mere language usage, let alone, grammar. Of course, that Pegasus *is*. It is in a very different way than the horse out there, but still it is, it is *distinguished*, even much more, it is *distinguished* as something. That it, perhaps, does not have material existence, that it is not a living being, that it is a concept or a mythical figure are truths which do not in the slightest affect the fact that it *is* – we all know 'what' it is, so we should not be so concerned whether it, in fact, is. Even "fictions are from God, because some of them are mental entities, some vocal, some written signs, and all of these are real beings and thus are from God, just as lies are from God, since they are real entities."[223] There is nothing wrong with 'being' of a thought – a thought *is* as much as a horse, a table, or a meaningful relationship.

The dream I had yesterday *is*, the image, the phantom of perfection I am chasting *is*, the illusions I nourish *are*, the feeling I have *is*. It is impossible to get rid of this ascription of 'being' in spite of the fact that we would say that all these things *are not*. They are not because they are *only* my subjective feelings, imaginations, ideals... Yet, to be an image, is not that also 'to be'? That they are all 'subjective' does not in the least deprive them of being because they, too, are *distinguished*, even *distinguished* as these specific 'whats'. They are called "subjective" because they are relative only to me – though, as a matter of fact, now as you have read about them, not any longer only to me! But relativity to a particular person or a group of people is a further differentiation of the *distinguished* beings, of things which *are*. But sure, one usually means something more specific with "being". What?

Some things are called "subjective" because they are relative only to me or only to you, only to one *actual subject*. But this does not help much because one particular *subject*, in one *actual* moment, can experience something *objective*, and do it not only entirely on his own but even in spite of everybody else. So one keeps distinguishing: something relative exclusively to my thought or also to my perception, something relative exclusively to a unique act or to a possibly repetitive series of acts, something relative exclusively to my experience versus something relative also to the experience of others, something relative to an experience of a particular existence or to a particular form of existence (particular human versus human existence in general), something relative to human experience or to the experience of ants, etc. But all such are secondary *distinctions*, in particular, the supposed 'realities' they postulate are invariably of a limited scope: the 'physicalist reality' is threatened by the 'reality of subjective qualia', the 'reality of perception' by the 'reality of feelings', the 'reality of my life' by the 'reality common to all', the 'reality of public consensus' by the 'reality of personal convictions'.

One would like to arrive at something which is constant and fixed, one and the same 'for everybody'. But populism and consensus is no measure of 'reality', although it is certainly the measure

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[221] J. Derrida, *The supplement of Copula*. The Remainder as Supplement... p.202. One can recall here the example of Semitic languages which dispense with the use of 'to be' as copula and express it in the nominative sentences (e.g., "Pegasus winged horse." for "Pegasus is a winged horse.")

[222] J. A. Fodor, *Concepts*. III;p.54

[223] W. Ockham, *Quodlibeta*. III:q.3 (As is often the case, we do not have to subscribe to the details of the argument.)

of the 'reality about which there is a consensus'. As the scope of possible entities – relativity to which would constitute, eventually, objectivity – expands, the content of this objectivity becomes only less and less definite and threatens with dissolving in the *indistinct*. The richness of the possible *distinctions* and relativisations is only the richness of our world. Interesting and often quite relevant as such relative distinctions may be, they are not very useful in determining any 'absolute objectivity'. They lead invariably to positing some form of being as '*the* being', '*the* real', and delegating all others to 'unreality'. For there is only a very small and usually imperceptible transition from the question about the ultimate principle of everything to the exclusion from the reality of everything which does not conform to the 'discovered' principle. Yet a principle which would embrace absolutely everything can hardly have any determinate content – principles tend to (if not must) exclude something. Eventually, the search for the 'true reality', for something which is both determinate and not relative to our way of *existing*, leads invariably towards the abyss of the inaccessible 'reality' of 'things in themselves', and dissolution of everything we know and *experience* in the merely phenomenal 'unreality'.

'Reality' (and it is very tempting to credit the Greek philosophers with its invention, even though they had no word for it), when opposed to anything, in particular to the mind as something mind-independent, becomes but a metaphysical extension of the *actual dissociation* of *subject* and *object*. And then, immediately, follows the search for the infallible, 'real' criteria of 'reality'. The Greek 'fall' from the reality of myths to the 'true reality' of *objectivism*, praised as much as it always has been for laying down the foundations of science and rationality, was primarily drawing the *distinction*, in fact, *dissociating* the 'real' from the 'unreal'. But there is nothing unreal. How could there be? It takes a lot of disappointment to rise suspicion, and then a lot of suspicion to claim that reality consists of two parts: 'real' and 'unreal'.

Everything *is*, or else there is no thing, there is nothing, which is not, about which one could not – in one or another, but always meaningful way – say that it is. "It is and it is not so, that it is not."[224] Once you start pointing at something, you *distinguish* it and hence – it *is*. "Being itself is manifold within itself, and whatever else you may name has Being."[225] Everything is and this seems like another side of the fact that it is so hard to say something which could not possibly make any sense. The equivocity of "to be" is the equivocity of all the differences which we can *distinguish*; its univocity is the universality and univocity of the fact of *distinguishing*.

6.3.2. A note on Berkeley's idealism

144.   We won't let grammar mislead us, grammar pointing out that saying "to be distinguished", we already use the word "be". It is only grammar, besides only English or German grammar.[226] Thus, while to *exist* is to *distinguish*, *existere est distinguere*, so instead of Berkeley's *esse est percipi* (which arises from the same intuition), we would say *esse est distingui*. We should probably comment briefly on the relation to Berkeleyan idealism. For are we not actually reducing ontology to epistemology, being to being perceived? No, we are not.

First, there is a difference between our *distinction* and perception. The latter is the category of *actuality*, and Berkeleyan idealism suffers from phenomenalism and nominalism for this reason. Restricting being to being perceived, he reduces being to pure *actuality* and everything (not only so vehemently criticised abstract ideas) transcending this horizon becomes ... 'unreal'.

Furthermore, the *actuality* involves one into the dualism of *subject-object*, so naturally conflated with that of 'mind'-'matter'. Berkeley gets rid of the latter but the dualism remains effective, both in argumentation and, as we believe, in his thinking. "Ideas imprinted on the sense are real things, or do really exist; this we do not deny, but we deny they can subsist without the minds which perceive them, or that they are resemblances of any archetypes existing without the

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[224]Parmenides DK 28B2. Parmenides seems to have been exceptional among the Greeks in resisting the temptation to disgrace some forms of Being as 'unreal' – "un-Greek as no other in the two centuries of the Tragic Age." [F. Nietzsche, *Nietzsche on Parmenides*. «ungriechisch wie kein andrer in den zwei Jahrhunderten des tragischen Zeitalters»]

[225]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:3.13

[226]In Scandinavian languages, for instance, the passive form does not require the usage of "to be". In Norwegian "Å være betyr å skilles" says, literally, "To be means (to be) distinguished", where the paranthesised (to be) simply does not occur and where the apparently active "skilles", "to distinguish itself", has a marvelous ambiguity involving equally the passive aspect of "(being) distinguished" (as in "ting skilles ..." which is as much "things are distinguished..." as "things distinguish themselves...").

mind;"[227] One could perhaps invent a distinction between 'real' and 'subsisting' allowing one to accept the former and deny the latter. As it happens, Berkeley can accept the real, continuous existence of things subsisting without our minds, only because they subsist in God's mind. This is again the disturbance caused by the mere *actual* perception. For us, a table left unperceived in a room keeps existing undisturbed, because we all go around with the understanding that it is there – it is *distinguished* also when it is not *actually* perceived by anybody.

This, of course, still involves the relativity to the *distinguishing existence*. But here we are touching upon the main difference – existence of things 'in the mind'. "Thing or Being is the most general name of all: it comprehends under it two kinds entirely distinct and heterogenous, and which have nothing common but the name, viz. spirits and ideas. The former are active, indivisible substances; the latter are inert, fleeting, dependent beings, which subsist not by themselves, but are supported by, or exist in minds or spiritual substances."[228] Just like the previous quote, we could accept this one almost without any changes, except for a minor detail which turns out to be the crucial difference: beings which "are supported by, or exist in minds of spiritual substances". The vocabulary of "being supported by" and "substances" should be taken very seriously here, for the point is that things exist as if they were mere accidents of spiritual substances. This is much more than our claim of relativity to *existence*. Things are *distinguished by existence* (or mind, to keep it closer to Berkeley's vocabulary, though not his concepts), but the *distinctions* are made *in* – or even better, *from* – the *indistinct*. I do not draw *distinctions in* my mind while you *in* yours, we all draw them in the *one* and the same *indistinct*. We may draw them differently, but this is another point.

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For things which exist only 'in the minds' to be 'objective', some universal and 'objective mind' (typically and, for a bishop, quite naturally God's mind) is indeed needed.[229] But this is not so for things which are only discovered by, and hence only relative to, the mind. Not only 'being relative' does not contradict 'being objective' but belongs – even, belongs essentially – to the latter. One can not specify anything claiming its objective existence without having first *distinguished* it. And *distinctions* are relative. What concrete things appear (are *distinguished*) depends on the organism and we certainly live in very different worlds than ants do. But the fact that a thing appears for an ant and not for us does not make it less 'objective' or 'real' – at most, only less relevant for us. This relativity does not deprive the appearances of any 'reality' or 'objectivity'. Existing 'in the minds' (whatever that might mean) involves dependence on these minds. But relativity to an *existence* does not require (nor imply) dependence on this *existence*. A daltonist and I can see the same object as having different colours – our perceptions of it are relative (to our minds, including organs of perception). But they are not dependent on, in the sense of being caused or otherwise determined by, our minds.[230] *Existence* does not generate *distinctions*, it encounters them, meets them in the *indistinct* – this is the sense of *confrontation* in the sphere of the *distinguished*. Consequently, what is being *distinguished* are not mere appearances but the

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[227]G. Berkeley, *A Treatise...* §90

[228]Ibid. §89

[229]The 'mind' need not be God and can, of course, enter in various disguises. "That is, there is no thing which is in-itself in the sense of not being relative to the mind though things which are relative to the mind doubtless are, apart from that relation." [C. S. Pierce, *Some consequences of four incapacities.* p.68] They are 'apart from that relation' only because we imagine others who appear in our place with the same capacities to *distinguish*. This leads to Pierce's notion of reality (repeated by other prophets of consensus or ideal rationality), namely, "that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you" [Ibid. p.69], which further implies that "this conception essentially involves the notion of COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of a definite increase of knowledge." It was hardly Pierce's intention to make reality relative to a consensus, that is, eventually to a 'mind'. But, apparently, it did not take Durkheim to replace God with society. Starting with 'minds' opposed to 'reality' and then thinking the latter in terms of a 'totality of things', as is typically the case with the scientific bias, makes the reality appear as an inaccessible epistemological terminus, an 'ideal limit' of cognitive or experimental development. Pierce's 'reality' is the ghost of Kantian 'things in themselves', with their independence and immovability, which tries to overcome the impossibility of becoming flesh in the 'collection of *distinct* things' and process of discovery. Eventual consensus seems to provide a solution to this very impossibility. But do I need any consensus to *know* that the edge of the fiord at which I am standing is real? Do you need any consensus to *know* that the beauty of the view is real? The eventual reality is the *one* which *founds*, rather than is founded by, any possible community. All *distinctions* have their reality *founded* in the *one*. The distinctions between 'subjective' and 'objective', 'inner' and 'outer', or 'private' and 'common', are distinctions *within* the real, not ones founding it.

[230]We face here the possible ambiguity of the word "dependence" which can involve only necessary but also sufficient reasons. We tend to take "relativity" as meaning the necessary reasons – without *existence*, no *distinctions* – while "dependence" as causal dependence, meaning the sufficient reasons or efficient causes.

very things which *are*. This does not, of course, mean that all *distinctions* are equally adequate, or that no mistakes are possible, but truth and adequacy are just categories of relating some (set of) *distinctions* to another, and we will take it up at some later time (II:2.2.3.ii). Things are *distinguished from* the background which remains their *origin*. *Distinctions* do not turn them into mere 'appearances', in the sense of something opposed to some 'reality'. *Distinctions*, and eventually also *reflection*, 'create' things of *experience* (or these things 'subsist' only 'supported by' the *distinguishing* 'minds') only in the sense that other people might *experience* things differently, while other beings might *experience* entirely different things.

But freedom of such a 'creation' does not mean arbitrariness or voluntariness. The *distinctions* made by ants reflect something of the world as much as the *distinctions* made by us. They are all relative (to those who *distinguish*) but, at the same time, fully objective. For what is *distinguished* is always a reflection of the *indistinct*, it comes *from* the *origin* and is made *into* it. Each *distinction* is made *from* the *indistinct one*, and this 'from' for ever leaves the stamp of objectivity on whatever is *distinguished*. Every *distinction* is a *distinction* of Being and hence a reflection of Being, it reflects the possibility of being *distinguished*.

146. So, "there can be no things with determinate natures unless there are true descriptions, and no true descriptions unless the intellect is already at work."[231] Adjusting the Plotinian vocabulary: every thing, everything that is, is relative to some (*distinguishing*) *existence*. The problem with accepting such a claim is the same as with imagining that something which is once *distinguished*, could remain undistinguished. Once a *distinction* has been made, it becomes ineradicable, unerasable – it can acquire entirely new sense, it can be modified, it can be declared 'untrue' or irrelevant, it can sink into deeper layers of *virtuality* – but once made it can not be un-made. This is the primal ground for the *experience* of objectivity (as well as for the not so infrequent insistence with which we stick to once acquired opinions). But this does not mean that we were not involved. Say, this table or the chair you are sitting on, if you died now, it still would be there, wouldn't it? What does one mean by this "still"? One means that if, when you died, somebody else came here and looked, he would perceive this chair, too. Sure – it is not relative exclusively to *your existence*. But if only most primitive bacteria were left...? No! Even if nobody were around, the chair would still be there. It would be there, perhaps, in the sense of a potential *distinction* to be made by somebody capable of it. But if we imagine (let us keep imagining for a while) that until the end of the world the only living organisms were such that the presence or absence of this chair could not possibly make any difference to them, what sense would it make to say that it is there? As Berkeley observed, such an insistence on its being there, independently of you, me or anybody *distinguishing* it, harbours a vicious circularity. First we *distinguish* a thing and then pretend that it did not matter. But insisting on *this* thing being there is exactly saying that somebody might *distinguish* it again, in fact, is sticking to this very *distinction* in the very moment one tries to ignore it.[232] When one maintains that, if humankind died out, the same things would *still be* in the world, one assumes (as witnessed by "still") a human *existence* in that world – departed by all humans – to whom these things still make difference. "For what precisely is meant by saying that the world existed before any human consciousness? An example of what is meant is that the earth originally issued from a primitive nebula from which the combination of conditions necessary to life was absent. But every one of these words, like every equation in physics, presupposes *our* pre-scientific experience of the world, and this reference to the world in which we *live* goes to make up the proposition's valid meaning. Nothing will ever bring home to my comprehension what a nebula that no one sees could possibly be."[233]

It is obvious that when I die, other people will continue living in the same world, that is, among the same things as I did. The world, although intimately *mine*, is not relative only to *myself* and most things in it are *distinguished* similarly by all people. This commonality does not refer to any *actual* consensus but to the fact that (experiences of) such things are relative to the very form or kind of *existence*: they are *shareable*, even if they are not *actually* shared. There is no universal

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[231] S. R. L. Clark, *A Plotinian account of intellect.*

[232] "[T]here is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while?" [G. Berkeley, *A Treatise....* §23]

[233] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception.* III:2

consensus about the *actuality* of the piece of paper on which I am writing just now, but I can not experience it otherwise than so that if somebody else were here instead of me, he would experience this piece of paper in approximately the same way, that is, he would experience approximately the same piece of paper. But the world without *any existence* to differentiate it, the 'objective world' of physics where only things, *objects* or, perhaps, atoms or strings float around, in short, the world 'in itself' is an image, or rather a phantom – it is just *indistinctness*, into which one has projected some selected *distinctions*.

6.3.3. One is

Our uneasiness with such a generous notion of being comes from the expectation that being should be independent, should be exactly that which is *not* relative to our nor any other existence, that reality is *one* and the same for all. This requires a bit more precision: who are all, or else, independent from whom? Certainly, not only from *my existence*, not only from any particular *existence*. So, perhaps, from all *existences* of all people who ever lived and will live. We start suspecting something uneasy, don't we? For why not exclude also relativity to all other living organisms? And then, not only to the actually living (future or past) *existences*, but also to the mere forms of all possible *existences*. If we follow such chains we end with the 'things in themselves' which, unknowable and inaccessible as they are, are neverless *posited* by *reflection* as the ultimate and truly 'real' objects. 147.

Among other requirements for a 'true Being' one listed unchangeability, simplicity, self-identity, and all such were on various occasions ascribed to the particulars which one considered to be 'truly existing'. From what we have said so far, no such things are to be expected. Yet the expectations do have their source – they are *traces* of the *originally*, but always also *actually*, *present indistinct one*. As Hegel observes following Berkeley, and Husserl following Hegel, even the *distinction* between thought and its object is a distinction relative to thought. But (and this is reminiscent of the ontological proof) this *distinction*, although made relatively to the distinguishing being, reflects the fundamental *distinction* of this very being, its *confrontation*: it is relative but not arbitrary, not to say merely 'subjective' – it is not only 'within the mind' (what could *that* mean?) for it signifies, it means something. It is an *actual sign* of the fundamental ontological *distinction*, of the fact of *existential confrontation* with *nothingness*. That this is impossible to establish from purely epistemological, that is *actual*, assumptions shows only that such assumptions are at best secondary. Indeed, the *subject-object distinction* is but the most *actual* form, the lowest *trace* of this *original separation* of one from *one*. The *existence* is constituted by *confrontation*; although all differentiation of the *indistinct* is relative to *existence*, it is differentiation of and in the *indistinct*, not in anybody's mind. Thus, although we may live in different worlds, we always *share* the ultimate *origin* of *existence*. It lies beyond any *actual experience*, it lies *above* all particulars of our lives, but it is the ultimate pole of *existential confrontation*. Most things we are saying may remind about Berkeleyan, or sometimes transcendental idealism, but the bottom line, that is, the starting point is quite different. Perhaps, we might call it "transcendental realism", for the *origin* of all differentiation itself *is*, and it is in the most *absolute* sense.[234]

But: if to be is to be *distinguished*, then *one*, as *indistinct*, is not. It certainly is not *a* being, is not a something. "Being must have some definition and therefore be limited; but the First cannot be thought of as having definition and limit, for thus it would not be the Source but the particular item indicated by the definition."[235] But, as a matter of fact, it *is* – not by being defined but by being *distinguished* as the *indistinct*, it is *distinguished* from everything which, being differentiated, falls under the categories of *distinctions*. According to Eckhart it is even "*indistinct* from all things" and we can agree to that in the sense of it being *esse omnium*, the being of all things, that which is *present* "everywhere and everywhere entire."[236] But this entire *presence* remains nevertheless entirely *transcendent* because, as undifferentiated *origin*, it is *above* 148.

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[234]Of course, this expression must not be taken in the sense given it by Kant. It stands here for almost exact opposite of the transcendental realism which "[a]fter wrongly supposing that objects of the senses, if they are to be external, must have an existence by themselves, and independently from the senses, [...] finds that, judged from this point of view, all our sensuous representations are inadequate to establish their reality." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2nd Division.2.Book 2.1.1st paralogism [A369]]

[235]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.6

[236]Eckhart *Latin Sermons* Ga.III:16-22. [B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart...* XXIX, *God is one*]

all *distinctions*. It is *nothing* because it is *indistinct*, undifferentiated, but it is *distinguished* from all the *distinctions*, and so it "is not nothing, for this *nothing* has a name "nothing"."[237]

149.   So, is *indistinct* only by being *distinguished* as such? Although our point of departure is *birth founding* the *confrontation*, that is, an indissoluble relation between the *existence* and the *one*, the latter retains also primacy in spite of this apparent dependence on the *existence*. "Not that God has any need of His derivatives: He ignores all that produced real, never necessary to Him, and remains identically what He was before He brought it into being."[238]

- The *indistinct* is *one* and the same for all – "there can be only one such Being: if there were another, the two [as *indistinct*] would resolve into one, for we are not dealing with two corporal entities."[239]

- It is immutable – no matter what *distinctions* are made, it remains unchanged beyond and *above* them, as the eternal horizon. All *distinctions* belong already to the world, and leave *indistinct* behind – unchanged, unaffected, untouched.[240] The *indistinct nothingness* does not diminish as a consequence of all *distinctions*, it does not shrink while science makes its progress; nor as God does in Isaac Luria's process of «*tzimtzum*» ('contraction' or 'withdrawal'), making place for the creation through the introvert act of self-limiting withdrawal; nor as the perfect mixture and unity of the elements, the Whole, has to dissolve, according to Empedocles, into the conflict of the active Love and Hate between the separated passive elements in order to make the emergence of phenomenal world possible. Spatial analogies may require shrinking or dissolution of the *indistinct* as the *distinctions* are made in its texture, but these are only spatial analogies.

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[237]Nicholas of Cusa, *Dialogue on the Hidden God*.

In the letter to Charlemagne, Fridugisus of Tours, *On the Being of Nothing and Shadows*, states this argument using his contemporary conceptual apparatus: If to the question 'Is nothing something or not?' one "answers 'It seems to me to be nothing', his very denial, as he supposes it, compels him to say that something is nothing, since he says '*It* seems to me to be nothing' [...] But if it seems to be something, it cannot appear not to be in any way at all." Then, "if 'nothing' is a name at all, as the grammarians claim, it is a finite name. but every finite name signifies something. [...] Again, 'nothing' is a significative word. But every signifying is related to what it signifies. [...] Every signifying is a signifying of that which is. But 'nothing' signifies something. Therefore..."

St. Anselm resolved this linguistic pseudo-difficulty in quite a Wittgensteinian way, namely, by pointing out that "the word 'nothing' in no way differs in meaning from the expression 'not something"' which "indicates that every thing, whatever expresses any reality, should be excluded from the mind [...] So it is not necessary that nothing be something just because its name in a certain way signifies something; rather, it is necessary that nothing be nothing, because its name signifies something in this way." [St. Anselm of Canterbury, *On the Fall of the Devil*. XI] Anselm's nothing, i.e., "'not something' signifies no thing or reality", it "puts aside something, without positing anything in the understanding." [St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Philosophical Fragments*. C.3] But having nothing in understanding is just the right way of 'comprehending the incomprehensible', is the whole *concept* one might have of *nothingness*. Things, that is, *visibles*, and even less *actual* things and understandable thoughts, do not exhaust our notion of reality, *nothing* may still be both 'no thing' and real. Quite a similar possibility appears, for instance, in the formulation like "the unconditioned meaning viewed as an abyss of meaning." [P. Tillich, *What is religion?*. I:1.1.e]

The distinction between the creator and the creation – of central importance for all Abrahamic religions, for the ancient Greeks, Hindus and Buddhists, and one might be tempted to say, for all religion – appears, for instance, in R. Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* as "*the* distinction": everything except God is created by God and so *is not* God. Although creator and *indistinct* may seem to have nothing in common, the creation and the *distinguished* certainly have a lot. In our case, the difference between the two does not depend on any extraneous predicates but is almost analytical... In any case, *indistinct* may help to take care of the apparent problems with the names like "nothingness", or the apparent paradoxes like that "it is the 'unknowable' ", that it is "incomprehensibly understandable and unnameably nameable" [Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:5], that "in every term's signification God is signified – even though He is unsignifiable" [Nicholas of Cusa, *On Wisdom and Knowledge*. II:§29], that "Its definition, in fact, could only be 'the indefinable' " [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.6]. No paradox seems to result from *distinguishing* the *indistinct* from all that is *distinguished*.

[238]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.12. Eriugena expresses clearly the same thought that *immanence* and *transcendence* of God are not exclusive opposites but complementary *aspects*: "the Creative nature permits nothing outside itself because outside it nothing can be, yet everything which it has created and creates it contains within itself, but in such a way that it itself is other, because it is superessential, than what it creates within itself." [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. III:675C]

[239]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:4.1. Agreeing on the conclusion, we certainly do not need Plotinus' argument, and we prefer Eckhart's observation that "all distinct things are two or more, but all indistinct things are one" (footnote 197). Having characterised God in one way or another, one often felt the need to 'demonstrate' that it (He?) must be only one. From this popular theme, we mention here only a few examples like Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* 766B-767A; St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion* 3; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I:q11.a3.]

[240]Stoics distinguished the universe from the whole. The differentiated and finite universe was surrounded by the infinite and immovable void. Only the two together constituted the whole.

- It is thus not only *indistinct* but indistinguishability-as-such, not something which has not been *distinguished* 'as yet', but something which by its very nature never can nor will be differentiated. It is, we can say, the ultimate limit of all *distinctions*, the limit beyond which no *distinctions* are ever drawn. As it happens, *unity* is exactly a limit of distinctions. As will be shown in Book II (especially, 1.1.2 and 2.2.3.i), in the sphere of relative 'whats' such a limit establishes the identity of a thing; here it is the *absolute unity* of the *one*.

- It is the *origin* of all *distinctions* – not necessarily in the sense of being the source emanating them in an eternal necessity or else creating them by an act of free will, but in any case in the sense that all *distinctions* are made into it and arise from it.

- And finally, preceding (in the order of *founding*) all *distinctions*, it is indeed not relative to them being made. It remains *above* them, as their horizon and source. But if no *distinctions* were made, then the only that would be there would be the *indistinct*. It is thus, both as *distinguished* from the *totality* of all *distinctions and* as not relative to any *distinctions*, that is, as *absolute*.

Notice that all the above (except the very last one) apparently positive characteristics are only the characteristics which, we might say, *indistinct* acquires in the *confrontation* with the *existence*. 'In itself' it is just ... *nothing*, or *indistinct*: "until creatures came into existence, God was not 'God', but was rather what he was."[241]

A possible mode of expression: *quid sit* is *se esse*, its essence is its Being, its what is its *that*. We could accept this Scholastic mode of expression but only because ... it does not say anything. It is amazing how much ingenuity went on trying to either derive something from this empty idea or, on the other hand, to nevertheless apply more specific expressions to the *one* which, to begin with, was proclaimed unnameable, *esse purum et simplex*. *One*'s essence is its Being and its Being is *indistinct*. This *indistinctness* captures the primacy and independence of *one*; *indistinctness* is exactly that which is totally independent from any being, for any being appears only as a consequence of *distinctions* which do not affect the *indistinct*. Being (of the) *indistinct* is thoroughly independent from and unlimited by any being or beings. Absence of any relativity makes this *absolute* Being.[242] *Absoluteness*, absence of any relativity, means exactly that as far as it is concerned, it simply is, *esse purum et simplex*, a pure *that*. All 'whats', all specific characterisations emerge only in relation to something else, a *separate existence*.

The *one is* and it is *above my existence*, *above* any *existence*. It is *transcendent*, ultimate reality 150. which *founds* the reality of all specific things and *distinctions*. It is not something which merely 'appears', not to mention mere 'appearing for me'. It does not appear at all: as *indistinct* it can not possibly appear. The constant *presence* of this *transcendence* is what makes it for ever impossible to accept various forms of mere immanentism, subjectivism, solipsism – we know *that* is, and we know *that* the more the less it 'appears' to our concepts and conceptual constructions.

We know *that* with unmistakable certainty but this does not imply any 'what' – we know *that* God is, but not *what* he is. We can say *that* there is, but 'what it is' is already the question about relative, more specific *distinctions*. The more specific and *precise* 'whats' we find in search for 'objectivity', the more they threaten with relativity – in fact, the more *objective* they appear, the more *subjective* they turn out to be. *Subjectivity* is exactly *actuality* and narrowing its scope in order to *externalise* the appearing *objects* does not help the least to reach the 'truly objective'.

Insisting on *that* and opposing all 'whats' with respect to *one*, we are not trying to actually distinguish these two *aspects* which, as already Duns Scotus observed, can not be *dissociated*.[243] The inability to say 'what' is not due to our imperfect knowledge and limitations – it is simply because there is nothing to know about its 'what in-itself', because there is no 'whatness' beyond *that*, hidden from our view behind the eternal veil. Even God in Himself is ignorant of God's essence. This 'ignorance' is exactly the proper knowledge of *that*, of the fact that *one* is none

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[241] Eckhart *German Sermons*, Matt.V:3. [O. Davis, ed., *Selected Writings* 22, J. Quint and J. Koch, eds., *Meister Eckhart...* 52]

[242] Indian counterpart of "I am that I am" [Ex. III:14] is uttered by Krishna: "Know that with one single fraction of my Being I pervade and support the Universe, and know that *I am*." [*The Bhagavad-Gita.* X:42]

[243] E.g., "For I never know anything to exist unless I first have some concept of that of which existence is affirmed." [J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense.* I:d3.q1] Of course, we replace "concept" by 'what', and the *equipollence* of the two is just the *equipollence* of *that* and 'what' in every *distinction*.

of the things of creation, that it involves no *distinctions* which first can provide any material for (knowing) 'what'.

"He surpasses every intellect and all sensible and intelligible meanings Who is better known by not knowing, of Whom ignorance is the true knowledge."[244] "But sacred ignorance teaches me that what seems nothing to the intellect is the incomprehensible maximum."[245] "We do not, it is true, grasp it by knowledge, but that does not mean that we are utterly void of it; we hold it not so as to state it, but so as to be able to speak about it. And we can and do state what it is not, while we are silent as to what it is [...]"[246] Admirable as such quotations may be, they still indicate the assumption that beyond, behind, above, there hides something which we can not grasp, although one can not let thinking of it as something 'graspable'. Treating the *one* as an epistemological limit, turns it into something relative and underlies the *objectivistic illusion*, according to which there is actually something to be known, some 'essence of all things', some 'maximum', which isn't known only because of the finitude of our mind or whatever limitations one wants to postulate. Eventually, such a 'one' threatens with becoming a mere *totality*, a pantheistic 'substance'.

Inheriting the apophatic features constitutive for its predecessor, late Hellenic henotheism, negative theology says that all names are inadequate.[247] Certainly, there is no need for names. But pretending that something hides, that *one* is more than the *indistinct* background, is to project the assumed possibility of *distinguishing*, if not any particular *distinctions*, into the *indistinct*. It *transcends* our being in this simple sense that this being is constituted by *birth* and *distinctions*. However, it is not merely an epistemological limit beyond which no *distinction* is possible. One can always draw more *distinctions* without in the slightest affecting the *absoluteness* of the *one*, without approaching any limit. It is *that* which is never *distinguished*, no matter how many *distinctions* we have made. It is the residual site which always and forever remains *indistinct*. It is *indistinct* and this is the whole and only truth one can and need say about it. This is the only way of limiting it against that which 'delimits' it – the world of *distinctions*.[248]

151.   As there is no 'what' to be known there, as there are no *distinctions*, the *one* seems to be an arbitrary invention. And indeed, it is – if one needs proofs or arguments; any such involve distinctions which never reach *one*. Being *indistinct* means, in particular, that it never appears, not to mention appearing *for* consciousness. Although it underlies all phenomena, it is itself trans-phenomenal. We would probably have to disagree with Heidegger that the "specific element of phenomenological understanding is that it is capable of understanding something non-understandable, exactly when it radically leaves it in its non-understandability."[249] The eventual non-understandable is also trans-phenomenal and we don't need phenomenology to understand something non-phenomenal. In the moment we try to 'think' or 'intuit' (*anschauen*) *one*, it becomes an empty word, a pure nothingness – it refuses to appear. One could try claiming that it is *just this withdrawal* which is the phenomenon of the *one*, that "exactly when the Letting-be in a particular way lets a being to which it relates be, and hence unveils it, it veils being in general."[250] This, however, is not any phenomenon but only an *aspect* of every phenomenon. The meaning of the trans-phenomenal is

[244]J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* I 510B

[245]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance.* I 17/51

[246]Plotinus, *Enneads.* V:3.14

[247]The Christian origin of negative theology must be, of course, taken with serious reservations. Etienne Gilson, in a truly apologetic spirit, would like to detect Christian roots even of neo-Platonism itself, observing that Origen "[s]tudied under Ammonius Saccas, in whose school he perhaps knew Plotinus." [E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy....* II:1.2.footnote 14] Observing such common influences, one should however mention also the persons like Numenius of Apamea who acting in the II-nd century contributed to, if not was chiefly responsible for, the transition from platonic idealism to neo-Platonic synthesis. As every irresolvable issue, we prefer to leave this one to the scholars and speak generally about negative theology, whether of Greek or Christian flavour.

[248]"The ur-object, the absolute is not something yet not determined nor yet not determinable, but something which by its very nature is devoid of any determinations as such." [M. Heidegger, *Philosophical Fundaments of Medieval Mysticism.* Irrationality of Meister Eckhart] In short, "[t]he human mind possesses an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God." [B. Spinoza, *Ethics.* II:47] Of course, there is hardly anything in common between our and Spinoza's understanding of 'the eternal and infinite essence' or its 'adequate knowledge.'

[249]M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenology of Religion.* Supplement to §18-19

[250]M. Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth.* V. «Gerade indem das Seinlassen im einzelnen Verhalten je das Seiende sein läß, zu dem es sicht verhält, und es damit entbirgt, verbirgt es das Seiende im Ganzen.» It is, indeed, like hearing that the "unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth [...] thou must not disclose to any of the uninitiated, by whom I mean those who cling to the objects of human thought, and imagine there is no super-essential reality beyond, and fancy that they know by human understanding Him that has made Darkness His secret place." [Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Mystical Theology.* I]

itself trans-phenomenal.

Except for this small (anti-)phenomenological proviso, we retain Heidegger's main statement about importance of understanding by leaving not-understood, for indeed it "is better known by not knowing [when] ignorance is the *true* knowledge". Its certainty is the same as the certainty of my *existence*, and this has nothing to do with adequate or inadequate presentations in any acts of intuition or apprehension. (This certainty itself might be, perhaps, analysed phenomenologically.) It is the most fundamental ontological notion, not any supra-essential incomprehensibility but *nothingness* – in the fully *positive* sense of this apparently negative word, as the undifferentiated, *virtual origin*. It is *nothing* but "this *nothing* is not nothing, for it has the name "nothing"."

It is not any 'thing in itself' which epistemology has to invent realising its self-reduction to 152. 'objective' knowledge, which immediately threatens with complete 'subjectivity'. It is not any unknowable, inaccessible x. It is perfectly well known, if only we allow ourselves such a (mis)use of the verb "to know": we know *that*, we know *that* is. This irrevocable certainty, *equipollent* with the certainty *that* I *exist*, has only one counterpart – the certainty *that* we will die. These seem to be the only *abolutely* certain things in life. The only things and, as a matter of fact, one and the same thing. *That* which is, becoming *present* through *birth*, is the *transcendence above* the *existence*. To *exist*, to be *confronted* means thus also to know *that* I am finite. (Sorry for misusing the word "know" again. We can reformulate it: to *exists* means to live the fact *that I am not the master*.) One can, in principle, imagine a finite being which begins at some time but never ends. But this is, at least here, but an empty, abstract image, "that which has become has also, necessarily, an end."[251] Beginning is the end – they are but temporally differentiated epitomes of the ultimate *transcendence*.[252]

Separation by *birth founds* thus the fundamental certainties of life. These, deriving from the *confrontation* with *transcendence*, have all 'negative' character. I know that I will die, but I do not know when, how. I know that I can not control everything, but there is hardly anything particular which I could not, at least in principle, bring under my control. And so on, and so on. The lack of 'positive' content in such certainties opens in fact the horizon of *concrete* freedom – it expresses only the ultimate *that above* any 'what', leaving 'whats' to the *actual* relativity of *existence*.

Delegating 'reality' out of the sphere of 'knowledge' to 'things in themselves' is as good as 153. 'bracketing' it in order to save the tranquility of undisturbed epistemological ruminations. One might imagine us doing essentially the same, by postulating eventual reality of some *transcendent one*. However, the intention, tendency and the conceptual unfolding are exactly the opposite. If various members of this epistemic family ('bracketings', 'in-itselfisms', and likewise scepticisms) did not pretend that any certainty, which ultimately is the certainty of *that*, could be found again among some 'whats', it was only because they could not believe that it could be found at all. If we have only access to mere appearances, what hope can we have for any certainty? For *if* it could be found, then it was *only* here, among that to which we have access, our appearances – beyond the horizon of these *visible* 'whats' there remains only the unknown and uncertain. And since 'Being does not add anything to the concept' one could and should dispense with it. We take the opposite stand saying rather that no concept adds anything (of significance) to Being; and the concept of Being (if we have any) is *only* a concept, trying to indicate its meaning: the *indistinct* is not 'unknown' waiting for a successful conceptualisation – it is known perfectly well, as the *indistinct*, as the *absolute that*. It is not uncertain but, on the contrary, the most certain of certainties which *transcends* any relative *distinctions* and, in particular, any *actual distinctions* of reason. Perhaps, this certainty means only that, eventually, everything *visible* is only relative and hence uncertain. Perhaps, but there is more to it and we will return to it in Book III.

For the time being, we do not 'bracket' the 'reality', we do not 'bracket' the Being *above existence*. We only 'bracket' everything that critiques wanted to save for the rational knowledge, everything that *epoché* was supposed to leave untouched – all the *distinctions* in their relativity to *existence*. We do not by this token refuse them real being, we do not reduce them to mere 'appearances' – their being, *founded* in the *one*, is perfectly real, and their 'whatness' may be perfectly *objective*. We only refuse that they are the place of any *absolute* 'objectivity' – except for their being, they are relative to the *distinguishing existence*. And so, with few exceptions,

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[251] Anaximander DK 12A15 [after Aristotle, *Physics*.203b9]

[252] One might probably list some other certainties of the similar kind, like the fact *that* I can not control *everything*, and the like. But these are only variations over the same theme of the *absolute that*.

we 'bracket' their relevance to our considerations. Thus, if we were to stick to the Husserlian metaphor, we do not 'bracket' anything after all: we are not after any *visible* explanations which would force us to 'bracket' the inexplicable; we are not after *actuality* of adequate intuitions, after 'seeing', which would force us to 'bracket' the trans-phenomenal; we are not after any specific 'essences' which would force us to 'bracket' the significance of the fundamental experiences of *existence*.

154.   In short, things indeed are what they seem to be, they are as they appear, because they appear exactly by being, that is, by being *distinguished*. But *above* things there is the immovable *origin*, the eternal source which, in the *visible* terms, amounts to the ever present possibility of meeting something new, finding more. The art of living is the art of drawing the borders and everybody has to find the border between these two *aspects* so that the *visible* is not threatened by the hidden. *Actual* knowledge remains for ever partial and incomplete, because the *non-actual* sphere is not reducible to the *precisely visible* categories. But incompleteness is not any lack, is not any 'subjectivity' to be overcome; when treated this way it is only a *sign* of the desire to reduce the irreducible. The 'truly objective', in the sense of absolutely independent, ultimately inaccessible, beyond and above any *subject* and 'subjectivity' is only the *indistinct nothingness*. But inaccessibility does not mean here that it is completely beyond *experience*, that no *existence* can ever come in 'touch' with it. It means only that the *distinctions* constituting the contents of any *existence* never reach it, that all 'whats' remain forever below the ultimate *that*. *Existence* is in fact defined by the *confrontation* with it and so we know it, for we know *that* it is, we only can not know 'what' it is – simply, because it *only is*, undisturbed and unaffected by anything, as indifferent as undifferentiated.

6.3.3.i. Asymmetry of being

155.   *One* is, but we are very far from saying that it is all that is. The first *distinction* is that between the *indistinct* and the differentiated, and everything that is *distinguished*, the whole 'sublunar world' *is*, too. We won't dwell on various kinds and hierarchies of beings, on species and genera, but we want to register a dimension of possible distinction which will be of relevance to us.

   The fundamental distinction concerns 'being' vs. *existence*. *Existence* is *separated* directly from the *one*, not as its part, but rather an image, in any case, as a *confrontation*. As such, it is not relative to anything except the *one* from which it emerges. 'Being' of all other beings means to be *distinguished*, i.e., it is relative to the one who *distinguishes*. What may matter then is what something is *distinguished* from.

   X being *distinguished* from *Y* means that '*X* is *Y*' and this (one might be tempted to say: relation) is asymmetric. In the most crude sense of a copula, the fact that 'this pen is blue' says something about its being, but this does not mean that 'blue is this pen', in the sense of any equality. We might say that such a predication is not merely an assignment of some accidents to some substance, but actually amounts to *distinguishing* this pen from other blue things, and that this is what accounts for its 'being' blue. But at such a level of *actualities*, distinction has also often the character of a 'distinction against', as when saying that "this pen is not that ball", and we should not attach all too much meaning to the verbal expressions which may easily lead to confusion of 'being' and 'not being'. It may, indeed, be a sign of pantheism to say that *omni determinatio est negatio*, for in such a case we seem to have only one, as if horizontal dimension, where things may be only more or less, larger or smaller parts of the whole, and where they are distinguished only mutually from each other.

156.   Important differences in 'being' depend not on how big a part of some imagined, though unimaginable totality, *X* is, nor against which other particular *Y* it is distinguished, but on the background *from* which it is *distinguished* or, more specifically, at what level of *founding* it is *distinguished*.

   The most fundamental *distinction* is *birth*, *separation* from the *one*, yielding units from the *unity*, *henads* from the *monad*. Being *separated* from *one*, *existence is one*. But this does not mean that *one* is the *separated* being; in fact, it is not, for it is just the *transcendence* which makes the *existence* 'be' – not by coinciding with it but by *confronting* it. (Cf. the remarks on the primacy of the *indistinct* in *confrontation*, §149.) "I am not in them; they are in Me."[253] says

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[253] *The Bhagavad-Gita.* VII:12

Krishna about all the states of created beings. Misusing the pantheistic mode of speaking, one might say that *one* is 'more-than' *existence*, but we understand this 'more-than' rather as the *confronting transcendence*. All other ways of 'being', down to the most *actual* predicative copula, repeat this asymmetric pattern and are *founded* in the primordial *separation*.[254]

Chaos, the primordial element of *existence*, as the first hypostasis, *is one*. But *one* is not *chaos*, it remains *above* and beyond *chaos*, as the *transcendent unity* of differentiation. Speaking a bit paradoxically, the *one* is the limit beyond which *chaos* ceases to be chaos – it is only by being its own limit that something at all 'is'. *Experience*, arising from *chaos*, *is chaos*. This does not mean that it is chaotic, only that *chaos* underlies it, is its *founding* element. And again, being such a *founding* element, it remains beyond and *above experience* – *chaos* is not *experience*, but it may appear as the horizon which limits the *experience*. Finally, *reflective experience* with its beings-at-hand is *experience* but not vice versa; *experience* is the limit of *reflection*, usually called "its beginning". In short, "there is from the first principle to ultimate an outgoing in which unfailingly each principle retains its own seat while its off-shot takes another rank, a lower, though on the other hand every being is in identity with its prior as long as it holds that contact."[255]

The asymmetry of being corresponds to the fact that higher level, *founding* the lower one and thus constituting its 'being', is not accessible to the categories of the lower level. The unity of the higher level is at best reflected only as some ideal *totality* of the *distinctions* of the lower level, but such *totalities* never sum up to yield the *unity* they only imperfectly reflect. Put a bit differently, if '*X* is *Y*', the asymmetry means that *Y* transcends *X*, is *above X*. But at the same time, *X* is 'in' *Y*, participates in it, and thus *Y* is thoroughly *present, immanent*. Thus although, for *X*, *Y* appears remote and inaccessible, it is in fact most intimate and close. Taken to the extreme, every *existence* is *one* but *one*, seen from the perspective of the *actual existence*, is remote and transcendent. "Nothing, however, is completely severed from its prior."[256] *Confrontation* with it constitutes the very being of *existence*, and thus *one* is most intimately *present* around it.[257]

157.

6.3.3.ii. Against pantheism

Everything is *one* before it becomes two. All *distinctions* originate from *one*, and this might make one think of *one* as the mere sum of everything. But Being is asymmetric – every thing is (from) the *one* but *one* is not everything. It is not any sum, not any *actual* totality – it is the *virtual origin*. *Totality* of *distinctions* is only that – a *totality*. It does not sum up to any *unity*, because it does not sum up at all. "Everything" is but an expression we find for *nothingness* in the differentiated world of feelings and concepts, eventually, of *reflection*. But this "everything", meaning indeed the totality of things, points to *nothingness*, their unity which in no sense belongs to *this world*. It is, in fact, thoroughly *transcendent*, for once the *distinctions* dispersed the *one*, to *reflect* it eventually as the *totality* of 'everything', *nothingness* withdrew and remains *above*, unreachable through the categories of *distinctions*.[258] "The First remains intact even when other

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[254]"[P]redicative 'is', used in the context of theoretical explication, has its source in the original 'I am', and not vice versa." [M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenology of Religion*. II:3.§24]

[255]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:2.2

[256]Ibid. V:2.1

[257]Everything *distinguished* is so primarily from the *indistinct* and yet the *indistinct*, *above* all, is still *indistinct* also from the *distinguished*. "In-distinct" can be read as "not-distinct" or even as "not-other". It could be thus taken as an alternative translation for this ultimate name, "Not-other", given to God by Cusanus, in an attempt to express the asymmetry: while creation is other than God, He is not other from it and is, in fact, that which makes everything being itself: "Since everything which exists is not other than itself, assuredly it does not have this fact from any other." [Nicholas of Cusa, *On Not-other*. III:§10]. It has it from Not-other. "But notice that «Not-other» does not signify as much as does «same». Rather, since same is not other than same, Not-other precedes it and all nameable things. And so, although God is named «Not-other» because He is not *other* than any other, He is not on this account the same as any other." [Nicholas of Cusa, *On the Pursuit of Wisdom*. XIV] He is not the same as any other, for sameness is symmetric, while every *existence* and particular being is only by being *distinguished*, by not being *indistinct* – "all things are *other* than Not-other." [Nicholas of Cusa, *On Not-other*. II:§6]

[258]Thus, not even the label "panentheism" is appropriate to the extent it involves any spatial associations of a universe somehow 'contained within' the God (*pan en theo*). Absolutisation of feeling, as it often happens in modern forms of panpsychism following panentheism (e.g., Gustav Fechner, Alfred North Whitehead), or of life as it happens in the organismic analogy of Charles Hartshorne, amount to a conflation of the *transcendent unity* of the world with the *totality* of its (feeling, living) contents – the identification characteristic for pantheism. But to the extent panentheism points towards the intimate presence of God and his *both* aspects – transcendence and immanence – the label might be acceptable.

entities spring from it."[259]

159.   Although *absolutely transcendent* and never *actual, one* remains *present* in everything by virtue of being the *origin*. For as the lower hypostases bring us more and more within the sphere of *actuality*, the higher hypostases do not disappear as stages of a development to be left behind, but remain *present*. In more *actual* terms, we might say that they remain *present* as the horizon surrounding, and lending *unity* to the *totality* of the lower level. *Actual presence* of the *one* is merely as the horizon of distinguishability, the horizon beyond which no more *distinctions* are made and whence all new *distinctions* emerge.

No matter what and how many *distinctions* populate our world, this world is surrounded by the sphere of the *indistinct*. This sphere is not merely something which is not-yet-distinguished but something which is the indistinguishability-as-such. New *distinctions* can emerge from it without ever diminishing its character and scope, without ever violating its *absolute transcendence*, its *original indistinctness*. The more and more *precise distinctions*, entering gradually the sphere of *visibility*, leave by this very token behind and *above* them the *indistinct origin* which surrounds them as a horizon from which always more new *distinctions* can emerge.

160.   *Birth, confronting existence* with its *origin*, preserves the latter – the *existence* is *separated from* the *origin*. But being thus *separated from* the *origin* does not mean to be its part. Neither *existences* nor other *distinctions* sum up to some *posited totality* of the absolute; on the contrary, every *existence* has a full contact with the *absolute, participating* in it. *Participation* (in the current, merely ontological sense) means simply the constant *presence* of *one* in every *existence* – analytically, since *existence* is just the confrontation with the *one*. Yet, as will be elaborated in 6.4.2.i, *one* is *present* only through *chaos* and further hypostases. *Existential confrontation* happens only through these lower levels, eventually, it finds always place in the *actual* situation. The *presence* of *one* is an *aspect* of every *actual experience*, and thus it is always *experienced* but it is never the *actual object* of *any experience*.

Participation has nothing to do with 'being a part', as the Latin etymology might suggest. Parts do not *participate* in their *totality*, they form or constitute it. *Participation* corresponds rather to the Greek *metousia* which means 'to have being after', as we say, 'to be *founded* by'. True, to be a part is an aspect of being *distinguished*, but only in so far as we imagine *objects* extracted from the background, the parts of which they still remain. But a *distinguished* being is not a part of the *indistinct*, it is only a part of the differentiated world – by the very token of being *distinguished*, it ceases to be a part of the *indistinct*. It leaves its 'native seat' and becomes ex-pressed, ex-plicated, in the language of Nicholas of Cusa, unfolded. If we were allowed to see almost exact parallel between our process of *distinguishing*, on the one hand, and *participation*, on the other, to Cusa's twofold operation of unfolding (*explicatio*) and enfolding (*complicatio*) of the divine beginning, then we might also use some of his formulations which caused suspicions of pantheism: "God is not in the sun 'sun' and in the moon 'moon'; rather he is that which is sun and moon without plurality and difference."[260] "Clearly, He is all things, in the sense of enfolding (*complicite*) all things. For everything that in any way either exists or can exist is enfolded (*complicantur*) in this Beginning. And whatever either has been created or will be created is unfolded (*explicantur*) from Him, in whom it is enfolded (*complicite*)."[261]

161.   According to pantheism, being a part is the primordial mode of participation. Pantheism assumes that the background is somehow given as already differentiated. It identifies, on the one hand, the *transcendent indistinct* with the *visibly distinguished* and, on the other hand, this *visibly* differentiated with the *totality* of basic entities. In this respect it is similar to empiricism, and it steps beyond empiricism only by postulating the *totality* of all differences (and ascribing them some divinity).

It takes severe *objectivistic illusion* to make these identifications. If we were to emphasize these distinctions, along with the distinction between being and *existing*, we could say:

   i. to be is to be *distinguished* – and as such to be a part of the differentiated world, relative to *existence* but also, by the same token, not to be a part of the *indistinct*;

   ii. to *exist* is to be a *distinguished* image of the *origin, imago Dei* – not in the sense of being a

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[259]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.5
[260]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. II:4.115
[261]Nicholas of Cusa, *Trialogus de possest*. VIII:19-22

part of it, but of being *founded* by *participation* in it; to some extent, to be like it, in that *nothingness* of *self* and *nothingness* of the *one* are the same, but primarily only in the sense of being its *separated reflection*, an event of a direct *confrontation* with it, §3, p. 1.

We observed in §157 that *one*, being most intimately *present* and *immanent* is also, unlike a   162. pantheistic substance, ultimately *transcendent*. *One* is *present* not *in* every thing but only *behind* every thing; not because every thing is 'its part', but because every thing points to it, being surrounded by the *invisible rest* which eventually leads to its *origin*. Likewise *existence* is not 'a part' of it but *participates* in it, is its image in the sense of being eventually constituted by the *confrontation* with it. Remaining undifferentiated (and indifferent) *above* not only the *totality* of all *distinctions* but also the *existences* through which things come forth, *one* is ultimately *transcendent*, inaccessible to any *actual* look. At the same time, it is most intimately *present*, as the site of every *existential unity* and the ultimate horizon from which everything originates and in which it *participates*. "All these things are the One and not the One: they are He because they come from Him; they are not He, because it is in abiding by Himself that he gives them."[262]

6.4   Virtuality

6.4.1. Two kinds of causes

As Plato, or rather his neo-Platonic version, had been sieved through the Aristotelian categories,   163. the distinct hypostases and stages of emanation became gradually replaced by various kinds of 'causes': the One became the Primordial Cause, the multiplicity of *henads* became a multiplicity of Primary Causes, then secondary causes, etc. Of course, things were not so simple and to reflect the essentially different order of *founding* one had to significantly adjust the four causes of Aristotle. John Duns Scotus for instance, divided the *ordo essentialis*, concerning the ontological order of being, into *ordo eminentiae* and *ordo dependentiae*.[263] Unfortunately, the same words are used for 'causality' in both (as well as other) orders and this may easily cause confusion. Nevertheless, the 'causality' in the order of excellence or, as we might say, of *founding*, is certainly of different kind than that in the order of dependence. With some good will, the later could be said to correspond to usual causality while the former to the hierarchy of *virtuality*, of higher and lower levels of Being. A form of causality in *ordo eminentiae* might then be interpreted as *actualisation* of *virtuality*.[264]

Actualisation of *virtuality* is to be sharply distinguished from the actualisation *á la* Aristotle   164. which only materialises one among the given possibilities.

The *origin* does not *actually* contain all the hypostases – they are present only *virtually*. This, as with Bergson, is the difference between 'possibility' and 'virtuality'. The former contains its realisations in their actual form, so to speak ready-made, and realisation is a mere selection or, in the case of general concepts, specialisation and, eventually, individuation by a mysterious conjunction of immaterial form with matter. But the relation between higher and lower, the *founding* and the *founded*, is not that of the general to the particular, that of instantiation and specialisation. It is the relation of *expression*, possibly of incarnation, and in the ontological form addressed so far, that of *actualisation*. *Virtuality* of *birth* is the very site of individuality which contains only potentially its *actualisations* and *actualisation* is differentiation. In particular, what emerges as its result is entirely different from, in no way similar to that from which it emerged.[265]

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[262]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:2.2 [translated by A. H. Armstrong]

[263]J. Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as First Principle* I:6-I:9. Only slightly different classification of causes can be found in J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* I:d2.q1 [The existence of God].

[264]These are, of course, remote analogies, not any detailed relations. "[W]e may distinguish two sorts of causes, the one divine and the other necessary" [Plato, *Timaeus*. my: III.37] could be taken as the original form of this distinction.

[265]The example, so beloved by the hylomorphic dualists, of a "perfect artisan [who] has a distinct knowledge of everything to be done before he does it" [J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*. I:d2.q1.a2] hardly applies to any more genuine creative activity than a mere construction work following plans and drawings made usually by somebody else. An artist does not have any precise, ready-made 'form' in mind which he so 'applies' to the 'matter' 'actualising' its 'possibility'. Starting a work he will typically have a more or less vague intuition which lacks any precise form. Indeed, "how irritating is this introductory phase when one has to fetch from within the first shape of the work, so awkward, not yet enriched with all the tiny inspirations which the pen will only encounter later on." [W. Gombrowicz, *The Diaries*. 1957:II] The process of artistic work is exactly the process through which this vague intuition *for the first time* finds an actual form and expression; it is like birth and not like causation. "A true

What Plotinus says about 'forms' applies to *distinctions* arising in the process of *actualisation*: "Form is only a trace of that which has no form: indeed, it is the latter which engenders form."[266]

165.   The *virtual origin* is a *nexus* of *aspects* which cannot be dissociated from each other without changing their character. *Actualisation* amounts exactly to such a *dissociation*, giving rise to new elements and forms and, in most general case, to new levels of being. We have illustrated this general process in Sections 1 through 4, and we have seen several examples of more specific *nexuses* giving, eventually, rise to various elements of *actuality* (e.g., *one–signification–sign–sign as a sign*; *one–simultaneity–spatio-temporality*–space&time; *confrontation–awareness–consciousness–reflection*).

There are, though, no clear lines separating one level from another, just like there are no definite limits separating a baby from a child, a child from an adolescent. All is a continuous process without sharp boundaries except those used for the purpose of description. Nevertheless, the distinctions of nature, which we ascribe to different levels, are thoroughly real, just as is the difference between an adult and a child. They mark emergence of more differentiated systems from the prior *nexuses* of *aspects*, of more involved and sharply distinguished elements, which were present only as a *virtual* germ at the previous levels. The nature of a new level can not be explained in terms of the previous ones, it can not even be understood in such terms. It requires new concepts for expressing a more complex interplay of several aspects. In this sense, there is a qualitative 'spring' between levels. Yet, viewed as stages of the process of differentiation and *actualisation* of the *virtual origin*, they are but distinctions of degree.

166.   Most importantly, *all* levels belong to every *experience*, all preceding levels and forms of *transcendence* remain *present*, though not *actual*. The successive stages are not passed to be left behind – they accumulate. "We have not been cut away; we are not separate; [...] we breath and hold our ground because the Supreme does not give and pass but gives on for ever, so long as it remains what it is."[267] Results of earlier *separations* are gathered underneath the later ones. Beyond the actual horizon of each relation, there remains the background – not only as merely 'more objects' of the same kind, but as something truly inaccessible to *this new* form of relation, as an "indefinite murmur of being"[268] under the newly emerged, newly differentiated, visible surface of things.

This means that every *actuality* remains involved in the *nexus* from which it emerged and interwoven with the other *aspects*. Even if, at the *actual* level, the *aspects* have been completely *dissociated*, the *presence* of the whole *nexus* is marked by a *trace* which, usually, takes on the form of a relation between the *dissociated* and substantialised entities (e.g., the 'relation' of *meaning*

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artwork emerges «from the artist» in an arcane, mysterious and mystical way. Detached from him, it becomes an independent live, a personality..." [W. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. VIII] Whether this happens during the actual performance of the work of art, or else in advance, does not matter nor does it change the basic structure of *actualising* a *virtuality*, rather than 'realising' a 'possibility'. "[T]he artist himself goes to back, after all, to that wisdom in Nature which is embodied in himself; and this is not wisdom built up of theorems but one totality, not a wisdom consisting of manifold detail co-ordinated into a unity but rather a unity working out into detail." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:8.5] The insistence on plain *visibility* in search of explanations can not admit such mysteriously *virtual* elements. It pervades all attempts at reductions, the most recent one being that of thought to its expression. "What happens when we make an effort – say in writing a letter – to find the right expression for our thoughts? [...] Now if it were asked: «Do you have thought before finding the expression?» what would one have to reply? And what, to the question: «What did the thought consist in, as it existed before its expression?»" [L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:335] The latter question can be, indeed, hard to answer *precisely*, but this need not imply negative answer to the former. The lack of *actual* linguistic expression need not mean the lack of any expression. The very *effort* to find *the right expression* is itself an expression of some *presence*.

A 'possibility' is a category of *actuality*, it is something definite and *actual*, even if only potentially. *Virtuality* should be distinguished not only from 'possibility', but even from latency, which is a kind of middle notion. Latency does not contain a ready-made result of its future actualisation and in this it resembles *virtuality*. But it has only one, or very few, possible actualisation(s), so that these can be determined and predicted in advance. Thus, like 'possibilities', latency moves within the determinations of *actuality*.

[266]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:7.33. Although Plotinian emanations follow some principle of similarity, one should not confuse that with any kind of causality. Commenting on V:9.2 "What then is it which makes a body beautiful?" a scholar remarks "I take here *to poiesan* as meaning 'the principle responsible for the existence of an instantiated character in its bearer', which amounts to excluding both the meaning of efficient cause – in so far as this involves deliberation and change – and the one of creative cause – in so far as this conveys the idea of a beginning out of nothing. None of these meanings fits well, with the Plotinus' account of the causality of the intelligible principles." [C. D. Costa, *Separation and the forms: a Plotinian approach*. II:footnote 29] Thus, both emanations and our 'emergence from *virtuality*' are quite distinct from causality.

[267]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.9. Likewise, albeit a bit metaphorically, the fruit contains in itself the seed from which it arises: "the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself [...] the fruit of a tree yielding seed" [Gen. I:11/I:29]

[268]E. Levinas

between the abstract *sign* and the signified, which is the *trace* of *sign*; the relation *after* which is the *trace* of the *unity dissociated* into *subject* and *object*; the objective space and time 'relating' distinct 'places' and 'nows' as the *traces* of *spatio-temporality*). Something similar to a *trace* was called by James a "conjunctive relation".[269] The fact that X appears (always) *with* Y shows the relation of 'withness' which is as real an element of experience as are X and Y. The fact that, e.g., knower and known always go together, that continuous transition involves a very close, inner connection between its phases, are to be taken as facts of experience showing "different degrees of intimacy". The degree of intimacy might be taken as the inverse of the degree of *dissociation*, though James would not ascribe to it ontological priority we ascribe to *nexuses*. A more genuine analogy may be found in Duns Scotus' *distinctio formalis*: the 'formal distinctions' are distinctions between *aspects* which, although formally distinguishable and truly distinct, remain really inseparable.[270] It is equally crucial to us to keep the *trace* of the *nexus* from which all *aspects* emerge, as it was for Scotists to stick to the unitary reality of formally distinguished aspects. The difference here may concern the fact that, in our case, differentiation and even *dissociation* does take place and may have significant consequences: only by differentiation can a *nexus* give rise to something new, staying however unchanged and the same above its differentiated contents.

Nexus is not a term of explanation, for Cartesian explanations are its exact opposites; it does not provide sufficient reasons nor efficient causes. It is the term of the origin, indicating only that some things go together, not in a mere 'togetherness', but in a most intimate and original closeness – even if we can *dissociate* them and *posit* them as independent entities, they remain inseparably bound together by their origin in the same *nexus*. *Nexuses* are like *logoi spermatikoi* of Stoics, the 'rational seeds' of active matter which, after every turn of the Great Year when cosmos has again dissolved in the elemental fire, *ekpyrosis*, initiate its regeneration always following their immanent principles of growth. Commenting on Parmenides' poem, a scholar remarks: "Parmenides creates here the impression of the archaic argumentation in which, once the system and the convictions are given, the premises and conclusions tend to appear in the presentation as merely put next to each other."[271] *Nexus* is the central element of such an archaic understanding which does not attempt to *dissociate* things and make them more *precise*, but rather to keep them as *vague* as they originally appear in the barely differentiated but as-yet-not-*dissociated* mixture of mutual dependencies, "opposites that still are not opposed."[272] The ultimate *nexus*, "[t]he One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent existence; for in a way they do occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but they will be."[273]

The series of drawings below captures some of the essential aspects of our development. We should speak here in three dimensions, with plane representing the *one* and sphere the developing *existence* but, for simplicity, let us draw it in two dimensions.[274]

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[269] W. James, *A World of Pure Experience*

[270] They are not, however, mere distinctions of reason alone, *distinctio rationis tantum*, which Scotus considers to be *caused* by the reason as, say, the distinction between a definition and the thing defined. Thus, for instance, soul was formally distinguished into its faculties, but even God could not posit will as something existing without soul and its other faculties. A predecessor of this idea can be discerned in Plotinus' hierarchy of (the concepts of) numbers. On the one hand, (the lowest) numbers stand for mere quantity: "You take one thing with another [...] a dog and a man, or two men; or you take a group and affirm ten, a decad of men: in this case the number affirmed is not a Reality, even as Reality goes in the sphere of sense, but is purely Quantity." On the other hand, there are true and essential numbers which precede and found their quantitative applications: for "the case is different when you consider one man in himself and affirm a certain number, duality, for example, in that he is at once living and reasoning.[...] this is another kind of number; number essential; even the duality so formed is no posterior; it does not signify a quantity apart from the thing but the quantity in the essence which holds the thing together." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:6.16]

[271] G. Calogero, *Studi sull'eleatismo*. [«In der Tat erweckt Parmenides hier den Eindruck des archaischen Argumentierens, wo die Prämissen und die Folgerungen, wenn das System und die Überzeugung einmal da sind, dazu neigen, in der Exposition bloß nebeneinandergestellt zu werden.»]

[272] Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:6.3

[273] Ibid. V:2.1 [translation of A. H. Armstrong]

[274] As usual, one should be careful with not pushing such analogies too far where they necessarily break down. However, they can often be quite useful, if only taken with a bit of salt.

0) ———————————————————————————

1) —————————————————•—————————————————

The line 0) represents the *indistinct one* and the point • in 1) the *birth*. The *born* being begins to 'grow' which is represented by the gradually larger circles. The main analogy concerns some properties of this, so called stereographic projection, which become effective in the moment the point turns into a circle (for instance in 2).

2)

3)
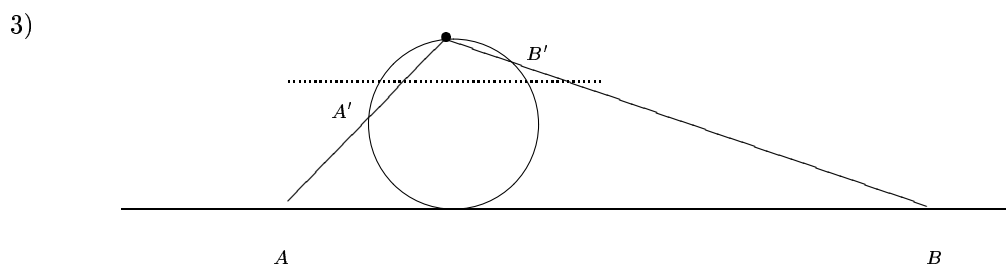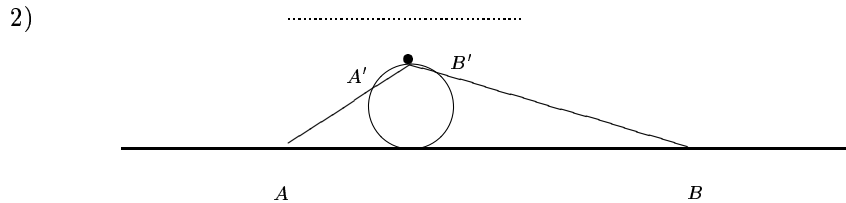
There is, namely, a one-to-one correspondence between *all* the points on the infinite line and all the points on the circle. The mapping is obtained by, starting with a point on the line, say A, drawing an imaginary line to the pole of the circle marked with •. The point where this line intersects the circle, A', is the image of A. All the different points of the infinite line will thus be mapped to different points on the finite circle and vice versa. The point at which the circle touches the line will be mapped to itself. The points close to it will be relatively exactly mapped on the lowest part of the circle. The further away from the circle the points lie on the line, the 'denser' will they be mapped to the points closer to the pole •.

The pole •, the 'origin' is, too, an image of something originating from the line. Of what? Of its infinity. Two lines are parallel if, being in the same plane, they do not intersect. Put in a somehow more abstract language: two lines (in the same plane) are parallel iff they intersect in infinity. The further from the circle we move, the closer to the 'origin' the images of the points will be; the line determining the image B' of B, as B moves toward infinity will be 'more and more parallel' to the bottom line. The two lines: the bottom one and the one parallel to it and touching the circle at its top pole, will intersect in infinity. The 'origin', reflecting the so called "point in infinity", is thus the image of the infinity of the line on the finite (but unlimited) figure of the circle.[275]

2) represents (an early) stage of *experience* with *chaos* lying somewhere in-between 1) and 2), one could say, immediately after 1), when the circle is still very small.

The short dotted line corresponds to the level at which *actuality* is constituted as *distinguished* from *non-actuality*. 3) represents the stage of *reflective experience*. The circle became big enough to cross this line which now marks two spheres: what lies below it (e.g., A') represents the *actual* and what lies above (like B') the non-*actual*, and eventually the *non-actual*, aspects of *an experience*.

What lies on the circle 'under' the dotted line represents the *actuality* which we can also characterise as simultaneity. With respect to 2) this means that all the *distinctions*, all the images on the circle are simultaneous. Time has not begun to flow and all *distinctions* still coexist in a

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[275]"The soul is not a circle in the sense of the geometric figure but in that it at once contains the Primal Nature [as centre] and is contained by it [as circumference], that it owes its origin to such a centre and still more that the soul, uncontaminated, is a self-contained entity." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.8]

manner similar to the *chaotic* co-presence. At 3) the simultaneity becomes limited to the *actual* contents, to the *horizon of actuality*.

Imaging further 'growth' of the circle, we would soon reach the stage where the *actual* part is almost negligibly small compared to the non-*actuality* above it.   168.

We can also point out how the *origin* – the pole, and the *chaos* of *distinctions* – the 'dense' images of the remote points compressed close to the pole, withdraw during the 'growth' further and further away from the *actuality*: the *distance* between the two is marked by the growing number of *distinctions* which separate them, the points on the circle between the dotted line of *actuality* and the pole •.

Finally, imagine the circle 'moving' along the bottom line. As the circle in 3) 'moves' to the right, the image B' of the point B will 'slide down' the circle – from its presence up there, close to the 'origin', and entering at some moment the *horizon of actuality*, when also the actual point B on the line gets close enough. (Eventually, if the circle stops at the point B, the two would coincide.) This could be taken as a picture of the process of *actualisation* which 'pulls' the vague, unclear image B' out of the compressed density close to the *origin* and isolates it in sharper and sharper form as it becomes *actual*.[276]

The *actual experience* is thus a juxtaposition of the *actual* contents of the line (close to, or under the circle, like A in 3) *and* the *traces* of these contents as they enter the sphere of actuality on the circle 'from above' (A' in 3). This goes equally well with the *Gestalt*-like psychology of perception, with the 'filling in' of the unperceived aspects by the 'mind', as well as with the deeper phenomena of *vague* anticipation and foreknowledge, things and events which are, consciously or subconsciously, anticipated and which are as much reflection of the approaching events as of the psychic and intellectual structure of the person who happens to be receptive to this kind of experiences. The *traces* are what connects the *actuality* with its non-*actual*, and ultimately non-*actual* and *invisible* roots.

Let us push this analogy just one step further. During a finite 'life time', the circle will traverse only a finite portion of the line. Traversal corresponds to gathering the *actual experiences*. Thus we mark two extreme points on the line L and R – the limits of the *actual experiences* the circle ever may have. The drawing 4) below illustrates the situation when the circle is on the L extreme – the image L' is on the edge of the *horizon of actuality*. (The dotted line of *actuality* is adequately lowered indicating the 'growth' of the circle. L' coincides now with the point of intersection of the circle and this line.) The points lying on the circle above it, that is between L' and the pole, will never enter the *horizon of actuality* (because the circle can move only to the right).   169.
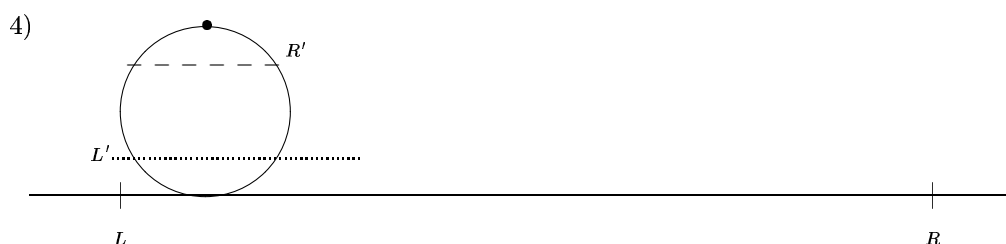
The point R' is the current image of the other extreme R. The points on the circle lying (clockwise) between L' and R' are those which never will be images of something within the *horizon of actuality* on the line – their pre-images lie either to the left of L or to the right of R. Now, as the circle moves towards this other extreme point R, R' will 'slide down' reaching, eventually the edge of the *horizon of actuality* (symmetric to the current L'), while L' will 'slide upwards' reaching the point opposite to the current R'. These two images, the current R' and the analogous position for L' obtained when the circle moves to the R extreme, induce the sphere which is marked with the dashed line. This sphere represents (relatively to the circle, not to its position on the line nor to the line itself) the part of the circle which never corresponds to any *actual experience*. It

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[276] Of course, technically, the image B' is equally "clear", no matter how close to the pole it is. By "vagueness" here we should understand the density of the images which are closer to the pole ("what is closer to the *one*, is lesser with respect to quantity" [Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §179]), as opposed to their 'more adequate' representations, the closer they are to the point where the circle touches the line.

is the most condensed collection of the images originating beyond the limits of ever experienced *actualities* between L and R.

170.   The *objectivistic illusion* ignores, if nothing else, at least this part. It bases its understanding exclusively on the fact that anything between L and R can be given in *an actual experience*. This is then extrapolated beyond these limits. Now, there need not be anything wrong with such an extrapolation. If this (or some other) circle moved beyond L or R, it would encounter new *actualities*. It is hard to dispute "that the matter of the heaven does not differ from that of the earth; and that even if there were countless worlds in all it would be impossible for them not to all be of one and the same matter."[277] This observation (or rather, postulate), founding the scientific attitude, marks the sharpest break with the whole tradition which, in its apparent 'objectivism' and lack of explicit 'subject', had never managed to disregard the fact that all human considerations are made from some *actual* position, are made from within a horizon which is as variable as it is *absolute*. Fruitful in *objectivisitic* matters as such an abstraction might be, pretending that there is no designated place and urging one to view things as if one were simulateneously at all places, it simply deprives one of *the* place to which it always will try and never will manage to return. Its inexcusable mistake lies in ignoring the *concreteness* of human place which is not the mere *actuality* of *hic et nunc* but the ever present sphere of the essential *non-actuality* (above the dashed line).

As we travel by car, or even better by carriage, the speed with which various objects pass by is inversely proportional to our distance from them: the close ones pass by very quickly, those which are not so close much slower, and those which are so far away as to be almost indiscernible seem also to remain practically motionless. New impressions and things emerge from beyond the horizon but what remains constant and unchangeable through the whole journey is, if nothing else, the simple fact of this inverse proportionality *as well as* the very presence of the horizon. To claim that beyond the horizon there are things passing by as quickly as those closest to us is right only if one has already placed oneself there. Such a placement, however, is a displacement – it falsifies the very character of the experience which is always surrounded by the immovable horizon reflected as the most intimate center, the *trace* of *birth*, the point in infinity.

The illusion pretends that there is no horizon. It attempts to grow the circle to infinity in which case, in a truly Cusanus-like unimaginable fashion, the circle would become the line itself, coinciding with it at every point, comprising everything within its apparent 'actuality'. (Let us not even ask what would happen with the pole and 'all the rest' of the circle.) We need not say that such an operation not only does not help to understand the finitude of the circle – it also creates a confused mixture of this finitude and the infinity of the line, completely obliterating their respective character and, consequently, their *confrontation*.

6.4.2. What makes One differentiate?

"[I]f we follow the theologians who generate the world from night, or the natural philosophers who say that 'all things were together', the [same] impossible result ensues. For how will there be movement, if there is no *actually existing cause*? Wood will surely not move itself – the carpenter's art must act on it; nor will the menstrual blood nor the earth set themselves in motion, but the seeds must act on the earth and the semen on the menstrual blood."[278] The 'analogical modeling' – a typical example of *objectivistic illusion* – is transparent here. If one posits *one* as some 'one' different from 'another', as a 'being' among 'beings' only raised (in some strange way) above the differentiation – the question, implying an irresolvable antinomy, makes no sense. But *one* is nothing of this sort; the figure in the previous section should also illustrate the inadequacy of the question. Nothing makes *one* differentiate, because *one* is the for ever undifferentiated, the *indistinct*. The answer to the question "Why has the Primal not remained self-gathered so that there be none of this profusion of the manifold which we observe in existence and yet are compelled to trace to that absolute unity?"[279] is thus simply: it *has remained* so self-gathered. Yet, it is the *origin* of all the *distinctions*, so one may still wonder.[280] Let us therefore reiterate a few points

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[277]R. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*. II:22
[278]Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. XII:6 [my emph.]
[279]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:1.6
[280]Plotinus' answer concerning how the One engenders the first hypostasis, the Intellectual-Principle (or intellect), culminates in the passage: "Simply by the fact that in its self-quest it has vision: this very seeing is the Intellectual-

related to this question, which will also clarify our debts to neo-Platonism and evolutionism.

6.4.2.i. Virtual co-presence

Our starting point is not *one* 'in itself' – it is *birth*, the primordial *confrontation* of *existence* and 171.
one. The precedence of levels concerns the relation of *founding*: indeed, an ontological relation,
but not in the sense of the *founding* element having existence before and independent from the
founded ones, but only in the sense of not being relative to the *distinctions* of and between these
lower, *founded* elements.

In so far as we can legitimately speak about the *one*, it is not the *one* 'in itself' (nor 'for itself'),
but only its *presence*, that is, its *transcendence confronting existence*.[281] It is a pure *virtuality*, a
background behind the *chaos* – it has no *presence* except through differentiation, staying always
above it. Although it is the first, it is inseparable from the second; although it is *one*, it emerges
only through the *chaos* of many. The unchangeable, eternal Platonic Being is not the opposite
of temporality, becoming and impermanence; the two do not constitute disjoint and completely
dissociated ontological spheres – they are only the two extremes of the continuous line stretching
from the *origin* to every, most minute *immediacy*, the extremes between which *existence* unfolds.
We should never *dissociate virtual* elements (whether *aspects* of one *nexus* or levels of one *trace*)
and consider them 'in themselves', as separate entities. They have meaning only in connection
with each other, only when seen in the unity of the process in which they are involved. "Here
conspires with There and There with Here [...] And since the higher exists, there must be the
lower as well. The Universe is a thing of variety, and how could there be an inferior without a
superior or a superior without an inferior? We cannot complain about the lower in the higher;
rather, we must be grateful to the higher for giving something of itself to the lower."[282]

Forgetting this *virtuality*, one quickly gets involved into antinomies of the kind: if the *one* is
really 'one', then there is nothing which can affect its differentiation; but if there is something
which can do that, than it cannot be the *one* itself, and so the *one* is not 'one'. This is precisely
the form of antinomy we have seen in 5.2.3. The question assumes the differentiated world of
things, concepts, principles, reasons and, at the same time, *posits* the *one*, or rather 'one'. And
then it tries to apply the *reflective* categories of the differentiation back to their *origin*, as if *one*
was 'one', a *dissociated object* which, analytically, means one among many. "You cannot take
reality to pieces and then see how once more it can be combined to make reality."[283]

But, of course, the *one* is not 'one'. *Birth* is creation, not only of the *born existence* but
also of the world, or of the *nexus* of the world. In these antinomous terms, the *one* might be
taken as the state of *this* being and its world before it was *born*. But we do not want to multiply
unnecessary antinomies. *One* is the *transcendent* pole of the event of *birth*. It is the *existence*
which differentiates. And the more it does so, the more relative the *distinctions* are to this *existence*
– differentiation is the expression of the sensuous mechanism, nervous system, needs, abilities, life
style, *reflections*, etc. of this being. The world created with the *birth* of an ant is different from
the world created with the *birth* of a human being. Even worlds created with *births* of different
human beings are different.

The *birth*, the *separation* from the *one*, is the very individuality, *haecceitas* of the *existence*.
The rest is the differentiation of life – if you want, development of the embryo.

This probably does not sound like a satisfactory metaphysical principle. But we are not trying 172.
to construct abstract metaphysics. We are interested in philosophical anthropology for which the
starting point can only be the *concreteness* and uniqueness of human *existence*. The question
about the principle of *one*'s differentiation is the same as "Why is there something rather than
nothing?" which we referred in §11 to the definition of *existence* as the *confrontation* and *existential*

Principle." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:1.7] Unfortunately, scholars can not figure out and agree whether "its" refers to
the One or to the Intellectual-Principle which would make rather quite a bit of a difference. (A good account of
interpretations and positions is given in C. D'Ancona, *Traditions of Platonism*.) We will continue with only loose
Plotinian associations.

[281] Only in this sense the double meaning of the Greek *arche* applies to *one*: it is the 'origin' from which everything
emerged *and* the 'principle' governing all, not in any specific sense but merely as the constant and always the same
presence surrounding – and penetrating – every *actuality*.

[282] Plotinus, *Enneads*. III:3.6-7

[283] F. H. Bradley, *On truth and copying*. p.38

differentiation arising with *birth*. The ultimate *nexus* of *birth* is reflected in the archetype of a seed or egg, like that which, according to Aristophanes, Nyx (Night) laid in Erebus (the Darkness of the Underworld) and from which, in due time, Eros (according to some versions, the very first of gods) was born; or else like that which, according to Basilides' gnosis, was deposited by God before generating a series of beings and eventually the visible universe, which as "a germ, pregnant with hot and cold, separated itself off from the eternal, whereupon out of this germ a sphere of fire grew..."[284]

If one definitely wanted to insist on a metaphysical principle of differentiation, then let us use a more modern image: Bergson's abstraction of *elan vital* – the driving force of creative differentiation. We could say that *one* is the name (as good as *nothingness* or *Being*) given to the *original virtuality* of life, and "that life will at once establish in it [matter] a primary discontinuity, expressing the duality of need and of that which must satisfy it."[285] Life will at once establish *distinctions*, life *is* the force of distinguishing. The first primitive would then be, instead of the *one*, the 'force of differentiation'.[286] But this force has to start somewhere, so take also the 'pure virtuality' (which, to begin with, should be the same as the force itself). In principle, we won't object.[287] The *one* is not a dead 'one' which awaits (in time!?) for some external force to breath life into it, to turn it into 'many'; it is not a 'potentiality' of formless matter which needs additional forms and all kinds of causes or motions to join them and turn into *actuality*. The *one*, as *indistinct*, is *pure virtuality* of possible *distinctions*. In particular, although it can be *posited* by *reflection* as a kind of 'object', it is *present only* through differentiation which is an inseparable part of *existential confrontation* with *one*. This differentiation establishes, however, another level of Being, leaving *one* untouched and inaccessible. The *one* "rests by changing."[288] *One* taken as a metaphysical (meta)principle would thus be the force of 'bearing' *existences* – with both connotations of giving birth and support. All the rest of the process of differentiation is relative to such events of *confrontation*.

6.4.2.ii. Birth as mystery vs. birth in time

173.   Now, since *birth* is our starting point then, as the first moment of creation, it must remain a mystery. And so it does. But this is a mystification! We know perfectly well what birth is and how it finds place in the course of the world, of the objective world. Why would one try to obscure such a common event?

Speaking (and thinking) *objectively*, you, like everybody else, are just an accident of the world, of the *objective* world... Indeed, but this is as true as it is uninteresting, or let's only say, existentially irrelevant. You are an element of the *objective* world but only in so far as you view yourself as an *object*. This 'object' seems so unclear, indeterminate and undefinable, that one hardly needs arguments against such a reduction. Our exposition in this Book amounts also to the claim that it is just that: a reduction. From such an *objectivistic* perspective one can then learn nothing about oneself – at best, only something about one's *objective* aspects. Looking all the time for the ultimate atoms which would explain everything, it only finds ever new 'whats' and suspects, if not knows perfectly well, the partiality and insufficiency of constructions starting from them. The explanations never reach any bottom, remain always conditioned by 'something more' which, although still hiding, is just around the corner and once unveiled, will yield the ultimate sufficient reasons and efficient causes. Thus science with its explanations (and every explanation is a reduction), risen to the ideology of 'objectivism', remains a perpetual project, striving after

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[284] Anaximander DK 12A10

[285] H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. p.198

[286] This is the *force of* differentiation, not the play of differences. As such, it is different from Heraclitean *pyr aeizoon* if the latter is taken as a principle of mere strife between *distinctions*. However, following Philo, one can easily attempt an interpretation according to which the *arche* of fire is the very force of differentiation, the one which *is* many: "This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made. But it always was, is, and will be: an ever-living Fire (*pyr aeizoon*), with measures of it kindling, and measures going out. – Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself..." [Heraclitus DK 22B30-B51] Then, the war of opposites is only "father of all, king of all" [DK 22B53], i.e., precedes the world and, being "the same for all", is the *virtual* and ever *present* arena on which all skirmishes of differences find place. Following the lines of such an interpretation would probably eliminate most significant differences.

[287] Bergson intended such an interpretation of Plotinus which, more recently, has been expounded, e.g., in E. D. Perl, *The One as pure giving in Plotinus*.

[288] Heraclitus DK 22B84

some regulative idea which, if reached would in some inexplicable manner explain everything but which also everybody knows is impossible. With respect to the meaningful things of existential importance, 'objectivism' either ignores them or keeps promising future answers, without ever having anything to offer.[289]

Let us emphasize: *objective* thinking has its irreplaceable and all important role in the project   174. of control, in the project of *reflectively* arranging the *dissociated* pieces into agreeable and useful complexes. We object only to the *objectivistic illusion* which claims *absolute* validity of *objectivity*. For all constructions bottom-up must start from some 'given' bottom, from the ever evading 'atoms'. What such 'atoms' are and what counts as such 'atoms', is always a result of *experience* and *reflective dissociation* of experience. They have to be discovered before they can be used and, moreover, everybody has to discover them anew – in the course of his *experience*. *Objectivity* itself must be discovered which means, must be encountered in the *experience* of *objectivity*. But no matter 'what' appears, at a given moment, as the ultimate pieces of the *objective* world, it turns sooner or later into relative elements of more general understanding or deeper assumptions, that is, into something unpleasantly *subjective*. For what we can do with the ultimate *that* is either take it for what it is or project on it relative 'whats'.

We claim truth of some theories and untruth of others, we discover mechanisms of the world and history which were active long before our birth and will continue long after our death. They are all, hopefully, true but to be discovered, *experienced as true* something more is needed. Namely, the basic idea of truth, not of any conditions or ways of ascertaining it, but of its very sense. The basic idea of 'being there', not of something being there, not of any 'what' but simply – *that*. We can populate the world 'beyond' our experience with people and events, only because we have such a 'beyond', that is, only because we know *that*; only because 'reality', 'objectivity', call it as you like, is given in advance, as the very first condition and fact of *existence* and *experience*. It does not follow from any *experience*, not to mention, from any *experiences*. It is a mere *that* which does not arise from any 'whats' which are discovered already in *experience* and are relative to it. So, in a good, Kantian fashion – it is *a priori*. Unprovability *and* certainty constitute together a good sign of *a priori* as does, more generally, irreducibility to the merely *actual* categories.[290]

In short, the projects of elimination of *existence*, and of our *existence* in particular, from the ultimate (absolute and not relative) explanation of the totality of the world can arrive only at the *indistinct that*, that is, at no explanation at all. Every explanation is relative, and hence also partial, which, however, does not deprive it of value and objectivity. But absolutised 'objectivism' ends up as a projection of a solipsistic 'subjectivity', whether the latter takes the form of some transcendental 'constitutions' or of atomic 'sensations' and 'ideas'.

This, however, is still only a mystification! 'Objectivity' is not *experience* of *objectivity* and   175. 'objective' time is not *experience* of *objective* time. There is always the problem: the genesis of (the experience of) time involves and presupposes the temporal genesis, the genesis *in* time. If the discovered world and time are 'objective', this means exactly that they are present independently of this very discovery. This crux of the matter is impossible to ignore, and we are far from doing that. We have explained in 4.3.3 that our experience of time, like all our experience, amounts to a discovery, not to a constitution, let alone 'subjective' experience and projection. "Man learns the concept of the past by remembering."[291] Saying no more is to remain in the grips of empiricism. For, if there were no past to learn, learning its concept would amount to an empty game. The concept of the past as well as the objective past do arise through *actual experiences* and *reflection*. But they do no more than, first, *reflect* the *experience* and, eventually, *confrontation* with the ultimate 'objectivity' and *transcendence* of the *one*. This accounts for the natural interweaving of one's *experience* of time with the *objective* time, of one's *experience* of the world with the *objective* world. The former does not *represent* the latter in some 'internal duplication', it only *distinguishes* it and thus enters it, weaves itself into it.

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[289]The projects and promises are as old as reductionism and all its forms could be quoted as examples – starting perhaps with some philosophers of nature from Miletus, then Democritus' atomism, through most forms of empiricism, and then, after Descartes, all forms of scientism, with instances like Laplacean dismissal of the unnecessary hypothesis, later Skinner's behaviorism, early champions of AI and the very idea of Turing test, Wilson's biological reductionism, etc., etc., etc. All instances when science becomes scientism can and will serve as examples.

[290]Of course, we do not share Kant's concept of *a priori* which, according to phenomenological understanding, is not given independently from *experience* (there is no *such* thing), but is *experienced*, if not given, in any *experience*.

[291]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. II:xiii

Every *birth* is also an *objective* event, the mystery of the beginning finds place in the time we understand as *objective*. But the fact that the ontological event coincides with the *actual* one does not mean that we should confuse its ontological character with its *objective* form. The fact that the order of ontological *founding* happens to coincide (in so far as we are concerned) with the order of temporal succession does not mean that they are one and the same. The former has an *absolute* beginning, while search for the beginning of the latter (with the associated antinomies) continues since ... the beginning of time.

We certainly do not want to oppose the attempts to understand *objective* processes of *actual* things and relations between them. We only claim that such attempts will never even touch the fringe of *concreteness* which surrounds every *actual experience* and every abstract conception. The value of such attempts is as praiseworthy as their absolutisation is regrettable – they are, after all, complete opposites of the *absolute*. An *existence* arises from the ultimate objectivity of *nothingness* and it arises in the process of differentiation. This process can be viewed from 'inside' (as we are trying to do) or from 'outside', in terms of 'objective givens'. The latter view always has to re-construct the primordial *unity* from its 'givens' which, however, themselves are relative to the prior differentiation. Consequently, 'how' this process proceeds in the *objective* time and 'what' are its *objective* elements are questions involved already into relativity to the inquiring *existence*, to the context of inquiry, to the level of objective knowledge, to the historical and cultural situation. If one finds in such a relativity reasons for universal scepticism or historical relativism, it is only because 'objectivism' itself is only matter of faith. And we would say, of bad faith, because its lack of ultimate reason and justification rests on the constant absolutisation of the current results of relative *distinctions*, on claiming the status of *absolute that* to the relative 'whats', in short, on the *objectivistic illusion*.

6.4.2.iii. Creation, emanation, evolution

We obviously owe quite a lot to neo-Platonism. At the same time, we seem to mix it with other elements (creationism, evolutionism) which are typically considered as its contraries. Let us therefore comment these aspects.

176.   *Creation vs. emanation*

Birth establishes *existence* as the *confrontation* with *one*, the (force of) differentiation of the *indistinct*. We called it "*creatio ex nihilo*" but we also used the language of neo-Platonism, identifying this creation with the gradual hypostases emanating from the *one*. This might easily appear as an unjustifiable conflation of the two ideas which exclude, even contradict, each other. For either the world is created from nothing, created by a free act of God's will, or else it emanates by necessity, and hence in all eternity, from some archetypal principle, from the unity of the First.[292]

Indeed, it is easy to construct incongruent, even contradictory, images. On the one hand, God – no matter what one says, imagined as an external agent, sitting there and waiting for the moment when his freedom makes Him say "*Fiat!*". And, *voilà*, here comes the world – but in fact, just a new object (or totality thereof) created by an agent, just like a house is 'created' by the construction workers. On the other hand, One – no matter what one says, imagined either as a dead object, lying there and waiting for being given life from outside, or else as a uniform and undifferentiated *being* – yes! an object again – which somehow externalises its hypostases, throws them out of itself; moreover, since it contains the principle of the emanation within itself, it can not do anything else, it emanates all hypostases with eternal necessity.

Both pictures are equally childish, yet this is easier to state than to help. It is these pictures

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[292]Interpretation of Genesis as *creatio ex nihilo* was suggested to Christians by Galen, who criticised their capricious God creating in a completely arbitrary manner. For Moses "it seems enough to say that God simply willed the arrangement of matter and it was presently arranged in due order; for he believes everything to be possible with God [...] We, however, do not hold this[...]" [Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*. XI:14] Gnostic theologian Basilides seems to have been the first Christian thinker to articulate the rudiments of the doctrine (second quarter of the 2-nd century), followed shortly by more definite formulations of Theophilus, the bishop of Antioch [after G. May, *Schöpfung aus dem Nichts....*]. Christian thinkers of neo-Platonic orientation did not make much out of the claimed contradiction. The idea of emanations was forcefully opposed by Aquinas and then Ockham, both emphasizing the *ex nihilo* aspect as well as the fact that God creates every individual being directly, and not by any gradual individuation of some universal essence. We can easily agree with this critique when restricted to individual *existences*. With respect to particular things, it is a different matter which has been presented so far and will be addressed further in Book II.

which make one consider the two, creation and emanation, contradictory. But *one* is *nothing* and *nothing* is *one*, 6.3, §§148.ff, and so creation from *nothingness* is the same as emergence from the *one*. *One* is not any agent with will and other faculties similar to ours – speaking about His free will is indeed funny antropomorphism. An individual *existence* is created – *born* – directly, as it is determined exclusively by the *confrontation* with the *one*. This aspect of creation remains a mystery as far as its reason and first stages are concerned. "How?", "why?", even "what?" are inadequate questions, because when there are only *pure distinctions*, or perhaps even only the mere fact of *confrontation*, there are no grounds for answering them. Every attempted answer will be only a reduction to some 'whats' assumed more primordial. We start with *birth*, the *absolute* beginning and do not attempt to give an account of its reasons – whether one calls them "God's free act" or "One's generous goodness" makes no difference: both are equally inadequate. Finally, the *origin* does not remain 'outside' the emerging world but in its midst, the *presence* of *one*, as the *indistinctness* surrounding eventually every situation, penetrates the whole creation. "Emanation" emphasizes the *aspect* of *immanence*, while "creation" that of *transcendence* of the *origin* in relation to the differentiated and, eventually, *visible world*.

Neo-Platonism vs. evolutionism

Evolutionism is easily considered the successor of neo-Platonism, almost as if it were its scientific improvement which deservedly replaced the hapless and unenlightened ancestor. In fact, while the differences may appear contrary, there are also apparent similarities which justify the sense of continuity between the two. Our middle ground differs, being a middle ground, slightly from both. Let us therefore indicate briefly the respective relations.

There are many passages in neo-Platonic texts suggesting that emanations are not mere reflections but genuine differentiations, that the emerging entities are truly different from their origin.[293] Yet, the accepted interpretation, as well as many other fragments, suggest that "emanations proceed through similarity."[294] This aspect may be particularly prominent in Proclus' dry conceptualism, but the principle of *chorismos* (reflection as likeness of the original) is quite central in Plotinus.[295]

Our 'emanations' proceed by *distinction* and even *dissociation*. Even if "[e]verything that is in another emerges *exclusively* from that other,"[296] then it is also the case that the emerging entity, the emerging *aspects* introduce entirely new elements not present originally. The process of differentiation is a gradual *actualisation* of *virtual nexuses* – its result is *founded* in the *nexus* but not determined uniquely by it. The result need not be – in fact, never is – in any way similar to its 'cause', to the *nexus* from which it emerged. The former is not an image of the latter but its *sign*, it does not have to resemble the latter but only point to it. The dependence on the origin is neither conceptual (similarity) nor causal but evolutionary, where everything "unfolds from some concentrated central principle as from a seed."

Although the relation of similarity is not transitive, using it as the principle of emanation poses the question about *how far* the succeeding stages should resemble each other, exactly *how* similar the image should be to its prior and, in particular, to its immediate predecessor. This principle carries the primary responsibility for the neo-Platonic multiplications of the intermediary stages almost *ad infinitum*. Plotinus' disciple Amelius distinguishes three additional hypostases of the Intellect; Iamblichus adds yet another One above the One of Plotinus, some additional intellectual principles or demiurges, supra-terrestial and other souls; Proclus, arranging the hypostases into triads, brings in some order but the number of levels of beings hardly diminishes; the gnostic

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[293]Plotinus uses the analogy of a seed: everything "must unfold from some concentrated central principle as from a seed, and so advance to its term in the varied forms of sense. The prior in its being will remain unalterably in the native seat;" [Plotinus, *Enneads.* IV:8.6] and the element of differentiation is, of course, always there: "Every thing which participates of The One, is both one and not one." [Proclus, *Elements of Theology.* §2]

[294]Proclus, *Elements of Theology.* §166 [Likewise, in §18: "Everything that by its existence benefits others, is in itself originally that which it bestows upon the recipients."]

[295]E.g., discussing time and eternity, Plotinus says: "We begin with Eternity, since when the standing Exemplar is known, its representation in image – which Time is understood to be – will be clearly apprehended [...]" [Plotinus, *Enneads.* III:7.1] Generally, "in things of sense the Idea is but an image of the authentic, and every Idea thus derivative and exiled traces back to that original and is no more than an image of it." [Ibid. V:9.5] There is certainly space for discussion whether apprehension of the image through the knowledge of the exemplar implies for Plotinus similarity in any trivial sense, but we leave this to the scholars. In J. H. Fielder, *Chorismos and Emanation*, likeness is listed as one of the four aspects of the Plotinian image (the other three being distinctness from, inferiority to and dependency on the original).

[296]Proclus, *Elements of Theology.* §41 [my emph.]

cosmogonies and ontologies inherit this disease and, even more than the late neo-Platonic hier-
archies, slip out of control enmeshing the student into the intricacies of ever longer and longer
series of spiritual beings which follow each other according to the similarities and oppositions as
fantastic as they are unbearable. Our levels, the steps in the process of *actualisation*, could also
be multiplied *ad infinitum*. The reason is simply the continuity of the process as opposed to the
discrete structure of its conceptual representation; or put differently: the *unity* of *existence* as
opposed to its *reflective* account.[297] One might be tempted to excuse the principle of similarity for
the multiplication of the hypostases as being if not a perfect image, so at least a vague reflection
of this very continuity.

   The kind of development, however, is different. The lower levels in our process of differentiation
are not, as in neo-Platonism, inferior to the higher ones. As they are not mutually similar, they
are not to be compared either. The lower levels constitute truly new dimensions of Being, just
like new evolutionary stages go beyond the previous ones. The "higher" and "lower" do not refer
to any valuations but simply to the precedence in the order of *founding*. The *founding* itself is
also different from – and much weaker than – the relation of being generated, of reflecting, of
necessarily emanating, or almost whatever interpretation one might assign to the neo-Platonic
relation between the lower and the higher. The lower levels are, indeed, dependent on the higher
ones but only in the sense of the latter being their necessary conditions. A *dissociated* (or only
distinguished) *aspect* depends on the *nexus* from which it is thus *distinguished* (just like a *sign* or
a *trace* depends on that *of which* it is a *sign/trace*) but the *nexus* itself is not its efficient or other
cause. There is no causal or direct generative relation, the lower is not determined by the higher,
nor follows from it by any necessity.

178.   Another important difference concerns the understanding of individuality. The soul, according to
       Plotinus, is divine, by its power "the manifold and diverse heavenly system is a unit; through soul
       this universe is a God". Yet soul "for all the worth we have shown to belong to it, is yet a secondary,
       an image of the Intellectual-Principle."[298] And the soul treated here is not yet the individual soul
       of the individual human but the comprehensive soul-principle from which individual souls emanate
       in further stages. With us individuation happens not by descent and joining the matter, but is
       the first event of *birth*: *haecceitas* is not at the lowest level of Being but in its center, preceding all
       distinctions of substances, attributes, causes and effects. A unique individuality of *existence* is the
       beginning and not only the final result of a gradual differentiation and eventual enmatterment.

179.   Neo-Platonism has been taken as the abstract metaphysics of the objective world, supposedly
       explaining the emergence of souls, people, particular things in the process of objective generation.
       Although such an interpretation might perhaps be defended, we do not find it plausible to dwell on
       such literal images.[299] In our case, the separation of concerns should be completely unambiguous
       – we are doing philosophical anthropology, not any abstract metaphysics, not any objective theory
       of everything. In this respect we believe to be in full agreement with neo-Platonism and only want
       to distance ourselves from its objectivistic (mis)interpretations. Treated as such a 'theory of the
       objective world', neo-Platonism has been replaced by evolutionism. Although such a replacement
       witnesses to a misunderstanding, it offers also conceptual tools of reinterpretation which, so it
       seems, we have been utilising. Let us, therefore, comment now briefly on this aspect.

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   [297]Hopefully, the way we have structured these stages does not appear completely arbitrary. It will be further
justified in the following Book.
   [298]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:1.2-3
   [299]Such an objectivistic interpretation can be seen in a close association with magic and spiritualism which infected
Plotinus' mysticism almost immediately. While Plotinus lived, "he lifted his pupils with him. But with his death the
fog began to close in again, and later neo-Platonism is in many respects a retrogression to the spineless syncretism
from which he had tried to escape." [E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Appendix II:2] Porphyry, Proclus,
Iamblichus not only commented extensively on the theurgic ground work, Julianus' *Chaldean Oracles*, but mixed
religious devotion both with magic statuettes and oracular images (their power resulted from the natural sympathy
linking image with original) but also with conjuring spirits and gods in mediumistic seances which would be hard
to distinguish from the practices of modern spiritualists. This tradition becomes reinforced in the neo-Platonism of
the Renaissance which, joining it with the newly imported Cabala, tried to apply the system to magical purposes.
Such applications seemed possible because the natural world was seen as literally dependent on (generated from
and subordinated to) the celestial and then supra-celestial one. The whole hierarchy turned thus – in the hands of
Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandolla, Cornelius Agrippa, John Dee and many others – into a system of objectified,
because usable, entities, whether angels which could be conjured, or letters and symbols which could be manipulated
according to the numerological formulae. (F. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* provides a good,
general overview.)

Just like ontogenesis repeats philogenesis so here, every *actuality* repeats the levels of its development, repeats this development in the structure of layers surrounding it in its very *actuality*. In this way, the dynamic element of evolutionism present in our development is fully compatible with the static universe of neo-Platonic inspiration. 'Evolution' (let us use temporarily this designation for our *actualisation*) does not simply leave the past stages behind, transforming the less advanced forms into the more advanced ones. In the process of temporal development, the primordial – and higher – remains completely unaffected, it is not replaced by, but remains around and underneath the lower. Unlike in the evolutionary process, here the source is preserved and remains untouched, §165.

Just like the lower is not any debasement of the higher, so the 'later' is not any improvement of the 'earlier'. The 'evolution' is indeed differentiation but this seems the only ground for comparison of various levels. More importantly, what completely distinguishes our 'evolution' from evolution is the fact that the lower ('later') aspects may in fact influence the higher ('earlier') ones. The higher does represent an 'overflow', though not in the productive sense as often used by Plotinus, but only in the sense of inexhaustibility by the lower, of being *transcendent* in relation to and inaccessible by the lower. The inaccessibility concerns however only the lower restricted and completely enclosed within its own categories. For instance, using and focusing exclusively on the categories of *reflective dissociation*, one will never reach any genuine experience. But as one is more than the *reflective actuality*, as one is the *unity* of the whole *existence*, so the events of the lower and more *actual* order may influence the higher levels. We leave these remarks for the time being, because the mechanisms of such an influence will be discussed in more detail in Book II (2.2.3.i and 2.3) and in Book III.

The above two points – that 'earlier' stages get accumulated and remain *present*, and that the 'later' ones can influence them – lead to the final point of difference. Unlike evolution – and similarly to neo-Platonism – our process leaves open the possibility of a kind of return. "Whence things have their origin, Thence also their destruction happens."[300] The eventual return to *indistinctness* – death – will not concern us much, but much of Book II will be concerned with the relations between the *actual reflection* and the higher levels which, in some sense, might be called "return to the origin".

In short, we have adjusted neo-Platonism and evolutionism by restricting both to the development of a human individual. This is development of a *unity*, of a unique *existence*, which does not appeal to any externally differentiated environment but, to use such a language, is only the development of this very environment. There is no essential gap between *existence* and the world because this world emerges only with the *existence*, because it is the world of *distinctions* which this *existence* is able to *recognise* (not only 'understand', not only *erkennen* in any narrow sense of this word). The *objectivistic* assumption that every particular *act* is an event involving some ready-made entities, *dissociated* more or less *precisely* from each other, not only makes any meeting impossible but also tries to begin with something which is only the end of the fundamental process. The evolutionary aspect is present in the creative differentiation of the *indistinct* through the subsequent *nexuses* and *dissociations*. But it is neither any mechanic development in which a system passes through stages with different contents but the same form, nor any *objectivistic* evolution which forgets the previous stage as soon as it reaches the next one. The 'past' stages are preserved as the deeper *aspects* underlying the 'subsequent' ones, and this conservative aspect of the process distinguishes it from evolutionism and brings closer to neo-Platonism.

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