The Visible and the Invisible
Summa anthropologia philosophicae

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Not earth and water, for two came from one
and depths hide the beginning,
till the end of time...

The higher you climb, the lower you descend
Many are roads, but the door only one.
Leaving, one returns...

What is, becomes, and passing – remains.
No borders. Yours is only all
That you have given away.

Life is strife, strife is death. The dead live
unless the living die. You find, unless you seek,
When two become one.

Contents

Preface

The underlying theme of this work is the unity of human existence. It is only *underlying* because it is neither proven nor constructed from any more specific pieces of particular experiences. It is taken as the starting point from which all the variation of actual experience unfolds in a spiral of hermeneutical self-elaboration.

This elaboration, and our presentation, does not follow any deductive path of necessary causation or conceptual determination but is, so to speak, organic. We describe the emergence of gradually more differentiated experience where the subsequent stages do not follow logically from the preceding ones but emerge by dissociating new aspects which are present at most implicitly at the earlier stages. This form of presentation is applied not only in the first Book where the emergence of reflective experience is traced from its virtual origins. New elements appear likewise in Book II, where the reflective attempts to trace the unity of existence or, if one prefers, the epistemic attempts to find the ontological foundations, contribute various modifications to the very foundations they are seeking. Book III describes then the existential, and not only reflective, attitude which centers around the pivotal choice implied by the split of the experience into the spheres of the visible, reflectively determinable contents and the invisible ones which, although present in experience, cannot be circumscribed within the horizon of reflective actuality. This final Book also brings new aspects resulting from the change of perspective which is no longer a mere description of the existential situation but addresses the fundamental choice implied by it.

This form of presentation may cause some difficulties for the reader since the overall picture arises only after one has followed its considerable part, if not its whole. It has been chosen because it most accurately reflects the order of origination and dependence. Although signs of the ultimate conclusions can be thus observed from the very beginning, they remain only approximate before reaching their final formulations. Hopefully, the reader will be willing to postpone the concluding judgment, especially if it happens to be negative, until reaching the end.

More specifically, Book I describes the gradual emergence of what is naturally considered the beginning of reflection – the world of differentiated, separate experiences. This world is, indeed, a presupposition of reflection but it is not the existential beginning. As hermeneutics has taught us, reflection begins always in some already given context. But although reflection can be aware of this fact, it must renounce its claims to precision if it wants to incorporate it into its horizon. For this world, or rather this experential horizon, which reflection finds 'always already there', does not result from reflective dissociations. Although it can be, like everything else, reflectively analysed, its existential significance is not captured by such analyses. It establishes structures surrounding all reflective experience which, being prior to it, are not amenable to description at the same level of exactitude as the precisely identifiable objects of reflective experience. The very fact of confrontation with the differentiated contents, let alone their definite circumscription, is a presupposition of reflection in need of an analysis which is the object of Book I.

Book II describes then the levels of reflection which, so to speak, repeat the stages of ontological founding from Book I in the reversed order. Reflection, starting with the most specific contents, follows them, through their more and more vague presuppositions, towards the virtual origin. As one used to say, what is last in the order of being, is first in the order of knowledge. But what is thus found by reflection is not any original truth of the innocent, unreflected being but its double. The world of reflection is constituted by the split into the actually visible contents and the sphere of invisible and vague, original

intimations which although, or perhaps exactly because, can not be captured by reflective thought, exercise fundamental influence on reflection, nourishing its existential thirst with the constant motivation to transcend the horizon of whatever happens to be actually available, that is, visible.

This reflective development leads to the primary dilemma of reflection: either to dispense with all vagueness of the original, and this means in particular, existential motivations and concentrate on the determinable, visible elements of experience, or to acknowledge the invisible origin. Whatever the latter might mean, it appears easily as an offence against the autonomy of reflection which is, equally easily, conflated with the autonomy of human being. Book III elaborates this choice and the character of the involved alternatives. Its main message is that what for the reflective thought appears as the renounciation of autonomy is, in fact, the genuine freedom. Just as reflection is driven by the search for the absolute, whether beginning or truth, so it rejects immediately every actual image appearing with the pretentions to absoluteness as not living up to its expectations. Such a rejection, justified as it is, carries however the danger of rejecting not only the absolute character of any visible image but the idea of the absolute as such. As nothing particular is absolute, so there seems to be nothing absolute. This amounts to the absolutisation of itself, of the reflective, or egotic, level of being which recognises only what it can grasp. The liberation may seem genuine since all particulars lose thus the binding power of idols which they possess as long as they can appear for reflection as absolutely valid. But it leaves reflection alienated, that is, surrounded by total emptiness – perhaps, free from all finite pretentions to absoluteness but, at he same time, not free to express any higher meaning. For every possibility of a higher meaning, that is, meaning which essentially transcends the sphere of subjectivity, disappears in the moment subject absolutises itself. Although reflection can not forget and completely ignore its existential origin, it often keeps insisting on the exclusive validity of its precisely visible contents, thus absolutising itself. Book III is concerned with the tension between the right rejection of the absoluteness of any visible image and the mistaken renounciation of the very idea of the absolute. The former rejection combined with the later renounciation amounts to the absolutisation of the reflective subjectivity and, thus, to the idolisation not of any specific, visible entity but of the visibility as such. Examples of this can be encountered already in Book I, but Book III describes the tension, as well as its opposite poles, in a systematic way relating them also to the sphere of subjectivity and reflection.

Sources and references

Although some readers will probably appreciate the frequent quotations from quite varied sources, for others they may appear cumbersome if not directly distracting. In the later case, one can simply ignore the fact that they are quotations and treat them as part of the main text into which they are merged. Ocassionally, several examples are given but then they are delegated to the footnotes. The quotations are only *possible formulations* of the discussed issues and could be replaced by others. They serve, at most, as the remainders of others expressing similar thoughts and, although they may give associations to particular schools or traditions, are never meant to attract one's attention to them.

In particular, quotations come often from very different traditions and are brought together simply because they happen to express the same thought about the actual issue. They only pay tribute to the recognition that every thought of some depth has been thought before and that it might have been thought irrespectively of the wider intellectual context.

In general, quotations from a particular author do not imply any wider agreement with whatever is commonly associated with him or his schools.

One will, nevertheless, find particularly frequent Neoplatonic quoations reflecting more intimate relations to this tradition, in its whole span from Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius, through Eriugena, to Cusanus and Meister Eckhart. We do not, however, attempt any exegesis nor new interpretation of this tradition – we only acknowledge its inspiration. The readers familiar with it will recognise the analogies and divergencies. For those unfamiliar with it, let it suffice to say that the views presented here can be fitted into it only at a very general level and, often, only by a dramatic reformulation of many central ideas. One may consider the presented views as, say, *existential* Neoplatonism which, dispensing with any cosmogonic and cosmological associations and explanatory pretentions, focuses exclusively on the only form of experience we know of, namely, the experience of an existing individual (shared with and, consequently, communicable to others as it might be). This makes the presented view – if one wishes to see it so, of Neoplatonism – a philosophical anthopology, a study not of man's place in cosmos but of man and his experience of cosmos.

The further one proceeds, the more frequently one will encounter quotations from Bible or other religious sources or wisdom literature. The fact that such references are virtually inadmissible in today's philosophy may be due to shame and professional arrogance or else fear and modesty. It is, however, doubtful that the deepest works of spirituality have exercised completely no influence on today's thinkers (true as this may be in many cases). Quotations from them will, hopefully, support the view that the differences of language and conceptual frames do not necessarily mean lack of any connections and that sterility of much of philosophical discourse does not mean sterility of philosophy.

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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, is not done here.)

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, 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

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

formulations, although reflecting hopefully the intentions, are hardly Heidegger's. (In any case, the English quotations are my translations, often from the Polish translation of the German text.)

Likewise, Celsus, *On the True Doctrine*, is only reconstructed from the extensive fragments quoted and criticized in Origen, *Against Celsus*. Here, 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.

Two distinct English 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 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.

Both MacKenna's and Armstrong's translations of Plotinus *Enneads* are used. The former are marked in the references as [MacKenna's translation].

Some conventions

All the works are referenced by the English title, even if the used source was 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 referenced after another author, as is often the case with collected works or fragments.)

The references to all the works look uniformly as

$$\text{Author, } \textit{Title} \text{ XI:1.5}\ldots$$

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 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 quotation marks. I have likewise indicated the use of unauthorized, or in any case unedited, versions of the texts found on the internet for which bibliographical data, except for the title and the author, may contain only the http-address. (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 – is just subject, with the full ambiguity and 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

"Why is there something rather than nothing?" What makes one ask? Just because we 1.
have 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 – is it worth pondering
why it does not obtain?

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: of the emerging *existence*
with the *transcendence*. The *transcendence* withdraws gradually but it does not disappear.
It not only envelopes and surrounds the *existence* but *confronts* it, gives rise to Something.
Something is there because we *exist* and without us, or other *existing* beings *confronting*
the *transcendence*, everything would sink back into the indistinct waters of the *original
nothingness*.

Before any *existence*, before any experience, there was *nothingness*; no 'what', not even a 2.
'that' which is not yet any 'what' – but just *nothing*. The *original confrontation* takes place
in its midst – 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.[1] 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

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[1]We are not intending here any implausible claims about objective world's nonexistence before one's
birth. We only mean the simple fact that nothing of what constitutes one's experience existed. And the
objective world is itself a part of one's experience. We will elaborate the concept of *nothingness* and then
of the world which, like all our concepts, are meaningful only in relation to the concrete *existence*.

no *existence* can be repeated – it is unique.

3. *Confrontation*, encounter with *transcendence*, involves immediate self-understanding. But this self-understanding is nothing more than the *confrontation* itself, awareness of the very fact of *confrontation*. 'Knowing' oneself to be *confronted* is neither more nor less than simply being *confronted*, that is, *existing*. For that which 'one is not' throws one back to oneself and makes one's own being an issue. For a solipsist there can be no 'mineness' for that, as many thinkers maintained, arises only in a *confrontation* with 'not-mine'. The sometimes postulated all-embracing immanence of some spiritual unity is thus 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. Only *existential confrontation* with *transcendence*, encounter with something 'one is not', can give a being the character of 'mineness'. Unrepeatability of *existence* and its immediate self-awareness in the face of the *transcending nothingness* are both *aspects* of this intial *nexus* of unique individuality.

4. 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 before any subject appears; it is exactly *that* which is there before any 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 the total lack thereof.

    Birth is not an experience, it is the ontological event. It precedes any *distinctions* and so no one remembers one's own *birth*. It brings forth an *existence*, a *confrontation* which is not a relation but a meeting. Only when seen as if 'from outside' can it be reduced to a relation of dissociated entities. But to be *confronted* means to be challenged, to meet something which does not remain external and insignificant but which, opening the horizon for the unfolding of life, puts claim to be taken into account, to be reflected. As such a challenge, the *confrontation* happens not at the outermost borders of one's being but in its midst, that is, at the very beginning.

    In *confrontation* the *separated* poles reflect each other. Not in the sense of one being some 'mirror reflection' of 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, a game or a conversation in which one part *reflects* the other. Responding to the other's punches, moves or statements, he is in fact an *imago* from which one reconstructs the moves of the other.[3] In this sense of a direct contact, *existence* is *imago* of *nothingness* (and one would be tempted to say, *imago Dei*).

5. Although the *original confrontation* has many *actual* analogues, it does not belong to phenomenology – happening *above* everything *visible*, it is not a phenomenon. 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

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[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.

seen from outside! It is true that ultimate uniqueness of every person is also what is *the same* in all persons – those who like paradoxical formulations might say: every *existence* is a repetition of the unrepeatability of the beginning. But this fact, *founding* the deepest *communion*, is the matter of *exstential sharing* in the *origin* but not of any objective analogy. If one reduces oneself to the objective mode of thinking, trying to 'jump out of one's skin' and pretend that one is not here, only 'out there', one will never be able to appreciate the unique meaning of one's *birth*, and hence neither of any *birth*.

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 recognises. 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*.

In our daily life we are surrounded by all kinds of objects which we can, more or less 6. 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 places, 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 are less thing to remember because there *were* fewer things 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 the chair and the table are two separate things. It takes time before it learns that they 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 surroundings. 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 are significant, which 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.

Every genuine thinking, whether mythological, religious or philosophical, confronts the 7. constant presence of the original indistinctness. Whether it confronts it at the beginning or at the end depends more on the order of exposition than on its actual significance. Let us give only one example. The "appearances are not things in themselves; they are only representations, which in turn have 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."[4] The emphasized phrase is the point from which we would start remodelling Kant to fit our purposes. He speaks 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 presumption that the two should be distinguished. Allow us therefore to think them the same: emptiness of the 'pure concept of x' is 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 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.

8. *Nothingness* is void of *any* experience. But it is as well the simple *one*, the *origin*, since everything in the world originates beyond world's boundaries, comes from what embraces it, from the entirely other – in the world's language, from *nothingness*. This does not mean that the *one* contains everything which then enters the world. If it did, the designation *nothingness* would be inappropriate. It is the *virtual*, not the *actual origin*, the germ from which everything arises, 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. And it is the background which, once the world has appeared, continues to encircle it.

It precedes the world in the ontological order of *foundation*. When one imposes onto it the image of objective time, it becomes natural to express this precedence in terms of the temporal order. In such terms, 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."[5] Things arise only from this formless homogeneity, from 'the dark and indistinct waters' which embraced everything before the creation of the world. 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*. "For the simple [absolute] coould not derive from something else, but that which is many, or two, must itself depend on something else."[6] We will not understand this dependence as any causal derivation but as the dependence of a sign on the signified, of the appearance on the appearing – as the dependence on the necessary condition which *founds* everything that is differentiated.

9. Acknowledging that "visible existences are a sight of the invisible,"[7] we start with the first and ultimately invisible: *nothingness*. Its invisibility is not any accident, any lack of our

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[4] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. A109-110

[5] Gen. I:2 [Septuagint has "invisible and non-composite" instead of "without form and void".]

[6] Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:6.4

[7] Anaxagoras DK 59B21a

finite minds, but its very essence: where there are no *distinctions*, there is *nothing* to see.

We will not try to explain why the differentiated world emerges from the *one*. We will not disturb the tranquility of the mysteries attempting to answer any How? or Why?.[8] We only notice that the trivial fact that there are things harbours even greater triviality, namely, that there are *different* things. What marks the end of *indistinct nothingness* and a transition towards the world of experience, is that "God divided the light from the darkness,"[9] is a *distinction*. The primordial act of creation is the event of *distinction*, turning the *indistinct nothingness* into something, pulling this something out of *nothingness* and letting it come forth, letting it appear. This is not appearing for anybody, for in the beginning nobody is there, but simply appearing, simply coming to being. This happens 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 bring forth everything that is. For everything that is is a *distinction* from the *indistinct*.

Distinction breaks the original unity, the oneness of the *one*. *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 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 *not-distinguished*, between the 'many' of the actual *distinctions* and the *oneness* of the *indistinct origin* which they "inhale".

Confrontation is the constant circumscription of the boundary of each thing and of the boundary of all things, limiting the unlimited, *distinguishing* the *indistinct*. *Existence* can be thus characterised equivalently as the being which makes the difference and for which things make difference, which *distinguishes* and 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 *confronts* it, that is, encounters something.

2 In the begining there was only Chaos, the Abyss

2.1 Distinction

To "connect" means to relate 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 to limit the unlimited, to cut out of the *indistinct* background. In the primordial sense, it is to draw the first border and thus to encounter *for the first time* – and only once; to encounter the entirely new '...', a '...' never encountered before. It is a genuine encounter, in the sense that neither the *distinguished*

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[8] All 'whys' and 'hows' share the common ground: they 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 only produce conceptual analyses of dubious value, if not transcendental illusions. Why and how something happens are questions already involved in the differentiated world of experiences and concepts. And we, too, will get there, but at a later stage, not at the beginning.

[9] Gen. I:4

'...' was 'there before', as if waiting ready-made for being discovered, nor the *distinguishing existence* brought it about. The '...' emerges from the *indistinct* (in this sense, is not merely 'created' by the *existence*) but it emerges for the first time (and in this sense, it was not 'there before' and is relative to the *distinguishing existence*). Being both a reflection and a creation, *distinction* is neither – it precedes both.[10]

The emerging '...' isn't anything specific, it isn't 'this something' as distinguished from 'that something'. *Distinction* does not involve any 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. Primordial distinction is a cut from the indistinct, formless background.

Distinction splits the plane of the *indistinct*. It is naturally visualised as a line | dividing the plane in two, but it can be equally well imagined as a circle ○ which also splits the plane in two. This later image gives often more adequate associations with something being circumscribed and acquiring a border, something limited emerging from the indefinite background, like the first elements emerging from the primordial *physis*. *Distinction* carries this archaic connotation of a limitation. Thus, equivocating *distinction* and limitation (finitude), we would not see much difference between the *in-distinct* (indefinite) and the un-limited (in-finite), both reflecting possible meanings of *apeiron*, "from which came into being all the heavens and the worlds in them."[11]

11.   *Distinctions* emerge gradually, in a top-down fashion, from the general and diffuse ones, they become gradually 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. *Distinctions* are like the adjacent stripes of the rainbow, mutually distinct but without any definite boundary separating them from each other. Or else, they are like waves: here is one, there another, and there yet another, but where one ends and the next begins, nobody can tell. We only can point at the peaks and thus be sure that there are, indeed, different waves.

The so called "paradoxes" of Heap or Sorites appear as paradoxes only under the assumption that *concepts* draw rigid *distinctions* with uniquely identifiable boundaries and, as a consequence, uniquely determined negation. Although this may be the case with the *concepts* obtained within the sphere of prior *reflective dissociations*, it does not apply generally to the contents of *experience*. Primordially, *panta rei* and even later *concepts* and apparently rigid *distinctions* still flow into others, 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 direc-

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[10] The word "*distinction*" will be used in the equivocal sense: as the (f)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.

[11] Anaximander, DK 12A9

tions. Moreover, a *distinction* can be always refined, made more *precise*. Yet, although never reaching the final, definite, rigid form, *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. 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* can be built. 12.

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

Certainly, 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. 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. 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. But this means that what is *distinguished* does not involve only *actual*, particular objects but also something *not-actual* and even universal. 13.

Hunger is something that does not appear just like that. It increases gradually. When it eventually hits the barrier at which an infant begins to cry, it involves not just this moment now but the continuity of the whole development, of its gradual increase. It 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 are *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 are all equally 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, 1 hour and 1 day. 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 will later call a "property", a "complex", a "process", a "feeling", a

"conjunctive relation".

The primordial distinctions are not limited to objects given here-and-now. They may bring forth something actual, like this particular table, as well as properties, processes, emotions which, objectively speaking, span long periods of time.

2.2   Chaos

14.   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*. 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* light from darkness, one person from another, mother from father, then a chair from a table...A *distinction* occurs against the *indstinct origin*, but it occurs 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 an unlimited number of *distinctions*, in fact, a chaos exceeding our possibilities to embrace it in any single act.

　　Chaos – the limitless manifold, the overflow of *distinctions* – is not *nothingness* any more. *Nothingness* has no *distinctions*, in particular, no subjective pole. But *chaos* exceeds something, it has a subjective pole, namely, the arising *actuality*. The *actuality* confronted with *chaos* appears powerless. *Chaos*, or overflow, is the first, differentiated analogue of the *origin*. Its *proto-experience* is *the same* as the *proto-experience* of the finitude of *actuality*, of the impossibility to embrace everything within the *horizon of actuality*, of definitely limit the unlimited. The *confrontation* with the limitless reveals not *nothingness* but the limited; the limited whose fragility dissolves in the overpowering overflow. This fragility, the finite reflection, the *imago* of *chaos*, is the site of *actuality* or – *proto-consciousness*; the limitless is its primordial correlate.

15.   If we try to imagine – and we can hardly do anything more than *imagine* – *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, without any sharp boundaries. 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 nor is it an experience of nothing – it just isn't an experience. It is like "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 [such an experience] 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."[12]

　　All these lacking distinctions are what distinguish *proto-experience* from *experience*. But *proto-experience* is not *nothingness* any more because it involves *distinctions*. And whatever is *distinguished* already is. We can never find anything about which we couldn't,

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[12]W. James, *The thing and its relations.*

in one sense or another, say that it is. The 'univocal 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.

Approaching it phenomenologically, we risk overinterpretation. Using words like "*proto-experience*" and "*chaos*", we should keep in mind that there is no experience *of chaos*. *Chaos* never appears *for us*, and so there is no phenomenon of *chaos*, no experience *of* it. *Proto-experience* is not *an experience* but *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."[13] *Born* out of *chaos*, we become very quickly involved into specific *distinctions* and *reflective representations* which, giving us power of control, at the same time debar the access to the primordial *aspects* of *experience*. But 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*.

2.3 Spatiality/simultaneity

Except for being differentiated, *proto-experience* does not offer anything. It is properly continuous, not in the sense of a successive flux of distinct 'nows' and 'thats', but as timeless – without any 'now' and 'then' – manifold of heterogeneity. 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 possess any meaning. It still carries the connotations of the Parmenidean *indistinct* 'is', but begins to move towards Anaximander's *apeiron*, with its full ambiguity of *both* indefinite *and* infinite, *both* indistinct *and* unlimited. This second hypostasis precedes any more specific differentiation.[14] 16.

It is tempting to apply here the image of a flow, and such an image has indeed been often used to intimate the quality of *chaos*. But applying it, one should be careful with the elements which, belonging to the image alone, can distort the original. There are as yet no persisting entities and flux conveys this idea pretty well. Likewise, the contents are mutually distinct but their lack of self-identity means that they, so to speak, flow over into each other. This, too, is well captured by the image of a flux. But flux suggests also time, while no time has yet begun to flow. There is as yet no *distinction* between the *actual* and *non-actual*, not to speak about any succession. The heterogenity of *chaos* is simultaneous, not because it was comprised into a simultaneity, because all 'before' and 'after' have been 17.

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

[14] Borrowing the image of chaos from the translation of Hesiod, we should not forget that the Greek *khaos* refers to a gaping or opening up of a chasm. Hence one might prefer to translate it as abyss, the bottomless *nothingness*. The ambiguity should not cause any confusion, if only we keep in mind that our *chaos* marks the first stage of differentiation, of emergence from the chasm.

abstracted away, but because there is, as yet, no 'before' and no 'after'. There is no sign of a distance, nor any measure. *Distinctions* are *pure*, 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*.

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. In the images like "a flow of continuous change", neither does the "flow" refer to some flow of time, nor does the "change" refer to anything changing. Rather, "flow" suggests the overflow of all involved contents, and "change" their flowing into each other. It is static co-presence of *distinctions* without any distinguished objects, mutual interpenetration of *vaguely* distinct contents devoid of any sedimented identities.

This feature of simultaneity – the flow which is not temporal, but a simultaneous overflow of *distinctions* – can be taken as the fundamental characteristic of *spatiality*. Thus *spatiality* (not space) is somehow prior to temporality. It expresses only that *distinctions* do not arise one after another,[15] 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*.

2.4   Signification

18.   In spite of its indeterminate, timeless, reactive and objectless character, in spite of its entire lack of relations, *pure distinctions* of *chaos* involve 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 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 the primordial *signification* in every *distinction*, and later in more specific *signs*, expresses only the fact that *distinction* arises from something which, 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*.

19.   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. 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."[16]   We do not have any specific *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

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

[16]E. Levinas

any 'something out there'; the separation of light from darkness finds place before any particulars appear.

3   In the beginning was the Word

Chaos, though created from *nothingness* and thus, in a way, opposed to it, is not yet 20. the world. It is like the *materia prima et confusa* from which world can be created. Or, to refer it again to the *distinction* as limitation, §10, it is like the primordial elements – apparently contrary as wet and dry but, in fact, without precise boundaries and merely dividing the *indistinct* plane into regions which are as distinct as they are inseparable. These first *distinctions*, providing the 'material' for all specific things, the background from which more specific things will be differentiated, are themselves no things. They are *pure distinctions* without any identifiable sameness. But in the world there are no *pure distinctions*, only 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. The structure of *sign* in *recognition* is no longer a mere *signification*. For the burden of *non-actuality* carried now by a *sign* is no longer the mere *indistinct rest* but something more specific which only happens not to be *here-and-now*. *Sign* points from *here-and-now* to somewhere else or sometime else, 'outside' of *here-and-now*, and so far it involves *signification*. But it points also to something *specific* 'outside' the *horizon of actuality*, thus making present not only the *indistinctness transcending* all *distinctions* but also this specific something which *transcends* only *actuality*. Everything *actual* carries this structure of a *sign*, of a reference to something *non-actual*. Things are *signs*, words are *signs* and *signs* are what make the world emerge from *chaos*.[17]

The exposition of *proto-experience* can be summarised thus: in *proto-experience* something 21. is *distinguished* but nothing is *recognised*. 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'.
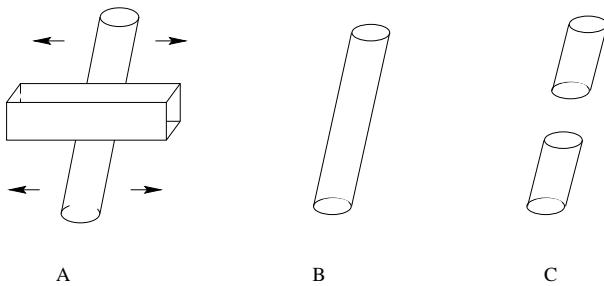
Pure *distinction* does not distinguish x from y; it only brings forth a manifold of *distinctins* against the *indistinct* background. *Recognition* is to *proto-experience* what *distinction* is to *nothingness*: a further and more specific differentiation. It cuts off what is *recognised* from the *chaos*, bringing forth not only a *pure distinction* but an appearance, that is, an appearance of *something*. To appear is the same as to be *recognised*. (It would be difficult to attach much meaning to unrecognised appearances.) 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.

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[17]Thus, one might want to repeat after Hilbert: "In the beginning was the sign." [D. Hilbert, *The New Grounding of Mathematics*. p.202] The signs of Hilbert's formalism, however, are only the abstract, limiting cases of our *signs*, to which we will return in 4.1.1.

3.1   Sign and recognition

22. *Recognition*, the *separation* of *actuality* from *not-actuality*, *founds* a *sign*: not any more a merely *virtual signification* of 'all the rest', 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, *not-actual* or even *non-actual* one.[18] As yet no *sign* appears *as* a sign – *sign* means here just the 're-' of the immediate *recognition*, which 're-' does not refer to any repetition but only to the emerging *distance* between the *actual* and *not-actual*. It is a *sign* in the sense that something *actual* points to, or just is continued in, something else or something more, something *not-actual* and, eventually, *non-actual*. But the two are immediately merged into one and the *sign* is entirely transparent.

23.   And how and when did the first *recognition* occur? Impossible question. As far as I am concerned, I do not remember. If there was a time when I did not *recognise* anything then I couldn't remember that time. Because to remember means to remember *something* and when there is *nothing*, when something only begins to appear for the first time, then there is nothing to remember either.

A possible example might be as follows. 4-month-old babies 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.

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.[19] 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.

24. *Recognition* of object's completeness and permanence testifies to the emerging *distinction* between the *actual* and the *not-actual*, where the *actual signifies* the absent, but also to 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. 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: it tries to fill the *actual*

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[18]We will later distinguish between the *not-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*. *Not-actual* contents presuppose *non-actual* ones and *non-actuality* subsumes *not-actuality* so, occasionally, we will omit one of these designations leaving it implicit.

[19]A. Slater, *Visual perception and its organisation in early infancy*. A multitude of examples is provided by the research on infant psychology, e.g., G. Bremner *et al.*, eds., *Infant Development: Recent Advances*.

absence. This "filling in", as phenomenologists might say, is what we mean by the structure of a *sign*: completing the *actual* by something not *actual*. Perhaps, we might even call it "intentionality"? Why not? Thus understood, intentionality is just the presence of the *non-actual* in and through the *actual*, the pressure it exercises on the *actuality*. It is a more crisp, sharpened modification of the virtual *signification*: the *actual* begins functioning as a *sign* of something which is not *actually* given.

This is also the germ of objectivity. 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*. Pure *subjectivity* means pure *actuality*, mere appearance. *Subjective* is what, like the passing feelings or immediate sensations, is exhausted in the pure *actuality* of *an experience* and does not hide anything, does not keep anything from appearing. 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 a mere appearance. This is only the *germ* of objectivity because there is as yet no sharp difference between the *not-actuality* of an impression which is fading away in the retention and the *not-actuality* of a table seen two days before. But the *dissociation* of *subject* and *object* will emerge from this *nexus* by sharpening the *distinction* between the *actual* and the *non-actual*.

Although we have not yet attained a full *dissociation* of *actuality* from *not-actuality*, 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 at this early stage.[20] It is, moreover, exactly the relative lack of *dissociation* of such *signs* from their meanings (characteristic for the current level) which accounts for their *creative* role.

A good example is provided by the Hebrew language (of the Old Testament) which did not distinguish clearly between word and thing. The primitive root *dabar* (*dbr*), referring to speaking and words, means also the things said/commanded and occurs often in the modified form as *dȧbar* (*dḃr*), which relates to things. (The difference is purely the matter of grammatical form: *ḃ* is only a modified form, ב, of the middle beth, ב, from the root.) Thus, for instance, *dabar aher* means 'another matter', while *dḃarim* (plural of *dabar*) – 'the words/things said' (the original title of the book which, in Vulgate, became Deuteronomy). The book of Chronicles is called *dȧbrei haiamin* (*dȧbrei* is plural genitive of *dabar*) which, literally, means 'the things/events of the days', while *dȧbrei Elohim* are 'God's words'. The singular genitive of *dabar*, *dḃar*, refers typically to the content of the things said, like *dḃar mitzwa*, 'the essence/content of the commandment', or *dḃar Torah*, 'the content of Torah'. One senses the associations going from the word/speaking, *dabar*, through the thing said to the thing itself, *dȧbar*. (E.g., the ten commandments can be either *aseret ha dibrot*, 'ten pronouncements', or *aseret ha dḃarim*, 'ten things said'.) But trying thus to distinguish the two, one should keep in mind that *dabar* and *dȧbar* are not two words but two forms of the same word which are also pronounced identically.[21]

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[20]We should take language here in a very wide sense, namely, as a system of *signs* which, given *actually*, can make present something *not-actual*. The language as spoken by the most is only a paradigmatic example.

[21]There are numerous examples where the translation – as thing, resp. word – emphasizes the difference not present in the original. E.g., 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 "thing"/"word" translate *dȧbar*/*dabar*. If the distinction were intended,

Now, the creative power of the Word which was in the beginning need not be taken so literally.[22] But if we take the words in their more *virtual* form, the above conflation of thing and word seems to be not merely an accident but exactly the constitutive character of the primordial *signs*. This process can be easier discerned on the individual scale. A child learning its first language(s) 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, for drawing *distinctions* in the matter of *experience*. Acquisition of the first language(s) 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. A child starts by using the same word or construction for what the adults recognise as different meanings or intentions. It can 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 passive, less intentional character of the former and the active, volitional aspect of the latter, are distinguished. Providing the means of drawing the *distinctions* and organising their *chaos*, the first language contributes to the creation of the world. It comes to a child as naturally as the world does, for learning it is learning the world, is the emergence of the world for the first time.

3.2   Actuality

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 anything specific *not-actual*. Before *recognition*, *pure experience* is heterogenous but continuous or simultaneous – *spatial* (in very rudimentary sense) but not temporal.

26.   Like *distinctions*, *recognitions* are not limited to minute *immediacies*. With *recognitions* the element of temporality begins to enter experience as the distinction and fusion of *actual* and *non-actual*. But *recognitions* are still 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 *experienced* difference between the *actually* given and absent notwithstanding, 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. When the unit 'day' is *recognised*, it carries the *non-actuality* which, for the

one might rather expect derivatives of the root *mila* (*mll*), which refers only to words/speaking.

[22]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.

moment, is just a *vague* intimation of its 'objective' duration. 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 something 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. *Recognition* of something from the *chaos* establishes the *horizon of actuality* as distinct from the background, which now becomes a not-*here-and-now*.

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 "*not-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 a *spatio-temporal nexus*, not yet differentiated into space and time. 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* which refers to, not to say contains, that *not-actual*. 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' 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 already *recognised* but, equally, it may be an unjustified and unfounded expectation, a wish to find something not *actually* given. The past is being accumulated but there is yet no experienced difference between something which receded into the past and something which awaits in the future. These two aspects of *actuality* and *non-actuality* mark only the first modification of *spatiality* from §17. The further breaking of the horizon of *experience* into temporal and spatial dimensions is based on this *nexus* of these two primordial *aspects*. 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 carry 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*, 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.

28. Any attempts to relate temporality to a succession of objects or perceptions are concerned with secondary notions, time and space of, so to speak, higher order. They are projections of *reflective dissociations* into the pre-reflective *experience*. 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.

Describing *spatio-temporality* in a bit different language we might recall that it was time, Cronos 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 abyss of Tartarus.

3.3   Awareness and self-awareness

29.   The common understanding of consciousness originates from the *reflective experience*, where we can easily differentiate between moments of reflective – in the common language, just conscious – attention given to something, and the greater part of our *experience* which passes by without such a particular attention. Yet, if we weren't immediately *aware* of ourselves and our activities, we could hardly pause to reflect over them. Beholding a view one can be completely absorbed in it, as one says, unconscious of it. Yet if interrupted and asked "What are you doing?", one can immediately answer "I am beholding this beautiful fiord." The answer involves an act of *reflection*, but it can be given only because one has already been *aware* of what one was doing. Calling this awareness "(self-)consciousness" is perhaps too generous, but it is what philosophy of consciousness used to do.

It is here that the confusion arises and it concerns the difficulty 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.

30.   The principle of intentionality may serve as a good example. It postulates an intentional object, a specific correlate of every *act* 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. Observing the fiord, I may not be *reflectively*

consious of it but, certainly, I am not unconscious of it. But wandering in the mountains I may, in fact, not be conscious of anything in particular. My thoughts, or rather moods and impressions, wander with me and stroll without stopping at anything particular. In many situations I may experience the qualities and feelings of so *vague* character that any attempt to identify their object seems futile. But I am not unconscious of what is happening, so to speak, in my mental background. Principle of intentionality would, nevertheless, postulate some specific intentional correlate. One is quick to specify that it is the correlate of an *act*. But in such situations I do not seem to be performing any acts. Rather, I am involved in some form of activity, some continuous movement. I am not unconscious, but I do not focus on any specific something, as I do in the moments of *reflective* consciousness.

What used to be called "immediate consciousness", "non-thetic consciousness" 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:

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. Accounting for one of them, leads eventually to the others. *Nexus* can be thought differently, with some of its *aspects dissociated*. *Equipollence* means that *aspects* are mutually conditioned, not that they could not possibly be (thought) separated. For the most, they even get naturally *dissociated* as we proceed towards more and more *immediate*, more and more *precise* determinations. But in the *nexus* they are not yet *dissociated*, they are merged into each other and only their later *reflective dissociation* allows us to view them as possibly independent from each other. 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. And entering this *horizon* is the same as entering the sphere of *proto-awareness*.

As the *actual* contents emerging in *proto-awareness* become more sharply *recognised*, we   31. may with greater confidence speak about *awareness*. There is no sharp border separating the two. 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 *precision* with which it *dissociates* its contents. This *dissociation* amounts at the same time to the withdrawal, and hence sharper seapration, of the *non-actual* elements. *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 distance between the actual and the non-actual.

Again, it is not founded upon, it does not emerge from, it is not involved in – it *is* this very difference. *Awareness is actuality*, experientially distinguished from *non-actaulity* as

the horizon; 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 univocally 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 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*.

32.   Appearances of contents *recognised* as *transcending* the *horizon of actuality* make particularly clear the *horizontal distance* separating the *sign* and the signified. Now, just like the distance from x to y is the same as the distance from y to x, so *awareness*, as the *horizontal distance* separating the *sign* from its content, is the same as the *distance* separating the content from the *sign*. To be *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*, of the *distance* separating the *sign* from its content. *Self-awareness* is always and only consummated in the event of being *aware* of '...', it is "by sight that one perceives that one sees."[23]

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 being conscious, i.e., involves consciousness. 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*. This *equipollence* precedes the more specific forms of consciousness.[24]

33.   *Awareness* is not any faculty of a *subject* – it precedes *subjectivity* of any experience. Neither is it any quality which can accompany some *experiences* – 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 *experience* is to be *aware*. It does not mean that one has to be *reflectively* conscious *of* what this experience consists of, what it presents. As Nagel says it, an organism is *aware* "if and only if there is something it is like to *be* that organism – something it is like *for* the organism."[25] There seems to be no need to distinguish this famous 'to be like' from *experience* – *experiencing* things can be taken precisely as that which 'it is like' to have ... this form of *experience*. Although *experiencing* something one

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

[24] It is tempting to mention an example of an apparently quite distinct nature. 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." [Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §§167-168.] Although the Neoplatonic concept of intellect (*nous*) cannot be identified with our concept of *awareness*, it seems that "intellect in its act" can be. Justification makes it clear "[...] since it sees that it apprehends, and knows that it sees, it knows that it is intellect in act [...]" It does not seem too far fetched to take this as referring to the same *equipollence* we are considering here.

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

may be *unaware* of some of its elements, so without any *awareness* one could not *experience* anything either. And to be *aware* of something means to *experience* it.

In the following section, we will see more and more sharp *distinction* between the *actual* and the *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. Consciousness is anything between the two extremes of *awareness* and *reflection*. It, too, is a matter of degree, which 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 "*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*: *self-aware recognition* completing the *actual signs* by something *non-actual* and surrounded by *chaos* and *nothingness*. The latter, although they do not constitute separate *experiences*, form the 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*. The *virtual signification* of a *distinction* refers through the *chaos* to the underlying *nothingness*. And 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 the *origin* but which carry *non-actuality* within themselves, confronting *awareness* with contents exceeding its *horizon* and, by this very token, constituting also *self-awareness*.   34.

Thus we might think that the only thing to do is to study *experience*, to ask how it emerges, how it is multiplied, inter-related, refined. But 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*. *Experience* provides the inexhaustible source of novelty and surprise, the source of ever new *recognitions*. But isolation of a particular content from it, which can be identified and reconsidered in repetitive *acts*, amounts to leaving the flow of *experience* behind and establishing a new level.

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*.

Abstractly, *reflective* consciousness involves a mere registration 'that ...', that something is, that it is so-and-so. What underlies such grasping 'that ...' is precisely the *dissociation* of '...' from the very *act* of 'thating'. This *dissociation*, in turn, is founded in the *dissociation* of '...' from its background. 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 *experience*, which now becomes its background.   35.

Reflection amounts to splitting *experience* into *experiences*. We may *reflect* over the whole 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* which appears as an inadequate *sign*, never able to match the intended totality. In either case, one ends with a particular (*object* or situation) *posited* as an independent entity – independent because *dissociated* from the surrounding *experience*.

36.   Such a *dissociated* item – a particular, limited totality of *distinguished* and *recognised* contents resulting from a *reflective cut* through *experience* – is *an experience*. It need not involve any 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*.[26] This ultimate possibility of *reflection* arises when the *reflectively* isolated '...' becomes completely *dissociated*, that is, viewed as a thoroughly independent and hence self-subsisting entity, when *distinguishable* becomes *dissociated*, when separable becomes separated, when one declares "that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences."[27] This section will consider the *aspects* of such a *dissociation*.

37.   *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 still surrounding the *experience*. A *distinction*, as 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 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. Likewise, *reflection* changes *experience* into *an experience*, into 'experience diversified into separate experiences'. From this perspective, *experience* remains an inaccessible horizon, surrounding the *reflection* and lending it the perpetual intention to integrate whatever it has *dissociated* back into the continuous texture of *experience*.

Inaccessibility 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* beyond *chaos*. Inaccessibility means only the impossibility of capturing the quality of the higher level using exclusively the categories of the lower one. It can be attempted reconstructed but reconstruction, assuming only the categories of its own level, is bound to apply only these categories. The problem is not to forget them, to erase them, to jump to the higher level, but to

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[26]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 of the *actual* thought.

[27]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]

acknowledge the genuine difference of various levels of experience. Otherwise, the *reflective dissociations* from which reconstruction is attempted, gaining exclusive power, break the *traces* of continuity which might gather the distinct levels in the *unity* of one *existence*.

 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 manifold. *Recognitions* differentiate *experience* but do not *posit* separate *experiences* – these are distinguished but not made independent from each other. This happens first through *reflection*. This means, in particular, that *experience* is not a *totality* of *experiences*. On the contrary, it is the level of being which, preceding, *founds* particular *experiences*. "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."[28] *An experience* emerges as a part of *experience* through an *act* of *dissociation* – *reflective* focusing on this particular aspect of *experience*, *positing* it as the *actual object*. Thus *reflection* is a *new* mode of being which *dissociates* from the flux of *experience* a particular totality, *an experience*. The basic rôle or the functional definition of *reflection* is just this: *dissociation* of *experience* into *experiences*.

 Just like the earlier processes of *distinction* and *recognition* so, too, *reflection* can bring forth and 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. At some stage, *precision* of the *distinctions* results in *reflective dissociation* of *external objects*. This is *equipollent* with the *dissociation* of the *actual subject* from *experience* and, by the same token, from the *object*. These *dissociated aspects* form the structure of *representation*.

38.

39.

4.1 Representation

Distinction introduces the primordial *signification*, underlying and all embracing reference to the ultimate 'outside', *nothingness*. *Recognition* happens through a *sign* – an *actual distinction* which merges into some *non-actual* ones and into 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*.

40.

   Reflective focusing on a particular content *dissociates* it from its surrounding and endows it with the character of an independent *object*. The *object* is no longer merged with the background of *experience* but merely *related* to other *experiences*. At the same time, however, the content remains involved in the texture of *experience*, it is not, in any case not at once, torn out of it and considered in absolute isolation. Its relations to other contents are *traces* of this involvement. It becomes as if doubled in that the *experienced recognition* becomes *dissociated* as the focus of attention. It is seen as that particular which became *dissociated* through the *act* of focusing and, simultaneously, as the same particular related

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[28]I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. B138 [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.]

to other things. This doubling is a form of *repetition* constituting *representation*. The word "*re-presentation*" expresses this double perspective on the same – as a moment of the unity with *experience* (presentation) versus as an entity extracted from it (re-). The *reflected* experience *repeats* the unreflected *recognition*. It does not *repeat* it as a new thing, but merely as a sharp contour which, drawn around the *recognised* content, *dissociates* it from its element. Thus, *representation* is not any copy, any miraculous internal duplication. It is just the next level of differentiation, it is a part of *experience* which has been more sharply isolated, a *dissociated* part which, retaining the *traces* of its involvement in the whole, is carved out from it.

Walking around in a room, you are *aware* of its space, colour of the walls, various pieces of furniture. But all these, although *distinct* and *recognised* are, so to speak, meshed into a coninuous whole of the *experience*. And then you catch yourself staring at one piece of furniture. You stare at this cupboard and as you do it, it loses its earlier character of being just an 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, but the cupboard has been pulled out of the room and is experienced in a new way. It has been doubled: you *experience* the fact of its being merged with the background, of being there but, on the other hand – and simultaneously – you *re-cognise* its particular status of a *dissociated* entity, which your *reflection* found there (in its form, perspective, 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*. *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*.
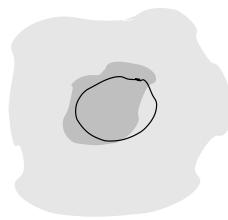
41.   Thus it is not a repetition in the common sense of 'recurrence of the same for the second time'. Yet, this common 'repetition as recurrence' is founded on the possibilities opened up by the primordial *reflective repetition*. The latter is not confronted by the problem of "how do I know that this is really a repetition of *the same* thing?" Starting with the ready made things, with the *objects dissociated* 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. This mystery of 'sameness' along the temporal line is but an example of the problem of identity when one tries to account for it starting with the *dissociated actualities* as the primary items. It is, in fact, the same problem as one faces whenever representation is assumed to be some 'internal image' of an 'external object'. Although no temporality is involved here, there are two *dissociated actualities*: that of the object and that of its image. The questions about the relation between the two, about the sense in which the one is an image *of* the other, and the like, remain perplexing when the two *distinct* aspects are taken as genuinely *dissociated* items.

The original *repetition* is not any ontic double but merely a sharp contour drawn around *recognised* contents. It is 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. This whole event does not involve two independent entities but two different perspectives on one and the same. In particular, it happens within the *horizon of actuality* and so there is, as yet, no way to talk about 'second time'. Neither there is any duplication of things – it is the same *experienced* simultaneously from two angles, from two different levels.

Representation in the more common sense of the word is but a sharpened version of this primordial *representation*. It is a more explicit repetition – it presupposes something *of which* it is a representation as already given, that is, *dissociated*. 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, §§44.ff, and to the question of 'repetition as recurrence' when discussing identity in II:2.2.2.i.)

The *reflective repetition* involves a double *dissociation*. The *act of reflection dissociates* 42. this cupboard from the rest of *experience* as an independent *object*. On the one hand, it singles out a unit which is contained within the *horizon of actuality* 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."[29] The object acquires thus a special status as compared to all the rest of *experience* which is ignored by *reflection*. (This implicit reference to 'all the rest' is the *signification* from 2.4 common to all *signs*.) The *object*, or *an experience*, is carved out of *experience*, it is, so to speak, torn out of the context. This gives it the character of an independent entity. The *object* has been *dissociated* from *experience*.

On the other hand, the object of *reflection* has been already *experienced* and *recognised*. The more intensely I try to grasp 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 background from which *object* is *dissociated* is not a collection of other *objects* but *experience*. Only *dissociation* will allow to view it as a context consisting of other *objects*. But *dissociation* from *experience* is, at the same time, *dissociation* from the *experiencing actuality*. The *mere representation* expresses this fact that the *object* is no longer only an *aspect* of *recognition* but, acquiring independence from the context, appears also as independent from its *actual* appearance. It no longer coincides with the *sign* through which it appears. We can visualise it by marking the *recognised* content by the darker area in the flow of *experience* and the *actual sign* by the line which carves out the *actual representation*:

The *sign* appears *as a sign* – it does not coincide with the signified. *Representation* hardly ever coincides with the *recognition*, even though it intends to capture the same content. In so far as it is a *sign*, it indicates the background; in so far as it does it *as a sign*, it makes clear the *distance* separating it from its *object*, their non-coincidence. This is the other dimension of *dissociation* involved in *representation*.

The original *representation* is carving *an experience* from *experience*, is a sharp *dissociation* of an *object*. This sharpness endows the *object* with independence from the background *and* from its *sign*. This double *dissociation* – of something from the background and, at the same time, from its appearance – characterizes the *reflective representation* as

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

distinct from earlier *recognitions* and *distinctions*. We will refer to it as *externalisation*. *Reflection externalises*: it is not only *aware* of a distinct object but is *aware* of it *primarily as distinct*. The sharp contour, which *dissociates* it both from the surrounding and from its *sign*, is what makes its distinctness the primary *aspect* of the *reflective act*.

4.1.1. Signs and meanings

43.   *Distinction* is indiscriminately the event of distinguishing *and* the distinguished content. Similarly, 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 experienced *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* something *non-actual* by means of a *sign* which (i) is *dissociated* from this something and which (ii) fits completely within the *horizon of actuality*.

       The point (ii) is primary and might be even taken as conditioning (i). It applies also when 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 escapes more specific means of linguistic identification. But it can also be used with reference to some *vague* content which we are unable to circumscribe precisely but which has been sufficiently identified in the course of a conversation. *Reflection* over any more *vague* contents is bound to use words with only approximate meaning. As the object of discourse becomes more and more remote (pleasure, 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*, §31. In the current case of *reflective signs*, it amounts to their inherent inadequacy, the impossibility to capture the signified. With respect to *immediate*, *precisely* identified *objects*, the inadequacy may seem negligible. It increases with respect to the *vaguely recognised* contents of *experience* and becomes virtually infinite with respect to the *invisible origin*.[30]

44.   The appearance of the *distance* amounts to a new discovery: the *sign* need not be an *aspect* of the signified, the two are *dissociated* and so may be *put into a relation* to each other. Thus emerge abstract *signs*. Abstract *signs* are the ones which, being completely *dissociated* from their correlates, can function independently from them. Artificial and conventional signs provide the typical examples. Smoke, as a sign of fire, is still only a *sign*, it means only that: fire. When used for the purpose of signaling it becomes an abstract *sign*. With this *dissociation* there appears also the *trace* which the prior unity leaves among the *dissociated aspects*: the relation between the *sign* and the signified.[31]

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[30] 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 *shared* with) another, it diminishes also the distance between the persons.

[31] An *actual sign* carries a *trace* of its origin and, to this extent, also of its *actual* opposite(s) *dissociated*

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*.

A *sign* is *the* means of comprising (possibly *non-actual*) *distinctions* within the *horizon of actuality*. Appearing within this *horizon*, it 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 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*.

Meaning, as the relation between the *sign* and the signified, is but an expression of the *distance* separating these *dissociated aspects*. Contrary to what might be expected, words are the more meaningful, the longer is this *distance*. Simply, because deeper things reside further away from the *actuality* of *signs*. The difference between words and 'mere words' is exactly this: the latter fail to make anything present, while the former reveal. The 'mere words' are *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 not so much in the rather dubious possibility to capture uniquely particular contents, but more in the possibility which it offers to say – and communicate – something very *distant*, something deeply meaningful which we do not quite grasp, which we can not make *precise*. What makes *signs* and words deeply meaningful, as distinct from merely meaningful, is the fact that they do not embrace the whole (reality) which they intend – they merely hint at it with sufficient *clarity*. After all, words are only *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.

Meaning arises in the context of *sign*'s application, in some *actual* situations. Unused *sign* 45. 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."[32] The context of use usually disambiguates the abstract signs – "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.

Actual *meaning* may involve all aspects of the actual situation. "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

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from the same *nexus*. *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 (relations between) *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]

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

mean "Are you interested...? In talking..." These, too, are *distinctions* which the statement
may make in the *actual* situation. Thus, (almost) every situation of using a *sign* results in
some meaning which, being dependent on the context, is unique.

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 var-
ious 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. (This seems to be the content of the cele-
brated inscrutability of referfence.) 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' meanings* reflects mostly only the stability of the corre-
sponding *distinctions*. But *dissociated signs* acquire also abstract stability, the stability of
the mere form and rules, which function independently from the possible (in)constancy of
their *meanings*. This formal stability, autonomous constancy of abstract *signs* can then
strengthen the stability of the signified *distinctions*.

46.   We are thus far from equating the dependency of *meaning* on the actual situation of usage
with any kind of nominalism. The possibility of using an abstract sign in a given situation
is, in fact, 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."[33] One can scream "Danger!" as a joke or
to cheat others, when no danger is present. But one can make such a joke *only because*
"danger" means something prior to its actual usage. This prior meaning depends, of course,
on the *distinctions* sedimented in the language as a social institution. But this aspect goes
beyond our *existential* considerations.

In spite of the dependency on the contex of use, the specificity of words is that, being
dissociated as signs, they are *always* signs, they always carry if not a specific *meaning*, so at
least its promise. In the outermost extreme, all encountered words signal this simple fact:
they are messages *from other humans*. Even if no recipient were ever intended, an author
has been there and this, too, is a part of the *meaning* of every word and text. Because
words are always already inscribed in the context of inter-human communication, they
carry their residual meanings independently from any *actual* situation. This "autonomy of
meaning", as Davidson would say, is the fact of meaning's independence from the pragmat-
ics of actual usage. Thus, whenever encountered, words can hardly fail to produce some
distinctions beyond the trivial *distinction* of their mere presence (which is a *distinction*
made by everything that is). It is the *trace* of the *nexus* of *sign dissociated* into the event
of distinguishing and the distinguished content, into 'use' and '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.

Thus, the *meaning* of abstract *signs* has a twofold aspect: on the one hand, every

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

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, in more linguisitc ones: literal meaning). The former can be thought of as individual in opposition to the latter which carries the socially sedimented, common elements. The former is undefinable due to its uniqueness, the latter due to its open potential. Both are *aspects* arising from the prior *nexus* of a *sign* where the *distinguished* content, the 'common meaning', and the fact of *distinguishing*, the 'pragmatics of usage', have not been yet *dissociated*.

There are much more *signs* than there are words, and much more *distinctions* than *signs*. 47. 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 disquotational schema of *meaning* which simply says that *meaning* of the linguistic *signs* is, typically, not determined and not definable by purely linguistic means.[34] The *meaning* of a word, the *distinctions* it can actualise, transcends 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. One might think that the story with trivialities like "blue" and "horse" 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 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.

Reflection externalising its contents gives rise to *signs as signs*, to the *distance* separating 48. *actuality* 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. In particular, it allows for a free play with the *signs* themselves, opening the door to creativity and, as the case may be, madness and alienated subjectivity.

This independence is embodied in the structure of 'as'. 'As' in *sign as a sign* signals the *dissociation* of *sign* from what it signifies. 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, now seen as y, could also be seen on other occasions as z. 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

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[34]Certainly, it can often be relatively precisely indicated. But indication, no matter how precise, is very different from definition. Given some elementary linguistic basis, meanings of more advanced words can be explained – indicated – as it happens whenever we explain the meaning of a new word to a child. Our concern here is this elementary basis, not advanced language usage.

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[35], one can see the drawing ⬡ 'as' a glass cube or 'as' a solid angle or 'as' a wire frame or... Here we notice the difference: various 'as...' are now joined by "or" for, indeed, one cannot see it as *both* a glass cube *and* a solid angle. This difference signals the new status acquired by *signs*. In the previous example, the *nexus*, friendship, could be seen 'as' various specific manifestations. Here the situation is inverted. It is the *sign* which is fixed and can be seen 'as' representing various things. *Sign as a sign*, having acquired independence from its function and meaning, has become itself an object. It has become *dissociated* from its signification and can now represent different objects, depending only on 'as' *what* one sees it. The extreme cases of such a *dissociation* are purely formal systems, like those of mathematical axiomatic systems. Symbolic manipulation is goverened here exclusively by the syntactic rules independent from possible meanings and arbitrary interpretations are admitted, as long as they respect the rules of manipulation.

This *dissociation*, where not only one *nexus* happens to have different *aspects* and *actual* manifestations, but where also one *sign* can represent different objects, marks clearly the independence of abstract *signs* from their *actual meaning*. The correlated sedimentation of some residual *distinctions* in the literal meaning of abstract *signs*, amounts then to the emergence of the system of language. It is not a necessary *aspect* of *reflective experience* but arises only with its more advanced, that is more definitely *dissociated*, forms.

4.1.2. The power of words

49.   Identities carved from the flux of *recognitions* by *reflective dissociations* are sharper and more definite than those established by mere *signs*. As just described, they appear through abstract *signs* which, *dissociated* from their correlates, can function in a relative independence from the *actual experiences*. This involves a new form of the 'creative' power which words acquire as compared to the more primordial *signs*, §25. *Signs* lead to the emergence of differentiated contents of *experience*. Words 'create' now not so much by bringing any new *distinctions* but by strengthening the existing ones. They fixate in the *precise* and *immediate* – and that means, in particular, graspable and repeatable – *signs* the flux of *experience*. They 'freeze' something which, if unsaid, might pass almost unnoticed. As long as one is engaged in an undisturbed course of *experience* without talking about it, one is engaged in a flux where things, although identified and *recognised*, need not stand out sharply from the background. To *experience* is to *participate* in this flux. But if one pauses and observes, saying "Look at *this*! It is so-and-so but also a bit like that, consider this...", one is giving it a more definite shape, is *dissociating* it. 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. Even if what is so *dissociated* remains *vague* and *imprecise*, the very *act* of ostentatious pointing towards *it* transfers the *precision* of the sign to the intended content. An *objective* axis around which attention can rotate is established – an *act* of *reflective* cut from *experience* has found place; the sign has extracted and 'frozen' the sediment of the *actual* content from the flux of *experience*.

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

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. *Dissociated* contents appear as independent from *experience* and this independence, sedimented in a word, can be repeatedly invoked whenever this word is used. "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.»"[36] Abstract *signs* lend their stability and independence from *experience* to the things. Words do not put the end to the uncontrolled flux of *experience* but, providing a system of *signs* beyond and above this flux, they enable us to 'freeze' its flow, to abstract from it.

Reflective dissociation sets the definite, even if not always *precise*, limits. By this it 50. enhances (and sometimes even establishes) the identity of whatever is named or denoted. 'Freezing' endows thing with permanence. Dragging it out of *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 giving names (or new names) to his people expressing their (new) identity.

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.[37] 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 the almost embarrassing triviality that in order to control x, x must be there, one must be able to distinguish x in order to manipulate it. The power of words is the power of *reflective dissociation*. To 'freeze' and set the limits, to *externalise* and to objectify, means to make *visible*. 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 and *externalising* them as *objects* independent from the background to which they belong, we gain power. This power is not unlimited and, in some sense, it is even illusory. But it also marks the purely *reflective* attitude with the powerful and ambiguous tendency to control its objects, to outsmart the *experience* by means of its abstractions. This issue will be addressed further in 5.1, while its *existential* dimension will be central in Book III.

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

[37]In a Hebrew myth written 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]

4.1.3. Distinctions in the (same) indistinct

51. Just to anticipate a possible worry, which we will address in more details in the last section of this Book, in particular, 6.1.2, we comment briefly the 'subjectivity' of *meaning* and 'arbitrariness' of *meaning* of abstract *signs*.

     Asking "How does a thought act?" Frege answers: "By being apprehended and taken to be true."[38] *Distinction* acts by merely being apprehended, although this means simply effecting some *distinction*. (And 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.

     Signs are *actual* tokens of *distinctions* which are drawn and made *in* the current situation, *in* the world but, eventually, in the *indistinct*. Every *distinction* makes a *distinction* in the *indistinct*, and so does (the *meaning* of) every *sign*. There is nothing 'mental' about the *meanings* of *signs*, unless we take "mental" to mean just the meanings of *signs*. A *sign*'s *meaning* is not something residing 'in one's head' as opposed to some 'reality outside': a *sign* is a *sign* only to the extent it is *recognised*, its *recognition* amounts to drawing some *distinctions*, and *distinctions* are not drawn 'in one's 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 effects, the way it changes the world. In this sense, every utterance is a true speech act: it effects some *distinctions* in the matter of the world.

52. Of course, the same announcement can mean different things *for* different persons. But this is possible only due to the abstractness of *signs*, due to the *dissociation* of *signs* from their *meanings*. What is 'the same' in the same announcement heard by different persons is, eventually, only its linguistic appearance and, possibly, its residual, literal meaning. The differences concern the actual *meanings*. This duality is exactly the *dissociation* introduced with abstract *signs as signs*.

     Such signs, like words, being *dissociated* from their *meaning*, acquire existence relatively independent from their actual usage, an impersonal or social existence. They can thus function 'as' signs of various things and this exposes them to the (apparent and, eventually, factual) arbitrariness of meaning. For it does not any longer reside merely in the actually drawn *distinctions* but, primarily, in the sedimented residual, in the *vague* potentiality for actual usage, which is conditioned not exclusively by the actual applications but also by the relations to other words which rest deposited in the tradition and convention. The 'subjectivity' of the meaning of 'the same' announcement for different persons is the same as the indeterminacy of its meaning: 'the same' announcement can also have different meanings on different occasions. Although simultaneity of *actualities* of different persons is not the same as different *actualities* separated by some passage of time, both cases involve the same underlying *dissociation*: *actuality* is more and more definitely isolated from its surroundig (of others, of temporal experience) and, in the same process, *actualities* become *dissociated* from each other.

     This *dissociation*, and the resulting arbitrariness of meaning, can be illustrated as follows. Encountering a seemingly arbitrary and incomprehensible combination of letters, we expect it to carry some meaning. We know that words are *signs* and letters compose words. Even if their combination appears meaningless, we suspect that it might, in spite of appearance, mean something. Only abstract *signs* can appear 'as' meaningless. Such

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

an appearance requires objects whose constitutive function is to be *signs* irrespectively of the meaning they happen to express in a given situation. It is possible only due to the *dissociation* of *sign* from *meaning*, of the abstract function of a *sign* from it actually functioning as a *sign* of something.

Arbitrariness of meaning, the *sign dissociated* from the signified, arises from the more primordial *nexuses*: most abstractly, from the *nexus* of *experience dissociated* into *reflective experiences*. But the fact that the resulting elements, apparently not standing in any relations to each other, can enter arbitrary such relations, does not mean that they never have been involved in more intimate relations. Asking how and why a given word denotes what it denotes, how abstract *signs* relate to their *meanings*, may require endless investigations. For once *dissociated* they have lost any necessary connection. The connection, however, remains – as impossible to define as to deny – for it is the *trace* of the earlier *nexus* from which the elements arose, eventually, of the *virtual nexus* of the *indistinct one*.

4.2   Subject-object

Reflection externalises. Recognitions of *awareness* contain the germ of *externality* since they appear through *signs* separated by a *distance* from the element of *non-actuality*. But it is only when one pauses to *reflectively* consider an *object*, when it is pulled out of *experience* and captured by a single *act* within the *horizon of actuality* (even *immediacy*), that it appears as an *external* entity. The cupboard which, as one is attentively staring at it, both loses its anchoring in the surrounding 'reality' and gains independence, becomes a *dissociated object*. Objects of *awareness*, of *experience*, are not *external* in this sense.

Externality does not imply spatial relations. It is just an aspect of *reflection* which is *self-aware*, that is, *aware* of the *distance* separating it from its *object*. Focusing *reflective attention* on the *actual* sensation of pain, a particular memory, a particular feeling, makes them appear as *external*. Being *dissociated* as objects of attention, they acquire independence. They remain, of course, related to other elements of *experience*, but they are so related as *dissociated* elements to other such elements. They lose their anchoring in the surrounding *experience*, become alienated from it and, by the same token, alienated from the *reflecting subject*: they become *externalised*. Thus understood *externality* is more primordial than spatial externality. It is opposed to something like 'internality'. One used to oppose the external sense and the internal one. But although sensations are easily classified as the former, the characterisation of the latter has always presented if not serious difficulties, so multiple choices depending on the conceptual context in which it was considered. We view minuteness of sensations as their specific feature which they share with *acts* of *reflective dissociation*. As such, they are opposed to the contents which are not *dissociated* but which still reside in the 'inner' flux of *experience*. In the moment they become *dissociated* as independent *actualities*, they leave one's 'interior' and appear as *external*, even if not spatial, *objects*. They leave the deeper layer of *experience* and come to the surface, become clearly *visible*.

It would be common to equate the distinction external-internal with objective-subjective. A table is opposed to its perception, just like friendship is opposed to one's understanding of friensdhip. We do not find it so easy to maintan the latter opposition. Friendship is not easily *dissociated* from its experience. Both are immersed in the *unity* of one's being and are internal in a way neither table nor its perception is. *Externality* is the feature of contents which appear in the narrow *horizon of immediacy*. It expresses the *vertical*

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dissociation of *immediacy*, whether of sensations or *objects*, from the deeper layers of *non-actuality*. But the events within the *horizon of actuality* involve also further, *horizontal dissociation* of the *actual sign*, of the appearance or *noesis* from the appearing, *noema*. The *dissociation* of the *actual* description of friendship from friendship, marks only *externality* of the *actual signs* in relation to the experience(s) of friendship which, overflowing the *horizon of actuality*, remains internal. A table, on the other hand, is captured within the *horizon of actuality*, both with respect to its *subjective* appearance and its *objective* content. Here, one can easily distinguish between the *actual* table 'out there' and its mere internal, or as we prefer to say, *subjective* perception. Only this latter *dissociation* of *sign* from its *actually* and *precisely* given content, leads to the *subject-object* distinction.

Objects and *subject* are the two poles of the double *dissociation*. The abstract *signs* mark the *subjective* pole of *reflective acts*. *Objects* are their correlates which are *precisely dissociated* not only from the *signs* (as also *non-actual aspects* of *experience* can be) but also from the *experential* background. This *precise dissociation* is constitutive for *objects* and distinguishes them from other contents which, like friendship, *transcending* the *horizon* of *actual signs*, cannot be grasped equally *precisely*. *Objects* are sharply distinguished, *externalised* contents. This *precision* is an *aspect* of being captured in the unity of a single *act* and entirely inscribed within the *horizon of immediacy* from which all competitors have been suppressed. The fact that *objects* carry with themselves the aspect of *non-actuality* appears for *reflection* only through their *externality* and *dissociation* from its *signs*.

56.   *Subject* is the signifying pole of *reflective act*, the mere *fact* of the *reflective sign* appearing as a *sign*, its non-coincidence with the signified *experience*. Whenever a sharp contour around the *experienced* content is drawn by an abstract *sign*, the *sign* appears as distinct from its content. This sharp contour is the contribution of *reflective act* to *experience*. The *actual subject* is the place, or better, the event of this contribution to non-coincidence.

This non-coincidence is only an *aspect* of the whole *nexus* of *reflective dissociation*: of *actual object* from its background, of *subjective sign* from its *objective* content and, by thus confronting the *reflective subject* exclusively with the *actual object*, of this *subject* from the deeper layers of its own being. This final *aspect* is what endows the *actual subject* with the character of an independent entity. For it is *distinction* (from the *indistinct*) which marks the being of something, and the *dissociation* which marks it as an independent being. (Thus, the three just mentioned *aspects* of *dissociation* establish also the respective independence: of *object* from 'the rest of the world', of *object* from *subject*, and of *subject* from 'the rest of the world'.) *Subject* is thus *dissociated* not only from its *actual object* but also from its deeper, internal *aspects* which, *non-actual* as they are, slip out of the *horizon of actual* grasp by *reflective acts*. This *dissociation* becomes apparent whenever, trying to *reflect* over oneself, one notices that the correlate of the *act* is not any given *object* but something obviously *transcending* its *actuality*.

57.   Notwithstanding this independent character, *actual subject* is not any new entity. It is only *dissociated* from the deeper layers of *experiencing existence*. These deeper layers leave the *trace* of substantiality which does not belong to the *subject* but only to the *existence*. Yet, narrowing the attention to the *immediacy* of a *reflective act*, and observing its contribution of a sharp contour drawn around the *object*, the question about the origin of this contribution results in substantialisation of the *subject*.[39] Once the *dissociated subject* is ascribed this character of the genuine protagonist, it becomes impossible to

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[39]This happens, for instance, in the criticised Cartesian transition from the mere *act* of «*cogito*» to the substantial entity, «*ergo sum*».

account not only for its relations to the *external objects* but also for its temporal unity.

The insoluble relation of *subject-object* is a *trace* of the prior *unity* which withdraws, but remains in the background, as the *dissociation* proceeds. It concerns the events of *reflection* and is therefore thought in terms of *actuality*: 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. But ignoring this *trace* of prior *unity*, makes an account of the insolubility of the relation between the *dissociated* elements appear impossible. On the one hand, a lot of transcendental machinery and long series of constitutions may be needed, in order to let the purely *actual subject* have anything to do with at least a shadow of the real world. Or, along a different line starting from the same *dissociation*, assuming only *external objects* or sensations which, nevertheless, should appear for at least a shadow of a real being, one has to perform a lot of constructions, associations, juxtapositions – intense and often ingenious sewing – before one is forced to unwillingly give up the reality of any subject.

In our view, *subject* and *object* are not any fundamental elements but arise from the *unity* 58. of the prior *nexus* of *experience* and, more specifically, of *actual recognition*. *Traces* of this *unity* remain present as the *non-actual* elements *transcending* the *horizon* of *reflective acts* which are perceived by *reflection* as various relations between *dissociated* entities. We have followed the process of ontological *founding*, of the gradual emergence of different levels of being leading to this *dissociation*. Different levels mark 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*. The distinctions between an infant and a child, a child and an adolescent, an adolescent and an adult can be viewed as distinctions of degree. But the distinction between an infant and an adult becomes definite enough to allow viewing them as distinct in nature. 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*. Yet, *awareness* is the nucleus from which *reflective subject* and *object* emerge in the process of further and more *precise* 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*, degrees of being captured by a *sign* within the *horizon of actuality*. *Objects* are the final hypostases, the *actual* limits (usually, only provisional and hardly ever necessary) of the process of *distinguishing*. Some contents fit better into our sensuous, perceptual and conceptual apparatus, into the scope of our *horizon of actuality*, and these are the *objects*: pens, pieces of chalk, blackboards reappearing with the immutable persistence whenever an example is called for. Others do not fit equally well, announcing immediately the inadequacy and insufficiency of the *objective representation*. 'The whole world' can, in principle, be *posited* as an *object* of *reflection*, but we feel easily that there is a significant difference between the two. Unlike 'this pen', 'the whole world' slips out of the horizon of apprehension leaving there the mere *sign*. Even friendship slips out of this horizon and, no matter how much discussed and considered as transcending the *subjective* determinations, refuses to appear with the *precision* of an *external object*.

The same continutiy applies to the subject. Narrowing the horizon of attention to the minuteness of a single *act*, *subject* appears as the entity *actually dissociated* from the *objective* correlates. However, it appears as an entity because, *dissociation* notwithstanding, it remains invovled into the *unity* of *experience transcending* the *horizon of actuality*.

Granting this, one can still try to isolate oneself as an independent entity, no longer a minute but a lasting, *objective* totality, and think of one's, still only *external*, relations to the world and other people. But doing this one knows also that it is not the whole truth, that the *objectivisation* went too far leaving perhaps the most significant, internal *aspects* outside its scope. These internal *aspects*, interwoven into one's *existence* and thus 'subjective' as they may seem to be, are nevertheless much more deeply experienced than their mere *representations* and so, after all, appear as *transcending* one's *subjectivity*.

In short, *subject* and *object*, the experience of *subjectivity* and of *objective* contents, mark only the final station of the process of refinement of the *existential confrontation*. Their relations, inter-dependence and intimacy are *founded* in the *unity* of *existence*.

59.   Before closing this theme, let us observe one more *dissociation* accompanying *reflective experience*: the *dissociation* of *reflection* from *self-reflection*. After Kant, one has been cautious to stress that the *actuality* of the *subject* is acompanied by *self-awareness* and not merely by *self-reflection*. 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."[29] *Reflection* is focused exclusively on its *externalised objects*, its acts are exhausted by its directedness towards them. *Reflection* can occupy itself with an *object* only by excluding all other objects, in particular, only by forgetting 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*. In a series of *reflective acts*, *self-reflection* can arise only as one of them. This is the site of infinite regress. The 'I' objectified in an *act* of *self-reflection*, being an *object*, is always *dissociated* 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.[40] 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 *reflective experience*, *reflection* and *self-reflection* are not such *aspects* – they are two different modifications of a *reflective act*. *Reflective* interest in *self-reflection* arises from the *self-awareness* which, however, *reflection* is unable to express in terms of its *dissociated* elements. And *self-awareness* is constantly present because, as before, the earlier hypostases do not disappear with the emergence of the new one. *Reflection* over x is one *act* and *self-reflection* another, but *reflection* is only lowest level of *actuality* which is underlied, that is, always accompanied by the higher ones. Every *act* of *reflection* is *self-aware*, and it is only this *self-awareness* which challanges it to, and makes possible, occasional *self-reflection*.

4.3   Time and space

60.   *Externality* is different from the three-dimensional extensionality, and time of the *objects*

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[40]Speaking a bit mathematically, if a single *reflective act* is represented by surrounding its *object* '...' by 'that(...)', then 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-xpoint where no more that's add anything new, so that $that(f) = f$.

and their changes (not to mention *temporality* of the flow of *experience*) is different from the linearity of objective time. Yet they are steps in the process of emergence of the 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 and this experienced identity 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 homogeneity of space. Let us consider the former aspect first.

4.3.1. Time

Reflection comes always 'too late', it *represents* something which has always already been *recognised* in the flux of *experience*. And as any act involves its whole structure within itself, no additional 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* takes time 0 (whatever that could mean). It is there, in the structure of the *reflective experience* and hence also in the experience itself: *reflection repeats* what it *reflects*, doubles it, and this basic *repetition* is the same as the primordial *after*. 61.

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. One can, perhaps, view it as the Husserlian retention, as the *primäre, frische Erinnerung*. The withdrawal of the just-perceived into the immediate past amounts to the impossibility of *actually* grasping and retaining the *object* in the unity of the *reflective act*. But Husserl's descriptions address only the flow of intentional contents, while our *after* is an *aspect* of the emergence of such contents. It is the *trace* of the *nexus* of *recognition* which has been *dissociated* into the *external* content and the *subjective sign*. *After* is the *distance* separating the latter from the former. It is experienced simultaneously with the *dissociated* poles, all elements of the relation *after* are experienced simultaneously within the *horizon of actuality*. But this simultaneity is disturbed because its content has already withdrawn into the background and has been doubled by *reflective representation*. It has thus already, always already, been there and *reflective dissociation* arrives always *after* it.

This *after* does not *merely happen* to *reflective* consciousness. It 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 after. The more *precisely reflection dissociates*, the more definitely this primordial *after* turns into the flow of time which, gradually, becomes more and more 'objective'.

Externality is the feature of *dissociated actualities* which become, so to speak, thrown out or pulled out of *experience*. *After* is the same *distance* but viewed now from the perspective of the *reflective actuality*. It expresses inaccessibility of *experience* to *reflection* as every *reflective act* involves the *self-awareness* of having arrived at the scene *after* its *object*. It 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*. As such, *experience* is for *reflection* the *pure past*, the past which not only isn't merely a collection of past *actualities*, but which never had been any *actuality*. In fact, it is 62.

present to *reflection* – not as its *object*, but as the horizon from which it arose. "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."[41] 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 *totality* of *experiences*; it is what precedes *experiences* and makes them possible. Preceding the *dissociation* into *experiences*, it also precedes time understood as a succession, in particular, the possibility of past *experiences*, of *actualities* which are not *actual* now but were so some other time. Past, thought as a 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 turning into past *actualities*.

63.   This establishes, perhaps, the dimension of the past, but what about the future? The future is not so 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"[42], appears as the point into which all *experience* converges, to use Bergson's image, as the tip of the cone of the whole past. *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 asymmetry, this *reflective* thirst after its *object* and *object's* indifferent independence, gives the time arrow its direction.

The rest is uniformity by analogy – the *actuality* of *reflection* comes *after* the past which, by the same token, came *before* the 'now' of *reflection*. We might say: *actuality*, seen as a 'now', is *the consummated* future of the past. In more plain terms, *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*. Future is to the *actual sign*, what this *sign* is to what it signifies, i.e., just like 'now' of *reflection* is *after* what it has captured, future is *after* 'now' of the *reflection*. It is a point of *reflection* over the *actual experience* or, as the case may, 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*. 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 (e.g., expected) form augmented, however, with a sign of indeterminacy, the possibility of unfullfilment, or else protention which anticipates the *immediate* action, like

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[41]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. III:2 Merleau-Ponty borrows probably this idea from Bergson.
[42]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. B:2.§26

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.

4.3.1.i. The unity of time experience
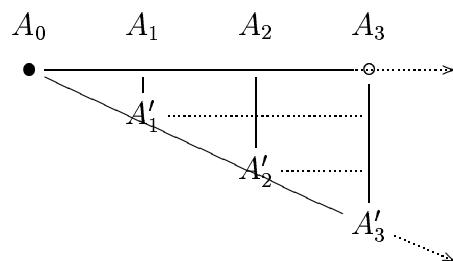
Temporality as just described is objective in the sense of being an *aspect* of the experience 64. of *externalised objects*, but it isn't yet the objective time *dissociated* from subjectivity and its apprehension of things. It is still time of *an experience*, still *temporality* with a designated *actuality*, 'the present now' of *here-and-now*. Such *temporality* pertains to any being which has reached the level of discerning independent *objects*. A dog bringing a ball and looking expectingly into one's eyes, waiting for the ball to be thrown away is, too, involved into *temporality*, just as it is when looking in the bushes for the ball just thrown.

But neither past nor future is limited to the (affectively presented) contents, to the *immediacy* of retentions or expectations. Past is encountered in the indefinite recession of one's memories and future in the general sense of openness of one's life. Eventually, past is also the objective past of the 'whole world' and future is the abstract future of the 'whole world'. Both dimensions can be extended beyond the horizon of exepriential *actuality* and this extension *founds* the objectivity of time.

"A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? – And *what* can he not do here? – How do I do it? – How am I supposed to answer this?"[43] The phenomenal time of *actual now*, with its retentions and protentions, does not suffice here. Expecting somebody's arrival the day after tomorrow (or next year) presupposes the ability to relate to the objective time, simply because having at all the idea of 'next year' requires such a ability.

This significant dichotomy is well expressed by Husserl. He describes two kinds of time 65. consciousness: the consciousness of time as it unfolds in 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."[44]

The former is the *temporality* 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. 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

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[43]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. II:i

[44]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. A:1.1 §6

the idealized *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."[45]

66.   But now, there is also "inauthentic consciousness of time: a part of a perceived melody drained off a longer time ago. [...]   We say, that of which I am retentionally conscious is absolutely certain. How does it now stand with remoter past?"[46] Analysing a continuous experience, like that of listening to a melody, one may still keep, towards its end, some living memory of its beginning.   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'. "For the emergence of this time consciousness, reproductive recollection (intuitive as well as in the form of empty intentions) plays important role. [...]   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."[47] The reproductive recollection does not have the capacity to *actually* bring the original object or experience to life (*Anschauung*). It can only intend it, as if *positing* the objective identity across the time which broke the continuity of the experience of the object. Once such an abstract 'past now' is *posited* in the *dissociation* from the *actual experience*, it can be multiplied extending indefinitely into the past. The flow of time becomes a succession of time-points and "[t]his process is obviously to be thought as unlimited, although the actual recollection fails in practice."[48]

An *actual* object or event retires into the past, dissolving gradually 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?

67.   In the *actuality* of a temporal experience, Husserl finds merely "the intentional unity, that which in the stream of the flow is intentionally given as unity. [... And even] 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."[49] The unity of the remote and immediate past, of the objective and experienced time, is given merely as an intentional fact. There is nothing in the content of the *actual experience* accounting for this unity, but the unity is meant, we do experience the two as the same, though intention of this unity is *empty*, is not fulfilled by any phenomenal content.

The question what happens to the contents between their disappearance from the retentional *actuality* and their reappearance as remote recollections, is not legitimate for a phenomenologist. It asks for 'something' which is not given in any *act* of consciousness but which happens between two such *acts*. One can discern in the *act* of recollection the

[45]Ibid. A:II.Beilage vi.
[46]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time.* B:II.§27; A:I.2.§22.
[47]Ibid. A:I.2.§32; A:II.Beilage iv.
[48]Ibid. A:I.2.§32.
[49]Ibid. A:II.Beilage viii; A:I.2.§25
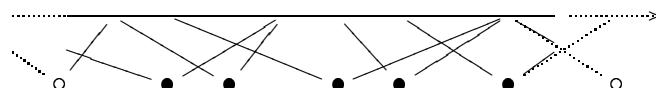
intentional identity of the originally experienced and the now recollected object, but the unity of the past time and the time of the *actual* recollection is only an 'empty' intention.

This conclusion is chracteristic for thinking which takes *actuality* as the only source of possible justification. The methodological limitation to the *actuality* of a *dissociated* phenomenon makes it difficult, or rather impossible, to account for the ontic unity transcending *actuality*. Similar problems are met whenever *immediatacy* is taken as the only site of evidence.

For us, the question is not how to establish a unity from the *dissociated actualities* but, 68. on the contrary, how the *dissociated* elements arise from a prior unitary *nexus*. The 'dim surrounding of the actual recollection' is, in fact, the dim surrounding of every *actuality*. Retentions disappearing in this surrounding on their way toward the remote and dead past, become inaccessible to the *actual* analysis until they reappear as recollections. For us, primary is exactly this process of disappearing, the process of *dissociation* of *actuality* from the surrounding horizon of continuous *experience*.

What seems a bit disturbing in the figure from §65 is the origin, the point A_0, 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 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 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 arises constantly from the past – primarily, from the *pure past* of *experience* and then, once this *pure past* has been *dissociated* into *actualities*, from the just past, but never *precisely* definable, 'now'. It is, as Husserl always emphasized, a continuous process. Continuity of *experience* is a counterpart of the vagueness of *distinctions*. It is like the continuity of 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), a malfunctioning tool which calls 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*.

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."[50]

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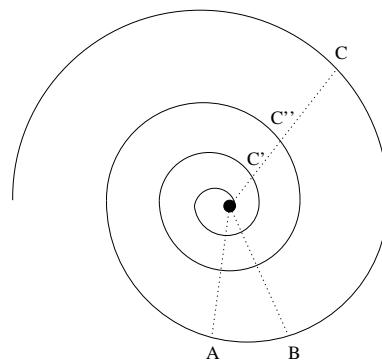
[50]W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*. I:9.3.

Such breakpoints, such 'substantive parts', mark only the particularly intense 'nows', the *reflectively dissociated* moments. But the *rest*, the lines leading to these points, are also part of *experience*. These 'transitive parts' appear to *reflection* as its opposite, as a differentiated but continuous and not *dissociated* stream of consciousness. The 'substantive parts' break this continuity 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 *reflective 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, one might perhaps say, it is the attempt to stop the flow of *temporality* by extracting from it 'substantial parts'. But although the flow recedes in the background of *reflective experiences*, it remains present as a succession of *dissociated* 'nows', as Bergson would say, as a spatialised time.

69.   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*."[51] It certainly is, but this does not change the fact that it still is a joint and "the joint connects two things."[52] 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 within a single 'now'.

Recollection fetches its contents from beyond the *horizon of actuality*. It does it by finding there another, now past, *actuality*. But *dissociation* of what is beyond *horizon of actuality* into *actualities*, is founded on the prior *unity* of *experience* which *transcends reflection*. This *transcendence* of *pure past* is for *reflection* an open and unlimited horizon. And so, the process of positing earlier 'nows' "is obviously to be thought as unlimited, although the actual recollection fails in practice."[48] Consequently, one should continue the line $A_0 - A_3$ from the figure in §65 not only indefinitely into the future beyond A_3 but also into the past, to the left of A_0. This would dissolve everything into a single line (or two parallel ones) and might please pupils of Cusanus but does not seem quite satisfactory to us. Instead, we would draw the whole (*the whole!*) process as in the figure below, as a spiral emerging from the *origin*.

The figure can be thought of as enfolding of the original figure from §65 with the point A_0 of *Urimpression* collapsed to the origin of the spiral. An *actual* point is anywhere on the spiral, and the (dotted) lines linking such points to the *origin* correspond to the vertical lines $A'_i - A_i$ from figure in §65.

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[51]W. James, *The Principles of Psychology*. I:9.3
[52]Empedocles DK 31B32

The spiral traversed backwards, say, from C past B and 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, e.g., at C, the line connecting the 'now' 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 C' is inaccessible for direct introspection from C, it can be reached only through the memory of an earlier point, C''. Memories, de-vitalised recollections 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.[53] 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. We do not retain any *actual* memory of it because, as we have said, the *original* lack of *distinctions* gives *nothing* to remember. But we retain an incontestable certainty of it. When the *temporality* of *experience* has been turned into the flow of objective time, this certainty of having the *origin* becomes the *reflective* certainty of not having been here always, of having a beginning in time.

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 and screens earlier experiences.

4.3.1.ii. The objective time

As *reflection dissociates* sharper and sharper its *actuality*, moving away from the continuity of *experience* into multiplicity of *experiences*, it leaves also the unity of *experiential temporality* and encounters time as sucession of separate *actualities*. The *pure past* becomes a line of its past *actualities* and the openness of future the *actualities* to come. 70.

But even this is not yet the ultimately objective time. Although the time experience stretches past the retentions and protentions towards remote recollections and expectations beyond the *horizon of actuality*, it is still time, so to speak, subjectively localised, centered around the *here-and-now*, which has become 'now'. The objective time – the 'time of the world' – requires yet further abstraction. The relation *after* has already been *dissociated* from its context of the *actual representation* and begun connecting arbitrary objects, *dissociated actualities*. The final step is removal of the designated *actuality* which is *my actuality*. Purely objective time emerges as a consequence of 'abstracting oneself away', of *dissociating* the experienced time from the *experiencing existence*.

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[53] 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. We will return to this issue discussing memory in II:2.2.2.i.

This *dissociation* begins with the *externalisation* of *objects* and their *dissociation* from the *subject*. But a single *object* does not yield the objective time. 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 *aware* of other *objects* – it is involved into *experience*. Likewise, an *actual object* can 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', the 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 impossibility, *positing* it as an *object* is a quite common act.) Combined with the idea of *actuality*, it yields something like 'the totality of the world at this particular point of time' – the 'now' of the world. The relation *after* applied now to this *object* – the whole world – and extended indefinitely leads to the time of the world. 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* and, at the same time, retaining some abstract 'now' of the world-object.

71.   The isolation of this *one object*, which is also the *totality* of all *objects*, i.e., exludes all *transcendence*, leads to the total, linear order of time. *Temporality* of *experience* is not linear. It is arranged rather like a multilayered surrounding centering in the focal point of *actuality* and opened toward future which has as many dimensions as possibilities. *Experience* unfolds surrounded by *transcendence*, by the *presence* of the *pure past* and by the open possibilities (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*, 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 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 states of the isolated *object* which, being one and alone, can only be in one state at a time. In case of the 'world time', what is *posited* as an independent *object* is the 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. This time itself, however, as the time of the single world-object *dissociated* from any *transcendence*, is itself linear.

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*, 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. 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.[54]

72.   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*. *Reflective act* is

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[54] 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". 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.

surrounded by the *experience* which, in this context, acquires the character of the *pure past*. The *reflective* project, *founded* by the *externalisation* of *objects*, is the same as the project of stretching across the *distance* of *after* which separates *reflection* from its *object*. This intention of grasping and appropriating the *dissociated objects* turns out to be the same as 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, ultimate entity 'beyond time', *dissociation* from which is but another *aspect* of *reflective actuality*.

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 *existential temporality*. 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 and thinking. 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 *reflective experience* of *dissociated objects* – good reasons for diminishing its importance are as many as for making it the only measure of the absolute truth, that is, none. The identities of *objects* stretchnig beyond the *horizon of actuality*, as well as the idea of the *totality* of the 'world', make more sophisticated *reflective experience* possible. Discovery of the objective time (and the objective world; not only a single *object*) is what extends the horizon of our *reflective experience* beyond the mere lived *actuality*, 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 *actually* given, retentionally present and protentionally 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, is a diminution and pauperisation. The objective time and world provide powerful means of inquiry and control. Their legitimacy can be questioned only in cases of misuse. Viewed *existentially*, they are the reminders, the *traces* of the *original unity* of the *existential confrontation*, retained in the midst of *reflective dissociations*.

4.3.2. Space

We have discerned the element of *spatiality* – as simultaneity – even before experienced 73. *recognitons*, already in *chaos*, §17. *Temporality* is like stretching of this simultaneity along the dimension *before-after*. Its emergence amounts also to a sharper *distinction* of *spatiality*. Only isolating from the *here-and-now* the element of *after* allows the element of simultaneity to be isolated as well. For the dimension *before-after* acquires its temporal status by leaving the static simultaneity of the contracting 'now'. This simultaneity, this *actual* 'here' is *dissociated* – from *here-and-now* – as the place distinct from other, but simultaneous places, just like 'now' is *dissociated* – from *here-and-now* – as the place (or rather the "point of time") distinct from the places which come *before* and *after* it. These two 'points' are originally the same *nexus* of *here-and-now*. They acquire different status, and names, only as the spatial and temporal dimensions are *dissociated* from this *nexus*.

There is thus a complementary duality: things have the *spatial* aspect to the extent they are seen as simultaneous, and the *temporal* aspect to the extent they appear *after* each other. The final *dissociation* of space from time 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*.

74.   *Spatiality*, centered around the *actual* 'here', has infinitely many dimensions: any *object* marks a possible dimension (if one prefers, a direction for a course of action). Indexicals like below, above, in front, behind, etc., are already further abstractions. In some form, related to a multitude of aspects like social organisation or religious system, they emerge in the primitive world-view. For instance, the tribe of North American Indians, Zuñis, arranged all natural objects, and even abstractions, in a system of seven regions of space: north, south, east, west, zenith, nadir and center. Everything in the universe had its place in one of these seven static regions, each having also certain colour and clans belonging to it.[55] The celebrated three dimensions of space are but a further, highly convenient abstraction. The fact that localisation in objective space can be represented abstractly by a choice of a reference point and three coordinates seems a very bad reason to postulate them as the original truth of ontology. They are just a convenient *representation* of the objective space abstracted from *experience*.

75.   It arises in an analogous process to the one from 4.3.1.ii. Firstly, *spatiality* becomes extended beyond the *horizon of actuality* and becomes the spatiality of (arbitrary) *objects*. Then it loses its designated 'here'. The simultaneity within the *horizon of actuality* is the constitutive *aspect* of *reflection*. Once *objects* emerge as *dissociated* entities, the abstract *signs* allow *positing* any of them as simultaneous. As the *unity* of *experience* gives rise to the *totality* of all *objects*, the 'whole world', its simultaneity, the snapshot of 'now', becomes the abstract 'here', the space of the objective world.

Since this 'here' comprises everything, it does not any longer stand in any relation to other 'heres', it has become a *dissociated* and isolated unit. (Yet, the questions creating the first antinomy, like "What is outside the space?", are most naturally asked, indicating precisely that the 'objective here' arises from the 'subjective' one, from the limited and situated, *actual* place.) This lack of 'outside', of any transcendence, is just the opposite side of the emptiness of objective space. Just like the objective time of the world-object becomes the mere linear succession void of any objects, so the objective space becomes the empty simultaneity.[56]

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[55]E.Durkheim and M.Mauss, *Classifications primitives* [after F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*.II:23]

[56]The implication from the emptiness of 'outside' to the emptiness of 'inside' is not, of course, physical or logical. But it is of fundamental significance. Here, we see only its rather sterile, almost formal version. It does not apply to any single *objects* but only to their *posited totalities*, the ultimate containers. 'Everything', thought as the *totality* of all *objects*, excludes the possibility of any more *objects* 'outside' – 'outside' there can be only emptiness. But this emptiness surrounding such an 'everything' has the contagious effect on what it embraces, it spreads to the 'inside'. Therefore, single *objects* 'within' space must appear as separated by void, while *objects* or events thought in the *totality* of time are, likewise, separated only by its emptiness, its 'pure flow' (which is as hard to imagine as it is to avoid). In short, that which is supposed to fill the space between the *dissociated objects* is that which surrounds their *totality*, the ultimate background or limit. Empty space, the space *between* the entities residing in it, is 'filled' with that which limits it (like ether did in the XIX-th century.) This dependence reflects only the fact that, starting with mere *objects*, some bits and pieces conceived as the ultimate building blocks, construction can at most arrive at their collections and arrangements but is never able to 'fill' the emptiness between them, which is only another expression of their *dissociation*. The more fundamental version of this dependence

But if this replacement of the designated 'here' by the abstract one of the world-object yields 76.
the objective space, where is extensionality? This, after all, is a constitutive aspect of space:
objects in space are exactly the ones which have extension. The answer is: extension is 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. One more distinction must be
noticed to obtain spatial extension. Just like a *distinction* is what is being *distinguished*,
a *dissociated object* is a limit of *distinctions*, is the boundaries seaprating it from the
surrounding. An extended *object* is one in which these boundaries are themselves cut
from the *object*, are *distinctions* made within (around) the *distinguished object* itself. The
extension of an *object* is the very simultaneity of its boundaries (left, right, lower, upper,
etc. In the same way a temporal object appears as extended when the limits of its time span
are *dissociated* and *posited* in abstract simultaneity as points on the time line.) Spatial
distance is just another way of saying extensionality. It only depends on which boundaries
are considered. Whit respect to an independent *object*, the simultaneity of its aspects is
extensionality; whith respect to a collection of different *objects*, their simultaneity is the
distance between them.

There is, of course, a difference between a measurable distance between two objects in
space and the non-measurable distance between, say, two items of a mathematical defini-
tion. The difference consists in that the *objects* in space have an identifiable boundary
which can be *dissociated* from them. Other things simply *are* their boundaries. A math-
ematical item, say, the commutativity property, $x \cdot y = y \cdot x$, does not have a contour, it
is its own contour, is exactly the distinctions it makes. Objects which do not reside in
the objective space (or in the objective, spatialised time), have the property of being their
own contour: either like mathematical items which coincide with their own definitions, or
like unsharply delineated emotions, ideas, *nexuses* which, having no *precise* deiniftions, are
exactly the *distinctions* they draw. The constitutive *aspect* of the spatial extension is the
difference between a sharp contour and the object itself. Say, the table in front of you has
an identifiable contour which separates it from the surrounding space and other objects
around. But the table is not its contour. Of course, there are also spatial objects which do
not have such a sharp contour. But when we see such objects, we already have the experi-
ence of objective space and we blame their unsharpness on our 'subjective' indisposition.
An objective view of space would postulate that even the stripes of a rainbow conform to
this claim, since their interpenetration is *only* our approximate perception of a multitude
of particles which all have exact boundaries in the objective space.

If we imagine the boundaries of an *object* collapse, we obtain a point. A point has no 77.
extension. Is it in space? No, since it is not extended. But yes, if it is posited there, that is,
if we imagine it co-existing with other points (or system of coordinates, or its surrounding,
or any other moments identifying its position among other co-existing things). Once the
'container' of the objective space has been encountered, almost anything can be imagined
'in it'. It may be a bit too advanced a gymnastics of imagination to try to think a
single point, and the fact that points are typically considered in mutual relations, like
in geometrical arguments, accounts for the extension of the space between them. But
if we manage to imagine a single point, then it is no longer in space, it has no spatial

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was encountered in §3 as the *confrontation* with the *transcendence* conditioning the contents of *my* being
and whose lack would remove any character of *mineness* from a solipsistic subject. Its *existential* dimension
will be addressed in Book III.

aura – precisely because it is thought in a complete isolation, without any simultaneous counterparts. It appears 'in the midst of nothingness', as if surrounded by darkness. No matter how much we are trying to focus on the point and ignore this surrounding nothingness, it remains there, as the ineradicable remainder that the point is not, after all, completely alone. This might be taken as an image of the *virtual* background, not yet *spatiality*, from which the *distinction*, the point, arises.

78.   Finally, there remains the idea of homogeneity which is the same as infinite divisibility. It applies equally to the objective space and time. Homogeneity results from the two steps of *dissociation*: of the respective relations (*after* and simultaneity) from their components, and thus allowing them to relate arbitrary *objects*, and then of the *actual* 'now', respectively, 'here', which become the properties of the *posited totality* of the world-object. The first 'fills' the whole (time or space) with homogeneous *distinctions*, which, although in themselves highly unlike and heterogeneous, by being viewed as mere *objects* acquire the homogeneous character of independent and residual *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 by the extrapolation similar to that through which infinite time/space emerge from the extension of the *actually* anchored *after*/simultaneity to the world-object. 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-object, its all-embracing 'now', the homogeneous points 'filling' space and time – all these are *posited* abstractions, that is, not *representations* of the lived *experiences* but their ideal limits. Now, there is the *experience* of divisibility, the encountered *distinctions* and the potential for always making new ones. This 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 possibly unlimited *distinguishing* but not of infinite *distinguishability*. But as lived *temporality* and *spatiality* have been stretched to the ideal and infinite limits, so infinite divisibility is the ideal limit of *distinguishing*, *posited* for the homogeneous *totalities* of objective time and space.[57]

4.3.3. Objective or constituted?

79.   Identity of the *dissociated objects* transforms the original *temporality* into 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 the objective 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*,

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[57]One notices that our objective time and space do not comply with the current scientific accounts. Such compliance is not our objective. We are considering the emergence of objective *representations* and their *existential* rôle, not the possible objectivistic constructions of the 'world in itself'.

timeless as it is, which precedes both *spatio-temporality* of *actual recognitions*, and which, in turn, precede space, time and *objects*.[58]

To be sure: we are not doing here the impossible, we are not constituting *objective* time nor space – only a *representation* of objective time or space. More precisely, we are constructing a *representation* of *spatiality* and *temporality*. These are still *aspects* of un*dissociated experience* and 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 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 actuality*. The successive ordering of world'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 the *posited totalities* which are never *experienced*.

So, after all, we have not obtained any objective time or space but merely 'subjective' *representations*? For, do we not reduce the objective time to its phenomenal constitution, 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 and space as we experience and understand them are 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."[59] The world and the time of such a consciousness would involve very different contents 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 still 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, the objective time. Once the sphere of objectivity has been *dissociated*, everything can be placed there if only it is viewed as an *object*. But every *object*, including the most abstract 'objectivity', requires an *existence* which *distinguishes*

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[58]Thus we deviate not only from the Kantian account of time as the condition of possibility of objects but also from the objectivistic accounts trying to account for time in terms of the given *objects*. An example of the latter is the 'proof' of the unreality of time, of A-series, in J. E. McTaggart, *The Unreality of Time*. The 'givens' are its silent but crucial assumption. The past, present and future are only time-stamps of objectified particulars, "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 business. 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 prior givenness of (series of) *dissociated* 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 says "time" already when saying "event", even if to recognize this *equipollence*, one has to step beyond the common language usage.

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

it. And so is it with 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,"[60] eventually, from the *unity* of the *indistinct*. "Time presupposes an experience of time."

81.   But is not this claim an unfortunate inversion of the famous phrase, according to which exactly the opposite is the case, namely that "perception of succession presupposes succession of perceptions"[61]? This phrase (like the whole paragraph, and the whole book), however, does not concern the unity of the objective time but of the *consciousness* of time, with its double intentionality in which conscious reproduction of a past event in the present 'now', perception of succession, is itself involved into the flow of time embracing this very 'now', into succession of perceptions, §§66.-69. The succession of perceptions, which one might want to interpret as some objective succession, refers only to the transcendental level which constitutes the actual consciousness of succession. With this 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?"[62]

Our view does not meet this problem, because we are not opposing the 'subjective' experience of time to the 'objective', experienced time. We are only describing the emergence of the experience of the objective time from the *temporality* of *experience*. We do not inquire into what, possibly, might reside beyond any *experience*, what and how might, possibly, be distinct beyond any *distinguishing*. 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 objective time is nothing more than *objectified* temporal *experience*, than succession viewed in abstraction from the *experiencing existence*. Having once arrived at this objectivisation, *reflection* naturally turns around and applies it to all its *objects*. Objective time is a necessary *aspect* of the experience of the 'objective world'. It is an *aspect* of the conscious *actuality* which, emerging *after* its *dissociated objects*, discovers in this very *act* both the temporal character of its *objects* and its own temporal relation to them.

The fact that every 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 *chaotic* heterogeneity. 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 reach as far as *an experience* of 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 as objective

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[60] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. III:2
[61] E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. B:II.20
[62] J. Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis...*. I:2

as ours. For objectivity does not reside beyond and independently from any (form of) *existence* but only in *experience*. Thus, we would accept both phrases quoted above but only when taken together: time presupposes experience of time and experience of time presupposes time. And this *equipollence* is only an expression of both *aspects* arising from the prior *nexus* of *spatio-temporality*, of their *dissociation* in the same process which *dissociates* also *subject* from *object*.

One might object that by "objectivity" we mean exactly that which is beyond and inde- 82. pendent from any *experience*. Purely 'objective' inquiries require one to dispense with any such relativity. But their pragmatic relevance does not change the fact that their philo- sophical foundations remain, to put it mildly, problematic. We may, perhaps, consider the space-time of relativity theory as more 'objectively true' than the Newtonian empty containers. But this is so only because the former takes into account a wider scope of *experiences* than does the latter. We would not, however, claim that any has reached some final truth about the 'objective time in itself'. Both are, as scientific results in general, merely approximations. And they do not approximate any 'objective truth in itself' but only the *totality* of *experiences* taken into consideration at a given historical moment. The ultimate objectivisation would like to abolish all relative *distinctions*. But as all *distinctions* are relative to the *distinguishing existence*, such an abolishment would lead to the *indistinct* – a highly non-*objective*, not to mention non-scientific, thing.

Such a collapse would be prevented if one found some ineradicable *distinctions*, the ultimate 'atoms'. The residual sites of such 'atoms', the points, appear in the limit of all objectivistic inquiries. But as points are not 'real atoms', while all characterisations of the latter turn out to be only temporary and approximate, one takes recourse to inter- subjectivity. We can be partially sympathetic to such a recourse, if only we remove from it all flavour of sociologism and conventionalism. Time and space emerge as objective in the sense that they are not relative to any *particular existence*. Of course, once you die, other people will continue living in the same time. This "of course", however, is not grounded in the inter-subjectivity but in the *experience* of every individual. The consensus about time's objectivity reflects only the common form of existence, the fact of time's presence in every *reflective experience*. Speaking about time or space without *any existence*, 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 brings it forth, just like any *distinction* brings forth whatever it *distinguishes*. Like every other experience, it is *both* a discovery *and* a creation: a creation because it is relative to the *mode* of the *distinguishing existence*, and a discovery because it reveals the way such an *existence* does, or even is *bound* to, *experience* the world, to *confront* the *indistinct*.

The experience of objective time involves much more than the mere registration of the 83. 'objective passage of time'. There are modes and levels of *experience* which do not involve objective time and which, so to speak, suspend the validity of its flow. Thus, even if our setting can remind about the Kantian forms of intuition, the analogy is restricted to the level of *reflective experiences* (which, discovering the objective time, is already involved into *temporal experience*). The *a priori* of our *existence* reaches deeper than the actual flow of time, to the mere fact of *distinguishing* and, eventually, to 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 this discovery is conditioned by the structure of our being which brings the *original nothingness* and

chaos to the level of *actual reflective dissociations*. Its objectivity amounts first to the fact that it is the time of the *objects* and objective world. This, in turn, implies that it is *experienced* as not relative to any particular existence alone. It reflects the objectivity of the very *subject-object* relation, where *actual experiences* of *dissociated objects* cannot happen otherwise than in time. But neither can the experience of objective time occur without such *objects*. Time is not any *a priori* 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 arises from the relation between the *actual subject* and the *actual objects*, where the two poles arise by *dissociation* of the deeper layers of *experience*. 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 and you are experiencing, will continue to flow and will be likewise experienced as long as there is an *existence confronting* the *indistinct* through its *reflective experience*.

84.   It is this fact, that we discover and not merely constitute time, which accounts for the natural 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 the 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, *existential* and objective, internal and external. 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 some time 'in itself' but only its *reflective experience*, an *experience* of *temporal experiencing*. As *object* gets *dissociated* from the *subject*, the objective time, *dissociated* from the *subjective actuality*, arises as the time in which this *subjective reflection* has been constituted.

      This objectivisation involves the change of level, the change of perspective. As objectivisation involves *dissociation* of the *external* contents from their internal origin, these two perspectives can be set against each other. Although we do not intend to do this, we have to acknowledge their mutual irrelevance. Our *existential* perspective does not offer much ground for objective considerations, except for illumination of the emergence and place of objectivity in the *experience*. Objective perspective, on the other hand, requiring *dissociated objects*, is of little use in *existential* considerations. When applied unrestricted to elements which are not *objects*, it leads to antinomies and we will see examples of that in the following section.

5   Reflection and Experience

Words, the paradigmatic signs of *reflective dissociations*, make something transcending *actuality* present. Yet, the constitutive feature of *reflection* is *dissociation*, *positing* its *actual object* in the isolated independence from the *not-actual* surrounding and 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 problems which we will try to avoid later on.

5.1   Actual and non-actual

85.   We have observed in 4.1.2 that the *reflective dissociation*, by identifying and isolating

objects, brings about the possibility of control over these *objects*. The power of 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 *actual* limits and, by the same token, establishing connections (borders) between things. 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 over *signs*.[63] But the *distinctions* and the world of *experience* are much more than the *actual objects* which can be fully grasped within this *horizon*. The *distinctions* slipping out of this *horizon* find also their expression in words, but the *reflective* power over them diminishes with the increase of the *non-actual* element.

5.1.1. Beyond actuality

"I spent two weeks in Prague with my girlfriend." What am I talking about, what am I 86. referring to by this "two weeks"? A *concept* 'two weeks'? Hardly, and if so my girlfriend wouldn't be pleased. A phenomenon of 'these two weeks'? Perhaps, though I do not attempt to obtain any adequate intuition of it. I do not intend only what appears to my consciousness but also all that might have escaped me. I use this phrase to point to *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, also its unregistered aspects. 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 we can experience it? For we do experience such things, 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 – *reflective* – appreciation. During the walk uphill to *Hradčany*, the breeze and *Vltava* dissolve gradually 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 uphill at the portal of *Katedrála sv. Víta*, we have a brief recollection of a quarrel from this morning which changes the mood. But none 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,

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[63]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 a handful of soldiers (*maniple*).

perceptions, moods and feelings.

87.   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.

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 any 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*. 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*. When I say "two weeks in Prague with my girlfriend" I recollect my girlfriend, Prague, some particular experiences, perhaps, some unifying 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 literal meaning to establish some degree of common understanding among all who hear it.

88.   Likewise, 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 point on the map, a rather abstract *object*, some place I have heard of. 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 the city where this-building-and-this-square are placed? If I was born there and it was the first city I ever saw, its experience 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, is 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.

89.   One might ask, if not only single moments, then why two weeks? Why not two years, twenty years? Why not the whole life? If not only this-square, then why Prague, why not ... the whole world? 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. Some might resist the idea that we *experience totalities* which go far beyond any particular moment of time, beyond the *horizon of actuality*. Yet, we communicate not only the experiences gathered during the stay in Prague but also the experience of Prague, not only different things seen there but also what Prague is like. It is so natural because *experience* does not consist of a *totality* of minute *experiences*, is not a mere sum of some 'objective' or 'subjective' intervals marking separate *experiences*. *An experience*, a *reflective dissociation* from the horizon of *experience*, finds place only against the continuity and *unity* which precede and *found* 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, in the *unity* of time experience exceeding every *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.[64]

5.1.2. Not concepts, not phenomena

Due to the *non-actuality* interwoven into *recognitions* as well as the fact that *distinc-* 90. *tions* need not be consciously registered to make difference, our *experience* and what is *experienced* comprise much more than phenomena, not to mention the experience of empiricism. 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 when we think 'world', *nothing specific* appears, because what we know about, mean by, experience of the world cannot be given within the horizon of any single *act* of consciousness. One searches one's *experiences*, follows a chain of associations, looking for the aspects and properties related to the 'world'. In particular, one follows this chain beyond whatever is present in one's consciousness *in the moment* of thinking 'world'. What is its intentional object supposed to be? The best one can say is that it is some totality out there, but we have no clue what this totality is nor what "out there" means. 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 two more years? Likewise, is there any phenomenon *of* 'life'? The intentional object of 'my life' is my life but it is again something which nobody knows *precisely* what it is. And nothing indicates that the situation might ever change. We do not have *any experience of* life, life is not any *object* or *complex* one might experience at any particular moment and whose essence one might hope to grasp with full adequacy. 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.

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[64]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 "total act" is an expression inviting to a thorough deconstruction. The 'now' becomes an *extended* interval which imperceptibly emerges from the previous one, becomes the next one and, eventually, dissolves beyond 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*.

'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 *transcend* any *actuality* and even the posited *totality* of all *actualities*. They can be pointed to and even addressed in specific ways, but they cannot be captured fully and adequately in *precise, actual* terms. A definition must fail whenever it attempts to appropriate *experience*, to *actualise* the essentially *non-actual*. *Experience* constitutes a *unity* not reducible to any *totality* of *actual experiences* and *signs*. And *signs* which forget that they are only *signs* turn into mere words.

Experiences appear for reflection, within the horizon of actuality, only as signs which refer to them. These signs are the actual data of reflection.

91.   Everything transcending *actuality* can enter it only by means of a *sign*. "Two weeks in Prague" is a *sign*, and so is every word and phrase. 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 continuity of *experience*. Only *reflective dissociation* establishes them as independent *objects* and then their definiteness is just the *actuality* of the *signs* through which they appear.

The question about such individuals – *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). Like universals, they are not limited to any *actual* moment, but unlike universals 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. They differ from phenomena in that 'Prague' or 'these two weeks', whenever made into *objects* of *reflection*, appear at once at a *distance* from the *actuality* of the *sign*, 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 *precise* 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, one may use different formulations and, in a sense, describe different *actual* contents. 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.

5.1.3. Confrontation with transcendence

92.   *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 it. *Reflection* contributes to *experience* the sharp contours but the *dissociated* contents appear as *transcending* its *actuality*. *An experience* is always given and never taken. This *aspect* of *transcendence*

is not limited to the *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*.

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, conceptually unattractive and yet existentially 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. This *transcendence*, this *presence* is the constant *aspect* of *reflective experience*. It surrounds the variety of changing *actualities* with the *unity* which is as certain as undefinable. "For the intellect, the unity is only a postulate, an act of faith. For the spirit, the harmony is the experienced reality."[65]

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

Words can refer not only to *experiences* but also to the *experienced*, 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 impassable, they nevertheless bring 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*, on the assumed attitude. *93.*

Yet, this 'power' concerns only the *actual* manifestations. *Reflection dissociates experience* but does not create it. It does not even create its *experiences*. It exercises its power only by means of *signs* which sharpen the already *recognised distinctions*. These *signs* are neither arbitrarily chosen nor voluntarily generated, they are only the *actual* expressions of the *non-actuality* which is not reducible to the *actual* categories and, hence, can not be captured by the *objective* determinations. The *reflective* power, the power of the *sign* over the signified, is the greater, the lesser the *distance* separating these two *aspects*. It is greatest with respect to the *precise objects* grasped fully within the *horizon of actuality*, and diminishes as the contents *transcend* this *horizon* becoming more and more *non-actual*.

There is only a difference of degree between 'this building', 'the two weeks in Prague' and 'the whole world'. This is the difference in the *distance* between the respective contents and the *reflective act positing* them. However, this difference marks also a distinction in nature which, due to the difference in the *distance*, involves different ways of *positing*. *Positing* can be taken as *representation*: *dissociation* of the *actual object*, of 'this building', from the *experience* and, by the same token, from the *reflective subject*, §42. 'Two weeks in Prague' are also *posited* in this sense, they are *dissociated* by drawing a merely temporal or also experiential border around them. But the difference in the time scope between '(the impression of) this building' and 'these two weeks' is real and is marked by the *precision* of the respective contours. One can attempt to capture 'these two weeks' within the *horizon of actuality*, expressing their essence, mood, understanding. But all such attempts are *94.*

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

perfectly *self-aware*, that is, aware of their insufficiency. They may succeed in pointing towards the appropriate *distinctions* but not in capturing them with full adequacy.

The difference becomes quite significant with the objects like 'the whole world', 'the whole life', 'the totality of time'. These, although corresponding to some *aspects* of *experience*, are not experienced in the same way. The underlying *unity* of *existence*, giving rise to such objects, is *represented* only by projecting into it the *totality* of *actual distinctions*: the *vertical distance* separating the *reflective actuality* from the site of this *unity* is virtually infinite and is not prone to an adequate *representation* in terms of the *horizontal distance* between interrelated *dissociated objects*. (*Representation* of) such an object is *posited* as an ideal limit, as a *totality* trying to *reflect* the *experienced*, but *reflectively* only postulated *unity*. Such *positing* amounts thus not only to drawing a border around the *actual object* but to actually constructing it from the *reflectively* available pieces following the intimations of the *experienced unities*. And *reflection's* power over them is minimal. Although we can exercise some control over various aspects of our life or of the world, such a control is much lesser than that we have over a single building.

Finally, we can also speak about *positing* in the exclusive sense of constructing, without attempting to capture any *traces* of sensed *unity*. This is the case, for instance, with the pure phantoms or *actual* creations, put together almost arbitrarily from the *dissociated* bits and pieces of earlier *reflections*. As object is here constructed from the *signs*, the *distance* between the two is practically absent. Although such objects can be extremely *complex*, our control over them is virtually unlimited.

"*Positing*" is used equivocally about all three kinds of *acts* – *dissociating* an *object*, reconstructing an *aspect* of *experience* or constructing an abstraction – and the intended meaning will, hopefully, emerge from the context.

5.2   Some problems of reflection

In a sense, *reflection* does something inappropriate, it violates the order of things by *dissociating* them from the *rest*, *positing* as independent entities and bringing them under its control. This can appear as a desecration of the innocence of *experience*, especially, as the *reflective subject* begins to thirst for the pre-reflective, '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,...). This thirst expresses *awareness* of *reflection's* insufficiency. *Reflection* comes always too late. The *awareness* of 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 *actual* objects and situations, *reflection* can not find any other form of higher, *vertical transcendence* than narcissistic *self-reflection*. But *self-reflective* narcissism cannot avoid confrontation with its underlying derogatory *self-awareness*: "I swear, gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness – a real thorough-going illness."[66] Such remarks can be easily met in all the psychologists of the Victorian times and, in particular, in those who – like Dostoevsky, Nietzsche or Kierkegaard – opposed the primitive psychologism. They express certainly a characteristic of that time. But the personality type, associated with

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

any historical epoch, reveals only an *existential* possibility which, typical perhaps for that time, can be also encountered at any other. The psychologism of the Victorian time, confronted with its scientific positivism, can be seen as the paradigm of absolutisation of the *reflective* dualism. Let us look at some expressions of this possibility: first, in 5.2.1, on the self-destructive consequences of this absolutisation, then in 5.2.2, on the general mechanism of extending the *reflective* attitude to the whole of *existence*, and in 5.2.3 on the resulting antinomies.

5.2.1. The original truth

Much of our *experience* passes without any *attentive reflection*. "One can find a great many valuable activities, theoretical and practical, which we carry on both in our contemplative and active life even when we are fully conscious, which do not make us aware of them. The reader is not necessarily aware that he is reading, least of all when he is really concentrating; nor the man who is being brave that he is being brave and that his action conforms to the virtue of courage; and there are thousands of similar cases. Conscious awareness, in fact, is likely to enfeeble the very activities of which there is consciousness."[67] But the lack of *attentive reflection* is not the same as the total lack of consciousness, not to mention, of *(self-)awareness*. When the dualism of *subject-object* is taken as constitutive for our whole *existence*, there emerges the image of the 'original truth' which remains inaccessible not only to our *reflection* but to our very being. One starts naturally with the acceptance of the *reflective* dualism, in a sense, admitting the finitude of *reflection*. But this naturality is only an expression of the danger of identifying one's own being with *reflection*, in which case it seems that this very being is thoroughly and fundamentally dualistic. This dualism is not entirely satisfactory, it should be overcome and thus, although beginning with it, one does not accept it after all. This aspect has innumerable forms, so we give only a few examples.

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

$$s \xrightarrow{\;\;r\;\;} o \tag{i}$$

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 ...' As we observed in §59, the empty formality of this operation does not apply to *(self-)awareness* where *awareness* (of an object o) is *equipollent* with the immediate *self-awareness* (of r, and hence also of s). But this *equipollence* does not belong to the nature of *reflection* which involves their *dissociation*.

As a result of this *dissociation* and, at the same time, of the *awareness* of the more primordial *unity*, one asks for the constructions avoiding the infinite regress. Thus appear meta-considerations and meta-modeling. One terminates the regress by postulating just one (or only a few) level(s) above the basic one from (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

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[67] Plotinus, *Enneads*. I:4.10

eventually in this basic element: the need of relating *dissociated* entities avoiding, at the same time, the infinite regress.

Consider, as an example, a simplified hylomorphism. The relation (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:

$$s \xrightarrow{\ form\ } \|\ \overline{\ matter\ }\ o \tag{ii}$$

Unlike in the simple-minded case (i), attempting now a self-application of the schema becomes hardly possible. 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 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.[68]

The most standard version of this *dissociation* became the duality of essences, intelligible aspects belonging to the objects, and their reflection as actual concepts in the mind. This, however, makes it very difficult for the two elements to meet again (unless one postulates some form of pre-established harmony.) 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:

$$s \xrightarrow{\qquad form \qquad} |\ _{matter} \tag{iii}$$

The dualism remains, albeit only in a residual form, since matter is now reduced to the amorphous material entering the subjective pole through the sensations where the differentiation can be plausibly assumed. The forms (of perception, understanding, reason...) require, by definition, 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.

The infinite regress, preventing the coincidence of the thought with its object, is but another form of the respective non-coincidence, dualism, of subject and object. Meta-modeling, helping against the former, might seem to help also agains the latter. 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.[69] 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

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[68]We view the distinction form-matter 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*.

[69]Unless we are willing to turn to mere formalisms and utilise some fix-points reached after ω or more steps, cf. §59 and footnote 40.

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.

You will, hopefully, excuse this simplified presentation of the vast area of problems. Its only intention is to exemplify a general tendency which takes *reflectively dissociated* elements as primary. (For instance, the empirical approach would be symmetric to that in (iii), with the *form* reduced to a residual point of subjectivity. The respective problem is then to identify the objective atoms whose combinations might possibly account for the unity of experience.) The problematic dualism arising from the *subject-object dissociation* propagates to the meta-level and can not be overcome using exclusively *reflective* terms.

The 'original truth' did not enter explicitly the above examples, but its trace can be discerned in the very project of overcoming the *dissociation* of subject and object. The following gives it a more prominent place. 96.

"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. Then, the attitude in this chamber is ... unnatural? The unnaturality might be, perhaps, discerned in the exaggerated *reflection*, *reflection* unable to accept anything but *precisely* defined *objects* in *dissociation* from *experience* and even from *reflective experience*. For such an extreme *reflection*, the independent existence, this witness of *transcendence* anchored beyond the *horizon of actuality*, dissolves in the empty cracks between the *dissociated signs*. Pressing the opposition between the two attitudes, the natural one appears as lacking what is the proper element of the other. And when one is not careful with observing the differences of degree, this proper element appears not as an exaggerated *reflection* but as reflection *simpliciter*. The opposite pole becomes thus some irreflective, purely experiencing being.

A well-known form of this abstraction is some imagined pre-reflective state of nature. But it has also another specific form in which the *reflective* inquiry is opposed simply to its passive *object*: the scientific objectivism.[70] Eventually, in the long run, science will uncover all the secrets of the world and life and will show that our experience, our *subjective* experience is only a particular instance of some general, *objective* laws. Although we will leave such projects to those who are able to believe in them, let us for the moment assume that one manages to reconstruct the whole reality from the objectivistic assumptions, to eliminate all the *qualia* and impressions and demonstrate that "we are all zombies", to *prove* that freedom is a subjective illusion and that everything is really governed by the 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, as epiphenomena, were thus reduced to some inviolable principles? Sun is, after all, still rising above the horizon, even if everybody knows that it is earth rotating. 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*

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[70]It is probably no coincidence that the two appear in the history of European thought at approximately the same time. The post-Cartesian scientism of Enlightment's rationalism is accompanied by Hobbes' idea of natural egoism and, on the other hand, Rousseau's noble savage.

in particular, have been around for long enough to suggest that those who claim their all-embracing and universal applicability, should come with final justifications and not merely references to further research. There is first the great 'if' concerning the very possibility of such a reduction. Even if this turns out to be possible, 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 and objectivism, that is, when seen as a (never ending) attempt to overcome the *reflective dissociation* by ignoring one of its *aspects*, it represents only the outermost limit of irrelevance to our considerations.

The 'original truth', whether imagined as a pre-reflective state of nature or an *external object* of scientific *reflection*, is not only a *reflective* construction. It is 'always already there' – *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."[71] But *positing* the 'original truth' as the goal, perhaps only an ideal limit, of the *reflective* project of appropraition, is exactly the misunderstanding increasing the *reflective* thirst for *immediacy*. No such return is possible because *reflection*, occupied with its *objects* as it must be, cannot lose *self-awareness* from which it originates and which accompanies all its *acts*. There is no such return because the 'original truth' is itself a result of *reflective dissociation*, of projecting the *vertical distance* separating *reflection* from *experience* onto the *horizontal* dimension where, so one hopes, all the *dissociated* entities can eventually be related in a unifying harmony.

The attempts to reduce the whole *experience* to the *reflective, objective visibility* encounter *reflection* and cannot pretend that it is not there: eventually, they must ask the question about *reflection's* 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."[72] This can breed despair if, identifying the truth with the 'original truth' and one's being with the impossibility of coincidence, one starts suffering the presence of *reflection*. But then, as soon as one has constructed a 'solution', an 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*.

97.   As the final example, or rather the final stage, of the search for the 'original truth', we observe the disappointment. Even the proponents of the scientism recognise it as only an ideal limit. If the 'original truth' does not reside in any single *object*, and their *totality* evades the final grasp, perhaps one should better accept the failure. In order to be satisfied, *reflection* seems to need embrace everything (whatever "embracing" might mean). But as nobody can believe that finite *reflection* can grasp the richness of the whole world, there seems to be something fundamentally wrong with the *reflection* itself. As the difficulties with taking *reflection* into *reflective* account increase, so does the thirst

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[71]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*. Inquiry and intuition;p.129
[72]Ibid. Inquiry and intuition;p.126

for the 'original truth'. Only that, by its *reflective* inaccessibility, it becomes pure and complete 'otherness'. Without admiring Bataille's vocabulary and metaphors, one can still 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 thirst for the all-embracing universality, turn this impossibility into a despair much stronger than the thirst for the 'original truth' of some pre-reflective being. Now the despair becomes purely destructive: *reflection* cannot embrace everything – and truth is its entirely 'other' – consequently, get rid of *reflection*. This *reflective* hostility to *reflection*, and perhaps to rationality in general, is the intellectual form of the *reflective* disappointment, the utmost consequence of the search for rational *precision* and systematic *totality*. Although the mere socio-historicism, occupied with sociological transformations and historical progress, can see such a search and despair as disappearing in the past of modernity, it is a genuine, *existential* possibility of *reflective* being.

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. In this sense, it is finite: its *object* is *dissociated* from the *rest*. *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 the past and introductions to the future investigations, one can be tempted to stop writing in an understandable way and start 'writing otherwise'.

One can start thinking that *reflection's* only goal is to eradicate itself, is to cease thinking in systematic, logical, understandable, representational, communicable – in short, *reflective* – terms. Instead, renouncing itself, reflection should open itself onto everything that any system must leave 'outside', onto all 'otherness', 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 only the final disappointment 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'.

The sensed inadequacy of distinguishing form from matter, act from its content, aggravating the disappointments with the *dissociation* of *subject* and *object*, 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. But it arose only from such a search. In the latter, one would be more consistent staying quiet rather than shouting. In any case, one rejects the gullible simplicity of the systematic truths in favor of supra-reflective and extra rational ecstasy. 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. 98.

Lacking any proper expression, we hear calls to speak and talk 'otherwise'. But are

not such calls to break the barriers and reach beyond, very similar to the search for the 'original truth' of lost innocence? Equally thirsty, reaching equally 'outside', equally impossible... The only difference is that while the latter retains some of the naive faith in its possiblity, the former have renounced it. The thirst to "get rid of one's personal ego and become embraced by the otherness which one believes to be one's essence"[73] is, according to Durkheim, a characteristic sign of the altruistic suicide; a suicide committed with the best intentions, for the others' sake, but still only a suicidal self-destruction. Attempts to overcome the sense of *alienation* turn into even more advanced forms of estrangement when their goal is to overcome *every distance*, now, by dissolving *reflection* in the 'otherness' of 'the other'.

This estrangement reaches its culmination and, as the case may be, returns healed to itself, when 'the other', once we stop its/his apotheosis and attempt to communicate, starts showing its/his face. For this face appears strangely familiar. 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; and there is always the possibility of misidentifying the basic *recognitions* which form the starting point of others' thinking. But whenever we encounter a human being – which in particular means: one with whom we *share* a good deal of basic *recognitions* – 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 do understand *thinking* of strange tribes, just like a German can understand *thinking* of a Chinese or like one (say, 'modern') man can understand *thinking* of another (say, 'primitive') man. For thinking is not a matter of solipsistic activity screened from any contact with the world and others. On the contrary, it evolves only through such a contanct, by drawing and connecting *distinctions* which are eventually made in and from the *indistinct – one* and the same for all. Even if many of the most *precise* and *actual distinctions* are drawn differently by distinct people or distinct cultures, they are all involved in the same structure of human *experience* and thus *share* in the *presence* of its deeper *aspects*. Speaking otherwise, thinking otherwise, writing and acting otherwise may be *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 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 some 'other'. But there is no otherness without sameness. Without self-understanding and self-respect one is unable to understand and respect anybody else.

5.2.2. The objectivistic attitude, the subjectivistic illusion.

99.   The unlimited power of *reflection* consists in the universal *possibility* of turning anything whatsoever into an *object*, of bringing anything within the *horizon of actual* observation and inquiry by means of *signs*. It is possible for the 'I think that ...' to be added to all my *recognitions*.[74] It is possible to turn every *recognition* into an isolated *representation*,

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

[74]It is only *possible*, requiring an additional *act* of *reflective dissociation* which constitutes *representation*. This 'I think' is 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*. B131]. Kantian apperception corresponds rather to our *(self-)awareness* which *founds* the possibility of the *self-reflective* 'I think'.

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 at the bottom of the basic *reflective* attitude 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 *totality* of *reflections*, the world and its multiple dimensions become a *totality* of *objects*.

A few examples should illustrate the generality of this attitude.   100.

(i) The *not-actual* aspect of an *object* has itself an *objective* character. If I see a building, while actually I am only seeing its front-side, its back-side is also intentionally given (*gemeint*); and it may become an *object*, too. What distinguishes here the *actual* content from its rest, the front-side from the back-side, is the mere fact that the former is perceptibly present within the *horizon of actuality*, while the latter is here only potentially – actually it is not, but it might be. Its potential *actuality* is its present *not-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 *not-actuality* of the building's back-side into a 'potentiality', we have already assumed the *objectivistic attitude*, we have already started viewing the *unity* of *experience* as a collection of *dissociated actualities*.

(ii) The back-side of the house, although not perceived now, can be perceived if I only go around the house. It is *not-actual* now but not *essentially non-actual*. The situation becomes more dramatic when we try to *reflect* over the world, God, love, life, even the mere two weeks in Prague. It isn't common to call such things "objects" because, as a matter of fact, they are not. They make us acutely aware that what is grasped is a mere *sign*, only some actual aspect. It is hard to imagine that the 'missing parts' could ever be given in full *actuality*; it is even 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 *representations*, if we only think and reflect enough, we will 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.

(iii) One might think that we are not looking for all possible aspects and instances but only for the appropriate concepts, the eventual essences. This, however, is not very different. *Objectivistic attitude* postulates the essences as surrogates for the missing *actuality* of things which slip out of its horizon. Unable to grasp higher things (nor, for that matter, the *totality* of all things) under the *actual* spell of its *objectivistic* look, it replaces them with something eligible to such a look and treatment – its own *signs*. Essences and concepts are means of doing that (and we will devote them more attention in Book II:1.2.2). Objects turn into essences, matter turns into form, and these reductions, in the midst of the triumphant *objectivity*, unveil the *subject* (essence, form, perception. . .) which, as a matter of fact, has never disappeared. In one respect, this is the opposite of the *objec-tivistic* reductions exemplifeid above. However, metaphysical 'objectivism' and 'solipsism' are distinguishable only on the basis of the *reflective* dualism from which they arise. Each sacrifices one *aspect* for the other and both live only by this negation. The two are the same in so far as both see only *actualities*: one of the *objects*, the other of their *signs*.

(iv) The mood of the thirst for *more* extensive knowledge is different from the mood of the thirst for *more* intense *experiences*. However, as far as they search for *more*, whether

in the *objective* or *subjective aspect*, they reveal the underlying assumption that all that is is a *totality* of things from which one gets less unless one grasps for *more*. Hysterical tourism, search for the exotic and undiscovered corners of the world, rummaging after intensity of new *experiences* – these are common modern forms of the attempts to fill the emptiness of objectivism and boredom of subjectivism through *more*. Insatiability, this equivalent of avarice, is a cardinal sin because it treats the world in a flattened, purely extensional manner, where *more* becomes equivalent with better. But it does not matter much if Icarus intends to actually conquer heavens or only grows exillarated by the thrill of flying. What matters is that the overstepping of the limits, resulting from the uncontrolled search for *more*, leads to destruction. Searching for *more*, one finds less.

101.   *Objective* knowledge can deceive itself pretending that it has completely dispensed with the *subject*. Intensity of an *experience* can pretend that the *objective* order of things is of negligible relevance for its *subjectivity*. This mutual negligence is possible due to the *dissociation* of *subject* and *object*. However, the *dissociation* does not erase the *traces* of the neglected *aspects* and of their inseparable connections. No matter how much exclusive importance is attached to one of them them, the other is its indispensable companion. If *actually* ignored, it will sooner or later announce its presence either as an equally valid opposite or as the limit of the one which, for some time, has gained the exclusive rights. The problem is not to choose between the *subjective* and the *objective*, but to realise that this opposition is played on the grounds of *externality*. No matter the choice, once it is absolutised, the whole world and *experience* become merely the collections of the *external, dissociated actualities* which only repeat the chosen element. In so far as it is only a choice, made for merely pragmatic reasons, without implying any claims to absolute validity, we will call it, interchabeably, the "*objectivistic/subjectivistic attitude*". However, when extended with the claims to the universal validity, it becomes a *reflective* mistake, no longer a mere attitude but an *illusion*.[75]

102.   The illusory character of this attitude can be illustrated as follows. As we travel, say, 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 to remain 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 and the very presence of the horizon. To claim that beyond the horizon there are the same kinds of things 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 character of the experience which, emerging from the most intimate center of one's being, retains its *trace* as the immovable horizon of the *absolute origin*.

     The illusion urges us to view things as if no horizon were *present*. This removal of the distinction between the *actual* and *non-actual*, between the *external* and internal, dissolves the layered structure of *existence*. As the *vertical unity* of *experience* is replaced by the flat, *horizontal totality* of *actualities*, the structure of *existence* is replaced by a *complex* of *objective* or *subjective* pieces which dissolves, under analytic scrutiny, into a residual point of subjectivity – as incomprehensible as immovable. The illusion forgets that all human considerations are made from some *actual* position, are made from within a horizon which, variability of its contents notwithstanding, is *absolute*. Fruitful in objectivistic matters as such an abstraction might be, pretending that there is no designated place and urging one

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[75]One might also use the phrases like "forgetfulness of Being" or "metaphysics of actuality".

to view things as if one were simultaneously at all places, it simply deprives one of *the* place to which it always tries and never manages to return. Its mistake lies in ignoring the *concreteness* of the human place which is not the mere *hic et nunc* with its contingent *actual* contents, but the ever *present* sphere of the essential *non-actuality*, the deepest *aspects* of *experience* from which there emerge all *actual experiences*. Its impossible project is to *represent* the *origin* in terms of its *dissociated objects*.

A disease affects only those whose constitution exposes them to its effects, a virus deadly 103. to humans can turn out harmless to rats. The *objectivistic illusion* has a sound basis in *reflection's* very nature. It results only from the identification of the *reflective* mode with the being of the whole person, when all relations to the world are viewed as if they were relations of the *dissociated subject* and *object*, of *external* entities.

Such an identification happens very naturally. For, indeed, wherever one travels in the world, one does not encounter new modes of vision – whether in Paris or London, one encounters new buildings, new people, new roads. True, one can encounter new ways of seeing the world and new attitudes but they, too, are of the same character as those one could, at least in principle, contemplate at home. And *reflection* will only encounter new *external* contents even if it searches for something else. No matter how long and *attentatively* one reflects and analyses, one does not encounter any *qualitatively new* modes of presentation. All the new observations are of the same character – they present one with *more external* contents (*subjective* feelings and *actual* impressions are as *external* as *objects* and never bring one out of the circle of *reflective actuality*). The process of analysis and reduction is even by its proponents recognised as potentially infinite. All declarations of its infinity, all mere prolegomena and introductions one keeps writing in the hope that others will carry on the research, are expressions of the attempt to view the world and experience as a mere *totality* of *visible actualities*. Analyses become longer and longer, books thicker and thicker and the essence more and more evanescent. They leave one perhaps pleased but deeply unsatisfied. "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."[76]

5.2.3. Antinomies of actuality

According to Kant, antinomies arise because one posits a potential series of experiential 104. distinctions 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,"[77] arriving at the four cosmological ideas of absolute completeness with the respective antinomies of: composition (limited vs. limitless world in time and space), division (finite vs. infinite divisibility of any substance), 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, typically, *positing* a *non-actual aspect* of *experience* as *actually* given. What is so *posited*, appears for *reflection* as a *complex* of *dissociated 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*.[78]

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[76]S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*. p.109.

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

[78]This might seem 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

Kant's sharp distinction between appearances and 'things in themselves' makes illegitimate the questions leading to the antinomies. We only say: there are other modes of *experience* than the *objective*, *reflective* one. The *totalities posited* as *objects* often have some counterparts in *experience*, but not in the *objective experience*.

105. The inevitability of antinomies is just an effect of the universal possibility of turning anything into an *object* of *reflection*, of applying the objectivistic perspective to non-*objective* contents. *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 questions are possible. Is it or is it not the same feeling 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 the subject-object relation 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 completely *dissociated* entities 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 or admitting fundamental dualism. Any unity respecting the genuine distinctness of the two must appear as *transcending* the *dissociation*, as 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*.[79] We look at a couple examples which will also be of some relevance for our later considerations.

5.2.3.i. Matter vs. spirit

106. 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, with the associated attributes, like active vs. passive, eternal vs. temporal, higher vs. lower, etc.. The following fragment illustrates well the way of extending the *actual* distinction of body and soul which, in the Orphic-Pythagorean tradition, had primarily a moral character, to 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

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things in themselves." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2nd Division.2.Book 2.2.7 [A506/B534]] But the schema of inapplicability of categories across distinct levels is the same. The only difference might be in that Kant considers only *actual representations* as experienced and criticizes application of noumenal unity to them. We, on the other hand, consider *unities* to be also *aspects* of *experience* and see antinomies as arising from the attempts to view such *unities* as mere *totalities* of lower elements.

[79]We do not distinguish 'categories' from 'concepts' nor '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*.

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."[80]

This is a perfect example of 'analogical' modeling which, following the dictates of the *objectivistic attitude*, applies the *actual dissociations* to the deeper layers of *experience*. 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 ideal limit, an indistinct substratum *receiving* possible forms. The *dissociation* of purpose and achievement, plan and its execution, which permeates the daily 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." And due to its passivity and receptivity, it is in need of an external principle, "that of which the thing generated is a resemblance."[81]

Matter is an ideal limit *posited* on analogy with the 'stuff from which physical things are made'. But when *posited* as anything more than the physicality of particular *actual objects* perceived by the senses (designate matter as Scholastics might say), it simply dissolves losing all its supposed 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."[82] It is that "which remains when all else is stripped off."[83] When extrapolated beyond the limits of *actuality* as the primordial substance, matter becomes "an incomprehensible somewhat, which hath none of those particular qualities whereby the bodies falling under our senses are distinguished from one another."[84]

We see here the workings of the *objectivistic attitude*. As the world is viewed as the *totality* of *objects*, the experience of change is extended to this *totality*. But as every change presupposes something which is changing – and hence persists in the result – so matter fills this role for the *totality* of all changing things. It is the *dissociation* of the objective time from the *experiencing existence* which requires the 'objective', persisting subject of change. But time, and hence change, arises with the *reflective dissociation* of *objects* from the primordial *unity* of *existential spatio-temporality*. Here it means that change presupposes not so much a permanent subject of change as the permanent subject *experiencing* the change. This experience is conditioned by the *experientially* established identities. When one observes the gradual replacement of the planks in the ship of Theseus, the only subsisting subject is the observer – and his way of identifying this ship. If he considers its identity as constituted by the material from which it is made, no 'objective'

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[80]Plato, *Timaeus*. 18
[81]Ibid.
[82]Aristotle, *Physics*. I:9
[83]Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. VII:3 [modified]
[84]G. Berkeley, *A Treatise...*. §47

subject of change survives the process. But if he considers this identity as constituted by, say, its functional and legal status, then the item 'Theseus' ship' survives the replacement of its planks. In either case, it is the question of the borders drawn, of how the *existing* subject identifies the *object*. (We will enter a more detailed discussion of identity in Book II:2.2.2.i.) The only permanence is the *unity* of this *existence* which can *experience* change even when there is no 'objective' subject of change.

108.   Matter is an image, a *symbol*. Of what? It intends to stand for the *external objectivity* raised to the level of the *absolute*. But then, losing all its qualities, it turns into the *absolute indistinctness*. On the one hand, as it resides in physical *objects*, so one asks in an empirical manner 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. In a more materialistic fashion, matter, as the universal substratum, the always formed formless, is the limit of *distinctions*, namely, the ever *indistinct*. The differences of the tendencies and the apparently opposite directions notwithstanding, the two seem to coincide, for beyond the limit of *distinctions* there remains only the ultimate *indistinct*.

   If one can form any non-relative *concept* of matter at all, it is simply that of the *indistinct*. But the image of something "which remains when all else is stripped off" is as easy to *posit* as difficult to maintain, when conjoined with the *totality* of *dissociated objects*. In the language of substances and accidents it must emerge as the ultimate substance. But substances are also given the status of independent – and individual – existents. Such 'something' – an individual, independent existent above all temporal distinctions – might perhaps be thought of not as matter but rather as ... spirit. Yet spirit, as the similarly ultimate principle opposed to matter, is an equally empty result of the same absolutisation of relative *aspects*. 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 the opposite. 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.

109.   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 *distinctions* matter-spirit, not to mention body-mind, presuppose. 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*. The primordial *indistinctness* is that which, in a sense, is underlied all *distinguishing* and change when *confronted* by *existence*. However, it remains forever constant and *indistinct*, withdrawn beyond the horizon of temporal *existence*, for *distinctions* do not diminish it, do not change its eternal *presence* as the *indistinct*. Matter can be thus taken as the image of this 'ultimate objectivity'.

   If one wanted to discern some materialism here, it would amount 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 the *one* as matter which is opposed to anything whatsoever, one has already gone too far, 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

misleading, because endowed with specific connotations, name for the *one*.

5.2.3.ii. God vs. matter

The opposition of spirit and matter can be pushed even further into the transcendent 110.
sphere where it is the God or the One who stands on the other side, opposing matter. It
is only a continuation of the previous antinomy but it makes the matter-spirit equivocity,
which creeps in with a recurrent insistence, acutely clear and deeply unpleasant.

The following two fragments illustrate well the problem which has been facing the long
tradition. "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."[85] "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."[86]

Matter, which "is negatively defined as not being any one of the things that are,"[87]
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."[88] The apophatic language of the divine, just like the negative
descriptions of the ultimate substratum, point to the equally all-transcending, indefinite
and *indistinct*. Both opposites turn out to be just *nothing*. But one definitely does not
want to identify God with matter, so some conceptual *distinctions* must be introduced.
One has to distinguish the indistinguishable. From a vast variety of ingenious attempts to
keep the two indistincts distinct, let us only mention one common, though dubious, motif.
As the One is the giver (God is the creator), while matter is passive potentiality, one is
easily led to maintaining the 'analogical' image of God as a handyman busing himself with
transforming raw materials into various artifacts. The distinction between the two – formal
and material – causes, extrapolated to the *virtuality* of the *indistinct*, seems to differentiate
the two indistincts. Even if one tries to avoid this image, it invades and disturbs thinkning
once matter as the ultimate and formless substratum is admitted as a legitmate concept.

Matter appears in all respects like God – only with a huge negative sign making it actually 111.
the opposite of God. The experience of the *actual dissociation* of *subject* and *object*
extended to the opposition spirit-matter finds the anthropomorphic, in the most negative
sense, expression in ascribing power, activity, spirituality and other positive attributes to
God and, on the other hand, mere potency, passivity, formlessness to *materia prima*.

This dualism projected into the *indistinct* carries moral dimension. The calmness of
humble and dedicated contemplation is naturally opposed to the abruptness of sudden pas-
sions, 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, divine, side and the ultimate Evil on the other, material one.

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[85] J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* I:499D;499-500A
[86] Ibid. II:167-169
[87] Ibid. II:141
[88] Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names.* I:1.

As God becomes a mere limit of perfections, the 'most eminent', 'more-than-...', the *totality* of positive predicates, so matter fills the need for the corresponding negative principle. "[I]t is necessary that what comes after the first should exist, and therefore that the Last should exist; and this is matter, which possesses nothing at all of the Good. And in this way too evil is necessary."[89]

The Orphic-Platonic devaluation of body and matter, extreme asceticism obsessed with "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh,"[90] the suppression of body and senses – all that may have particular reasons representing a response to real dangers. But we would not consider this traditional tension as a conflict of two opposite principles, spiritual and material, but as an *existential* possibility of breaking the continuity of Being which, *dissociating* the *actual* from the *non-actual*, sets the abruptness of minute impulses against the calmness of *eternal presence*. Since we are not addressing here the opposition between Good and Evil (we will in Book III), we only notice that its association with the opposition between God and matter is of a very dubious value. It seems to be merely a result of extrapolating the possible tensions between reason and lust to the metaphysical dimension. We question the very idea of matter as any fundamental principle which would be opposed to another, equally formless and contentless but, contrary to matter, good principle. 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.

112.   Viewing the *indistinct* as both the place of *birth* and the ultimate *origin* and identifying the negativity of God and matter, we might seem to maintain a heresy. Pantheism always threatens the back-rooms of Neoplatonism and its associate – negativity of the absolute. We do not, however, propose any pantheism. Neither do we *identify* God with matter. So far, we have not encountered anything divine about the *one*, while matter simply has no significant meaning in our setting. 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 with 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 in Book III, while a critique of pantheism will be given in 6.2.2.

5.2.4. Reflective thirst

113.   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* 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. It amounts to a new form – perhaps universalized, 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',

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[89]Plotinus, *Enneads*. I:8.7.
[90]after Gal. V:17

'the end of discursive thinking', or other ends beyond which one hopes to encounter the suppressed '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 just 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 doctors Frankensteins, AI, robotics or genome research) appears as one of the basic driving impulses. It, too, is 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 attitude* and its possibilities. Consequently, no ultimate conquest is to be expected. For such a conquest would require reduction of whatever *transcends* the *actuality* of *reflective act* to the *signs* which can be grasped within its *horizon*. But as the higher levels are not accessible in terms of the lower *distinctions*, the reduction can never happen to be complete. Collecting the building-pieces, putting stone next to stone never finishes and "the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."[91] So the construction starts anew...

The suggestions to renounce the *reflective* project express the *thirst* for the intimacy 114. with reality, just like does the search for *objectivity*. Both aim at abolishing the *distance* between the *actual* and the *non-actual* by eliminating one of the *confronted* elements. But as this *distance* constitutes the very *reflective* being, abolishing it, even if it were possible, could not satisfy *reflection* leaving it alone in a solipsistic universe or cutting it off from the objective one.

Reflection, one's *subjectivity*, is not doomed to suffer because of the 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, absolutising the *actual dissociations*, tries to find the absolute among them.

The *subject* of *reflection* does not constitute the whole being of human person and *reflection* becomes *concrete* when, remaining occupied with its *objects*, it avoids falling into the *objectivistic illusion*. *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. One uses the *signs* to hold on to its *objects*, to conquer time by the objectivistic spells conjuring the ghost of *experience* from its *dissociated actualities*. 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. 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 its *object* 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* which do not exhaust the world, won't make *reflection* impotent. On the contrary, like all true humbleness, it makes stronger, that is, more real.

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[91]Ps. CXVIII:22

6   In a few long words...

This section summarizes first, in 6.1, the current development, emphasizing the central points. In 6.2, we discuss some alternatives and a few possible questions.

6.1   Actualisation of virtuality

6.1.1. Two kinds of causes

115.   Plato observes that "we may distinguish two sorts of causes, the one divine and the other necessary."[92]   The distinction has been maintained by much of the following tradition. Unfortunately, the two kinds completely different and using the same word leads easily to unwarranted conflation. We distinguish sharply the *vertical* order of ontological *founding*, in which various *aspects* of more *virtual nexuses* become distinguished and, eventually, *dissociated*, and the *horizontal* order of dependence between elements of any given level which at the level of *reflective dissociations* can be taken as the usual causality. The latter does not concern us very much but the former is of central importance. It amounts to *actualisation* of *virtuality*, to *dissociation* of an *aspect* from a *vague nexus* and bringing it into the *horizon of actuality*, grasping it in a single *reflective act*, making it *visible*.

   Actualisation of *virtuality* is to be sharply distinguished from the actualisation *á la* Aristotle which only materialises one among the given possibilities. *Virtuality* is distinct from possibility. The latter is a category of *actuality*, it is something definite and *actual*, even if only potentially. It is, so to speak, ready-made and its realisation is a mere assignment of the label *here-and-now* – a mere selection of one specific item from a list or, in the case of general concepts, specialisation and individuation. If x contains a possibility of y, this possibility can be in some way read from x, the *actual* shape of y is, in some sense, already given with x. This is the sense in which the possibility of a fall is given along with balancing on a tightrope. This is also the sense in which a general concept contains its possible instantiations: an actual y is an instance of x only in so far as it conforms to the pattern already fully prescribed by x. A view considering (our relations to) the world as consisting of only two dimensions, the actual and the possible, would be an example of *objectivistic illusion*, in that everything would consist of mere *actualities*, with some of them being only marked as not given *here-and-now*.

   The relation between higher and lower, the *founding* and the *founded*, is not that of the general to the particular, that of instantiation or specialisation, nor that of selection of one item from a list of equally well-defined items. It is the relation of *expression*, possibly of incarnation, and in the ontological form addressed so far, that of *actualisation*. Thus, for instance, the *origin* does not *actually* contain all the hypostases – they are present only *virtually*. *Birth founds* the ultimate site of individuality which contains its possibilities only *virtually* and *actualisation* is differentiation which brings forth something which was not given prior to this event. In particular, what emerges as its result is entirely different from and in no objective way similar to that from which it emerged. The example, so beloved by the hylomorphic dualism, of a "perfect artisan [who] has a distinct knowledge of everything to be done before he does it"[93] hardly applies to any more genuine creative activity than a mere construction work following plans and drawings made usually by somebody else. The example itself is flawed and our *actualisation* corresponds closer to

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[92]Plato, *Timaeus*. III.37
[93]J. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*. I:d2.q1.a2

the truly creative process. An artist does not start with any precise, ready-made 'form' in mind which he so 'applies' to the 'matter' 'actualising' its 'possibility'. Starting a work he will typically have only a vague intuition which lacks any precise form. The 'creative impulse' is exactly the pressure with which this *vagueness* cries for an *actual* form which it does not possess. 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 encounter only later on."[94] 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 artwork emerges «from the artist» in an arcane, mysterious and mystical way."[95] Once it has emerged, only the artist or his close friends may be able to discern some *traces* connecting the artwork with its true origin. The discussions about the specific meaning of a particular work of art exemplify usually the attempts to capture this origin in *actual* terms, to grasp the conceptual 'form' to which the work was tailored. The impossibility of terminating most of such discussions witnesses to the fact that this 'form' is rather formless, that it "is only a trace of that which has no form: indeed, it is the latter which engenders form."[96]

The *origin*, and lower *virtualities*, are *nexuses* 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 the differentiation of *nexuses* giving rise to various elements of *actuality* (e.g., *confrontation*↝*signification*↝*sign*↝*sign-as-a-sign*; *one*↝*simultaneity*↝*spatio-temporality*↝space&time; *confrontation*↝*signification*↝*awareness*↝*reflection*). 116.

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 a baby and an adult. 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,

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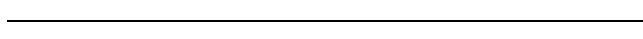
[94]W. Gombrowicz, *The Diaries*. 1957:II

[95]W. Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. VIII. "[T]he craftsman goes back again to the wisdom of nature, according to which he has come into existence, a wisdom which is no longer composed of theorems, but is one thing as a whole, not the wisdom made into one out of many components, but rather resolved into multiplicity from one." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:8.5] Kant notes that the schematism of our understanding, leading to the appearance of the *actual object* "is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Analytic of Principles; A141/B180] A more recent example recording the problems with expressing the origination of the *actual* from the *virtual* is the following: "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 hard to answer *precisely* and unambiguously, but this need not imply the negative answer to the former. The lack of a linguistic expression need not mean the absence of everything. The very effort to find *the right expression* is itself an expression of a prior *presence* which, in our view, is some *virtual*, not fully *actualised* element.

[96]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:7.33 [MacKenna's translation]
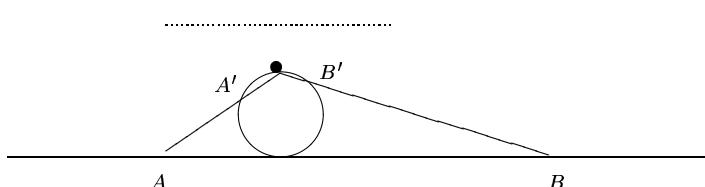
viewed as stages of the process of differentiation and *actualisation* of the *virtual origin*, they are but distinctions of degree.

117.   The series of drawings below captures some of the essential aspects of our development.

     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, as in 2) below. The main analogy concerns some properties of the so called stereographic projection, which can be applied in the moment the point has turned into a circle.

     2)

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 towards 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.

As all analogies, this one is not perfect. It may suggest the dualism of the circle and the line. Although we do claim the genuine *separation* by *birth*, this is not to be understood as *dissociation* of two alien elements. The point of *origin*, which in the image has been split into the pole of the circle and the infinity of the line, is *one* and the same. *Existence*, carrying the *trace* of its *origin* as the most constant and deepest *aspect* of its life, 'touches the infinity' in the *virtual* centre of its being. As Plotinus says it: "[t]he soul is not a circle in the same way as a geometrical figure, but because there is in it [as centre, our ●] and around it [as circumference, our line] the ancient nature, and because it comes from an origin of this kind."[97]
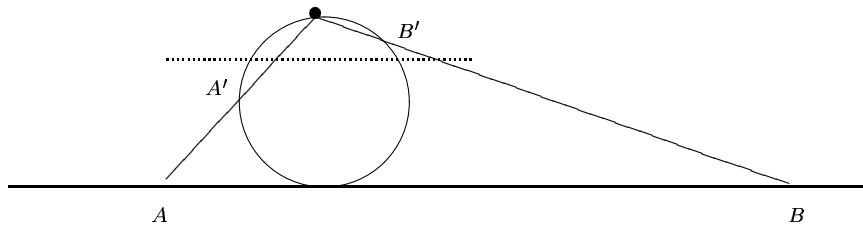
118.   2) represents (an early) stage of *experience* with *chaos* lying somewhere in-between 1) and

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[97]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.8. We might imagine the 'ends' of the line bent to meet at the pole ●, forming an ellipse containing the circle. More adequate in some respects, this would distort the rest of our analogy.

2), one could say, immediately after 1), when the circle is still very small.

The short dotted line represents 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 *not-actual* and, eventually, the *non-actual* aspects of *an experience*.

3)

B'

A'

A B

What lies on the circle 'under' the dotted line represents the *actuality* which we have also characterised 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 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.

We should also point out how the *origin*, the pole, and the *chaos* of *distinctions*, the 'dense' images of the remote points compressed closest to the pole, withdraw during the 'growth' further and further away from the *actuality*: the *vertical 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'. At some moment, when also the actual point B on the line gets close enough, it enters the *horizon of actuality*. (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 image B' out of the compressed density close to the *origin* and isolates it in sharper and sharper form as it becomes *actual*.[98]

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 with the deeper phenomena of *vague* anticipation and foreknowledge, things and events which are, consciously or subconsciously, anticipated and which are as much reflections 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 connect the *actuality* with its *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, will collect only a limited number of *actual*

119.

120.

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[98]Of course, technically, the image B' is equally precise, no matter how close to the pole it is. By "vagueness" we should understand here 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.

experiences. We mark the 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).

4)

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 anything 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 is the most condensed collection of the images originating beyond the limits of ever experienced *actualities* between L and R, where "since all things [are] together, nothing [is] distinguishable because of its smallness."[99]

121.   Irrespectively of the position of the cricle on the line between L and R, the four levels can be distinguished in its structure. They correspond to the *birth* from *nothingness* (the ●), *chaos* which turns into *invisibles* (above the dashed line), *visible experiences* (below the dashed line) and *actual reflection* (below the dotted line). Every *actual experience* contains all levels.

The *objectivistic illusion* ignores, if nothing else, at least this fact. It bases its understanding exclusively on the fact that anything between L and R is given in some *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*. But it becomes an illusion when the *totality* of *actualities* is taken as all that is, when the *non-actual aspects* of every experience, the higher parts of the circle, are abstracted away. The illusion attempts to grow the circle to infinity in which case, in an unimaginable, Cusanus-like fashion, the circle would become the line itself, coinciding with it at every point, comprising everything within its all-embracing actuality. (Let us not ask what would happen with the pole and 'all the rest' of the circle.) Such an operation not only does not help to understand the finitude of the circle. It creates also a confused mixture of this finitude and the infinity of the line, obliterating their respective character and, consequently, their *confrontation*.

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[99]Anaxagoras DK 59B1

6.1.2. To be is to be distinguished

Birth, the original *separation* is *the only* ontological event. But do not later *distinctions* 122. have any ontological significance? Certainly they do, they give rise to different beings and different kinds of beings. Instead of Berkeley's *esse est percipi*, we would say *esse est distingui*, to be is to be *distinguished*, to make a difference. To *exist* is to *distinguish*, *existere est distinguere*, but this marks only the specificity of *existence* which, too, is a being by being *distinguished*, *separated* from the *one*.

This fundamental role of *distinction* accounts for the common association of 'being' and 'independence'. Independence, as being *distinguished*, is not a property of something that is – it is what makes *it* be. The association can be, and was, pressed to the limit by claiming that only particulars 'are' – particulars, that is, the most definitely *distinguished* entities, eventually, completely *dissociated* ideal substances, prone to enclosure within the ideal limit of the horizon of *immediacy*, in a single point. But being is not only the event of the utmost *immediacy*; it begins at the very beginning.

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

On the one hand, 'Being' can be viewed as the transcategorial transcendent, the univocal 123. property which can be possessed by various things, but by all in the same way which simply makes them 'be'. " 'Being' is something fixed and restful in being(s)."[100] According to Aquinas, it is a a pure *that*, a divine act above the duality of form-matter, which endows a 'what' with the actual existence. 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."[101]

We note here the insistence on *actuality*. Indeed, the non-actual existence might seem a *contradicio in adjecto*. The problem is, however, exactly in the fact that attaching the label 'being', we think 'being *actually*', perhaps even, 'being physically given'. If something is not so given, it is not. Now, there is an obvious difference between the building *actually* standing here and the one which is only imagined. The difference is not conceptual, it consists only in attaching the additional label of 'being' to one and the same 'conceptual object'. But in order to attach a label to a 'conceptual object', this object must already *be* itself, even if it is not physically given.

The need to *attach* this label at all is grounded in the prior *dissociation* of being from that which is, of existence from essence. But since essence, or that which is assumed eventually to be, is itself not nothing, it must somehow *be* even before it acquires the *actual* existence. Whether it is in the ideal world of forms, or in the mind of God, does not concern us here. What concerns us is the involved identification of being with *actuality*

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[100]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*. I:20.4.
[101]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. I:q4.a1.ad3

and the simultaneous negligence of the fact that the postulated essences also are and, in fact, are with the assumed specificity of *actual* beings.

124.   The characterisation of the other line might start with the observation that "'Being' is obviously not a real predicate; that is, it is not a concept of something which could be added to the concept of a thing."[102] Although the observation is shared by both lines, the consequences drawn from it are different. 'Being' does not seem to be any real predicate – it is conceptually empty, as is, logically, every predicate which can be applied indiscriminately to everything. This suggests that one should, perhaps, identify it completely with things which *actually* are. 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 [. . .]."[103] This identification is a general tendency of the empirically, and later also analytically, oriented philosophy (the difference being only that the former renounces Being on the grounds of atomistic ontology while the latter for its irresolvable involvement into more specific conceptual and linguistic contexts.) In a more analytical formulation: "There are as many kinds of existential statements, as there are kinds of the objects of discourse."[104] 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." Assuming only particulars versus their kinds may be the distinction between nominalism and (some form of) conceptualism which does not concern us here. 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. It is dissolved in the multiplicity of *actual* 'somethings', in the empirical fact of distinctness of *actual* things.

   Unlike in the previous case, here the dualism of existence-essence need not be so problematic. But this happens only because one aspect is dissolved in the other, 'Being' in that which is. The reduction to *actuality* is even more transparent, in that the transcendent vagueness of 'Being' is removed completely, leaving only the *actual* existents. This whole line of thought, from Ockham to modern empiricism, is characterised by the atomistic ontology of particulars, each of them being in its own particular manner. Yet, no matter how many *kinds* of existential statements one manages to postulate or even identify, they all are still *existential* statements. No matter how many distinct particulars are, they all *are*. Admitting the conceptual emptiness and pronouncing it a mere homonymity, may excuse one from conceptual analysis. But philosophy is not merely conceptual analysis. It becomes such only when it has first dispensed with the *existential* relevance. And when it has done that, it will hardly find it again.

125.   These two, apparently contrary tendencies, are elaborations of the two *aspects* of the unitary event of *distinction*. 'To be' is to be *distinguished* and as soon as you *distinguish*, you *distinguish* something and this something is. It *is* even if it remains *vague* and *unclear* 'what' it is. 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

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

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

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

not a specific concept nor a concept proper to a singular thing."[105] We can *recognise that* something is without knowing 'what' it is. Even the most primordial *distinctions*, marking the essentially *non-actual aspects* of later *experiences*, which can never be grasped as any specific concepts, essences nor particulars, introduce the differentiation in the *indistinct* and announce something that is. When we try "mentally remove all the things that participate Being, nothing seems to remain."[106] *Nothing* seems to remain and yet, in its immediate vicinity, something unclear and almost indistinguishable, yet already distinct, begins to appear. And so Heidegger still asks: "*Was ist das 'es' das gibt?*"[107] What remains is the *indistinct*, but followed immediately by the 'first event', *distinction* which breaks the silence of *nothingness*.

If something remains not *distinguished*, it is not even a 'something', it is not even an 'it' – there remains *indistinct*, but it is not 'it' that remains *indistinct*, it is not *'es' das gibt*. The mere fact of *distinction* relates to the primordial emergence of all contents from the *one* and the same which remains always *above* them. "To be" signifies nothing determinable because it merely pulls whatever is *distinguished* out of 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 x from y; primarily, it *distinguishes* 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. This is the univocity of 'to be'. Brought to the level of language, there is, of course, no need for a particular word, since 'to be' is *present* in every word. As Derrida, quoting Benveniste, observes discussing the transcategoriality of 'to 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."[108] 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 no words.

The celebrated equivocity of "to be" is 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. But it is always accompanied by the univocity of the mere fact of *distinguishing*. "[T]he 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."[109] There is whatever is *distinguished* and, beyond that, *nothing*, the *indistinct*.

6.1.3. One is

But now, 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

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[105]W. Ockham, *Quodlibeta*. I:q.13

[106]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:17[51]

[107]"*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.

[108]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.")

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

Source but the particular item indicated by the definition."[110] But, as a matter of fact, "it is and it is not so, that it is not."[111] 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*. It is *nothing* because it is *indistinct*, undifferentiated, but it is *distinguished* from all the *distinctions*.

127.   But still, is it only by being so *distinguished*? Although our point of departure is *birth* *founding* the *confrontation*, that is, the insoluble relation between the *existence* and the *one*, the latter retains also primacy in spite of this apparent dependence on the *existence*. For the *one* "does not need the things which have come into being from him, but leaves what has come into being altogether alone, because he needs nothing of it, but is the same as he was before he brought it into being."[112] If no *distinctions* were ever made, if no *existence* came to being, the *indistinct* would simply remain *indistinct*. It is not relative to any *distinctions* being made. It is thus both *distinguished* from the *totality* of all *distinctions and* not relative to any *distinctions*, that is, *absolute*.

        In particular, 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. It *is*, it is *above* any *existence* and, consequently, *above* anything that is. It is *transcendent*, ultimate reality which *founds* the reality of all specific things and *distinctions*. The eternal *presence* of this *transcendence* makes it for ever impossible to accept various forms of immanentism, subjectivism, solipsism. We know *that* is, and we know *that* the more, the less it 'appears' to our understanding and conceptual constructions.

128.   Because it does not appear, but is, we know *that* with unmistakable certainty. But this does not imply any 'what' – we know *that one* is, but not *what* it is. We can say *that* there is, but 'what it is' is already the question about relative *distinctions*. Insisting on *that* and opposing all 'whats' with respect to *one*, we are not trying to actually distinguish these two *aspects*. On the contrary, as Scholastics used to say, its being is its essence, its *that* is its 'what'. 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. Dismissal of any 'what' is the proper knowledge of *that*, of the fact that *one* is none of the things of creation, that it involves no *distinctions* which first can provide any material for (knowing) 'what'. The assumption that beyond, behind, above, there hides something which we should be able to grasp, although we can not at present, is to turn *one* into something, at least in principle, graspable, an epistemological limit. *One* becomes thus something relative and gives rise to the *objectivistic illusion*, according to which there is actually something *more* 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 finds adequate to postulate. Believing that something hides, that *one* is more than the *indistinct*, is to project the assumed possibility of *distinguishing*, if not any particular *distinctions*, into the *indistinct*. But it *transcends* our being in this simple sense that this being is constituted by *birth* and *distinctions*. It is not merely an epistemological limit beyond which no *distinction* has been as yet drawn. One can always draw more *distinctions* without in the slightest affecting the *absoluteness* of the *one*, without approaching any limit. It is the ontological limit, the *absolute* beginning and the source of everything that is. It is *that* which never is

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[110]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.6 [MacKenna's translation]
[111]Parmenides DK 28B2
[112]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.12.

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 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*.

It is not any 'thing in itself' which *self-awareness* adumbrates to *reflection* and which 129. epistemology postulates realising its limitation to the 'objective' knowledge threatened 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* we *exist*, has only one counterpart – the certainty *that* we are not everything. In more specific terms: that we were *born* and will die. These seem to be the only *absolutely* 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 to know *that* one is finite. (To avoid misusing the word "know" again, we can reformulate it: to *exists* means to live the fact *that one is not the master*.) "That which has become has also, necessarily, an end."[113] Beginning is the end – they are but temporally differentiated epitomes of the ultimate *transcendence*.

Separation by *birth founds* thus the fundamental certainties of life which are all variations on the theme of the *absolute that*. Deriving from the *confrontation* with *transcendence*, they have all 'negative' character. One knows that one will die, but not when, how. One knows that one can not control everything, but there is hardly anything particular which one could not, at least in principle, bring under one's control. Etc. The apparent lack of 'positive' content in such certainties expresses, however, the fundamental positive insight: *that* is. It 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*.

The *absolute transcendence* of the *one* must not be taken as some alien remoteness – it is not 130. an inaccessible, epistemological limit. As the ontological source it is *present* in everything that is, it is *present* "everywhere and everywhere entire."[114] This *presence* has, however, the specificity of not residing *in* any particular things but, so to speak, *between* them. It is *nothingness* which seaprates one thing from another and which reminds constantly that all *distinctions* come from the *indistinct*. As this apparently empty space, which separates one *act* from another, one situation from another, it is *present* as, on the one hand, the source of whatever is *actually* given and, on the other hand, as the source from which new things, *not actually* given, can emerge and enter the *actual* situation (in *reflective* terms, as the unpredictability of the world). In this sense, we might call it "*immanent*", if only we do not consider it as opposite of *transcendence*, but rather as its intimate *presence*. In both senses, it remains *above* (or between) the *actual distinctions*. But this apparent remoteness from the *actually* given is the same as *existential presence*.

It is also *present* "everywhere entire" because *indistinctness* does not admit any measure. It is not 'something' that is indistinct which might be smaller or bigger. 'Something' is already *distinct* and only *distinct* things allow gradation. A 'tiny bit of *indistinctness*', if we allowed ourselves such a figure of speach, is the same as *indistinctness* itself, for it is not any bit which is indistinct but *indistinctness* which is *present*. Putting it differently, *indistinct*, not knowing any 'it', does not have any subject or, rather, is its own subject. It either is entire or, when any *distinctions* are admitted, withdraws 'between' them and

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[113]Anaximander DK 12A15
[114]Eckhart *Latin Sermons* Ga.III:16-22. [B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart... XXIX, God is one*]

is not at all 'in' them.

131. Let us gather these aspects of *one's* being for future references:

1. *One* is *distinguished* from all *distinctions* but, primarily, preceding (in the order of *founding*) all *distinctions*, it is not relative to them being made. If no *distinctions* were made, then the only remaining would be the *indistinct*. It is thus both *distinguished* from the *totality* of all *distinctions and* not relative to any *distinctions*, that is, *absolute*.

2. It is 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 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. In Book II (especially, 1.1.2 and 2.2.2.i), we will discuss the identity of particular things as such a limit. Here it is the *absolute unity* of the *one*. As the horizon surrounding all *distinctions*, the *one founds* the *unity* of the 'whole world', makes all differences appear not merely as a chaotic multiplicity but as the *unity* circumscribed within the limit.

3. The *indistinct* is *one* and the same for all. Two *indistincts* is an impossibility, "for if there was another of this kind, both [as *indistinct*] would one."[115]

4. 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. The *indistinct nothingness* does not diminish as a consequence of all *distinctions*. "The First remains intact even when other entities spring from it."[116] It does not shrink while science makes its progress; nor as God does, according to Lurianic Kabbalah, in the first stage of «*tsimtsum*» (contraction), making space for the creation through the introvert act of self-limiting withdrawal.[117] Spatial analogies may require shrinkage or dissolution of the *indistinct* as *distinctions* enter the stage, but these are only quantitative, imperfect analogies.

5. 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 the sense that all *distinctions* are made into it and arise from it. It is the first and necessary condition of all *distinctions*.

6. Remaining *above* all *distinctions* it is *invisible*, ultimately *transcendent*. Yet this *transcendence* does not contradict its *presence* in the midst of all *distinctions*. It is *immanent* in the sense of accompanying every *actual* situation, of being the *origin* of all *actual distinctions* and the source of ever new possibilities.

6.1.4. The asymmetry of being

One is, *existence separated* directly from it *is* and everything *distinguished*, the whole 'sublunar world' *is*, too. Yet, this univocity of being harbours the equivocity of different

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[115]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:4.1. Plotinus does not, of course, use the word "indistinct". Eckhart does: "all distinct things are two or more, but all indistinct things are one." [Eckhart, *Commentary on the Book of Wisdom*. (Ws. VII:27a) [after B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart....* p.167]]

[116]Ibid. V:5.5 [MacKenna's translation]

[117]Transliteration follows that used in G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.

kinds of being. We are not so much concerned with the difference between being of a chair and being of a pen which, indeed, is only the difference between chair and pen. But we classify beings according to the hypostasis to which they belong and we should emphasize one important aspect of this hierarchy.

One central distinction concerns beings vs. *existence*. *Existence* is *separated* directly from 132. the *one*, not as its part, but rather an *imago*, §4, it is begotten, not made. As such, it is not relative to anything except the *one* from which it is *born*. 'Being' of all other beings means to be *distinguished*, it is relative to the one who *distinguishes*. Significant differences between beings depend not on what they are distinguished against, as when x is judged distinct from y, but on the *background from* which they are *distinguished*, on the level of *founding* at which they emerge. For everything is that from which it is *distinguished* in this sense. The pen *is* blue being *distinguished* from 'blue', which relation does not obtain when we view the pen as distinct from the ball.

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 it is not *one* in the sense of identity. It is in fact *distinguished* from the *one* and *one* is not the *existence*. *One* is not the *existence* but the *transcendence* which makes the *existence* 'be' – not by coinciding with it but by *confronting* it. The higher remains *above* the lower but the lower 'is' only in virtue of the higher's *presence*. "I am not in them; they are in Me."[118] says Krishna about all created beings. One might say that *one* is 'more-than' *existence*, if only one understands this 'more-than' as the *confronting transcendence* rather than any 'supra-essence'. All other ways of being, down to the most *actual* predicative copula, repeat this asymmetric pattern and are *founded* in the primordial *separation*. Eventually, also the "predicative 'is', used in the context of theoretical explication, has its source in the original 'I am', and not vice versa."[119]

Chaos, as the first hypostasis, *is one*. But *one* is not *chaos*, it remains *above* and beyond *chaos*, as the *transcendent unity* limiting all differentiation. Speaking a bit paradoxically, *chaos* is *one* becaus *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 from which all elements of *experience* emerge. And again, being such a *founding* element, it remains beyond and *above experience* – *chaos* is not *experience*, but its horizon which limits the *experience*, beyond which we cease to *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". But such a name tends to *de-concretise reflection* forgetting that it remains 'in' *experience*, that the *founding* element does not recede in some pre-reflective past but remains *present above*, or underneath, the new level. 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,"[120] that is, as long as it is not definitely *dissociated* from it and entirely reduced to its own categories.

This asymmetry of being is reflected in the fact that higher level, *founding* the lower one 133. 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*

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[118]*The Bhagavad-Gita*. VII:12
[119]M. Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenology of Religion*. II:3.§24
[120]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:2.2 [MacKenna's translation]

of the lower level, but such *totalities* never sum up to yield the *unity* they only imperfectly reflect. This higher *unity* appears as a mere *totality* exactly when we attempt a thorough reduction of the higher to the lower. 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*. y appears for x remote and inaccessible exactly when x tries to drag y down to its own level, when it tries to appropriate y. But if only x ceases to insist on capturing y, on shaping y according to x's expectations, y becomes more *clearly present* and x gains *concreteness*. Taken to the extreme, *one*, seen from the perspective of the *actual existence*, is remote and *transcendent*. Yet, every *existence* is *one*, *participates* in *one*, as *confrontation* with it constitutes the very *existence*. Thus *one* is also *immanent*, most intimately *present*. "Nothing is completely severed from its prior."[121] But it becomes severed when, retaining its own mode and insisting on its own categories, it tries to appropriate the prior. We lose by chasing.

6.1.5. Virtual co-presence

134.   The asymmetry of being involves an aspect which we have frequently mentioned and will now comment more closely. We have desribed the emergence of *reflective experiences* in terms of a temporal process which, indeed, finds place. But we have also repeatedly emphasized that this development should not be viewed merely as a linear process in which one *actuality* replaces another. On the contrary, the *actualisation* of *virtuality* is something which, once the level of *reflective dissociations* has been reached, finds place at every moment. Like ontogenesis repeats phylogenesis, so every *actual experience* reflects, or is surrounded by, all deeper levels of *existence*. The hierarchy of levels, once established, remains constant, reflecting the ever *present* order of *ontological founding*. In this order, the *founding* element is prior primarily not in the sense of having existence independent from the *founded* ones, but in the sense of, on the one hand, being their necessary condition and, on the other hand, of not being relative to the character of these lower elements. When lower levels are established, the higher ones do not disappear but remain *present*. All our considerations are made with the view to this co-presence of *actual* and *virtual* elements, the co-presence of all levels.

135.   This implies, in particular, that ontological priority of the higher levels notwithstanding, they are not to be *dissociated* from the lower ones. They are *present* only through or underneath the lower ones. Thus, 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*. 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 is *present* only through the *chaos* of many. 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 *presence* surrounding – and penetrating – every *actuality*.

The unchangeable Platonic Being is not the opposite of temporal becoming and impermanence. The two do constitute different ontological levels but not disjoint 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

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[121]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:2.1 [MacKenna's translation]

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.

All levels belong to every *experience*, all higher levels and forms of *transcendence* remain *present*, though not *actual*. The successive stages are not passed to be left behind – they accumulate. "For we are not cut off from him or separate, [...] but we breathe and are preserved because that Good has not given its gifts and then gone away but is always bestowing them as long as it is what it is."[122] Just like pen, *distinguished* from 'blue', is no longer 'blueness' but remains blue, so *existence*, *separated* from the *one*, remains *one*. This 'remaining' is the asymmetry of being what one has emerged from, no longer identical to it, but ontologically participating in it. *Nexuses* of earlier *distinctions* are gathered underneath the later ones. Beyond the actual horizon of every relation, there remains the background – not only in its *horizontal* dimension as merely *more* objects of the same kind, but as *vertically transcendent*, as something truly inaccessible to *this new* form of relation, as an "indefinite murmur of being" under the newly emerged, *visible* surface of things. Inaccessible as it is, it is constitutive for the being of the lower elements.

Thus every *actuality* remains interwoven into other *aspects* of the *nexus* from which it emerged. Even if various *aspects* become completely *dissociated*, the *presence* of the whole *nexus* is marked by its *trace*. It lends the *dissociated* and substantialised entities an underlying unity, either as their limit or some relation between them (e.g., the relation of *meaning* between the abstract *sign* and the signified, as the *trace* of *sign*; the relation *after* as the *trace* of the *unity dissociated* into *reflective subject* and its *object*; the objective space and time relating distinct places and nows, as the *traces* of *spatio-temporality*). **136.**

In this way, the ultimate *nexus* of the *origin* survives in the *trace* of 'all things hanging together'. It does not help much to understand *how* they actually hang together, but it marks all our understanding with the underlying idea of *unity*. For such a *nexus*, the mythological language can often be better than the philosophical one. *Birth* from the *one* can be found 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. It is not obvious that philosopher understands more of it, even if he expresses it in an apparently more precise language: "The 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."[123]

Nexus is not a term of explanation. It does not provide sufficient reasons nor efficient causes. It is the term of the origin, indicating only that some things belong together, not in a mere 'togetherness' of *dissociated* entities, but in the most intimate, germinal closeness. Even when *dissociated* and *posited* as independent entities, they remain inseparably bound together by their origin in the same *nexus*. Commenting on Parmenides' poem, a scholar remarks: "Parmenides creates 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."[124] This "merely" signals the derogatory view of such a 'putting next to each other', which is quite understandable when one's **137.**

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[122]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.9
[123]Ibid. V:2.1
[124]G. Calogero, *Studi sull'eleatismo*.

aim is an explanation. But the 'mere putting next to each other' can also express an intention deeper than mere explanation. *Nexus* is the central element of such an archaic understanding which does not dare to *dissociate* all things in order to, having grasped them with full *precision*, bring them under one's control. For it senses that, by such a *precise dissociation*, they lose their original *concreteness*. Instead, trying to give an account of this original togetherness, which marks their ontological priority, it keeps them in their primordial *vagueness*, as "opposites that still are not opposed."[125]

138.   Useless as such a mode of thinking may be for providing *precise* explanations, it retains an aspect completely absent from explanations: *concreteness*. Although common language usage will hardly distinguish the two, *concreteness* is almost the opposite of *precision*. *Precision* grasps, *concreteness* opens. *Precision* requires narrowing of the horizon of attention to the most *immediate* and minute in order to draw the borders in a...*precise* way. *Precision* amounts to excluding, cutting off (*praescindere*) all that threatens with slipping out of *immediate* control. This exclusion is what is *precise* about, for instance, a *concept*. Its ideal limit is a point and mathematics its ideal image.

But mathematics is also abstract – not because it is not *precise* but because it is not *concrete*. *Concreteness* requires *presence* of all higher levels, of deeper *aspects* of *experience*. Like *precision*, it is a possible feature of *actuality*, of *actual signs* or actions. But unlike *precision* it does not require univocal exactness. On the contrary, it will typically involve some undetermined element, something which slips out of the *reflective* grasp and must be left to the *concreteness* of *experience*. "It is possible to 'understand' something, deeply, intimately, without 'grasping' it rationally, for instance, music."[126] This deep intimacy – and 'understanding' – is what makes musical experience very *concrete*. "When I recognise one thing among others without being able to say what its differences or properties consist in, my knowledge is 'confused'. In this way we sometimes know 'clearly', without being in any doubt, whether a poem or a painting is good or bad, because there is a certain *je ne sais quoi* which pleases or offends us."[127] Such a clear recognition is *concrete*, even though it is 'confused', not *precise*. The phrase *je ne sais quoi* ('I do not know what', 'a certain something') expresses quite accurately the *rest*, the impossibility of grasping this 'certain something' by any narrow, *precise* definition. *Transcending* the *horizon of actuality*, it reaches to deeper layers of *experience*. Likewise, we cannot speak *precisely* about suffering, love, hope, damnation. Yet, these are the most *concrete* elements of *experience*. And they are such becuase they penetrate to the very depth of *existence*, because every *actuality* marked by them cannot pretend to be *dissociated* from the sources which, indefinite and imprecise as they may be, fill it with trust or despair.

6.2   Some discussion

Some questions concerning our exposition have certainly arosen. We cannot anticipate, and even less treat in detail, all of them. We will address only a few which seem particularly important.

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[125]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:6.3 [MacKenna's translation].
[126]R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. XVIII
[127]G. W. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*. 24.

6.2.1. One – not Many

Chaos is a pure manifold, where "pureness" denotes the lack of any internal relationships, the mere heterogeneity of *distinctions*. As manifold of *distinction* is the daily bread of *reflection*, it might seem that chaos 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 a manifold? Why Parmenides and not Democritus, Plato rather than Aristotle, Spinoza rather than Descartes, monotheism and not polytheism, holism and not atomism?

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*. 139.

The classical argument is that "you cannot conceive the many without the one."[128] *Positing* a *totality* of differences, you *posit one* totality. One can not *posit* pluralism without *positing* a pluralistic *universe*. One might nevertheless still claim 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 grounded suggestions there is one main question: what *multiplicity*? Why not *multiplicites*?

The fact that we can not think any multiplicity without thinking it as one multiplicity, might be an argument, but it would be *only* an argument. And our objective is not to argue but to point towards the *aspects* of *experience* which might possibly justify our way of thinking. The argument might be answered by pointing out that, thinking multiplicity, you do not at the same time think one. One is in the background, so to speak, surrounds your *act* of thinking. It is a condition of the *actual* thought rather than (of) its content. Simply, every thought is a single *act* and thus, being one, presupposes oneness. But it is not the same oneness, say, macrocosmic oneness, which is claimed to be presupposed by the chaotic multiplicity of all things. The image of all things residing simultaneously in cosmos does not presuppose any genuine unity of the cosmos – only the unity of this image, of this very thought.

This latter unity, however, presupposes a more genuine one, namely, the unity of the thinking person. It does not presuppose it in the strict, logical sense. Nothing contraditory seems to follow from the image of a single, unitary act of thought, performed by a momentaneous subject in a total dissociation from everything (if anything) which preceded and will follow this spontaneous act. If somebody wished so, he might probably build his world around such an image. For us, this appears simply as an abstraction from *experience* obtained by narrowing the temporal horizon to the ultimate limit of *immediacy*. The presupposition of a more genuine unity is not of any logical but of *existential*, or even simply empirical character. The *unity* of the *experiencing existence* is the fundamental *aspect* of every *experience*, is like an axiom – unprovable but indispensable. 140.

We will not pretend to possess any independent arguments against the view according to which pure chaos, the manifold of *dissociated* entities, is the ontological basis of the world. Referring to the individual sense of personal continuity and unity of experience could be convincing only to those already convinced. Our objective is not to argue. We can only claim that, accepting our description of the emergence of *reflection*, such a view appears as a misunderstanding. If it is not, its proponents expecting arguments owe us a

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[128]Plato, *Parmenides*.

final specification of these supposed 'things' constituting the ontological fundament of the world. And they have owed it since Leucippus and Democritus.

141.   It is easier to agree on the presence of the need to comprehend *all* things in form of some *unity* (and not merely a *totality*). One can attach various weights to this fact and, in particular, not finding any specific reason nor fulfillment of it, ignore it. We, on the other hand, attach to it much weight because we see in it a reflection of the deepest event, the ontological event of *birth*. It is a reflection of the *unity* of *existence*, not only of *actual* thought or apperception. It is much more than a mere application of *reflective* thinking, with the unity of its every *act*, to the *totality* of everything. Such an application is only a source of antinomies and impossible questions, exactly because, assuming a multiplicity of things, it tries to form some *actual* unity of them. However, their *unity* is not any sum total of *dissociated* pieces. 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 and unity has to be established. It is the *indistinct*, that in 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. Circumscribing the 'whole world' by setting the limit of *indistinctness* around it, it gives *unity* to the *totality* of all differences. 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.

   An empirical pluralist, a lover of manifold, is afraid that *one* would take from him the glorious variety of *actual* multiplicity. The lifeless monotony of a de-concretised 'one', just like that of an over-rationalised universe of rigid laws, is hardly appealing. But *one*, being the *virtual origin* of manifold, does not negate it, does not oppose it, does not abolish it. In fact, as a pure *virtuality*, it is *present* only through *chaos*, only through differentiation. It only remains *invisibly present above* it.

6.2.2. Against pantheism

142.   Admitting *one* as *transcending* all multiplicity and *distinctions* involves opposition to any form of pantheism. Putting aside any considerations of divinity, one might define (a secular version of) pantheism as the view that no higher *unity* obtains *above* the mere *totality* of all distinct things. The highest entity, not to say the (image of the) absolute, is just the sum total of all particulars, the 'many' which we have just subordinated to the *one*.

   However, we have also said that everything lower *is* that from which it is *distincguished*, in particular, *existence* is *one*. This, too, might be taken as pantheism, especially, in its medieval version where it denoted the lack of distinction between the individual soul and God. Most thinkers in the Neoplatonic tradition met the accusations of pantheism. That such accusations are unjustified is witnessed by the asymmetry of being which, in one form of another, has been consistently maintained in this tradition.

143.   In our case, the center of *existence*, its point of *origin* is indeed the *one*, the *nothingness* of *existence* is the same as the *nothingness* of the *one*. However, everything lower is that from which it arises not in the sense of the symmetric identity but of the asymmetric *participation*. *Participation* in the higher amounts to its *presence*: not *in* the lower but, in the case of the *actual* things *between* them and, in the case of *actual subject*, *underneath* it, in its depth. The higher constitutes a deeper *aspect* of the lower, constantly *present* but never identical to it. Its *transcendence* can be pictured as an overflow, inexhaustibility.

That *existence* is *one* means that it touches *nothingness* in the center of its being, but this touching happens, so to speak, only in one point. This point is *one* full and simple and yet it marks only a particular place of *one's presence*. As a rather crude analogy, we can think of the pen which, being fully and completely blue, does not exhaust the 'blueness' which can be found also in other things. This *immanence* of the higher, its full *presence* can lead one to think of pantheistic flattening and dissolution of the higher in the lower. But then one ignores the *equipollent aspect* of its *transcendence*, of its overflow, of the fact that, *present* fully as it is, it stretches far beyond any *actual* manifestation.

In relation to the actual things, *one* is *present* not *in* every thing but *behind* every thing or *between* all things; not because every thing is 'its part', but because every thing points to it being surrounded by the *invisible rest*. By being *distinguished* a thing ceases to be *indistinct*, it becomes a part of the differentiated world. And since to be is to be *distinguished*, every thing is not the *indistinct*. Remaining undifferentiated (and indifferent) *above* not only the *totality* of all *distinctions* but also *above* the *existences* through which things come forth, *one* remains ultimately *transcendent*, inaccessible to any *actual* look. Our way of expressing these relations may seem confusing since, on the one hand, we postulate that everything is *one* from which it is *distinguished* and, on the other hand, is not *one* exactly by being so *distinguished*. This may be helped by viewing 'being *one*', in particular in the case of an *existence*, as *origination* and *participation*, while 'not being *one*' as the overflowing *transcedence* of the higher, *non-actual* element over the lower ones. As Plotinus puts it: "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."[129] Only disregard of this *aspect* of *one's vertical transcendence* can lead to the pantheistic identification of the *absolute* with the *totality* of all things. Such an identification is yet another example of *objectivistic illusion*.

6.2.3. What makes one differentiate

The simplest answer to this question is: nothing. Nothing makes *one* differentiate, because 144. *one* is the for ever undifferentiated, the *indistinct*, "it is in abiding by Himself that he gives". And it remains so, constantly *present*, as the peak of the hierarchy of levels surrounding every experience.

This answer, however, seems only to evade the problem. For even if *one* rests, it "rests by changing."[130] We are confronted with the profusion of *distinctions* which, originating from and participating in *one*, are not identical to it. We have described a *process* of gradual differentiation, a process starting with the *indistinct one*. It is the *origin* of all *distinctions*, so what starts the process?

Here we have to recall that the process we have described does not start with *one* but with *birth*. Our starting point is not *one* 'in itself' (nor 'for itself'). It is *birth*, the *confrontation* of *existence* and *one*. The reason is that we are not concerned with abstract metaphysics, let alone any speculative explanations, but with philosophical anthropology, *existential* description. We do not address the question what might have been 'out there' before any *distinctions* were encountered by some *existence*. It is *existential confrontation* which differentiates the *one* and this is the process we have described. The names we have used for the *one*, like *indistinct*, *origin* and *nothingness*, have meaning not as characterisa-

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[129]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:2.2.
[130]Heraclitus DK 22B84

tions of some entity as it is 'in itself', but only as it is in *confrontation* with an *existence*. Their meaning is *existential*.

Accepting *one* as the *origin* and being as differentiation, the question "What makes one differentiate?" is the same as "Why is there something rather than nothing?". Since we are not trying to explain why, we referred this question in §9 to the very definition of *existence* as *confrontation* and differentiation issuing from *birth*. A question "Why?" asks for an explanation which both assumes *distinctions* and expects them in the answer. The *indistinct*, possessing none, can never answer such a question. But then, it should not be asked about either.

145.   It is asked about only when it, as well as *existence* and all differentiation, are viewed from the objectivistic perspective, in terms of dissociated objects in the objective time. For instance, "if 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."[131] The 'analogical' modeling, a typical example of the *objectivistic attitude*, is transparent here. Asking for an actually existing cause of differentiation implies that *one* is posited as some 'one' different from 'another', a being among beings only raised somehow above their differentiation. It involves an irresolvable antinomy. For 'one', as the origin, must involve some principle of generation. Since it is 'the first', such a principle can not reside outside it. But since it is 'indistinct', no such principle can reside within it either.

Such a question, based on the objectification of the 'one', goes hand in hand with the imposition of the objective time onto the *origin*. This gives almost literally Kant's first antinomy. For when *origin* is thought as the objective beginning of the world, its presence amounts to the thesis, while the objective unlimited time applied to it implies the waiting time of the 'one' before its differentiation started, which is the cornerstone of the (proof of the) antithesis. Applying the *dissociated* image of the infinite time, no answer about the absolute beginning can ever be satisfactory.

146.   Our *one* is the *absolute origin* – not, however, in the sense of accounting for all objective issues but in the sense of not being relative to any *distinctions*, objective ones included. It is the *aspect* of *existence*, not of the objective world. Questions about what was going on before the Big Bang can and must be left to the objective treatment. Objective forms of the question about the *absolute origin* and limit (e.g., When and how did the world begin? When and how will it end?) recur so naturally not because of any particular importance of the objective beginning of things but because of the intuitions about the *absolute origin*. Every *existence* lives the *confrontation* with its *origin*, lives it *concretely* in every moment. Viewing it in the objective terms, makes it into the beginning/end of the objective world. Such objective forms of these questions are asked with the implicit expectation that, given the answers, we would learn 'everything' – also about ourselves. They only reflect the fact that *existence* carries its *origin* through all life and that its deepest interest concerns its relation to the *absolute*. Scientific development, this paradigm of objectivism, helps us to sort out which questions can be addressed in the objective terms and which can not. But while objective terms are always relative, they can never approach the *absolute*.

Although the two perspectives were not univocally distinguished, the tension between them can be easily identified in the history of Neoplatonism (if not of the whole philosphy). On the one hand, the personalities like Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, and then Eriugena,

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[131] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. XII:6 [my emph.]

Eckhart, Cusanus mark its existential dimension of personal experience. Due to the negativity of the *absolute* and its central place, it puts emphasis on the mystical aspect of *existence*. On the other hand, this *existential* dimension is easy to degenerate, once the *existential* hierarchy is conflated with the objective structure of the world 'in itself'. Taken as the metaphysics of the objective world, hypostases are supposed to *explain* the emergence of souls, people and particular things in the process of objective generation. And now, as the *objectivistic attitude* is also the *subjectivistic illusion*, the absolutisation of the objectivistic perspective involves the reduction of *existence* to a *subject*. The personal dimension of mystical experience becomes thus a mere *subjective* control, magic. While Plotinus lived, "he lifted his pupils with him. But with his death the fog began to close in again, and later Neoplatonism is in many respects a retrogression to the spineless syncretism from which he had tried to escape."[132] His most prominent successors like Porphyry, Proclus, Iamblichus not only commented extensively on the theurgic ground work, Julianus' *Chaldean Oracles*, but mixed religious devotion with magic statuettes and oracular images (their power resulting supposedly from the natural sympathy linking image with original) as well as with conjuring spirits and gods in mediumistic seances which would be hard to distinguish from the practices of modern spiritualists. This tendency becomes reinforced in the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance which, joining it with the newly imported Cabala, applied the system to magical purposes. Such applications seemed possible because the natural world was seen as literally dependent on the higher, celestial and supra-celestial, objectivities. 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. The epitome of this degeneration is the Renaissance magus personified eventually as doctor Faustus.[133]

In our case, the separation of concerns should be quite clear. We are concerned with philosophical anthropology, the *unity* of the *existential confrontation*, not with metaphysics of abstract principles nor objective theory of everything. We leave the latter to those who want to investigate distinctions which are not drawn by anybody. (By this, we do not deny them every value. We only see that this value is, at most, relative and never sufficient to respond to the deeper *existential* concerns.)

To conclude, the question about the metaphysical principle of *one's* differentiation, involving the application of the objective categories to the *invisible origin* and expecting an objective answer, yields an antinomy. From the *existential* perspective, it should not be offending to declare that creation is a mystery, which means simply that the *traces* of every *actual* appearance can be followed towards its origin only to some point beyond which they dissolve in the mist of the *ivisible* and *chaotic* element. 147.

If one nevertheless insists on a metaphysical principle, we might refer to a more modern image: Bergson's *elan vital* – the force of creative differentiation. We could say that *one* is the primal force of life giving. And life is what at once establishes *distinctions*, life *is* the force of distinguishing. The first primitive would then be the *one* understood as the life giving force. But this force has to start somewhere, so take also the pure, *indistinct virtuality* which, to begin with, should be the same as the force itself. In principle, we might accept this image: the *one* is the force of 'bearing' *existences*. But to retain our *existential* perspective of the constant *presence* along this objective one of the causal-like

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[132]E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Appendix II:2
[133]F. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* provides a good, general overview.

precedence, bearing must be taken with both connotations: of giving birth and support, of originating and sustaining.[134]

6.2.4. Relativity, inter-subjectivity, objectivity

As objectivism is only a mode of *existential* attitude towards the world, it is itself relative to the *existence* assuming such an attitude. But then objectivity seems to lose its objective character. It is only an adventure of *existence* while one would expect that, on the contrary, every *existence* is an adventure of the objective world. To repeat once more, the objective perspective is possible and legitimate but its fruitfulness can never satisfy *existential thirst*. As soon as objectivism approaches the limits of its current knowledge, these limits acquire the aspects of the *absolute* limits which are lived *concretely* but which cannot be moulded in objective forms. Objectivism either gets involved into antinomies or delegates the *existential* intuitions to the ideal limits of its own inquiries.

Objectivism, claiming that only objects exist and only objective inquiries merit attention, is another example of *objectivistic attitude*. But when kept within the limits of *actuality*, it retains its relative value. Still, from our perspective the *objective* determinations arise as relative to the *existence*. Every objectivist has to *discover* the objectivity of the world before becoming an objectivist. So one may still wonder how much of the 'objective reality' is left in our account.

148.   To be is to be *distinguished*. Does it mean that *everything* (which we *distinguish*) is? Yes, it does. And dreams, and square circles, and Pegasus? One 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 grazing on the pasture, but still it is, it is *distinguished* and even *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.

The dream you had yesterday *is*, the image, the phantom of perfection you are chasting *is*, the illusions you nourish *are*, the feelings you have *are*. It is impossible to get rid of this ascription of 'being' in spite of the fact that one might want to say that all these things *are not*. They are not because they are *only* 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 one person. But relativity to a particular person or a group of people is a further differentiation of the *distinguished* beings, of things which *are*. There is nothing wrong with 'being' of a thought – a thought *is* as much as a horse, a table, or a meaningful relationship. They all are different things and, at most, different kinds of beings.

149.   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 *existence*, in one *actual* moment, can experience something *objective*, and do it not only entirely on its own but even in spite of everybody else. So one keeps distinguishing: something relative exclusively to one's thought or also to one's perception, something relative exclusively

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[134]One notices that such a principle does not add anything to what we have already said. In the search for an objective entity, it merely objectifies the event of *birth*.

to a unique act or to a repetitive series of acts, something relative exclusively to one's 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. All these are secondary *distinctions*, as witnessed by the fact that the supposed 'realities' they postulate, being of a limited scope, turn out to be of limited validity: the physicalist 'reality' is threatened by the 'reality' of subjective qualia, the 'reality' of perception by the 'reality' of feelings, the 'reality' of public consensus by the 'reality' of personal convictions.

Granting that all these are 'realities' of some sort, one would like to arrive at something 150. 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 of the reality about which there is a consensus. Seeing a tree when feeling dizzy, you can see it distinctly but dizziness makes you wonder: perhaps it is only a hallucination? So you ask the accompanying person and his confirmation gives you more confidence that the tree indeed is 'there'. As Davidson would say, "it takes two to triangulate", and this analogy to the three-dimensional vision (requiring at least two eyes) attempts to establish the reduction of objectivity to inter-subjectivity. But relativity to a group of persons is still relativity. You could be both dizzy and hallucinating. If no objectivity were given to every one of you, such a consensus would never establish it. For objectivity is there already from the beginning and only its indefinable sense makes you wonder if what you are seeing actually is 'there'. No triangulation could place this wonder 'into your head', for all it could do would be to make you wonder if the other person also sees the tree you are seeing. Inter-subjectivity does not account for objectivity. At most, it can provide some (and for us, rather dubious) criterion of what may count as objective.

But as two persons can hallucinate simultaneously so inter-subjectivity can never stop trying to expand the scope of consensus. As the scope of possible people – relativity to whom would constitute, eventually, objectivity – expands, the content of this objectivity becomes only less and less definite and threatens with dissolving in the *indistinct*. Interesting and important as the degree of relativity of distinctions often is, it is not very useful in determining any 'objective reality'. It *posits* only an ideal limit, "that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you."[135] But do you need any consensus to *know* that the edge of the rock at which you are standing is real? Do you have to wait until 'information and reasoning finally result in' the conclusion that the ice-cream you are tasting is sweet?

Reality, and its unmistakable sense, has the *foundation* in the *existential confrontation*, 151. in the *concrete presence* which draws a horizon of *transcendence* around every *actual* moment and the whole life. Yet, at the level of *reflective subject* it acquires an additional element. As *signs* become *dissociated* from their meanings and *subject* from *object*, there arises the possibility of subjective manipulation, of more or less aribtrary arrangement of *dissociated signs*. As the number of *distinctions* exceeds the number of *signs*, there arise the questions of the relations between various kinds of *distinctions* and *signs*, for instance, between visual and auditory distinctions, between perceptual and conceptual ones, or else between *distinctions* recognised by one person and by others. Thus, subjectivity becomes opposed to something "independent from the vagaries of you and me". The problem is now, as several times before, to model the higher by the lower. The *absolute* reality of

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[135]C. S. Pierce, *Some consequences of four incapacities.* p.69

the *one*, accompanying or, as the case may be, haunting every *existence*, gives rise to the attempts to find this *absolute* reality among the *actual objects* and their constellations, in the *visible* world. As one confuses the *subject* with the *existence*, everything *existential* seems subjective and the real source of all reality is substituted by the 'objective reality'. The search for its definite characterisation is yet another example of *objectivistic illusion*. Seeing that *actual objects* are *external*, and assuming them to be independet not only from a particular *existence* but also from *existence* in general, it looks for the objective determinations of this independence.

Such an independence can be taken as the definition of 'things in themselves'. As such 'things' no longer seem a satisfactory answer about the nature of the ultimate, 'objective reality', one begins to ask for its criteria, rather than for its nature. But all such criteria, inter-subjectivity including, lead to positing some form of being as '*the* being', '*the* real', and delegating all others to 'unreality'. Then come some observations, or else arguments and critique, suggesting that the 'unreal' is, in fact, 'real' too. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."[136] Sorting out what is and what is not real generates only discussions and arguments, but never any consensus about the conclusions. The search for the 'objective reality', for something which both satisfies some determinate criteria and is not relative to our way of *existing*, if not taken at once as a contradictory project, either posits some ideal limit of the eschatological consensus or leads back to the abyss of 'things in themselves'. In either case everything we know and *experience* dissolves in the phenomenal 'unreality'.

152.   We do not dispute the distinction between the subjective whims and hard facts, between the fleeting appearances which disappear in the moment they emerge and the constant elements encountered repeatedly in the world. We do not even dispute the distinction between the lasting constructions raised from the *dissociated signs* as models of *actual* things and the ways in which these things may be perceived by others and surprise the one whose construction turns out to be inadequate. We only contest the primacy of these distinctions and the absolutness of their objective pole.

'Reality', when opposed to anything, in particular, to the mind as something mind-independent, is a metaphysical extension of the *actual dissociation* of *subject* and *object*. As *existence* reduced to an epistemic *subject* relates only to *objects*, the only 'reality' it can find is their *totality*. This 'reality', as distinct from 'unreality', arises as a supposed medicine against the *existential* insecurity of a *subject* who, relating only to the *objective*, *reflectively* comprehensible truths, delegates everything else to 'unreality'. But there is nothing unreal. How could there be? It takes a lot of disappointment to rise a suspicion, and then a lot of suspicion to claim that reality consists of two parts: 'real' and 'unreal'.

153.   The generocity of our notion of being implies that we do not reduce it to any specific region, least of all, to the *objective* being. *Objectivity* is not *the* reality but only part of it. It is the part which can be grasped as *objects*, as *reflectively dissociated* entities appearing with enough *precision* within the *horizon of actuality*. This circumscription makes them appear as *external*, for *externality* marks the *trace* of *transcendence* from which the *object* arises and which surrounds its appearance. This, as we have noted in §54, can be the case also with *subjective* feelings and sensations. They are not objects in the usual sense but, when *posited* as *actual objects* of *reflection*, they become prone to equally objective treatment.

Among *objects* further distinctions can be made, for instance, that between something

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[136]Ps. CXVIII:22

which only I can see at the moment and something which everybody is seeing, or else between something which I recognise as a hallucination or as accessible to others or to me at some other time. The later poles of these distinctions seem to mark higher degree of objectivity than do the former. But they do not suffice as any general criteria. I can repeatedly experience the same hallucination and seeing together can be equally, and sometimes even more, deceitful than seeing on one's own. Moreover, such distinctions are possible also with respect to things which are not *objects*. Euphoria of a crowd need not be shared by all who are present; there is a difference between a momentaneous feeling of powerlessness and the lasting sense of *not being the master*. Although the same distinctions as in the previous examples separate the opposites here (relativity to one versus many, minuteness versus constancy), one would not typically call a shared euphoria or a lasting sense of dependence objective. They seem to be too relative to the experiencing persons. They may be *posited* as objects of an inquiry but they are not 'real' objects in the 'objective world'. Such objects are pieces of chalk and tables mentioned whenever an example is called for, objects whose *externality* became only spatial externality. They provide the paradigmatic examples. The 'objective reality' seems to be nothing more than the assumed *totality* of such *objects*, the *totality* of things which are spatially external in relation to each other, in short, material things in the objective space. The problem for this version of the *objectivistic attitude* is to specify finally and objectively, in a complete *dissociation* from possible *subjects*, 'what' is objective, 'what' are the ultimate objects independent from *experiencing existences*. This problem is, as it always has been, left to the future investigations.

Delegating reality out of experience to 'things in themselves' or inaccessible limits, is as good as 'bracketing' it in order to save the tranquility of epistemological ruminations. One might imagine us doing essentially the same, by postulating the eventual reality of some *invisible one*. However, the intention and the conceptual unfolding are exactly the opposite. On the one hand, we do not deny reality to the *actual objects* and, what amounts here to the same, do not apply any rigid distinction between objects and appearances. We only deny them *absolute* reality. On the other hand, we recognise the *presence* of *absolute*, non relative reality. For the members of the epistemic family ('bracketings', 'in-itselfisms' and, in the extreme form, also various scepticisms), beyond the horizon of the *visible* 'whats' there remains only the unknown and uncertain. And since 'Being does not add anything to the concept', one can and should dispense with it. We take the opposite stand saying rather that no concept adds anything (of significance) to Being. The concept of Being (if we have any) is *only* a concept, a *sign* trying to indicate its meaning: the *indistinct* ground of all *distinctions*. It 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, not in spite of but exactly because it *transcends* all relative *distinctions*, all *actual* appearances including. Perhaps, this certainty means only that everything *visible* is only relative and hence uncertain. Perhaps, but there is more to it and we will return to it in Book III. 154.

We do not 'bracket' the reality, we do not 'bracket' the Being *above* the epistemic *subject*. We only 'bracket' everything that critiques wanted to save for the rational knowledge, everything that *epoché* wanted 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 them any *absolute* reality. Our *objectivity*,

the element of *transcendence* behind the *actual object* which keeps it at a *distance* from its *actual sign*, is not *the* reality but a part of it. It is the *rest* of the higher hypostases left on the *traces* leading to the *actual* appearances. It is the *sign* of the ultimate *that*, of the *one confronting existentce*. Its 'what', like all other 'whats', involves at once relativity to the *actual subject*.

Book II (of curiosity)

Between Heaven and Earth

We have followed the order of ontological *founding*, of the gradual *actualisation* of the *original virtuality*, the differentiation of the *indistinct* – of something emerging out of *nothing*. We have thus arrived at the level of *reflective experiences*, of the *dissociated objects* appearing within the familiar *horizon of actuality*.

In principle, one might imagine some further differentiation of the *reflective* contents which might, perhaps, offer new and more *precise* means of control. But this is possible only, so to speak, in a merely quantitative way. Having reached the level of *dissociation*, where *objects* are posited in complete independence from each other, where they appear as autonomous and self-contained 'substances', there is hardly any possibility of further differentiation. Certainly, one need not accept any actually given limits of *distinctions* as ultimate. A thing can be further differentiated into its properties and constituent parts, the parts can be investigated with increased *precision* leading to more and more minute atoms and particles, *recognisable* only with the help of more and more sophisticated equipment. But all such differentiation yields only new *dissociated objects*, more of them and more particular ones, but still only *objects*. It does not establish any new hypostasis, any new level of *experiencing* which would be qualitatively different from *reflection* – it only increases the *precision* of *dissociation*.

Dissociation is the terminus of *distinguishing* and is the dwelling place of *reflection*. In the previous Book, we have described the emergence of this terminus, which emergence could be also interpreted in temporal terms. But we have emphasized that the primary meaning of the hierarchy is the static co-presence of all levels. In this Book, we will be occupied exclusively with this static aspect. We will consider *reflections* of the ontological heirarchy, the ways in which various levels find expressions in the *actual experiences*. We will thus proceed with the categories of *reflection*, with some limits of *distinctions*, and move in the direction opposite to the order of ontological *founding*. But although "the way up and the way down is one and the same,"[1] it looks and feels very different when walked up and down. The levels which, so far, had primarily the ontological dimension, find now *actual reflections* and acquire *existential* relevance.

1   The existential levels
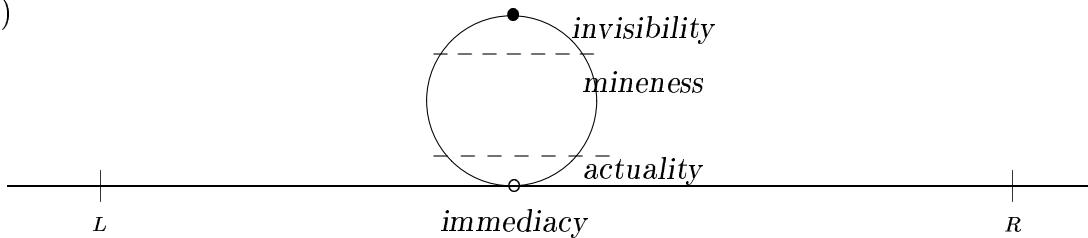
As the earlier hypostases gather underneath the differentiated contents of *actual experi-* 1.
ences and permeate them with the *invisible rest*, they are also *experienced*. They are never

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[1] Heraclitus DK 22B60

experienced as *actual objects* but as layers which surround any such *object*, as *aspects* of any *actual experience*. This constant *presence* of the whole hierarchy makes it *existentially* relevant for *reflection*. Even though *reflection* performs its function exactly by dissociating itself from the higher levels, it can not ignore them completely.

Augmenting figure 4) from I:§120, we can mark schematically the levels of every *actual experience*: **1.** *immediacy* is the ideal limit of *spatio-temporality*, impossible and unavoidable companion of *reflection*; **2.** *actuality* is determined by the contents within its *horizon*; **3.** the level of *mineness* encircles the limits of *my* world and *my* whole life, contributing the personal *aspect* to every *actual experience*; **4.** *invisibles* are the ever *present* but essentially *non-actual aspects* of every experience – they can be *manifested* in particular *experiences* but always *transcend*, and *transcend* essentially, the *horizon of actuality*.

5)

An actual experience involves all the levels and does not consist of some 'four parts'. (Imagining the circle moving along the line, only the actual contents but not the levels become affected by its changing position.) Nevertheless, *reflective acts* can be directed towards contents of distinct levels. Although *dissociation* of distinct levels from each other is an illegitmate abstraction, it should be allowed for the purpose of presentation. We will thus attempt to characterise each level from its limited perspective, but will often encounter relations to other levels. Each level is a *nexus* of various *aspects*, among which we will address the following:

1. the character of the *signs*, of the *actual* appearances, specific for the contents of a given level;

2. the correlate of the experience – its 'objective pole', the character of its contents;

3. the character of the 'subjective pole', or the self-understanding which *reflection* acquires in confrontation with the contents of a given level;

4. the form of *transcendence* pertaining to the contents of a given level; there are two different aspects which, together, constitute the character of *transcendence*:

   (a) the *horizontal transcendence* of the correlate, of the 'objective pole' of *an experience* at a given level; as a variation of the *horizontal transcendence*, one will usually encounter the merely quantitative transcendence of other correlates with respect to the *actual* one

   (b) the *vertical* or qualitative *transcendence* which, referring to the *non-actual* aspects of the *experience* at the current level, points towards the higher one.

One factor which can be helpful to illustrate the differences between the levels is the temporal scope of the involved experiences: from the ideal timeless point, pure *here-and-now* of a single *object*, through the finite and limited scope of *objective complexes*, then the finite but unlimited time of one's whole life, to the – again timeless, but now living – eternity, the immovable *presence* of the *origin*. Using this as the basis of distinctions, let us nevertheless remember that it only indicates the whole *nexuses* of *aspects* distinguishing various levels.

1.1 Immediacy

It is not easy to determine, in objective terms, the exact time span of a shortest possible 2. experience. The difficulty may lie in the fact that no such thing exists, that since every particular experience is only a narrowing of the *experience* to the *horizon of actuality*, its supposedly sharp limits are only an abstraction from the continuity of *experience*. Yet, this abstraction is exactly the effect of *reflective dissociation*. One can imagine a shortest possible time span as the (objective) time in which we can still experience, feel, sense – discern, i.e., *dissociate* – something. Such a minimum might be, perhaps, a single sensation, a punctual, localised, feeling of pain, pricking, heat. It might be hearing a noise, a single sound, seeing a simple thing. It might be, perhaps, a single thought, an isolated image, appearing instantaneously in our imagination. It might also be several such aspects together in one moment.

As we know, sensory cells and neurons register more minute events than those reaching the treshold of conscious perception. Yet, even at this cellural level, one finds some minimal temporal quanta which limit the possibility of discernment. Events which, in the objective time, are separated by smaller distances are not distinguishable. But we are not asking if a durational 'specious present', *minima sensibilia*, can or can not be further divided into more minute, objective *l'atome du temps* of Poincaré, 'quanta of time' of Whitehead or 'chronons' of some contemporary physicists. The objective duration does not concern us, only the presence of such minima (whose objective duration may even vary) and what remains as the possible experience. And since we are not inquiring into the objective mechanisms of perception, our question concerns only such minimal experiences which are *reflectively* identifiable, as those listed in the previous paragraph.

They mark the level of pure *immediacy*. We might think of experiential *immediacy* as the lowest level of distinguishing at which a child development turns and starts to consciously construct the world. It is impossible to say when, exactly, a child leaves the state of relative passivity and becomes active because it is only a matter of degree and none of these aspects ever occurs without the other. But we notice as the irritating (and sometimes charming) short attention span of babies, where cry can replace smile in the matter of seconds, becomes gradually longer. The child gets less and less determined by the immediate presence of stimuli. It can, for instance, wait for the mother a few minutes, even become distracted by other things, before it begins to cry. Slowly, from the minute bits and pieces (which also arise all the time along the way), it begins to rise complex constructions which reach beyond the *immediate* stimuli towards the *actual objects* and *non-actual* limits. *Immediacy*, left behind as the constructions proceed, remains however at their bottom as that which is im-mediate because it has no time to be mediated. What is experienced *immediately* may vary but it will never last two hours, it will be always comprised in a tiny, not to say infinitesimal, instant of time, at the limit of *actuality*. We will devote a few paragraphs to its experiential basis but most of the section will be concerned with the status of the *reflectively posited*, ideal and infinitesimal limits.

1.1.1. The signs

We have seen in Book I how *signs* emerge as the *actual* tokens of *recognitions* which, differentiating *experience*, establish the *distance* between its *actual* and *non-actual aspects*. As *experience* approached the level of *reflective dissociations*, *signs* became more definitely *dissociated* from their *actual meaning* leading, eventually, to the abstract *signs*

as signs. Although there is no sharp border separating the latter from the former, we can to some extent distinguish the *meanings* of the *original signs* of *experience* from the contents appearing for *attentive reflection* under its abstract *signs*. We will describe these two extremes of *signs* separately.

1.1.1.i. Original signs

3.   The *original sign* of an *immediate experience* is not announcing anything, or better, it is announcing itself and only itself. Whether it is 'subjective' or 'objective', whether it is sensed pain, heard noise, felt dread, perceived object, imagined thought, it is a *sign* which fully coincides with the signified. It has been *cut out* of the horizon of *experience* but *attentive reflection* has not yet had time to carry out its *representing* explication. When one gets burned by a glowing spark thrown out from the fire, one does not experience a sensation *and* a spark, it is the spark which hurts, one might cry out "Ooh, *it* burns!" 'It' is equally the spark and the place of one's body where it burns. Within the temporal scope of *immediacy*, there is hardly any difference whether the *sign* has some 'objective' or else only 'subjective' correlate. The *sign* and what it possibly signifies may be, perhaps, distinguished by subsequent *reflection*, but they coincide in the *immediate experience*. There is no intentionality, but only the event. The experience has the form of a pure 'state' with a definite quality (pain, warmth, meekness, etc.)

4.   An *immediate sign* coincides also with the reaction. Pain, like that caused by a burning spark, is *nothing else* than the *immediate* withdrawal, or attempt to withdraw, reaction of avoidance or defense which, typically, is taken care of by the autonomous part of the nervous system. Similarly, a pleasant sensation is nothing else than the response of the body to its attraction. (This may become *reflectively* realised first when the pleasant stimulus withdraws and one attempts to approach it but, originally, there is no distinction between the pleasant stimulus, its attractive force and the reaction of approaching or preserving it.)

       Such reactions are reflexes, elementary *reflections*. They are extremely narrowed – not, however, to an ideal point, but to a particular, minimal spatio-temporal span. Bergson, identifying sensations with perceptions of one's body, says it this way: "The psychical state, then, that I call "my present", must be both a perception of immediate past and a determination of immediate future. Now, the immediate past, in so far as it is perceived, is, as we shall see, sensation,[...] and the immediate future, in so far as it is being determined, is action or movement."[2] Re-action, this *act* or movement which follows within the *immediacy* of sensation, is what we call "reflex". It involves both receptivity, the re-, in so far as it is triggered and not mediated, and also activity, the -action, in so far as it is actually doing something, performs some movement.

       There is no subject of such an event. Sure, it is I who experience the pain, but in its *immediacy* it is not even relative to *my* body, but merely to a particular sense, particular organ, particular point of the body. Its minute localisation refers it to the reacting organ which, so to speak, only happens to be mine. The experience itself does not involve myself, only the affected place of my body. In fact, a more *reflective act* is needed to refer such

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[2]H. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. p.138. The immediate past and future, so aptly related here to receptivity and action, which Husserl turned into retentions and protentions, are images furnished by the narrowing of such an *immediate experience* to the idealized point. Our goal is not any objective theory of sensation and perception and so we will stay with the mere quality of 'experiential minimum', *immediate experience*.

an experience to a subject, to myself. As long as I do not perform it, I 'drown' in the *immediacy* of *an experience* and reflex, which are mine but do not yet appear 'as' mine.

1.1.1.ii. Reflective signs

They appear 'as' mine first upon a subsequent *reflection* which, *dissociating* the appearing 5. content from its surrounding, *dissociates* also the appearance from the appearing. The question analogous to that asked in §2 would be now: what can *reflection* focus on in a 'shortest possible moment'? What content can be circumscribed within the minimum of *immediacy*, which also means, with the utmost *precision*? It must be something exhausted in the disappearing limit of *immediacy*, given completely *here-and-now*, not anything extending beyond this limit like Prague, life, love. But the disappearing limit can harbour only disappearing content, its residuum. Even if it is some specific content, a particular sensation or object, which *reflection* tries to capture in such a limit, even if its properties, its being so and so, remain present, they withdraw from the *horizon of immediacy* leaving there the mere fact of its being. Such a *reflection* registeres only *that it is*.

One can sometimes experience the astonishment at the fact *that* this something, given here *is*, that it at all *is*. Existentialists made such an experience into a nauseous feeling of unbearable, meaningless presence. But it may also be quite a detached and full of gratitude realisation *that it is* while it might not be. We have associated with the question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" some other connotations, emphasizing the implied search for an explanation. But it, too, can expresse such a *reflection*, the amazement at the naked being of this something, the mere fact *that it is*.

This *reflection*, underlying the whole 'metaphysics of actuality', shares with the *original signs* the full consummation within the pure, experientially unextended *immediacy*. But as *reflection* it is already doubled. The *object* of such a *reflection* appears in a total *dissociation*. The strangeness of its being at all is the strangeness of its being 'on its own', of its being so strangely alone *before* – more in the spatial sense of 'in front of', rather than of temporal precedence – the *reflective act*. The *reflective sign* does not any more coincide with its *object*. But *reflection* does not have time to *reflect* over the *distance* which remains merely *experienced* – as *object's* astonishing being. The noetic quality of the *dissociation* is here experienced as being of the noematic residuum, the *dissociation* effected by the *reflective act* enters the correlate as its independent being. Both coincide in the infinitesimal limit of *immediacy*.

1.1.2. Substances, objects, particulars

An *object*, appearing in the *reflection that it is*, appears as "a complete indivisible being."[3] 6. This residuum of being is like the "ultimate substratum which is no longer predicated of anything else; but of which all else is predicated."[4] In short, an *object* of the *reflection that it is* appears as a substance.

A physical thing of daily experience is the paradigm of an *object*, but it neither exhausts the extension of the word "object" nor coincides with its intension. This word, suggesting

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[3] G. W. Leibniz, *Correspondence with Arnauld*. to Arnauld 28.11/8.12 1686. [In whole this section, we exclude living beings from our considerations. Likewise, here we exclude the specificity of Leibniz' notion of a substance which ends up with a monad (corresponding roughly to our *existence*). Here we are only concerned with the characteristics assigned to substances.]

[4] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. VII:3

"both separability and «thisness»,"[5] emphasizes the substantiality which, possessing various accidents, is nevertheless independent from them. It reduces the actual thing to its mere being something, one could say, to a point.

The intuitions of Leucippus and Democritus in this respect can hardly be overestimated. The Greek "*atomon*" means indivisible, and the speculative theory of atomism is the first tribute paid to the idealized notion of a substance. It captures the abstract idea of the least building blocks of the universe which, in spite of apparent similarities, can be seen as the opposite of the primordial elements inherited by the Ionian philosophers of the ultimate nature from the earlier religious thought. Unlike the vague qualities of earth, water, air and fire, it stimulates the search for the definite entities identifiable by the empirical procedure. Although the substantial point is a rather abstract image, it motivates the empirical mind in its search for such points in experience. These can be identified with sensations, perceptions, clear and precise ideas, objective things, atoms, elementary particles, quarks, strings... But all such identifications are only particular stations in the course of the development of knowledge and science. They only try to put some identifiable cloths on the evanescent shadow of the *immediately* simple, "that bounding point [which] indeed//Exists without all parts, a minimum//Of nature."[6]

7.   All the criteria for something being a substance reflect various features of a limit of *distinctions* solidified as a positive entity and are gathered in this ideal limit of a pure point. We mention only a few examples.

The definite *dissociation* of an *object* from the surrounding *experience* gives rise to the idea of its complete independence and self-sufficiency, its existence 'on its own'. This independence is clearly experienced in the *reflection that it is* as the *object's* naked being. But it is not limited to the *objective aspect* of an *experience*. It occurs also when, for instance a sensation, posited as an *actual object* of *attentive reflection*, becomes independent from the *reflecting subject*. As long as it is only felt in the flow of *experience*, it remains its integral part. But its *immediacy* gives the possible *reflection* a localised focus. As one *attentively dissociates* it from this context and *posits* it as an *object* of *reflection*, considers it 'as it is in-itself', it loses its concreteness and appears as a depersonalised entity, *external* in relation to the *reflecting subject*. If it belongs to the subject, is *its* internal sensation, it does so only because the subject's being is not exhausted in its *reflective act*.

A related aspect of sedimenting a limit of *dissociations* as a positive entity or, eventually, of positing an ideal point as a measure of reality, concerns temporality. On the one hand, point gains the place in the, by now objective, time as the extensionless 'now'. An *object* felt, if not intended, as a residual point of pure being something, becomes itself timeless. It resides in the purified 'now' which, by this reduction which is also abstraction, has become *dissociated* from time. A substance, abstracted in this way from time, appears as an unchangeable being. It appears so not by any analogy, not because it is permanent or because we have extrapolated to it observations of something relatively constant, but because it has been pulled out of time, confined to the ideal, timeless point of 'now'.

Another aspect of this timeless *immediacy*, of the determinacy of isolated independence is the idea of a perfectly clear, unambiguous presence (or absence) of the point, that is, of a perfectly clear and unambiguous knowledge. Idea of such a knowledge is, originally, with Aristotle or there about, merely another side of the idea of a substance: well-defined, clearly cut out, independent and self-same entity. It would be futile to follow here the history of

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[5]Ibid. V:8

[6]T. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*. I:5

this idea, but we can remark that, in the epistemological context, it leads to the image of knowledge coinciding with its *object* – no longer in the way intellectual realm of Plotinus or Scholastics, containing eternal intellections, was self-same with their objects, but in the way in which the *original sign* coincides with the signified in the *immediate experience*. The hunt for the infallible, certain knowledge and the hunt for the ultimate atoms are inseparable companions. Both emerge from the idealization of *immediate experiences*, from the narrowing of the *horizon of actuality* to the *immediacy* of a point.

A point, as the ontological residuum and phantom of infallible *precision*, is also the limit of possible *distinctions*, that is, of comprehensibility. 'In itself' it is unknowable, not however because it hides some ultimate content from us but, on the contrary, because it does not hide anything which could be *distinguished*, and hence known. *Positing* the substantial points, one *posits* by the same token the epistemically inaccessible 'beings in themselves'. 8.

Those pointing out how Aristotle's thinking was determined by the structure of the Greek language and common sense, might agree that the attempts to capture the idea of a substance end up with the attempts to define what, in the daily life, counts as things. And they end badly. That which "is first in every sense – in definition, in order of knowledge, in time"; that which can exist independently from all else; "that which is primarily, i.e. not in a qualified sense but without qualification"[7] – such characterisations, attempting to capture the independence of the *dissociated objects*, threaten with dissolution in nothingness. The subject of predication, so obvious for the common sense, when pushed to the extreme of a substantial residuum, a pure ontological limit devoid of any relative accidents, disappears from the horizon of epistemic accessibility. But then, it threatens also with a complete disappearance. Already in the IV-th century St. Basil suggested: "Do not let us seek for any nature devoid of qualities by the conditions of its existence, but let us know that all the phenomena with which we see it clothed regard the conditions of its existence and complete its essence. Try to take away by reason each of the qualities it possesses, and you will arrive at nothing. Take away black, cold, weight, density, the qualities which concern taste, in one word all these which we see in it, and the substance vanishes."[8] It does not even need vanish because the substantial residuum, the non-composite simplicity of any particular, has never actually been there: "there is no body of which I can say for certain that it is a substance rather than an aggregation of several substances, or perhaps a phenomenon."[9] Any particular can be analysed as consisting of other, more minute particulars, like any *distinction* can be refined by more *distinctions*. St. Basil's remark remains virtually unchanged in the XX-th century: "what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? – What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – "Simple" means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair'."[10]

Just like any particular can be viewed as a composite, so any composite can be made into a unitary particular. What's wrong with the (in)famous heap of stones? What does it lack to be a respectable substance? An inherent principle of organisation? A genuine unity? A substantial form? What particular does not lack all that? If it turns out that this very heap of stones was set up on purpose as a signpost, will it acquire some of these

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[7] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. VII:1
[8] St. Basil, *Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron*. I:8
[9] G. W. Leibniz, *Correspondence with Arnauld*. to Arnauld, draft, 28.11/8.12 1686
[10] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:47

lacking aspects? And if not then, perhaps, when it turns out that not only it was not just a heap functioning as a signpost, but that its exact form and the number of stones had specific meaning?

9.   *There are no such metaphysical entities as particular substances. A particular thing is a limit of distinctions signified within the horizon of actuality.*

A particular is a limit of *distinctions*, is a place at which the possible process of further *distinguishing* is terminated, or in any case, suspended. Particular thing as a limit of *distinctions* – signified within the *horizon of actuality* – can be equated with this thing being everything it is not, being the totality of *distinctions* which are excluded and left outside this limit. In this sense, opposites create each other.[11]

Violence creates mildness, hardness creates softness, repulsion creates attraction and both create indifference, etc.. Likewise, very advanced objects are determined only as limits of *distinctions*. Roman pragmatism created Greek rationalism, reformation created catholicism, etc. Of course, all such things might have existed before: mildness might have been the general mood of life before the first act of violence interrupted it; Greeks were Greeks before Romans marked their presence; the church was catholic and Trent only clarified various points in opposition to the Protestants whom it, in turn, created as one entity from the dispersed groups fighting each other, as the opponents of the Catholic church. "Creation" means here a sharpened degree of sorting out, of becoming more *precise* and conscious. The *distinctions* have already been made, they become only fully *actualised*, *precisely visible*.

Mildness which has not yet been contradicted by anything is certainly *recognised*, is *experienced*. But it is not yet *dissociated* from *experience*, is not yet opposed to anything. The first misfortune or act of violence draws a border between the two, causes mildness not only to be mildness but to appear 'as' mildness, 'as' opposite of violence. Primary *distinction*, entering the world for the very first time, at the very beginning, pulls out an x from its background but does not relate it to y nor z. *Chaos* does not involve any relations. An x *distinguished* for the first time from its background is not more distinct from y than from z. Only at the lowest level, where *reflectively dissociated objects* are surrounded by the *recognitions* of differentiated *experience* and by other *objects*, they appear related to and against each other: the sharp border of one is the equally sharp border of its opposite, or else several elements are mutually contrary only when all are equally sharply distinguished. This is the creative power of the abstract *signs* from I:4.1.2, which assist *reflective dissociation* in sharpening and fixing the prior *recognitions*. Particulars are the limits of this process of *dissociation* which can be confined with the *horizon of actuality* or, ideally, *immediacy*.[12]

10.   But if substances are not 'in themselves', they seem to be "[f]ictions of the mind, everywhere; and if we cannot discover what is truly a complete being, or a substance, we will have no stopping-point [...]"[13] Indeed, there is no stopping-point. Yet, the lack of any underlying objective substances does not mean that *distinctions* and their limits are fictions of the mind. On the contrary, they are discoveries – *distinctions* of and from the *indistinct*. They

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[11]Binary opposition exemplifies only the general possibility of a series of contraries. Blue does not create red, but not-blue and not-yellow and not-... all together give red.

[12]Our examples, like mildness or Greek rationalism, do not look like what is usually understood by particulars. Yet, the latter arise only as limits of the same process which, at its earlier stages, involves the former. More detailed distinctions will be made below in 1.2.2.

[13]G. W. Leibniz, *Correspondence with Arnauld*. to Arnauld 30.04 1687.

are found and not created, even if found only by the *distinguishing existence* and hence relative to it. Relativity means neither arbitrariness nor subjectivity. Some of things are more practical to fix as *objects*, to stop their further differentiation; mostly, those which are prone to be perceived within the *horizon of actuality*. In the *attentive reflection that it is*, it is 'I' who determines the termination point. But for the most, the limit of *distinguishing* is determined by the sensory and perceptive system, by the abilities to discern, by the intellectual criteria or tradition. The common character of these systems makes 'us' mostly agree as to what counts as particular things. Starting from such a basis one may attempt characterisation of the things about which there is a wide consensus. But at the bottom of it anything – a piece of chalk, a chair, a leg of the chair, a heap of stones, an atom, redness, anxiety, Prague, independence, love – can be *posited* within the *horizon of actuality*, that is, turned into an *object* and thus given the status of a particular. This does not mean that particularity is a fiction of the mind – only that metaphysics of particular substances is an enterprise of a very limited validity founded on the equally narrow basis as the metaphysics of actuality.

Distinguishing stops somewhere, usually, for purely pragmatic reasons. It is much easier to handle a sofa, a coffee-table and each of the four belonging armchairs as separate objects than to consider the whole as one indivisible 'sofa group'. But the latter is possible, too, as is the case whenever you must buy the whole group instead of only one armchair which you actually like and need. Every *object* admits further *distinctions*, the group contains sofa, and table, and. . . ; a chair has all its parts, composed of their parts, atoms, etc.. The limit circumscribing an *object* has nothing absolute about it, it can be pushed further up or down, depending on the circumstances. And thus one has never managed to specify a single substantial form of any substance. For substantial form is not an inherent property possessed objectively by a substance, but the mere fact that we have to and hence always do stop *distinguishing* somewhere, that even if the process can always be continued, it is always suspended at some point, though the points may vary. What determines this point may be very strange in any particular case and quite different in different cases, because it is not determined by the 'substances in themselves' but by the confrontation of the *subject's* pragmatics with the matter of *experience*. The only invariable element is the necessity to *actually* stop somewhere.

Every *distinction* is a boundary, creates two poles of the 'inside' and 'outside' or, per- 11. haps, just 'left' and 'right'. The positive characteristics, the 'internal natures' are not more primary than the respective 'exteriors'. They emerge at the end of the process of *distinguishing* and carry always the burden of everything which has been left 'outside'. Of course, the process establishes elaborate structures of *distinctions*. When we *distinguish* the chair from the table, we are already in the room and not in the desert, when we *distinguish* the concept of a group from that of a monoid, we are well within the mathematical curriculum and not in the forest. *Reflection* does not have to explicitly negate the nature, then a forest, then this forest, etc., in order to arrive at a monoid. But *reflection* does not have to do it only because all these 'negations' have already happened when *reflection* focuses on its *actual object*.

We would thus go much further than Lotze who says that a thing is what it does – a thing is everything that it is not. If this seems paradoxical, than observe that the whole work is done here by the word "everything". A thing is but *the sum* of all that it excludes, the limit of *distinctions* from all that *it* is *not*. This is the whole 'positive essence' of anything and knowing one is the same as knowing the other. In this sense, everything

indeed reflects the whole universe, every word means something specific only in the context of all other words, microcosmos of every particular reflects the whole macrocosmos. This is also what makes it possible to dissolve (as one says, "deconstruct") any issue, any concept, any construction – in short, any identity – in the interminable web of correlations, themes and exclusions by a systematic, that is, merciless analysis.

12.   But one might still object for, after all, it is so obvious and natural to think in positive terms. Standing in front of a house nobody thinks an infinite series of not-... No, but *distinction* is much more than thought, not to mention *reflective attention*. We certainly distinguish this house from what surrounds it, this is what makes one see this house at all. Learning the concept of a group, nobody thinks an infinite series of not-... No, one thinks perhaps a monoid and adds a few axioms. But this only means that, making new *distinctions*, we usually introduce them within some given context, whether the context of *actual* situation, the context of discourse, the context of mathematical definitions, in short, within some 'positive' determinations. But there are some things to observe here. All examples (mentioned here, and usually used elsewhere) concern *reflective distinguishing*, that is, *distinguishing* which starts with something given. This 'something given' is the 'positive' background to which some more 'positive' attributes are added, as it happens with genus to which one adds *differentia specifica* or a species to which one adds material accidents to obtain a particular. But where does this 'positive' background come from? It is *already distinguished* from other 'positive' backgrounds, the 'positive' backgrounds mutually limit each other.

All 'positive' content arises only as the limit of *distinguishing* it from others. The 'positive' character of the givens is the simple matter of efficiency. Having n distinctions which, in general, divide the space independently from each other, we obtain up to 2^n distinct sub-spaces, each one given by a combination of positive or negative ('inside' or 'outside') value for each of n distinctions.[14] (If we denote distinctions by $D_1, D_2, \ldots, D_n$, and the 'inside', respectively 'outside', of D by D^+, respectively D^-, then a sub-space S corresponds to a choice $D_1^{s1} D_2^{s2} \ldots D_n^{sn}$ where each si is either $+$ or $-$.) A new distinction will give 2^{n+1} sub-spaces, effecting the exponential increase in their total number. Thus if we were to identify every particular thing explicitly by the set of *all distinctions* separating it from all the rest of the world, we would be exposed to this exponential growth which would quickly put a limit to our finite abilities. But assume that we want to make a distinction D which is relevant only relatively to one, call it S, of all the 2^n sub-spaces. (E.g., we only want to distinguish blue – our current S is the sub-space of colors.) In principle, it would require a new level of 2^{n+1} possibilities from which only two are of interest: those *within* S which lie on the 'inside' or on the 'outside' of the new D. Having fixed S, perhaps giving it a name "colors", i.e., turning it into a 'positive' entity, we may now refer to the new possibilities as SD^+, "color blue", respectively SD^-, "color not-blue", instead of the whole sequences $D_1^{s1} D_2^{s2} \ldots D_n^{sn} D^+$, respectively $D_1^{s1} D_2^{s2} \ldots D_n^{sn} D^-$. Explaining to somebody what "blue" means, we do not start by saying that it is not a body, nor the taste of lemon, nor the view from Mount Everest, nor... We start by saying that it is a color – this limits immediately the horizon of attention to the relevant sub-space. Thus, stopping the *distinctions* at some points and assigning to their limits at these points 'positive' determinations – which simply forget the chain of negations which constitute it – reduces the burden of explicitly handling further distinctions which might appear within

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[14]Limiting, for the sake of simplicity, the attention to binary *distinctions*, cf. footnote 11. Admitting *distinctions* with up to k contraries does not affect the argument: we only replace the basis 2 with k.

these, not 'positive' and for the current purpose irrelevant, sub-spaces. The 'positive' determinations allow one to forget the – enormous and typically *reflectively* unknown – number of *distinctions* which, although present, would only disturb dealing with the *actual object* confusing the context with a multitude of irrelevancies. Nevertheless, the full series of such 'negative' *distinctions* behind every 'positive' determination can always be invoked – sometimes, for a creative enrichment and, sometimes, for a destructive disturbance.

Thus, although we grant the positive determinations with their eventual expression in the idea of a substance all practical value, we view them exclusively as such: pragmatic devices. The ontological status of substances, substantial forms and the like is, like of most other things, the same as their epistemological status, which in this case is: the limits of *distinctions*. *Omni determinatio est negatio.*[15] 13.

We bring thus an element of negative theology into the trivial matters of distinguishing particulars. But we do it because we are interested not only in these trivial matters but, primarily, in their relations to and anchoring in the *unity* of *existential confrontation*. Certainly, possible and most natural issues for discussion and investigation are *where* the *actual* limits are drawn, what 'positive' contents they determine and how such 'positive' determinations relate to each other. But as the Aristotelians and others have spent on that few thousands years, we could hardly contribute to the discussions in any way. From the *existential* perspective, we also consider their focus slightly mistaken because they are underlied by the *objectivistic* assumption of studying the 'real' substances and essences, as they are or even must be 'in themselves'. We do not believe in the metaphysical status of any particular substances, we do not take the particular things as anything more primordial than the *horizon of actuality*. Nor vice versa. For just like a particular thing is no ultimate substance, so neither is the *immediate* limit of the *horizon of actuality*, 'the shortest unit of experienced time' any absolute unit – it is just an *aspect* of *an experience* of a particular thing. The two mutually condition each other, form a *nexus*, a whole system of correlated and mutually dependent *aspects*. *Immediacy* is constituted by the minuteness of *an experience* of a particular thing, and a particular thing would never appear if it were not *dissociated* and narrowed down to the limit of *immediacy*.

The eventual dissolution of any thing, as its supposedly accidental features and properties are being removed, is now a standard objection against the very notion of a substance. We share it and, as stated in §9, do not find 'out there' any objective and indissoluble substances. But we find them everywhere where our thoughts, perceptions, feelings, *acts* and *activities* stop for even a shortest moment, bringing out of the *chaotic* flow of 'transitive parts' of time the 'substantive parts' which can be retained and carried over to the next moment, I:§68. The idea of a substance is founded in the elementary operation of *reflection*, in the observation *that it is*, which *posits* a being at the limit of *distinctions*. It is a constant *aspect* of *actual experiences*, in which *reflective dissociation* carries its work to the extreme limit of *immediacy*.

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[15]Let us only remember that living beings are excluded from the present considerations. We should also recall, from I:6.2.2, our objections to pantheism which might seem weakened by the above phrase. We are now working with some established *distinctions*, within a differentiated world where, indeed, choosing some determinate contents amounts to excluding others. With respect to our earlier development in Book I, the more appropriate formulation would be *Omni negatio est determinatio*. The two can be accepted jointly as expressions of the dual aspect of *distinction*: by drawing a border, splitting the space in two, it both negates (whatever falls 'outside') and determines (whatever falls 'within').

1.1.3. Subject

14.   As we have observed at the end of §4, *immediate experience* has no subject. It is relative
to an organ, a part of the body, a single *act*. In *reflective* terms, however, an *act* involves
a *subject*, and *reflection* will find it wherever it finds an *object*.

　　The idea of a purely *immediate subject*, a *subject* which no longer has anything to do
with human existence but merely with the logic of the universal – and as momentaneous as
timeless – constitution, may appear as the extreme offense to common-sense, as well as to
the objectivistic seriousness. But it only acknowledges a *subject* which is a true accomplice
of the givenness of the *object*. The reduction of things to the 'substantial' points effects
an analogous reduction on the side of the *subject*. Its experiential 'unreality' is due to the
fact that it must reside within the equally narrow, whether temporal or spatial, horizon. It
emerges clearly with the epistemology – and *immediacy* – of Cartesian *cogito* and reaches
its peak with the problematic of constitution within German idealism. The transcendental
subject operates always in the ideal *immediacy* of an unextended point, its *object* appears
in the *immediacy* of a single *act* which, carrying the burden of the constitution of the
whole world, becomes as complicated as it is instantaneous. Contents appearing at a
point *dissociated* from its surroundings, from its temporal and spatial context, appear as
arbitrary or, whenever one wants to give more positive connotations, as spontaneous. The
spontaneity of an *immediate subject* is just the other side of the arbitrariness of the *object*
emerging – no matter through how intricate meanders of transcendental constitution – *ex
nihilo*, not even in the *actuality* of *here-and-now*, but in the ideal limit of pure and timeless
immediacy. Consciousness – whether Descartes' *cogito*, Kant's 'I think', Fichte's Ego,
Husserl's transcendental consciousness or Sartre's for-itself – is *actual* through and through,
is an *immediate*, instantaneous – and by the same token, or rather *only in this sense*,
spontaneous – *act* of constitution of an *object*. Spontaneity of this *act* of endowing with
form (in-forming?) is, as we just said, only another side of the arbitrariness of the appearing
matter. Both *aspects*, *dissociated* from the surrounding background of *experience*, find no
other justification beyond the positive connotations of the word "spontaneous" which could
equally well be replaced by "whimsical".

15.   As far as we can discern any *subject* of *an immediate experience*, it is simply the signifying
pole of the *reflective act*, is the fact that such an *act* involves *representation*, a *dissociation*
of the *sign* from what it signifies. The *subjective aspect* is the *actual sign*, the sharpness
of the effected *dissociation* (cf. I:4.2). Substantialisation of the *subject*, endowing it with a
being beyond the limit of *immediacy*, is only another side of the permanent substantiality
sensed behind the *immediacy* of an *object*. This mistake, however, is grounded in the fact
that just as the *immediate* contents arise from the wider, also in the temporal sense, sphere
of being, so *reflective acts* are acts of a real *existence* whose being is not exhausted by their
immediacy. We will proceed towards this wider sphere in the following section 1.2.

1.1.4. Transcendence

16.   *Reflection that it is* experiences the transcendence of its *object* primarily as its *externality*.
We could say that it is nothing else than such *an experience*, that *externality* is the universal
content of every *reflection* which merely notices *that it is*. This is even the case with the
spark which burns me. Although the *sign*, *object* and reflex coincide temporarily, the
very localisation, the very narrowing of the horizon of the event and reaction, amounts
to *externalisation* which becomes apparent in the moment I direct my *reflective attention*

to it. It is not me, it only affects me; it does not involve me, only a part of my body. *Externalisation* does not have any inherent connection to extension or space, only to the narrowing of the temporal horizon to a minute, *immediate experience*. It is the eventually abstract minuteness which constitutes the sense of being somehow foreign, not quite mine, *external*. The aspect of *spatiality* enters this relation as simultaneity, in that the *external object* is experienced simultaneously and 'as' simultaneous with the *subject* of this very experience.

This simultaneity harbours all the ambiguity of different levels. It is co-extensional with the *horizon of actuality* but, as an *aspect* of *reflective dissociation*, it involves the experience of *reflection* arriving *after* its contents. In I:§55, we have seen how reification of *externality*, when limited to the *actually* given contents, leads to the *horizontal transcendence* of *objects*, which appear as independent from the *subject*. This independence, revealed in the *reflection that it is*, involves the dissonance between the *immediacy* of the given *object* and its temporal sliding out of the *immediacy* of *reflective* grasp. The *reflective after* is exactly the experience of *externality* with the germinal element of *not-actuality*, the most elementary form of *horizontal transcendence*.

We have also pointed out the character of double *dissociation* involved in *externality*, I:§42. On the one hand, *externality* is an *aspect* of consciousness encountering its *object* as distinct from itself, which amounts to self-consciousness, I:3.3. But the sharp distinctness of the *object* is but another side of its *dissociation* from the background, from its *experiential* origin. An *object*, imprisoned within the horizon of *immediacy*, has been *dissociated* not only from the *subject* but also from everything else. This double *dissociation* gives *object's* independence ambiguous flavour. On the one hand, as independent from the *subject*, it is, it appears as a residual, substantial point which *is*. But on the other hand, as isolated from everything else, as hopelessly alone, it is almost unreal. The strangeness of an *object* appearing in the *reflection that it is*, the strangeness of its being at all is the strangeness of its being 'on its own', so strangely, intensely and yet almost unreally alone.

This 'unreality' points towards 'something else', towards something from which the *object* has been *dissociated*. An *object dissociated* from its background and surroundings, a pure 'substance', appears as a spontaneous (arbitrary) fact *that it is* – as intriguing as it is meaningless. Not only has it no reason to be so and not otherwise – it has no reason to be at all. "*Why* is there something rather. . . ?" This gives rise to the existentialistic nausea exactly when one concentrates on the aspect of meaniglessness, unreality. But it may also be grasped with a grateful fascination or detached thankfulness. This, however, is possible only because the experience already involves 'something else' than the pure *immediacy* of the given. The apparent 'unreality', which becomes unbearable when *dissociated* from other aspects of *experience*, marks the *trace* of the *virtual signification*, of 'something else', which is felt the stronger the more *reflection* insists on the mere *immediacy* of the *objects*. This is the *vertical aspect* of *transcendence*, reminding *reflection* of the anchoring of its *immediacy* in deeper, that is, wider layers of *experience*.

1.2   Actuality

Let us now consider much more mundane cases of what, in the more common sense of the word, would be called "experiences"; situations which are not reduced to a single moment but which are organised within a relatively short, yet not *immediate* time span; *experiences* with a finite and limited but no longer experientially extensionless temporal scope.

1.2.1. Complexes

18.   Entering a room for the first time, gives first a vague, general impression of its character.
       It may be ugly, cosy, warm, cold, dark, pleasant...After a few moments in the room, its
       experience changes in that one becomes more attentive to its various aspects and parts.
       Looking around, one notices the arrangement of furniture, the colors, the fracture of the
       walls etc. At the same time the room itself recedes in the background, one no longer
       perceives the room but this window, this corner, this armchair. If, however, suddenly
       asked "How do you like this room?" one can at once posit it as one totality. Describing its
       elements and their interplay, one address *the actual object*, this room. It is both a unity
       and a multiplicity. Trying to grasp all of the room one will easily fail. Trying to embrace
       simultaneously all its details in one *act*, one can, at best, summarise them in a general
       impression. Very often, the very same impression one had on entering the room. But one
       also knows that this *totality* involves more than this *impression*, this *original sign* which
       is all of the *totality* one can *actualise*.

       A room exemplifies what is typically considered an object of experience. *Actual expe-*
       riences involve not just isolated *objects* but their *complexes*, unities which are *totalities*,
       objects which are not simple but internally differentiated. No such *complexes* are more
       fundamental than others. Before a child sees that a chair can be moved away from the
       table, the two can be experienced as one *complex*: one, because neither is yet definitely
       dissociated from the other, and *complex* because itself internally differentiated. A picture
       hanging on the wall is not part of the wall, nor something on it. To begin with, there is
       neither a picture nor a wall but a *totality* of one *complex*. Once we have learned that
       chairs and tables come separately and that picture may be taken of the wall, we live with
       the immediate consciousness of these *complexes* whenever we encounter them. But this is
       the end rather than the beginning of the story.

19.   *A variety of elements becomes one complex when it is cut out of experience as both*
       differentiated beyond the actual *givens and yet posited as one totality within the horizon*
       of actuality through a unifying, actual *sign*.

       Complexes are like *objects* which emerge not due to any metaphysical 'substantial
       form', but due to their particular relation to the *horizon of actuality*. Their constitutive
       feature is that, being grasped with the *horizon of actuality*, they are *recognised* as units,
       but units which are *totalities* presenting themselves, so to speak, incompletely. Although
       given in *an actual experience* through a unifying *sign*, they are not fully *actual*, they always
       carry some *recognised distinctions* which slip out of the *horizon of* the *actually* given.

       Entering the room, the first, in the order of *founding*, experience is not of furniture,
       walls, pictures etc. but of '...', of the unity of the *actual experience*. One does not look
       attentively into each corner, contemplate the ceiling, the floor, in order to finally conclude
       "Yeah, it is this room". At first, it is '...', a new *actuality* emerging from the background
       of *experience*, one might say, from the background from which one entered the room. Only
       in terms of the *reflectively dissociated* 'substantial parts', this new *actuality* seems to be
       added to the preceding series of *actualities*. And thinking in such terms, trying to specify
       the objective features which constitute this new *actuality*, one looks for the more and
       more specific atoms which might account for the discontinuity of *attentive reflection*. But
       experientially, it is not added to the previous *experiences* but, on the contrary, subtracted
       from the background, *dissociated* from the continuity of *experience*.

       The correlate of the *reflection that it is* was called "*object*". Its specific feature is

that, appearing within the *immediate* limit of the *horizon of actuality*, its experience coincides with its *sign*: the *sign*, that is, the fact of simply being. The *objecthood* of something is conditioned by the possibility of grasping it fully, without experiencing that anything was left outside, in the *immediacy* of one *act*. *Complexes* are, 'objectively', the same things. But in addition to being experienced as *objects*, involving merely the unity of residual being, their experience involves also multiplicity, *totality* of various elements. The experience of *complexes* involves therefore not only their *objective* unity but also the experience of their being complex, even if not of their full complexity.

1.2.2. The signs

The *signs* of *complexes* refer thus not only to the immediate givens but also to the aspects which, at the moment of experience, are not given within the *horizon of actuality* – and are experienced as such (like all the parts of the room which one knows are there but which are not given in the same way as those one is *actually* looking at). The unity of a *complex* is experienced independently from the potential, *reflectively* constructed unity of the objective contents. Even if, objectively, a chair may seem to possess more unity than a heap of stones, the unity of both is simply the unity of being comprised within the *horizon of actuality*. But this unity is differentiated. It is a multiplicity of simultaneous elements which is experienced along with their unity. In this sense, every *actuality*, every situation, involves a *complex*, a unity of multiplicity. The differences between various *signs* of *complexes* concern primarily whether they focus on the aspect of unity or multiplicity. The *original signs* do the former and the *reflective* ones the latter.

1.2.2.i. Original signs

I wake up and feel strength, a lot of vital energy, a joyful vigor. Is it the sunny morning 20. which is the cause of that? Was it the light supper yesterday evening? Is it. . . ? It does not really matter. Hopefully, it will last the day long but it may also easily disappear very shortly. No matter what its reasons might be, the *mood* does reveal something, if not anything objective then, as Heidegger puts it, how I am now. And this both reflects and will be reflected in my perception of the situation, for I will act differently (even while doing the same things) than I would if I woke up and felt fragile, feeble and low.

I leave the house, drive to the city, park my car and enter a cafe. I am enjoying the perspective of a quite hour over a cup of coffee and a good book. The coffee I get is not exactly the best, but it is not enough to spoil the *mood*. Unexpectedly, I see a friend approaching my table. He asks how long I have been here, how I came here, where I parked my car. At this moment I realise that I locked the keys in the car. Oh sh...t! The *mood* of the expected quietude disappears suddenly and I am getting upset. What makes me so? Not the keys locked in the car because, in themselves, they are not relevant to the sense of quiet enjoyment. It is the whole *complex* of the situation, the anticipated trouble, the money I have to pay, the spoiled hour at the cafe. The simple fact of locked keys is certainly the focal point of the whole situation but getting upset unveils much more than this simple fact. The *impression* unveils the significance of the simple fact, its placement in a broader, *complex* context of related facts and consequences.

Calm voice of my friend, reassuring me that it is no big problem, we just call this and that number, wait outside smoking a cigarette and they will come and open the car, helps a lot. One could say, he only rationalises away my *impression*. Indeed, but how? By

bringing into the situation aspects, points of view, possible solutions and, not least, his calm attitude, which all together modify the *complex* and, consequently, my *mood*.

21.   The *original signs* of *actuality* are all kinds of such *moods* and *impressions*.[16]   They are direct and original in the sense that they can be experienced without the respective *complex* being *actually* given. In fact, they often appear before the respective *complexes*. I can get a feeling of fear without knowing exactly what is frightening me. I can be in a bad mood without knowing exactly why. In this respect, a *mood* not accompanied by the respective *complexes*, merely announces . . . the general *mood*.

Even if some *complex* is present, the border between it and its *impression* can be very vague. The differences between a 'violent passion' and a 'passionate violence', between an 'intense curiosity' and a 'curious intensity', between an 'unpleasant meeting' and the 'sense of distaste' are as discernible from the objectivistic perspective as they are experientially negligible. In the evening we are sitting with some friends around a table in a pub having an enjoyable conversation about nothing. After some time the neighbour who was sitting on his own joins in. There is some intense curiosity in his eyes, as if slight irritability in the way they search through the whole place. But he seems to be doing quite well in joining and even modifying the conversation. After a few questions and answers he focuses on something particular one of us said and follows it up with more and more detailed questions. "So what did you really mean by that?" . . . Hmmm. "Was it this or that? But then, you see, you would have to say that. . . " His acuteness seems a bit uneasy, perhaps, impolite and too detailed but, so far, there is nothing directly wrong with it. And nothing wrong happens later on, either. After leaving the place, all of us have the same *impression* of the guy with a somewhat inquisitive attitude, as if afraid of unveiling his own meanings; interrogative, perhaps not quite a Porfiry Petrovich but still a bit like a detective. It is impossible to say at which point this *impression* started to make itself felt. Was it when he started to ask the questions? When he joined our conversation? Was it already his fidgety look? It is equally impossible to say to what precisely this *impression* refers. We could mention a lot of small examples, things he said, ways he looked but it is not the mere sum of such minute particulars. Saying "the detective" means much more the *impression* he created than any particular of his 'objectively given' features. Of course, there is far from here to any judgment of the person, but the *impression* has already painted a whole, even if incomplete, picture. Referring to him, we will now say "the detective".

22.   We can thus list three characteristic features of the *original signs* at the current level. These *signs* announce *complexes* lending them their unity, they comprise a *totality* of a *complex*, a situation or an object, into a unity of one *sign*, the distinctive quality of the *mood* or *impression*. An *impression*, "is always a simple predicate substituted by an operation of the mind for a highly complicated predicate."[17] This unifying function is the fundamental function of the *original signs* of *complexes*.

Another common feature of all the above examples is that the given *mood* allows a certain variation of more minute impressions, perceptions and *immediate* sensations. One can experience the same *mood* in different situations. The *original signs* of *actuality* can incarnate in a variety of lesser forms. "Every one knows how when a painful thing has to be undergone in the near future, the vague feeling that it is impending penetrates all our thought with uneasiness and subtly vitiates our mood even when it does not control

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[16]One might say, for instance, that *moods* are lasting *impressions* or draw even more specific distinctions. But we will not differentiate here any further.

[17]C. S. Pierce, *Some consequences of four incapacities*. III;p.58

our attention; it keeps us from being at rest, at home in the given present."[18]   A more pervasive *mood*, like that induced by the pending expectation, allows for modifications of more minute *moods* and, in particular, for a large variation in the sensations, perceptions, thoughts and other *immediate signs*. But it penetrates this variation with the constancy of a unifying *sign*.

Consequently, *moods* have a less reactive character than *immediate signs*. They are to some extent independent from the variation of the *objective* elements, are not fully determined by them. A joyful vigor or pending expectation announce the significance of some *complexes* and, as such, can be viewed as caused by something. But, in practice, this cause is often impossible to determine *precisely* because it is not any single element but their interplay, *complex*. *Complexes* have a very wide meaning: a table, a room, a situation, two weeks in Prague, inquisitiveness of a person, are all examples of *complexes*, of things which are differentiated into variety of aspects but which, nevertheless, appear as *totalities*, as focal points of all the involved differences. *Mood* can be seen as the interplay of these differences or else as that which gathers the interplay of *just these* differences in a unifying *sign*. It is not relative to any single of them. It admits inclusion of further elements and their variation until, eventually, it wanes giving place to a new *mood*.

1.2.2.ii. Reflective signs

Reflection of a *complex* no longer stops at the mere observation *that it is* but notices *that* 23. *it is so-and-so*. It goes beyond the positing of something that merely is and, differentiating the unity of an *object*, surrounds it with *dissociated* accidents, predicates, properties. Eventually, *reflection* creates lists, lists of properties, aspects, features, and then tries to reconstruct the unity of the *complex* out of the *totality* of these scattered parts. We will call these *reflective signs* of *complexes* "*concepts*" and "*thoughts*" – *totalities* organised around a unity which, however, for the *attentive reflection* remains often only a mere *sign*.[19]

Concepts are *externalised impressions*, explications of the unity of *complexes* as *totalities* of more specific determinations. Discussing the detective or the locked keys, one will collect a whole series of thoughts which make up the important aspects of the situations. Eventually, the whole *complex* may become a single *thought*, although this will merely mean establishing a simple *sign*, like "the detective" which now, in a truly artificial fashion, signifies the respective *complex*. There may be a difference between 'the detective' taken as such a *concept* or as an *impression*, but it does not concern their *objective* correlate, only the mode of its presentation. This *concept* of this detective may be very *vague*. Yet, in so far as it is explicated, it is a *concept*, a list of features gathered around the unity of his person.

Unity and multiplicity   24.
Just as an *impression* "is always a simple [*sign*] substituted by an operation of the mind for a highly complicated predicate,"[17] so a *concept* substitutes a 'complicated predicate' arrived at by analysis for the simple *original sign*.[20]   *Impressions*, as the *signs* of unity precede, in the order of *founding*, *concepts* which only explicate the involved complexity.

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[18]W. James, *Essays in Pragmatism*. I;p.13

[19]We do not aim at any (im)possibly detailed analyses of thought processes and their dependence on the available and unavailable concepts. We allow ourselves even to conflate the thought and the concept, just as we earlier conflated *distinction* as the act of distinguishing and as the distinguished content.

[20]The Latin *conceptus* reflects well the tension between the unity of the origin/embryo (retained in the English "conception") and the multiplicity which it gathers and stores as in a container.

But as *impressions* involve also internal differentiation, the transition between the two is only a matter of degree. A person can *recognise* 'BC' without understanding what 'B' and 'C' are. Take 'B' to be 'brown' and 'C' to be 'cat'. A child growing up with only 'BC's, but with no separate 'B's or 'C's, might learn to distinguish 'BC's from 'ZY's, even have a word "bc", without ever getting the idea of dissociating 'B' from 'C'. But meeting 'BD' (a brown dog?), can give rise to separate *recognitions* – even *dissociation* – of 'B' and 'C'. As long as 'B' and 'C' appear only in 'BC' they may be, to some degree, *recognised* but they are not (necessarily) *dissociated*. What happened with 'BC', can now happen to 'B' and 'C', which remain 'primitive' only as long as further *distinctions* are not drawn. Do the repetitive encounters with 'BC' give rise to the same *impression* or recognition of the same *concept*? We leave attempts to answer it uniformly to those who find them worthwhile.

25.   Unity precedes multiplicity in the order of *founding* yet, once the level of *reflective dissociations* has been established, new units may arise from multiplicity, from a series of particular *experiences*. Although this is typical for construction of advanced *concepts*, it applies equally to *impressions*.

        Entering a room, one need not get immediately any specific *impression*. One can have none and get one first after being in this room for a while, after having discovered different aspects and objects collected there which, together, build up a unified *impression* of the whole. Looking for a way in a foreign city, one can be forced to stop at each cross and ask for directions, to consult the city's plan, etc. Eventually, one finds the way. The next day one may still have difficulties but the intermissions won't be that frequent. After a few times one knows the way 'by heart', one has it as a one entity, given in a single moment not with all its details but with the clarity of the single *sign*: "I know the way." One has 'built a totality'. Sure, to begin with one might have had a mere idea of this way from the hotel to the restaurant but now one has *an experience* of it. Shall we call it a "concept" of this way? An "impression"? We leave such quarrels to those who find them worthwhile.

26.   One might want to say that "I know the way" expresses neither a *concept* nor an *impression* but an intuition: a unitary grasp of a *complex* which "relates immediately to the object, and is single."[21] An example illustrating the generality of such intuition, and of a *concept* emerging after the experiences of its parts, is given by reasoning, like that involved in understanding a mathematical definition. To begin with, one has to work one's way through the notation, then through the other concepts applied, then their interrelations, finally, its implications and relations to other definitions. Then one may understand it but it is not the same as 'getting it'. To 'get it', one has to grasp the whole in one *act* – of intuition – which gives perhaps a wrong *impression* of certainty that, even if one does not know all potential implications and applications of the definition, one knows *how* it possibly can be used, that is, where it can not be used. 'Getting it' is an *impression* of several things falling on their place, of having understood, which accompanies acquisition of a *concept*. Such an intuition arises when "[a]t the end of a certain time ordinary meditation produces what is called acquired contemplation, which consists in seeing at a simple glance the truths which could previously be discovered only through prolonged discourse."[22]

        Thus understood, intuition might be taken as the common element of unity involved both in the experienced *impressions* and in understanding of *concepts*. In its technical,

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[21] I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. A320/B377 [Without, of course, agreeing to the Kantian limitation of intuition to sensuous perception.]

[22] Although the passage refers to the development of spiritual insight, it is equally applicable in the present context. The quotation is from St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Homo apostolicus* Appendix I:7.

philosophical meaning it relates primarily to the conceptual understanding signifying its unitary pole gathering the multiplicity of the differentiated contents. In the more popular meaning, it comes closer to the *impressions* which provide only a hunch suggesting a *vague*, yet not arbitrary, direction for further elaboration.

All *reflective* efforts are guided by the search for a unifying intuition. To become a 27. *concept*, a *totality* must be gathered in a unity. Starting with the *dissociated* elements, the unity does not appear as any prior but as a goal to be achieved. The whole tradition of epistemology and theory of knowledge is marked by various attempts to obtain unities from the 'given atoms'. Abstraction (of higher concepts from particular instances), induction (of general laws from special cases), deduction (of elaborate consequences from simple axioms), construction (of complex structures from atomic data) – all assume some simple and *dissociated* givens and try to construct from them structured unities.

But as the assumed givens are only *dissociated objects* of *reflection*, it is never entirely clear what can be counted as a genuine unity. If we list a series of more or less arbitrary properties, we do form a *concept*. Its unity, however, does not reflect any inherent interrelations of the involved properties but only the unity of the *act* of *positing*. Possible deeper motivatations of this *act* do not remove from the result the aura of a voluntary *fiat*. In many cases the unity can be reduced to more specific aspects, like coherence, consistency, purposefulness. Yet the need for such a variety of aspects to account for the variety of unities, as well as many cases where none of them is discernible, suggest an accidental and almost arbitrary character of what counts as a unity. A single stone is a unity and so is a heap of stones. Unity is accidental, or primitive, in the sense that it amounts to drawing in the matter of *experience* limits which are not determined by any metaphysical, substantial unities. The *actual* unity of a concept, not having any metaphysical necessity, is primitive, is established often irrespectively of how coherently or incoherently, how logically or illogically the involved elements are related.[23] Even if *reflective* efforts result in the acquisition of a unitary intuition of the limited *actuality* of the comprehended *complex*, this unity has a different character from the *reflective* constructions, it is as if 'given' (intuited) – "for the intellect, the unity remains only a postulate, an act of faith."[24]

Concepts vs. impressions
28.

Concept requires explicit presence of the differentiated elements which it gathers in the unity of one *sign*. *Impressions* can also arise as *signs* unifying a multiplicity of more minute elements. However, these elements need not be explcitily given in the experience. *Impressions* not only often precede the discernment of such elements, but also occur without their, anterior or posterior, discernment. Focus of a *concept* is the interplay of distinct elements, focus of an *impression* is their unity. And so, psychologically, the two are incommensurate: at any *actual* moment, it is either a *concept* or an *impression* but never both. If, involved in a situation, one tries to observe the arising *impressions*, they become polluted and falsified. One can not *reflectively* catch, not to mention, control oneself, in the moment of getting an *impression*. Trying something like that, dissolves any *actual impression*, makes it withdraw behind the imposed *reflective* contents. Likewise, proceeding

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[23]Unity as the limit of *distinctions* lacking any *conceptual* unity is the reason why most *concepts* are not definable. For instance, "'doorknob' is primitive (unstructured); and, for that matter, so is too practically everything else [every other concept]." [J. A. Fodor, *Concepts*. VII;p.147] This primitive undefinability concerns only the unity, the line where the limit of *distinctions* is drawn. Multiplicity within this limit implies various relations which make some *concepts* more potent and relevant than others.

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

with a conceptual analysis, one can not pay attention to the *impressions* which, possibly, accompany it in the background.

Yet, although the two can not be *reflectively* given simultaneously, so every *complex*, containing the element of both unity and multiplicity, elicits both modes of apprehension. On the one hand, we know the possibility – far from universal but not entirely absent – of talking one out of an *impression*, like the friend's arguments which calm me down and bring me out of being upset. Also, a unified *impression*, like a *vague* intuition, carries already the possible results of decomposing it into a series of *thoughts*. Even if it does not contain them explictly so, once the relevant *complex* has been dissected, we find in the analysed results the reasons of the original *impression*. On the other hand, every *reflective sign*, every *thought has* a *mood*, it creates an associated *impression* which reflects the unity implied by the *thought*. (Of course, receptivity to and above all the significance one attaches to such *moods* may vary tremendously.) "Every concept in our conscious mind, in short, has its own psychic associations. While such associations may vary in intensity (according to the relative importance of the concept to our whole personality, or according to the other ideas and even complexes to which it is associated in our unconscious), they are capable of changing the 'normal' character of that concept."[25] Every system of thought has a *mood*, every philosophy has, besides its system of *concepts* and ideas, a general *mood* which hangs like a cloud above and flavours its more specific aspects. And just like the understanding of the situation with the locked car keys influences its *impression*, so one's understanding of a philosophical system influences its *mood*, the shape and the density of the cloud.[26]

29.   *Moods* and *impressions* are considered as subjective, only privately mine, while *concepts* as objective or, at least, public and shared. As most claims within this dualism, this one is of little interest and sounds as plausible, as it is misleading.

For the first, subjectivity of *impressions* is not different from the subjectivity of *concepts* and understanding. Just as different persons may have different *impressions* of a given *complex*, they may have different *concepts* of it. A person with an obsessive fear of revealing his privacy might experience our detective as a persecutor, while one with a purely social interests as an annoying snob. The *concept* of 'the detective' formed by each person will gather perhaps different aspects of the detective, but all these aspects may be equally *objective*. In each case we are dealing with the character of the confrontation involving both a *subjective* and an *objective* element. Having different emotions in a given situation is just like having different understanding of this situation. Incapacity of some persons to *share* the emotions of others witnesses to their subjectivity as much as the incapacity of some persons to understand the *concepts* understood by others witnesses to the subjectivity of *concepts*. "Human emotions are to a large extent socially objectified, and not subjective. Only a part of emotional life is subjective and individual. Human

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[25]C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious.* p.29

[26]This *mood* is like the *sign* of the typical experience underlying the given philosophy (provided that it has character – for as Nietzsche says: only "[i]f one has character one also has one's typical experience which recurs again and again." [F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil.* 70]) Say, for example, the mood of Heidegger: gnostic thirst for the hidden truth and resentment over its absence in the lower world and among common men; the mood of Nietzsche: unrewarded intensity turning into violent despair, heroic scream lost in the darkness; the mood of Spinoza: noble man need not judge others, but nobility of particular acts originates from the unity with the world; the mood of Wittgenstein was accurately described as empirical mysticism or, perhaps, mystification of empiricism; etc., etc. Finding such superficial and general characteristics insufficient does not change the fact that one, nevertheless, *recognises* their origin, one understands the *mood*.

thinking can be very subjective and often is so; thinking can be more individual than emotions, it depends less on the social objectification [...] Currently, one admits more and more often that there exist emotional apprehension [*Erkenntnis*]. It was claimed by Pascal, Scheler, and was emphasized by Keyserling."[27] Let us only add that the emotional apprehension need not be merely a result of social objectification. Rather, it results from the fact that emotions, like conceptual understanding, relate to the objective *complexes*.

The tendency to classify *impressions* as subjective arises from disregarding their character of *signs* which reflect aspects of *objective complexes*. Instead, one views them analogically to the *immediate* sensations, as *signs* coinciding with the signified. They appear thus as if locked within one's subjectivity, as *subjective signs dissociated* from any 'objective outside'. But once we operate within this *dissociation*, *concepts* become also *dissociated* into their *subjective thoughts* and 'objective outside'. It has never been easy to specify what this 'objective' correlate of a *subjective concept* is. We leave this issue for the moment and will return to it in §§36.ff.

Even if one admits some objective element of *impressions*, their subjectivity may be taken   30. as referring to their *vagueness*, impossibility to identify *precisely* their content, what they exactly are. The explicit list of *dissociated* elements involved in a *concept*, on the other hand, makes their identification and interplay plainly *visible*. This is reflected in the view of the subjectivity of *impressions* as their privacy, incommunicability. The unified *sign* of an *impression* cannot be dissolved into more *precise* components without changing the *impression*. Its fleeting *vagueness*, reflecting so much the given *complex* as the background of the person experiencing it, can not be transfered outside the borders of the *subject*. *Concepts*, on the contrary, can be shared and publicly communicated.

Impressions are not, however, completely *dissociated* from the objective and intersubjective world, locked within the isolated subjectivity. Even if each of us paid attention to somewhat distinc aspects, we all got the *impression* of a detective. One would like to claim that this is not a common *impression* but only some rough, approximate common denominator of the *impressions* each of us had in his privacy. But this assumes that *impressions* are some definite entities or events, have some sharp borders which separate them from each other; that each of us had such a *precise impression* and that 'the detective' is only their common part. Now, certainly, each of us might have had slightly distinct *impression*. But 'the detective' is not abstracted from any atomic *impressions* of all of us. On the contrary, the *impression* each of us had was something which only further specialised the *impression* of 'the detective'. Each of us can trace his particular *impression* to the *nexus* which he, like everybody else, experienced and which we agree to call "the detective". This *impression* is something genuinely *shared* by all of us and, consequently, genuinely communicable.

Now, various people have various capacities of empathy and sympathy, of *sharing* other's emotions. Just like various people have various intellectual capacities and skills. But if one is unable to *recognise* what another person is feeling, and one is unable to do so *in principle*, then one should have one's psychology and emotional constitution looked at. All people have, at least in principle, the capacity to face the same situations, to address roughly the same (limits of) *distinctions*, to relate to (roughly) the same *totality* of a situation, which involves also the reactions and feelings of other persons. *Sharing* another's feelings is, at bottom, just *sharing* his situation and problems. Whether one does it using one's emotional intelligence or distanced reflection is certainly a psychological difference.

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

But in itself it is of no deeper significance as long as the results are (roughly) of the same character.

31.   We have just admitted that every one of us might have had his own *impression*, a more specific version of the *shared impression* 'detective'. These might seem genuinely private. But they are no different from 'the detective'. Every limit of *distinctions* can be refined and it can be refined in various ways. It is only the question of how specific *distinctions* we want to communicate. If your *impression* was of an annoying snob and mine of a persecutor, there is nothing which could, in principle, prevent us from communicating these more specific *impressions* to each other. Such a communication would have to turn rather personal and intimate. And here we see a clear difference from *concepts*. The latter are not opposite of *impressions* in that they are communicable, but in that they are easily and impersonally communicable. The objective explication of the elements involved in a *concept*, their *externalisation*, serves the purpose of being accessible to an intelligence and education of the appropriate level – not to particular personalities. Communication of feelings and *impressions*, on the other hand, presupposes some personal community.[28]

32.   But one might still object. The *impression* I had was *this particular* feeling, *this* very specific and unique event which could not possibly belong to anybody else. We can, perhaps, communicate the meanings and significance underlying our *impressions* but we can not share the specificity and uniqueness of actually feeling them. My view of the city is not your view of the same city. I cannot communicate to you exactly and *precisely* all minute sensations and impressions affecting me when beholding a view. But it is not because they are not communicable but because they are inexpressible. I can not communicate them even to myself. Their occurrence is registered but their possible specificity and particularity remain below the treshold of *attentive*, conscious *distinguishing*. All we can do is to capture the experienced *impressions*. When we succeed, we can express them to ourselves and, consequently, communicate them to others.

But even when I manage to communicate them, I do not share them, they remain privately mine. Thus, underneath all communicable *impressions*, there is a sphere of subjective privacy. It is not expressible and hence, verbally or conceptually, as inaccessible to others as to me. But it is there, it marks something which is mine and only mine. Notice, however, that their private mineness amounts to their minutely *dissociated immediacy*. Surely, my view of the city is not your view, my sensation of pain is not your sensation of pain. In so far as it is a view of the city it is communicable – only its infinitesimal uniqueness is not. But then also the retinal image in one's left eye is different from the retinal image in the right eye. No two of the assumed ultimately private, minute and atomic impressions can have anything in common. Simply because the atoms, by their nature, are *dissociated* from each other. This ultimate subjectivity results from viewing the experience as moments of minute impressions – as *dissociated* from each other as one pure 'now' is *dissociated* from another. The uniqueness of feeling the *actual impression* can not be shared with other people just like it can not be shared with, repeated in any following *actuality*. Its uniqueness, its *dissociation* within this *actuality* is what, by this very token, makes it non transferable to any other *actuality*. Feeling *exactly the same* as another person, or expecting another person to feel *exactly the same* as I am feeling, are futile projects of overcomming the sense of *alienated* subjectivism. But it is equally

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[28]We will say more about *sharing* in III:3.3.3.§§120.ff. Here we only signal that feelings and *moods*, relating eventually, as everything else, to the *indistinct one*, are not so privately subjective as commonly assumed.

hopeless to try to find for the second time *exactly the same* feeling one had before. It fails by necessity, by its very nature, since it places the site of one's being in the minuteness of *immediate act* which is *dissociated* not only from other people but also from other *immediate acts*.

As said in §15, every single *act* has its *subjective aspect*. Such an ultimately *dissociated* subjectivity obtains when this *aspect* becomes substantialised, *posited* as an entity which, in its being, *transcends* perhaps the *horizon of immediacy* but is still viewed as nothing but a *toatlity* of separate *acts*. For such an atomism, no sharing is possible because any unity can be only arbitrary and nominal – not only the unity of *shared impressions* but also unity of one subject. But it, too, strives after some unity, because that is *experienced* irrespectively of the degree of *dissociation*. Unity is primitive, that is, we stop distinguishing at some points for pragmatic and not metaphysical reasons. If we do not want to stop, nothing will force us to – nothing, except for the limited time and finitude of *reflective* capacities. The call to neglect or, as one prefers to say, overcome these limits is the mark of *objectivistic attitude* which is now clearly seen to be the same as *subjectivistic illusion*. Here, it triggers the search for the atomic impressions, which can be certain only when *immediate* and *precise* only when *dissociated*. Its mistake lies not so much in the recognition of the sphere of subjectivity, as in viewing it as the field of particular, *dissociated* feelings which one attempts to capture 'in themselves', in their *dissociated* particularity, forgetting that they are only splinters of the *unity* of *experience*.

Understanding 33.

Summarising the above, we can say that *impressions*, just like *concepts*, are not 'internal' events of private and incommunicable subjectivity, but reflections of the confrontation of the *actual subject* with *complex objectivity*. Both draw and mark limits of *distinctions – distinctions* in the actual situation, in *experience* and, eventually, in the *indistinct*. *Conceptual distinctions* may require higher degree of *precision* and explicitness than *vague distinctions* of *impressions*. But in both cases, these are not (in any case not always) arbitrary *distinctions* relative only to *subjective* wishes. In this respect, the *precision* of *conceptual distinctions* is more voluntary, more relative to the *subjective actuality* than are *impressions*. We only seldom *recognise precise* limits. Their sharpness, imposed on the *recognitions* of *experience* by *attentive reflection*, is a more definitely *subjective* contribution than *vagueness* of *impressions*.

Both are modes of understanding. For understanding is *recognition* of limits. Understanding Prague is to know, more or less, where it ends and ceases to be Prague. Only objectivistic reduction would try to equate it with the knowlede of geography or administrative borders. To know Prague is equally to know what makes Prague different from Paris. Some *conceptual* explication is certainly possible here (e.g., Prague is the capital of Czech Republic, Paris of France) but it will be very limited. Likewise, to understand irritation, not in the sense of understanding its causes but what it is, is to know, more or less, where irritation ceases (or begins) to be one. *Recognising* these limits – which is not different from experiencing it, for feeling irritation is not to feel tranquility or pleasure – one understands what it is. In the same way, to understand the mathematical concept of a group is to be able to recognise what is a group and what is not, is to be able to distinguish it from other mathematical (and non-mathematical) entities, from a monoid, from a field. In either case, it is a wider context of *experience* and understanding which conditions the understanding of an *impression* or a *concept* – generally, of a *sign*. One understands the *sign x* when one knows what it refers to. Yes, but what it refers to is not (primarily)

any positive, *precise* and determinate 'essence' but the limits of its application, the limits which separate the *complex x* from others, which mark where x begins (and ceases) to be x. Understanding of these limits does not require their explication.

34.   To understand something is not to grasp its supposed 'essence' but to know its limits. (This is the same difference as that between the positive contents and the negative limits of *distinctions* discussed in 1.1.2, in particular, §12.) To understand something explicitly, one has to start with this 'something' which is already *recognised*. This 'something' is already understood, it is already delimited from a wider context, although such an understanding is hardly *precise* and *conceptual*. It is tacit rather than explicit, but it is understanding. Without such an understanding, questions about the possible causes of irritation, ways of avoiding it, etc. would not even be possible. These later questions may certainly contribute to the expanded understanding of irritation. But they do not condition its understanding, only explicate it. The initial moment of understanding is a *reflection* which isolates this 'something' as an *actual object*. At first, we may not even know what it is that we are trying to understand – something happened, but for the moment it remains a mere 'something', because we do not know what it was, whence it came nor what it meant. Only an *original sign* has appeared, which, in spite of, or rather precisely *through* its *vagueness*, calls for a closer attention. Then, and only then, the questions like "What is this thing?", "What makes it what it is?" can be asked. They ask for an explication of the involved *cut*, of the boundaries separating something already *recognised* from the *rest*. They ask for a *conceptual reflection* of a *recognised experience*.

     But explication has no 'given' limit. Although in a given context, say of making a table, it may be natural not to ask questions about the atomic structure of the wood, or about consequences of the act for the world peace or future generations, such or similar questions are always possible and may bring in *distinctions* which were not at all involved in the original situation. Every *distinction* and limit thereof which has not been drawn to the ideal limit of a point can be refined which often means: considered in another context. Trying to understand the *concept* of a group, one does start with its definition, but the process involves necessarily relating it to other concepts, seeing what happens if one drops some axioms, if one adds some, analysing possible examples and non-examples, relating it to a monoid, to a ring, etc.   Understanding is relative to the context in which the thing is considered because this context influences the boundaries of the thing. If the only other concept one has is that of a monoid, the understanding of group may be very poor. (Yet, it will be understanding! A group is distinguished from a monoid.) If one is able to relate the group to a large variety of other concepts, the understanding will be respectively deeper – group will be distinguished from more things/concepts with which it otherwise might be confused.

     One should notice here something which happens entirely implicitly, namely, that some contexts are completely irrelevant. One won't try to relate the mathematical groups to cows, last weekend's trip, one's mother. Although implicit, this is equally essential aspect of understanding since it, too, tells something about the limits of the thing. A great challenge of teaching, for example, consists in being able to explicitly delimit the object under consideration against the horizon of unrelated issues which, however, typically intrude on the apprehension of the object. Poor understanding will often violate exactly such implicit limits which for a more advanced understanding are not worth mentioning. Laughter provides another good example of the involvement of every thing into implicit contexts from which understanding must delimit it. Many jokes work by violating the

assumptions of such implicit contexts and dissolving the stiff form of habit and rule in the flow of the possible, even if unexpected, associations. Laughter brings such implicitly and often dogmatically assumed elements to the front and in this consists its often powerful and destructive function – it abolishes the positive and determinate character of the 'given'. For, as we observed in §12, the function of positive determinations assigned to various limits of *distinctions* is exactly to exclude possiblities which are irrelevant and disturbing. But this working of laughter is negative and threatening only to the stiffened and 'frozen' forms, to dogmatic prejudices, for which it is a painful reminder of their relativity, of the *experienced* flow from which they had emerged. (Inflexibility of character, whether personal or national, which feels threatened as soon as some rule is violated, is the same as the lack of wit and humor. Seriousness is the *recognition* of *absolute* limits. Grave parody of seriousness is the absolutisation of the relative ones.)

A difference between *concepts* and *impressions* is not that the former mark objective 35. understanding while the latter only subjective reactions. Both are forms of understanding and the difference concerns only its character. *Concepts* make the *totality* of the involved aspects *precise* and explicit. *Impressions*, gathering this *totality* into the *clear*, unifying *signs*, make it at most implicitly present. *Concepts* require *precision* and rigidity of the involved *distinctions*, which may be absent from *impressions*. But ultimate rigidity of the limits of *distinctions* is only ideal and, at best, secondary. Do you understand what a wave is? Whenever at the seashore, you can *recognise* waves or else see that there are none. You know what makes a wave. But, do you? What is it? How high must it be in order to be a wave? And where does one wave end and another begin? It is impossible to say because there are no definite, rigid limits. There are only *vague cuts* which tell "this is a wave and this is another". You may be unable to tell exactly where one wave ends and another begins, but still you are perfectly able to select some area, perhaps, around the peak, and say that this marks a wave. Common-sense does not have the *precise* understanding of a wave because we are unable to specify explicitly its limits. But we know that it is not a whirlpool, nor a current, nor a building. We are able to delimit it against other things and these *distinctions*, whether verbalized or not, make the wave *concept* sufficiently familiar.[29]

Wave is a much more fundamental example than a group or a chair, and understanding the former illustrates much better the process of understanding which always originates in what some call "tacit knowledge" and which we call "*recognitions of experience*". An *object* is a limit of *distinctions*, of *cuts* from the background of *experience* and thus *an experience* of something involves obviously its tacit understanding. Explication of this understanding is but a further *reflection* which tries to explicate the limits of a thing. Sometimes, such

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[29]Leibniz would say that we have a *clear* but confused understanding of a wave. We have earlier distinguished *concrete* from *precise*, I:§138. Now we would add that, in a similar fashion, *clear* should be distingished from *precise*. Neither *concrete* nor *clear* relates as closely to *precise* as to its opposite, *vague*. *Clear* can be conjoined with *vague* in the way in which Leibniz allows for knowledge which is both *clear* and confused. He associates confused with a large number of aspects which make it impossible to comprehend their totality distinctly, i.e., *precisely*, in one act. "Our confused feelings are the result of a variety of perceptions which is indeed infinite – very like the confused murmur a person hears when approaching the sea-shore, which comes from the putting together of the reverberations of innumerable waves." [G. W. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*. 33] He does not use the word "clear" here, but this is exactly the word we might use. When hearing this murmur, we *recognise* it very *clearly*, even if there is no *precise* border which separates it from silence nor, on the other end, from a disruptive tumult. Most *impressions* are, from the perspective of utmost *precision*, *vague* yet *clear*. And so is most of our understanding. *Concepts* strive after reducing this *vagueness* but, becoming too *precise*, they often lose *clarity* of the initial understanding.

an explication can be carried far towards *conceptual precision* and sometimes it can not.

36.   ***Essences***

We have devoted quite some space to the equiprimordial epistemic status of *impressions* and *concepts* – both reveal limits, and thus mark understanding of *complexes*. But we have not denied their difference which concerns mainly the explicit character of the *totality* of aspects involved in a *concept* versus its at most implicit presence in a unified *impression*. This difference has marked the philosophical explications which, driven by the ideal of explicitness and *precision*, assigned a much higher status and devoted much more attention to the *presicion* of *concepts* than to the *vagueness* of *impressions*. *Conepts*, in their *dissociated* and impersonal precision, have always seemed to offer a more 'objective' grasp of reality than *vague* and 'subjective' *impressions*.

We have downplayed this opposition, arising from the *dissociation* of *subject* and *object*, by emphasizing the *objective* correlate of *impressions* and by equating *thoughts* and *concepts*. One would, however, like to consider them distinct. Thought seems to be a subjective act of which a concept is the objective correlate. However, as a correlate of an *act*, it retains a subjective aspect. The 'truly objective' must lie even behind that. It is that which a concept reveals or captures, is the structure of the *actual object*, its essence.

37.   The idea of essence arises almost naturally once being, the fact *that it is*, is delegated to the limit of an extensionless and incomprehensible simplicity of a point, §8. The appearing *objects* obviously are not mere points, so there must be also some positive *objective* content, some *distinctions* which could justify *distinguishing* one thing from another. The ideal points reject to cease being multidimensional *complexes*, and this rejection is handled by *dissociating* being from its character, the existential from the intelligible, the mere fact of being, *esse*, from that which makes a being what it is, *quo est*, in short, *that* from 'what', being from essence.

A pragmatic limit of *distinctions* allows further *distinctions*. An *object* appears in different ways, its identity survives a lot of changes. So unless we identify its 'what' with its mere *that*, there must be also some specific contents, some constant 'what' hidding behind the varied appearances. "The essence of each thing is what it is said to be *propter se* [...] the essence is precisely what something is."[30] The essence captures the ... essential and it does it in a unique and *precise* way, it captures the ultimate truth about what it means to be this thing: "Each thing itself, then, and its essence are one and the same."[31] We will not spend time on tracing the modulations of the idea of essence and its relations to substances, forms, common natures, complete notions and other themes which surrounded it in its long history. We only notice its role. The 'essential what', being objective, should be grasped with the same *immediate* certainty as its ultimate *that*, it should be captured in the *immediacy* of a single *act*. "Therefore there is an essence only of those things whose formula is a definition. [...] definition is the formula of the essence, and essence belongs to substances either alone or chiefly and primarily and in the unqualified sense."[32] Essences correspond only to the intelligible substances and, eventually, to the intelligibility of substances. (The original Greek *ousia* can be, and in various contexts is, translated as either substance or essence.) Moreover, the "attributes attaching essentially to their subjects attach *necessarily* to them."[33] We see here the same equation of the

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[30] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. VII:4
[31] Ibid. VII:6
[32] Ibid. VII:4;5
[33] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*. I:6

epistemological and the ontological dimension, of what a thing is 'in itself' and of how it is defined, as in our equation of *thought* and *concept*. The difference is only that while our equation indicates the primary unity, which becomes *dissociated* along with the *subjective* and *objective aspects*, the present equation starts with *objective* essences *dissociated* from their conceptual reflections and sees their coincidence in the *act* of a successful definition. It is a difference of order but not of content.

In the order starting with the *dissociated subject* and *object*, essences are that which makes the coincidence possible. They make the ideal of necessary truths and *precise* knowledge, of the *immediate* access to the *precisely* given possible. The goal, if not the achievement, of essences is to reduce a *complex* to something which can be given adequately within the ideal limit of *actuality*, in pure *immediacy*. An essence, whether with Aristotle, Descartes or Husserl, is a graspable unit which can be made *actual* in a single *act* of intuition, comprehension, perception, understanding, or whatever variation of a *reflective act* one needed to identify. Essences are to give metaphysical rigidity and *precision* to the *distinctions* of *experience*, are to turn *distinctions* into *precise*, rigid distinctions. And *precision* is but another word for *immediate* 'givenness'. An essence is the *reflective* hope of *immediacy*.

We might perhaps say that the essence of a thing is the totality of what *distinguishes* it from other things. Perhaps to grasp the supposed essence is the same as to know the thing's limits. Perhaps, though then we have changed the traditional sense of the word "essence". In particular, no such final essences obtain since every *distinction* allows further *distinctions* and, moreover, what distinguishes a thing from others depends on what others are taken into account. And the field of references is inexhaustible. **38.**

If one had managed to display at least one convincing essence, one might, perhaps, also manage to arrive at some acceptable concept of a concept. No such thing seems to be available but, fortunately, cognitive scientists took over the quarrels. Since terminating the *distinctions* at *some* limit is unavoidable, somebody will always think worthwhile to ask what the essence of, say, a chair, might be. Typically it has four legs, but it may have only one, or none but rockers instead. One may try to define it functionally, as "something to sit on", but then anything one can sit on becomes a chair, for instance a table. One need not deny sincere ingenuity of many attempts to specify the most purposeful ways of defining things. But one should not confuse the normative, whether forensic or only administrative, character of such endeavours with any ontological foundation, not to mention existential relevance.

"The time has arrived to give up the myths of induction and *Wesenschau*, which are carried over, as some point of honour, from generation to generation. For it is clear that even Husserl himself never gained *Wesenschau* so that he would not have to re-consider and re-work it again, not to disqualify it but to force it to express something that it originally did not express at all [...]"[34] The fact that nobody ever managed to demonstrate unchangeable essence of anything, reflects the secondary character of *concepts* as compared to the *original signs* and, above all, the merely auxiliary character of positive, 'essential' determinations. It reflects also the accidental character of most *totalities* – no *complex* is more fundamental than others and there is no necessity for a *complex* to be so rather than otherwise – primordially, it is but a *cut* from *experience*. The boundaries between things are, more often than not, *vague* enough to defy *precise* definition but also *clear* enough to

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[34] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*. Inquiry and intuition;p.122

admit understanding.

39.   But have we not gone a bit too far? Does not the *concept* of a group, in its strict
mathematical sense, have a well defined essence? It is a well defined *concept* with an
unambiguous definition. What does it show? That if we start with *concepts*, some primitive
and precisely given ones (here, of a binary operation, associativity, inverse, etc.), we can
arrive at new ones. This shows, at most, the potential of *reflective* creativity in *concept*
formation and the *precision* of its results, provided *precision* of the starting *concepts*. This
extends far beyond mathematics. Have you never met an intellectual who is not able
to relate to the world otherwise than through the exact concepts and definitions he has
acquired? His insistence on *precision* is understandable, but also a bit obsessive. His
knowledge may be impressive but still this omniscience is as pitiable as his conceptual
omnipotence.

The power of conceptualisation, like of *reflection* in general, concerns only the *actuality*
of *signs*. Its domain comprises only *precisely* defined *complexes* – things reduced to their
intelligible 'essences'. But although most things and concepts are *vague* enough to make
the inquiry into their more *precise* definitions possible, it does not mean that they actually
hide any 'essence' behind their appearances. The concept of a group does not have any
essence – it only has a precise definition. "Since I have never been able to understand what
the 'essence' of a concept is, I must be excused from discussing this point any longer."[35]
Note, however, that dismissal of essences does nothing to the *concepts* themselves. We
can still give partial, more or less adequate, descriptions of *experienced* things, classes of
things, kinds of things. The *cuts* in the *experience* are there as they have been all the time,
and so are their *conceptual signs* with their power to bring such *cuts* into the *horizon of
actuality* and control.

40.   **Universals**
        We were trying to point out the analogies, rather than the differences, between *moods*
and *concepts*: they have the same temporal scope; addressing *complexes*, they move in
the tension between the unity of a *sign* and the multiplicity of the aspects and properties
of the *complex*; we have emphasized the communicability of *moods*, if not an irresolvable
association so at least complementarity of *concepts* and *moods*, and the fact that not
only *impressions*, but also *concepts* come in various degrees of *precision*. Eventually, the
difference between the two concerns the tendency and degree: *concepts dissociate* striving
for mathematical *precision*, while *moods* keep the *complexes* in a *vague* – but *clear* – unity.

This, however, is hardly the whole difference! Isn't it so that concepts are (composed
of) universals "and by the universal we mean that which is predicable of the individuals,"[36]
that which "is common, since that is called universal which is such as to belong to more
than one thing."[37] Moreover, it is that which can be *known* about particular, it is "implicit
in the clearly known particular."[38] *Impressions*, on the other hand, are particular and
unique, and certainly not known with the *precision* with which universals constituting
concepts can be known.

This isn't exactly so. An *impression*, say, of fear, is not the same as a particular
fearful experience. It appears in many *experiences*. One might claim that what reappears
in various such experiences is a universal 'fear', while an *impression* of fear is only its

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[35] A. Tarski, *The semantical conception of truth*. II:18
[36] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. III:4
[37] Ibid. VII:13
[38] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*. I:1

particular, always unique and individual, experience. This is then probably only a matter of language. One should not confuse an *impression* with its *actual experience*, just like one should not confuse a *concept* with a particular instance of its application.

The worrying element of such reappearing universals is their sameness. Does one experience the same 'fear' in various situations and if so, what makes it the same? With *concepts* the situation seems easier. We have only one *concept* of a group, uniquely and well defined. But here one might also worry, as Wittgenstein did, about the legitimacy of claiming that in all particular situations we know that we are applying the same concept. How do we know that? Before addressing this issue, let us first describe the context in which it appears as a problem. The answer will arise from the following discussion of the universals.

The problem arises for *reflective dissociation* in which world appears as a *totality* of separate particulars: atomic, substantial entities, each existing on its own. In this context any connection between the *dissociated* entities is at best secondary and at worst unreal. These two positions with respect to universals – considering them either as secondary abstractions from particulars or as nominal unrealities – seem the only possible, once we assume the ontology of particular substances. In either case, one can agree that "it is impossible to abstract universals from the singular without previous knowledge of the singular."[39]

41.

! Concepts are abstract and universal. Universal, that is, they may have many particular instances, be encountered in different experiences.

? Recalling §9, I wouldn't be so comfortable with the status of particulars but let go. Is 'Prague' a universal? When I go around, I see this building and that corner, from the Old Town Square I do not see *Vyšehrad* and from below of *Vyšehrad* I do not see *Hradčany*.

! Yes, but still it is a particular thing, only "too big" to be seen all at once.

? It is too big and at each of these places I see a part of 'Prague', I have a different perspective, a different *actual experience* of Prague, something which, with enough of bad will, can be called "a particular instance" of 'Prague'.

! No, you see different parts of a big city, you do not see *the same* universal exemplified in various particular places.

? OK, what I see of the 'horse' in this horse is exactly the same as what I see of it in another horse. But what I see of 'this chair' now is *the same* as what I saw of it yesterday. And do not tell me that it does not count because 'this chair' is a particular.

! It counts because you may have several distinct exemplifications of the same universal *simultaneously* and, furthermore, you may *always encounter more*. With this chair you cannot do the former – nor the latter if I burn it.

? What about 'all my grannie's chairs'? It looks more like a universal than like a particular. But they all are here – she has never had more than these four. And, besides, she is dead, so you will never get new ones. If it is "my grannie" who annoys you here, then what about the dinosaurs? We have rather run out of the possible new instances.

! Forget new instances; a universal is universal even if no instances exist.

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[39] J. Duns Scotus, *De Anima*. 22:3

? Have you turned extreme realist in this matter? But tell me first what they are.

! Take "abstract" – a universal is not an independent being, it is always only an aspect abstracted from particulars.

? You have just said that it need no particular instances. . . So, after all, the 'chair' (or the 'dinosaur') is not universal?

! It is, but it is what is common to many chairs, what can be predicated equally of many particulars.

? By "common" you mean, probably, something like a stereotype, a paradigmatic instance, or just the essence – but we know that these won't quite do. But who are these particulars? And isn't 'Prague' the same at this particular *Vyšehrad* and at this particular *Hradčany*?

! It is, but 'Prague' is not *predicated* about them.

? Really? One does predicate "praski" about this particular *Hrad*. But even if one didn't. So it would be just a matter of how we use the language? If I say "This city is exactly like Prague while that one is not." will it do?

! No. First you use "Prague" as a name of a particular city; then you use it as a . . .

? Predicate? A concept? Then, does it mean that I can pick any particular (reference) and turn it into a (predicable) concept? And what is the difference, except for the purely grammatical one, between "Prague" used in the first and in the second way?

! Predicating 'Prague' of another city, you are really predicating some universal which is implicit in Prague and which you also find in this other city.

? Perhaps, but then one should tell me what universal it is. As far as my experience is concerned, Prague has a very specific character and atmosphere, indistinguishable from its uniqueness, which can hardly be characterised better than "Prague-like" and which can be in various forms or degrees found at other places.

etc., etc., . . .

42.   Certainly, universsls can be abstracted from *reflectively dissociated* particulars. *Reflective* thinking happens already within the assumed ontology of *dissociated* and *externalised objects*, and equally *dissociated* points, 'substantive parts' of time. But when *reflection* encounters something completely new and unexpected, when it 'adds' a new and some old instances, performing the abstraction of, say, 'Prague' or the common nature 'cup', these have already been *distinguished* as unities *before* and *above* this *reflective act*. The *reflectively* new and unexpected has emerged from some *trace* in the process which is performed in *experience* (in one's body, perceptual mechanism, brain, or wherever one wants to look for it) and of which *reflection* only finds the final results.

What do we encounter the first time we see a cup? 'This cup', 'a cup' or 'cup'? Probably all, for there is as yet no reason to draw any such distinctions. Having all means that we have none, neither particular nor universal, just cup or, better, a special 'this'. Encountering the same cup for the second time, it is not added to the earlier 'cup' – it is subtracted from it (and, sure, it is also subtracted from all the *rest*, but it emerges through the *trace* whose last point is this earlier cup.) In this subtraction, the universal 'cup' and the two particular instances, 'this cup' and 'that cup', become *dissociated* from their prior *nexus*, the first cup. Every new cup is not added to earlier *experience* but is *distinguished* from it. And it is *distinguished* from the same *trace* on which the first cup

has so far marked the final point.[40] Eventually, everything emerges from the *one* and the same *indistinct*, everything is one before it becomes two. A *reflective* note taken of a new cup and its association with an earlier one is only a conscious or subconscious *reflection* of the process which has already *dissociated* the two from the same *trace*. Of course, once such *dissociations* have been established and sedimented, new instances of 'cup' can be encountered, that is, universals can start appearing as common features. But it is the *unity* of *experience* which *founds* the continuity in the *experiences* of the particulars as well as the connections between various instances of universals, in short, the very possibility of *reflective* association and abstraction.

The *dissociation* of the first cup into a universal 'cup' and 'this cup' illustrates the general pattern. Encountering a new 'this' may be *an actual experience*. And it may pass without any further consequences, leaving 'this' as a mere particular encountered only once. But, often, 'this' will acquire a status of a *nexus* when, for instance as in the cup example, new aspects arise from it. In the same manner, Prague can be an abstract entity, merely the capital of Czech Republic, and remain so for one's whole life. But it can also become a *nexus* of unity, from which, on a visit, one *dissociates praski Hrad* and *Vyšehrad* and other places and *impressions*. One can experience the same irritation on different occasions, one can *recognise* the feeling one is having now as the same one had before. This looks indeed like a kind of 'private language'. The worrying phrase is, again, "the same". But it is worrying only if one views this moment of irritation as completely *dissociated* from any earlier such moment. We are, however, not talking about any essences reappearing as new particulars nor any universals appearing in new instantiations at *dissociated* points of time. We are talking about *cuts* from the continuity of *experience*, eventually, from the *indistinct one*. The 'words' of the 'private language' are only *vague nexuses*, appearing for the first time and, hence, not yet *dissociated* into *precisely* identifiable items. A new instance of irritation does not appear *ex nihilo* to get re-cognised and connected to some old and merely remembered instance. (It can seem so when viewed in the *dissociated* terms of *attentive reflection*.) It enters the *horizon of actuality* through the levels of gradual *actualisation*: from the *indistinct*, through *chaos* to *experience* and, then, through some *nexus* to this *actual experience*. The *nexuses* on this *trace* constitute its 'relatedness' to the whole field of other *experiences*. Various *actual experiences* emerge as instances of the same because they arise from the same *nexus* and pass through the same *traces* on their way toward *actualisation*. Identity behind distinct instances of irritation, just as of 'cup', 'Prague' and, eventually, of the very sense of experiencing, is constituted *before* they get *actually* instantiated in particular moments. This is all we can answer to the question "*How* can one be certain that it is the same irritation as before?" The two emerge from the same prior *nexus* and are indistinguishable in their *actual* appearances. The only difference concerns distinct *actualisations* at distinct moments or places.

This indistinguishability might be accused of being merely pragmatic, for all merely practical purposes, while, 'in themselves', distinct occurences might be really occurences of distinct things. But such an accusation assumes that each occurence is something 'in itself', is a *dissociated* element whose connection to other such elements needs an argument. In short, it starts from the ontology or epistemology of *dissociated* particulars. In our onto-epistemlogy of gradual differentiation, identities are only sedimented limits of *distinc-* 43.

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[40]If one asked whether the fifth cup is *distinguished* from the first cup, from the fourth one or, perhaps, from the already established universal 'cup', we would have to say: from all. Neither the process nor its *traces* are linear. Even more: the universal 'cupness' is influenced by the experiences of new cups which, being *distinguished* from it, can also modify it. We will elaborate this issue in 2.3.

tions and things which, for all practical purposes, are indistinguishable, remain the same. On the way to the *actual* appearance, there is a hierarchy of stages, gradual narrowing of *distinctions* from the *indistinct*. Universals mark (some of) the *distinctions* drawn *above* the *actual experiences*.

Universals are the non-actual things of experience, the cuts through the experience exceeding the horizon of actuality.

As particulars are determined by being graspable fully within the *horizon of actuality*, universals are non-particulars. "If they are universal, they will not be substances; for everything that is common indicates not a 'this' but a 'such', but substance is a 'this'."[41] Insisting on the exclusive, or at least primary, reality of the particulars, universals appear ontologically suspect. But the relations between *actuality* and *non-actuality* are much more intimate than between particular substances and universals. The difference, even the difference in nature between them notwithstanding, there is no sharp, ontological border separating the *actual* and *non-actual* contents. Both are *distinctions* and hence *are*. *Actuality* is the terminus of the *distinctions* originating beyond its horizon, in *non-actuality*. *Non-actual cuts* are possible stations of differentiation which allow further *distinctions* providing, as one says, 'particular instances'. The primary difference, *the* difference which counts, is that between the possibility of an *experienced* completeness, of being given within the *horizon of actuality* versus the *experience* of the factual (or even essential) *non-actuality*. With respect to the *horizon of actuality*, the whole Prague, Europe, fear, irritation, my life are as much outside of it as the traditional universals. All that can appear within this *horizon* are their *actual signs*, *dissociated* 'particular instances'.

44.   As we have described in 1.1.2, the status of particular substances is not so obvious as common-sense would like to believe. The problem of universals is not very different. It originates from the assumption that there are some definite particulars, some basic substances – independent, simple and indecomposable – and, moreover, that such particulars are the only genuine objects of experience; in short, from the reduction of *experience* to the *totality* of *dissociated actualities*. This reduction is inseparable from a less plausible one, namely, that of *experience* into some isolated points, 'nows', succeeding each other. Consequently, the problem of the unity of a universal in its *dissociated actual* instances, is virtually the same as that of the unity of a particular (substance) across *dissociated actualities* of time. The question: what makes different occurrences of 'blue' or 'chair' instances *of the same* universal 'blue' or essence 'chair', is not really different from the question: what accounts for the fact that the chair I am seeing now is *the same as* the one I left here yesterday (or what is one in the experiences of Prague.) *Actual experiences* and particulars captured within the *horizon of actuality* are interwoven into the continuous texture of *experience*, are only its *actual reflections*. Encountering 'a new instance of a universal' may be a new *actual experience*. But this is not 'added' to the rest of *experience* as a new item to a collection. It is rather subtracted, for it has emerged as *an actual experience from experience*. The 'sameness' of two such *actual* instances is a consequence of their emergence from the same *nexus*. Only when *dissociated* while, at the same time, *experienced* as the same, they seem to call for an explication of what connects them. This *reflectively* perplexing 'being *experienced* as the same' is what marks their emergence from the same *nexus*, their origin in a *unity* which is not yet *dissociated*, and hence remains *reflectively* inaccessible.[42]

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[41] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. III:6

[42] Recall from I:§137 that *nexus* is a term of experiential origin, not of objective explanation. It is

Once we have drawn a limit around Prague, it has become one entity and we can have thousands experiences of Prague, all exemplifying this particular city, in the same way as one chair exemplifies 'chair' or, perhaps, another chair. Certainly, the one is the *sign*, the word "Prague", "chair". But these are not mere empty words. They refer back to the *cuts from experience* which, stretching beyond the narrow scope of any particular *here-and-now*, terminate at some limit beyond the *horizon of actuality*. The 'oneness' may have no accurate verbal definition, nobody can tell *precisely* where Prague begins and where it ends, what *precisely* fear or irritation *really* is. Just like nobody can tell *precisely* what makes a wave or a chair. Although we can *recognise* particular instances of all such concepts in *actual experiences*, we have no ultimately *precise* grasp of their universality. Simply because in so far as they are *non-actual*, they *transcend* the *horizon of immediacy* which is the only place of *precise* determinations.

Universals, and *non-actual cuts* in general, witness thus to the *unity* of *experiences*. Perhaps even more significant in the present context is that they *found* the very *experiences* of particulars. Trying to get rid of the former, one ends up dissolving also the latter, because both not only mutually condition each other but also emerge at different levels of the same process: as the sedimented limits of *distinctions*. Particulars are but the *actual* limits of *distinctions* which *cut experience* far *above* the *horizon of actuality*. Hence *an actual experience* of a particular always involves some *non-actual*, or universal, layers.

The view considering *actual* particulars as the primordial substances is conditioned by the 45. prior *reflective dissociation*. Abstracting activity of *concept* construction starts naturally from those basic entities which are most *precisely* grasped by the singular *acts* of *reflection*. The conflict between nominalism (denying any reality to universals) and conceptualism (viewing them as conceptual abstractions) is played on the ground of this ontology of particulars. It concerns only the question whether particulars contain any reality beyond their particularity or 'substantiality'. As such, both these views are opposed to the earlier realism which was willing to assign to the universals independent reality. Our universals come closely to this last view allowing them to exist before and independently from any particular instances. Since to be is to be *distinguished*, universals are somethings. They are *cuts* through *experience* which are not limited to any particular *actuality* but stretch always beyond its *horizon*. Furthermore, every *cut* is unique: what it *cuts* out is not *cut* out by any other *cut*. A *cut* is just that which it *cuts*. And thus, every universal is unique. But granting that, we should remember not to *dissociate* different levels of *experience*. Once the *horizon of actuality* is established, no *non-actuality* exists without and independently from it. This leaves some space for conceptualism, acknowledging the reality of particulars and the possibility of forming new universal characteristics by abstraction. But abstraction accounts neither for their character nor for their ontological status. Nominalism must rest satisfied with the fact that universals, just like all *distinctions*, do not exist 'in themselves' but are relative to the *distinguishing existence*.

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impossible to specify objectively what, possibly, might be a *nexus* and what not. It is not even possible to specify objectively in every case what *aspects* are invovled in a given *nexus*. Both *nexuses* and their *aspects* are relative to the course of individual *experience*. It is not this 'objective cup' which is a *nexus*, it is only its first experience. Although in many cases some consensus can be reached, individual background can always lead to idiosyncratic, but often also creative associations which reveal anchoring of given particulars in *nexuses* which are not common to all. Trivial examples are all situations in which several persons try to agree on *precise* boundaries of *vague* notions. There is seldom a final and detailed agreement on what *precisely* might count as annoying, just, respectable, even if we *share* a *vague* and *clear* understanding of *nexuses* corresponding to such notions.

1.2.3. Ego, body, action, control

46. The kind of *complexes* one is able to relate to, their character and degree of complexity is relative to one's skills to differentiate and connect various aspect of one *totality*. Unlike bare *objects*, *complexes* are not relative to one's mere presence, but to one's shrewdness, intelligence, skills; also to one's capacity of compassion and sympathy, of relating to and understanding other's way of thinking and acting.

     What is a *complex* for one person need not be so for another. Having more or less the same organs of perception and similar capacities for discrimination, we typically agree on the status of single things and *objects*. But many of these things may not even exist in the world of a bat, whose perception mechanisms will doom irrelevant, i.e., leave unrecognised, many things we distinguish. On the other hand, a dog's smell will differentiate things and situations which, for us, remain indistinct. Different humans have, similarly, different abilities of forming and connecting *complexes* which differences are only to some extent smoothened by functioning in a linguistic community where words establish much of the inter-subjective agreement on a host of *distinctions*. This applies for skills at all levels. For a professor of algebra, rings are quite different things from groups. A student may, to begin with, have problems with grasping the differences. An illiterate may not even understand that one is talking about anything meaningful. In short, the complexity of the world one lives and acts in, the complexity of the *complexes* one relates to is the reflection of the *complex* of one's features, skills and abilities which we call "*ego*".

47. *Ego* is the aspect of a person which can be reduced to *actual* expressions and described in *actual* terms. It reminds of Jung's 'persona' as opposed to 'person', in so far as 'persona' is a *totality* of *externalised* properties, one's 'face' as it appears in external comparisons with others. The inquisitive attitude of the guy from the pub who became 'the detective' belongs to his *ego*. (The *trace* may, of course, go deeper.) *Ego* is the first object encountered by the simple, teenager's form of self-reflection. It does not address being or, if it does, it does so only indirectly. It is primarily occupied with the facts *that I am so-and-so*. "I have too round face", "I have too thin hair", "I won't wear this – what would others think?" Such worries pass quickly into slightly more fundamental ones, marking the crisis of adolescence, which, nevertheless, still carry the *egotic* character: "I am not as good as he is", "I am insensitive", "I am stupid".

     Such characteristics and self-characteristics, genuine and honest as they may happen to be, consist of objectified attributes which get attached to their noumenal subject as some *external* properties. *Ego*, we could say, is oneself viewed from 'outside', with other's eyes. But even when others are not invoked, *ego* is still 'outside' oneself: every predicate involves, at least implicitly, a comparison. My insensitivity emerges only in comparison with sensitivity of others. This relativity marks *externality* of *ego's* qualities. Even if they intend some deeper aspects of *onself*, remaining relative and *actually* identifiable elements of the *ego complex*, they never reach to the 'innermost being' of one's person.

     The *not-actuality* of a *complex* is of the same kind as the *not-actuality* of *ego*. It is not *essential non-actuality* but only *not-actuality* of something which might be *actual* at some other time. If I appear pleasing and compasionate at the moment, it is only an accident. My *ego* is insensitive and we only have to wait for a proper occasion to *actually* see this. *Ego* is a person filtered through the *actualising* sieve of *reflection*. "The ego never appears except on the occasion of a reflective act."[43] And it appears always 'as' –

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[43] J.-P. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*. p.53; Sartre has "I" and not "ego" here.

confused, smart, late, amiable...*Ego* signifies a *complex* of properties, features, abilities each of which, taken separately, may be perfectly *actual*. "The ego is the unity of states and actions – optionally, of qualities."[44] It constitutes the subjective pole of *actual experiences* of *complexes*.

Besides skills and qualities, the fundamental *aspect* of *ego* is body. The *original signs* of *actuality* are often relative to the body. "It is nice" does not refer the feeling to a particular organ (even if it emerges there) but to the whole body which "feels nice". On the other hand, it is not relative to the *I*. Even if one might say "I feel nice", it is only a feeling one *has*, not something one *is*. In the same way, everbody *has* his *ego* and not *is* his *ego*. 48.

Body, although most intimately *mine*, appears for *reflection* foreign, as *external* as all the contents of the *ego* – *mine*, yet impersonal. Intense preoccupation with body marks often *egotic* personality or culture. Such a preoccupation, looking in the body for a most incontrovertible and *visible sign* of oneself, is never satisfied because body retains this impersonal character. One *has* body, not *is* it.

More generally, all the *original signs* of *actuality*, remaining at the level of *external ego*, carry such an impersonal element. 'The detective', although clearly a personal element, does not touch the 'innermost being' of the person. It remains somehow *external* feature. *Moods* and *impressions* can be, most abstractly, referred to an impersonal feeling of vitality, of life. Their variety reflects modifications of this feeling. It is not so much *my* life, as life in general, even if it is actually my experience. The *mood* of vigor and vital strength is the feeling of 'my *life*' rather than of '*my* life'. Vital feelings signal flow or ebb, increase or decrease of life energy. This life energy only, so to speak, accidentally happens to be seated and felt in one's body.

Body marks the *horizon of actuality*. It anchors one in the *actuality* and, circumscribing its *horizon*, determines also the horizon of one's *action*. These two horizons can be taken as the same. *Action* is the event of *actuality*. It is not merely an *act*, an *immediate* reflex or other minute movement – of body or mind – consummated in a single moment. *Action* unfolds in the entirety of the *horizon of actuality*, it addresses several *actual* elements. From the point of view of *attentive reflection* one might say that *action* consists of a series of *acts* but we would rather say the opposite: an *act* is an *aspect* of an *action* (unless it is an entirely spontaneous, that is mad, outburst unrelated to anything in its vicinity). 49.

A single *object* is a correlate of an *act* and so is a *sign* of a *complex*. However, a *complex* itself isn't merely a correlate of a single *act*. It is correlate of an *action*, one can manipulate it, act upon it for a specific purpose, one can think and reason about it, assemble or disassemble it, in short, bring it under one's control. *Objects* are under one's control only to the degree to which they are parts of *complexes*. *Object* itself, as a purely *immediate* given of consciousness, and considered only as such, appears in a somehow impulsive fashion, §14, §17. It emerges for no apparent reason, *ex nihilo*, and offers consciousness only the *immediate* alternative: yes-no, take-avoid, accept-reject. Although object serves as a paradigm of the controllable, taken in itself, it is not. It becomes so only in the broader context of *visibility* when, as a *complex*, it is underlied some *action*.

The active element of *actuality* has two aspects which are related to its *original* and *reflective sign* and mark their, perhaps most significant, difference. Just like sensations, limited to the *immediacy*, involve the responsive attitude choosing between the bare alternative of pleasant-unpleasant, yes-no, so do *impressions* and *moods* involve immediately a 50.

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[44]Ibid. p.61

response. Their unifying role is not only that they present us with a totality rather than its parts, but that this presentation involves at the same time a reaction. *Impressions* are not indifferent but mark always some spontaneous valuation. Fear, irritation, satisfaction disclose some value perceived in the *actual* situation. And they disclose this value even if its carrier remains undisclosed. Fear can be felt before its object is *recognised*, the source of satisfaction or irritation may remain unknown even when the *impressions* are felt clearly and intensely. Often, the reaction precedes the apprehension of its reason, the value is announced before the evaluated *complex* is recognised. To the extent the *complexes* are also given, the unifying *signs* of *moods* and *impressions* disclose them through the value they represent. "When I use the word 'feeling' in contrast to 'thinking', I refer to a judgment of value – for instance, agreeable or disagreeable, good or bad, and so on."[45]

Concepts, unlike *impressions*, lack this reactive aspect. Emphasizing the complexity of the *complexes*, they increase their *dissociation*, their isolation and, consequently, indifference. At the same time, however, the resulting *externalisation* of distinct aspects offers the possibility of manipulation and control. *Concepts* involve more *precise* differentiation of components and their relations than do the *impressions*. Unambiguous *precision* – the mark of instantaneous *immediacy* – *dissociating* the *object*, *founds* the possibility of its control, I:§50. The crudest form of control, brutal physical force, conforms to this claim in that it can only be exercised on the *actual objects* in the immediate reach.

But control of an *immediate object* is very limited. A cup is in my complete power but only in that I can simply grasp or smash it. Likewise, lower emotional phenomena like sensual lust or even pain, can be controlled by the will, that is, by *reflection*, to quite a high degree. Often a mere change of the focus of attention can eliminate them. But if I want to change the painting on the cup or equip it with an additional handle, its mere presence and my primitive power will not suffice. It requires analysis of the involved *complex*, its *dissociaion* into constituent elements and manipulation of their arrangements. More advanced control is made possible by the *dissociating* and manipulating potential of reason. This *dissociation* is exactly the aspect which *moods* and *impressions* lack. Thus, control provides finally the dimension along which they can be placed at the opposite end to *thoughts* and *concepts*. Eventually, also control of reason over emotions, the attempts to distance oneself from the influence of emotions, amount to approaching a *complex* through its complexity rather than unity, to dissolve the overpowering unity of an emotion in the interplay of its *dissociated* elements.

1.2.4. Transcendence

51.   A *complex*, emerging within the *horizon of actuality*, appears as a particular *object* and as such is *external*. But its *transcendence* is not exhausted by the simple *externality*. A *complex* is not merely a unity of an *object* but also *totality* of its properties and relations which, although not given *actually*, can be made *actual*. An object can suddenly reveal a new side which, as long as one merely focused on its mere being there or on its *actually* given aspect, remained hidden. One is *aware* of the difference between the *actual sign* and its correlate; they do not coincide. Perceiving a house as a *complex*, one sees its front but also knows that it has a back-side. One knows it, that is, it is a part of the experienced totality. Yet, these two aspects are not present in the same way, and one is *aware* of this difference: one knows that there is *more* to the house than what one is *actually* seeing of

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[45]C. G. Jung and M.-L. von Franz, eds., *Man and His Symbols*. I;p.49

it. In the same way, even if one sees the whole room at once, one knows that one does not see all its details equally well. Some are sharper, some dimmer, some are closer, some further away. And the same again with a definition: one grasps the defined concept in its intuitive totality, but one knows that one does not *actualise* all the details, that its complexity exceeds the *horizon of actuality*, that it has a potential which can be used or explained only through a lengthy labour. The *transcendence* of a *complex* involves something *more* than what is *actually* given and which is merely indicated by the *actual sign*. This *more* is not anything qualitatively different. The back-side of the house is as *actual* as its front-side. It only is not given *actually*. *More* of a *complex* involves *objects* and *complexes* of other, possible or past, *actual experiences*.

The more of a complex consists of other complexes.

The difference between the *complex* and its *more* concerns only the way of appearance – the former is *here-and-now* while the latter is not, but could be. The *more* is not essential *non-actuality* but only something which happens not to be *actual* now – it is *not-actual*. This quantitative *more* constitutes the *horizontal aspect* of the *transcendence* of *complexes*. It may be *more* of the same *complex* which is not *actual* at the moment, or it may be *more complexes* to which the *actual* one refers along some among the infinity of possible relations: as its cause or effect, as its predecessor or successor, as its part or its whole, as its motivation or purpose. No matter how far one follows this dimension of *transcendence*, one never encounters anything but *more complexes* or *more* complex *complexes*. Eventually, one may reach the first or the second antinomy of pure reason, where thinking in terms of *complexes* and their relations must stop: there is nothing *more* left and to the extent we assume that there is, it can no longer serve us since its breadth and complexity make it inaccessible to the *actuality of reflection*, the finitude of reason. In this way, but also *only* in this way, the *more* of a *complex* tends towards its inexhaustibility, appears as the potentiality of an *external object* to disclose ever new and possibly unlimited number of aspects, sides, relations. This potential inexhaustibility is the ideal limit of *more*.

The difference between the *actual sign* and the signified *complex*, the difference experienced now between the *actuality* and *not-actuality*, marks also the experience of time. The *more* of a *complex*, the surplus hiding behind its given surface, is hiding in its temporality. All *complexes* are temporal in the sense that they, emerging as *actual objects*, are nevertheless not *fully* present, hide something *more* beyond the *horizon of* the *actually* given. This *more* is an intended element of the *complex* but it resides in the past or future *actuality* of its possible presentation. *Complexes* are temporally 'stretched' and it is not merely one of their features but an indispensable *aspect* of their appearance as *complexes*. 52.

The *horizontal transcendence* of a *complex* is thus not mere *externality* but *more* of *not-actual* aspects. This *more* involves also temporality stretching beyond *here-and-now*.

Actuality constitutes the *vertical aspect* of the *transcendence* with respect to the level of *immediacy*. *Complexes* give the single *objects* the context in which the arbitrariness of the mere *that it is* may find the first form of meaning: a purpose, a reason, a relation to other *objects*. Now, the *complexes*, the objectified relations of the level of *actuality*, reveal an analogous 'meaninglessness' indicating the *vertical dimension* of *transcendence*. 53.

A popular way of expressing dissatisfaction with the *representational* form of *reflective* thinking, with the mere *externality* of *dissociated objects* is to refer everything to some context. There are innumerable variants which it would be impossible to review here. On the one hand, it appeals by introducing, although often only by implicature, the *sub-*

ject, since context is hardly something which can be determined in purely *objective* terms. Contextualisation carries an element of holism which, in turn, involves (although, again, often only implicitly), the unity of the subject. On the other hand, since it is actually impossible to determine what context might possibly mean and what might possibly constitute a legitimate context for anything, one tends to extend it as far as . . . everything. All pointers to coherence, totality, 'the whole', are ways of contextualisation, along with the more mundane attempts to put everything in the historical context, the social context, the inferential context, the context of usage, etc. Admirable as many of such attempts may be, they suffer from the inaccessibility of the eventual *more*. Context tries to function as a surrogate for the negative aspect of every *recognition* and contextualisation, starting with the *reflectively dissociated* atoms, meets almost immediately the combinatorial barriers, §12. If we have n atoms and, in principle, any combination thereof might be a context, we get 2^n contexts. Take half of them, one-tenth – as n increases, the number of contexts becomes very quickly unmanageable. Although context indeed points toward something endowing the *object* with a purpose, if not with meaning, it is hard to imagine how taking such (an unmanageable number of) contexts into account is supposed to help understanding a given atom x. The only manageable, if not also the only important, question concerns which context to choose (which is nothing else but the question about drawing the limits of x.)

54.   The *more objective* contexts to investigate, the more the actual object dissolves in them and the less understandable it becomes. The *more* information available, the more difficult to find any relevant, not to mention valuable, information. The *more* ambitious professor of the more *imprecise* subject (psychology, sociology, literature), the *more* attempts at mathematical *precision* in his research. The more persons with higher education, the more stupid and less knowledgeable each one of them. This general law – 'the smarter, the more stupid' or 'the *more*, the less' – underlies the life and expansion of *objectivistic* insatiability. "Look only at all the festivities of the intellect: these conceptions! These discoveries! Perspectives! Subtleties! Publications! Congresses! Discussions! Institutes! Universities! And still: stupefying." As an example: "Precision, richness, depth of the language in all expositions, not only the primary, but also secondary ones, or even those on the edge of mere journalism (like literary criticism) are worthy highest appreciation. But the overflow of richness exhausts the attention, and so the increased precision is accompanied by the increased distraction. The result: instead of increased communication, increased misunderstanding. [...] In the field of all discussions penetrating western *episteme*, you will never hear a single voice which would start with 'I do not know exactly. . . am not familiar with. . . did not read through. . . who could remember all that. . . there is no time to read. . . I know something, but not quite. . . ' Yet, exactly from that one ought to start! But who would dare?"[46] Instead, proving trifles, we let them parade as the genuine truths until, eventually, they start to seem the same. And then more seriousness can only breed more ridicule, more smartness only more stupidity, more achievements only more despair and more truthfulness only more falsehood. The smarter, the more stupid; the *more*, the less.

55.   *More* never sums up to any *unity* and, chasting its ideal limit of inexhaustibility, keeps expanding into *more* and *more* comprehensive *totality*. But, the *more* comprehensive – the less comprehensible. *Inversion* reveals a lack. The *more* intensely one focuses on the *actual complexities*, the less sense and meaning one finds in them. The more one's understanding approaches the self-secure enlightenment of scientism, the intellectual self-confidence or the safety of a bourgeois sterility, the greater the chance that one may wake up as Gregor Samsa

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[46]W. Gombrowicz, *The Diaries*. 1966:XIX

in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* – in the known, safe surroundings, in the same orderly house, in one's own bed, but transformed into a cockroach scared, or rather merely pacified, by the inexplicable event of a meaningless loss of one's so far obvious and unproblematic identity. At the limit of *more* one encounters oneself, even if often only as one's own caricature.

The subject is encountered at the limit of the world and, perhaps, only there. "The subject does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world."[47] But although never *actually* encountered, it is *present* in the world from the very beginning. The *objectivity* of a *complex* consists in its being given as an *object* in *actual experience* and, moreover, in the fact that its *more* is just more of the *actual, objective* aspects. However, to the extent that a *complex* is not given *immediately* in its full complexity, it bears always a mark of subjectivity. This is no longer the *subjectivity* of an ideal, purely *actual subject*, but a more genuine subjectivity understood as that which brings *not-actuality*, and eventually also *non-actuality*, into *actual experience*. *Not-actual* aspects can be always considered as *objective*, but their intrusion onto the *actual object* signals a unity stretching beyond the *horizon of actuality*. This unity apears, in terms of the *immediate* givens, a highly suspect subjective contribution. The status of *complexes*, carrying the *not-actual more*, as *external* and independent from us is much less evident than in the case of simple *objects* encountered by *reflection that it is*.

This aspect of subjectivity, the presence of the *ego complex*, becomes manifest, for instance, in the questions like: Can I be sure that it is one and the same object? If I leave and come back, how can I know that it is the same? It is a bit hard to know what "to know" means in such questions, but we sense that the lack of *immediate* certainty is taken as the possibility of error, that is, subjectivity. I – my sight, my memory, my understanding, any of my faculties, in short, my *ego* – can be mistaken. Certainly, in some cases, one can be mistaken. However, in most cases, one experiences this identity with such an infallible certainty that, if one were to doubt it, one could not be certain of anything. As Wittgenstein says: the burden lies here on those asking such questions – the burden of explaining what they would consider as knowing. We will not deny the possibility of error. But the fundamental suspicion, the systematic doubt arises exclusively from the assumption that the only certainty can be obtained in the *immediacy* and that everything which *transcends* its *objective* givens threatens with error, that is, subjectivity. For if all that is real are *immediate objects*, then even the relations between them, especially the relations across time, appear subjective.

Ego is the *aspect* of subjectivity within the *horizon of actuality*. But as one asks for *more* and more, as the *totality* of *complexes* extends beyond the limits of one's possibilities and, gradually, begins to dissolve in the flux of *experience*, *ego*'s status becomes more and more dubious. The ideal limit of *more*, *this world* as the *totality* of *complexes*, is also the place where the *ego complex* begins to dissolve in the *experienced chaos*. The obsessive rigidity of a systematic organisation, when carried to the extremes, creates eventually mad pandemonium, whether on personal or social scale. The ever renewed and never accomplished project of control encounters *more* in the most dramatic fashion. When driven beyond its proper limits, when attempted not only with respect to particular *complexes* but also their *totality*, it makes one acutely aware of the uncontrollable *more* which lurks in the

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[47]L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. 5.632 [The statement seems to apply most adequately to *myself*, although Wittgenstein's 'subject' or 'philosophical self' "is not the human being, not the human body, or the human soul, with which psychology deals, but rather the metaphysical subject, the limit of the world – not a part of it." [Ibid. 5.641] *I*, unlike *ego*, is its world by being its limit, the horizon within which life unfolds, as we will describe shortly.]

depth of everything one believes to control. The disappointments of the projects of total appropriation and control throw us back onto ourselves – for the limit of the *horizontal transcendence* is but a shadow of its *vertical aspect*.

The subject, implicitly *present* all the time, is encountered by *reflection* at the limit of objectivity. But the subject encountered thus at the limit of the world is encountered only as its own absence, as the lack of something which should be there but which is not. For it is neither the *immediate subject* of a *reflective act* nor the *egotic complex* of *dissociated* properties. It is something personal, something which never becomes *precisely visible* within the *totality* of *objective* determinations and *subjective qualia*. Insatiability – whether of Hegelian conceptualisations, of positivistic optimism, of sociological eschatologism, of progressive scientism or of those who, bored by the abundance of all past novelties, await impatiently for the next novelty which will finally cure their boredom – all forms of insatiability breed, eventually, dissatisfaction, the feeling of unfulfillment and incompleteness, of broken promise, perhaps nihilism. From these ashes, when the impassable limit of *more and more* has been left, not behind but *below*, there emerges a more genuine, Nietzschean or Kierkegaardian, personal subject.

1.3   Mineness

57.   The confrontation with chaos, with the overwhelming richness of *experience* reveals the limitations of the skills and powers of my *ego* and engenders the *reflection that I am*. It does not negate the *objective experiences* but, so to speak, suspends their, so far, ultimate importance. From their complexity, it husks the subject which does not any longer appear as a mere aspect of the (apprehension of the) *objective* world but as a being raised *above* it. It marks a breach in the continuity of being presenting *myself* in as astonishing a light of *dissociated* independence as the realisation *that it is* does with a simple *object*. *Reflection that it is*, the mere observation 'that...' of *object*'s *immediacy*, *dissociates* it and presents it as being 'on its own'. *Reflection that I am*, in so far as it merely notices 'that...' of my *presence*, does the same with *myself*. In so far as I am considered in the *actuality* of this *act* as its *object*, I appear as isolated from the world, from any origin, I am alone, 'on my own'. By the same token, it seems, I am free, absolutely, unreservedly. I emerge *ex nihilo* with the same ungrounded arbitrariness as an *object* appears for a purely *actual subject* – it is, but might not be, and there is no apparent reason for its being rather than not being, or for its being so rather than otherwise. On my own – as free as arbitrary, as unconstrained as alienated.

58.   *Reflection* over *myself*, *self-reflection*, is an *act* which attempts to *actualise* its intended *object*, and this attempt amounts to *dissociating oneself* from the world. But at the same time, this object immediately slips away and remains a mere noumenal site. *Self-reflection* is *(self-)aware* of this insufficiency. It *recognises* that one is much more than what is made *actual* in any single *here-and-now*. This *recognition* gives *self-reflection concreteness* distinguishing it from a purely formal constatation of simply and merely being here.[48]

In *self-reflection* one *experiences oneself* as transcending the *horizon of actuality*, but merely as some noumenal site of identity. One knows one's identity which extends over time

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[48]Such a constatation would amount to the *reflection that it is* with its *object* being only *accidentaly* oneself. Its course would be a series of *reflections that*: this is and that is, everything in the objective world is, but I am also one of the entities in this world, hence I, too, am. It finds in oneself exactly as much as in any other *object* – the mere being. We might call it an "abstract self-reflection".

– not because one has managed to *re-construct* and comprehend it but simply because one knows it. *Experience* of this identity precedes any particular *act* of *reflection* and extends beyond it. It is *experienced* in the course of one's whole life and does not depend on one's reflecting over it or not. One knows it long before one *reflectively* thinks about it. If *experience transcends* the *horizon of actuality*, then so does the experiencing being. In this form of *reflection*, one *represents* oneself as a being whose unity is not, like *ego's*, a mere *totality* of *actual* contents, but extends over time. Yet, this unity is for *reflection only experienced*. It is not grasped as a comprehensible, *reflective concept*. *Self-reflection posits* this noumenal identity as its primary object, but its relations to the *ego* and its *actual* contents remains obscure. It appears under the *actual signs* which are inherently inadequate and incomplete, mere indications, allusions.

These indications and allusions carry all the *concreteness* of *self-reflection*. However, 59. retaining the *reflective* categories of *actuality*, they appear inherently inadequate and insufficient. This inadequacy is particularly strongly felt with respect to *I's* temporal unity. *Reflection that I am recognises* in the immediate *self-awareness* that it encounters *myself*, an enigmatic site of continuous self-sameness. The enigma concerns the sameness of the *actually reflecting subject* and of *myself* who was yesterday, years ago, and whom I am going to be in all my future. As long as one stays with the categories of *actuality* alone, this unity poses an ever perplexing problem. For, being unable to deny the experience of sameness, one reverses the order of *founding* and tries, as Hume and many others did, to derive it from the *visible*, particular contents. One attempts to reduce *oneself* to the *visibility* of the *ego*, but lower categories yield, at most, some *totalities* but never *unities*.

Just like the temporal scope of *subject* (and *object*) is pure *here-and-now*, while of *ego* (and *complexes*) some finite and limited time, the *I* of the *reflection that I am* is finite but unlimited – it has no *experienced* beginning nor end. My birth is something *I* may be told about but not something *I* have experienced; my death is a perpetual not-yet. *I* am stretched, or better, *I* am stretching *myself* between these two limits, both real and yet ideal, since forever inaccessible.

They appear as *actually* given only when projected onto the objective time, as particular points on its line. The *reflective* apprehension of the finitude of my being in its temporal dimension emerges as the result of imposing its ideal end-points onto the infinite line of objective time. The infinity of this line is, of course, not experienced but only thought, and that only in terms of *more*, that is, as potential infinity. But one can equally well perform the opposite operation of mapping the infinite line onto, for instance, finite but *open* interval, or on a finite circle (as in figure I:§117, p.75). The ideal end-points (which do not belong to an open interval, while on the circle become the same pole) become then the image of the infinity – the point in infinity. This point reflects the beginning, and the end, of the supposedly infinite line. We could say that this folding of the objective line onto a finite circle represents 'relativisation' of the objective time to the temporality of *existence*. The *objectivistic* infinity is superimposed on the *experiential* finitude, and the ideal, temporally *dissociated* beginning-end on the intuited *origin*. Temporality, emerging from the *separation* of an *existence*, has an *origin*, but not a beginning nor end. Beginning and end are only objectified images of the *origin*. This time which has *originated* but which has neither beginning nor end, the finite yet unlimited time, is the temporal context of the experience *that I am*.

Although the *I* of the *reflection that I am* appears for this *reflection* as an inaccessible, 60. noumenal limit, its *dissociation* from the world, similar to any *object*'s, is not accompanied

by the similar *externality*. It is accompanied by the *awareness* of the *I* sliping out of
the *actual* grasp or, put differently, of the *concrete* layers underlying the *reflective act*.
Although one can never grasp oneself fully in such an *act*, all the *signs* given in *self-reflection* point to *oneself*, shallower or deeper appearances of *mineness*. *Self-reflection*
may encounter dark and unexpected sides, but they are all intimately *one's own* sides,
they are not in any way alien, *external*. They signify some characteristics of *oneself*,
not of one's *ego*. Unlike the *actual* properties of the *ego*, they are not merely *external*
possessions but most *concrete* – and *vague* – *qualities*. They are *mine* in a much deeper
sense of something which *I* do not merely possess but something *I* am. They reflect some
recurring themes of one's personality and being, the control over which seems entirely
impossible. They are not something one owns but something in which one *participates*.
It is *concreteness* of this underlying unity which is intimated in genuine *self-reflection*,
making it qualitatively different from the merely abstract one.

1.3.1. The signs

The experience *that I am* is *an experience* suspending the unquestioned validity of the
objective world. The *signs* of *mineness* are no longer relative to specific organs nor even
to the whole body. They are no longer sensations nor vital feelings, they are no longer
localised, narrowed to the context of *actuality*. The *original signs* of *mineness* are kind of
feelings which, unlike mere *moods*, do not reflect merely the *actual* situation, but rather
one's personal apprehension of and attitude towards it. They modify its *actual* perception
by immersing it in the *quality* of one's life or, if one prefers, of one's *soul*.

1.3.1.i. Original signs

61.   The *original signs* at this level are what we will call "*qualities of life*", or shortly "*qualities*".
Most vaguely, these are just feelings – however, not ones concerning a particular thing or
situation, but the feelings concerning some *vague unity*: of one's life, of the world, of life.
They are not *signs* of anything particular, of any things or situations as *impressions* were.
They are not specific, situated *moods* but *qualities* of the whole: life, experience, the world.
We notice easily such a *quality* with a child, often even before it starts talking. The whole
future can be seen – not, of course, any details concerning the development, career and the
like, not any specific events of the future but 'the whole future', the *quality* of the person,
the *quality* of his life. This strong impression we often get from children becomes, with
the adults, weakened by the noise of all more specific features, habits and norms but, our
claim goes, it remains the same *quality*.

62.   A feeling of peace can arise in a particular situation relatively only to this, peaceful,
situation. But *qualities* like 'peaceful', even if uncovered by *moods* and *impressions*, are
not reserved for particular situations within the world. The same *qualities* may appear in a
more intimate and deeper fashion as the *qualities of life*. There is a fundamental difference
between a feeling of elation situated in a concrete situation and the joy of life which is
only *actualised* in a particular situation. What distinguishes them is that the latter lack
any *objective* correlates, any *complexes* which might be identified as their proper origin.
Complexes are here only sites where such feelings are *actualised*, not by which they are
caused. A feeling of peace, in the sense of a *quality of life*, as a *sign* of *mineness*, even if
experienced in a particular context, is not limited by it, is not experienced as exclusively a
quality of this moment but, on the contrary, as something which is merely *actualised* in it

and which is a much more solid, even if *vague, quality* of deeper significance. A feeling of joy, as a *quality of life*, is not the vital feeling of elation and vigour which may pass or change into its opposite in the matter of hours or minutes. It is a calm feeling of my life which, through all the variations of vital feelings and *moods*, through all the variations of situated joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, unveils a theme which underlies and surrounds all of them. The *qualities of life* constitute a deeper layer of *moods* and *impressions*. They are *experienced* underneath variations of different situations which, in themselves, give rise to very different *impressions* and *moods*.

Going far away, to an exotic and unfamiliar corner of the world, is naturally accompanied by an excitement and openness to the encounter with something – as the expectations go – completely new. But after some time (perhaps a week, perhaps a year), when the storm of novelties and initial *impressions* has calmed down, there arises a specific *mood* of something familiar in the midst of all this unfamiliarity. One notices that, in spite of all the differences and novelties, one has not traveled that far. Even if the mood of the life 'out there' is very different from that at home, the mood of one's life seems to be only slightly affected by it and, at the bottom, remained the same. Variation of lower *moods* and *impressions* uncovers often deeper *qualities*. The latter are not as *visible* as the former. They are constant themes which remain unthematic but are *experienced* in the background of *actual* situations, as mere modifiers of the particular *moods* and *impressions*. Laughter of a happy man is different from the laughter of a desperate man, even if they both are laughing at the same thing. Being the *qualities* of *life*, they have no particular object but embrace all objects.

Having no particular objects, they may be *clear* and *recognisable*, but are *vague* and hardly 63. definable. This undefinable *vagueness*, this lack of any *objective* correlates gives them a calm character. Even if the *actual* feelings expressing the *quality of life* are restless and confused, the *quality* itself is not so. Because it is *experienced* as given – not in the sense of *actual* givenness of an *object*, but in the sense of givenness of something which is greater than any particular *object* and situation, which is greater than what can be controlled and influenced at the moment. Even if encountered in a particular situation, it is not limited to this situation, it does not aim at any *action* or expression – it is given and not taken, but given not as an *external* datum but as the internal determination. To the extent the *quality* has a negative character, it is experienced with resignation or wish that it be different. If it has a positive character, the same kind of calmness becomes a thankful acceptance. Any possible reactions, whether sudden outbursts, protests or satisfaction, are at most *actual* expressions motivated by such underlying feelings but not their proper *signs*. Calm reaction can express certainty or resignation, laughter can express acceptance or contempt, almost any *actual mood* and reaction can be associated with various deeper feelings and, eventually, *qualities*. And it is only this deeper association, this undefinable *rest*, which, on the one hand, modifies the *actual signs* so that one's laughter is unmistakably distinct from another's and, on the other hand, gives the *actual signs* their more profound meaning reaching beyond the *horizon of* mere *actualities*.

Most abstractly, the *qualities* might be divided into feelings of spiritual[49] gratification, 64. peace, on the one hand, and sadness, mourning, on the other. To most people the *quality of life* makes it worth living, but to some it does not. The immediate, *original sign* of the former is the simple fact that one does continue living, of the latter – suicide. But such oppositions are abstractions. Every person, every life has its unique *quality* and it is only

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[49] The word "soulful" would seem more appropriate here if it did not carry all too emotional connotations.

up to *reflection* to decide how far it wants to abstract or distinguish, what it wants to consider as analogies and what as differences. Every man carries with him the *quality of his life* which can be sensed and experienced (even if not contained in a precise concept) by himself and by others. There are people whose life *is* light or shallow, and whose life *is* sad or tragic. The *quality of life* of Ivan Karamazov, sharply independent, confusedly intellectual is something very different from the peacefully submissive, warmly open *quality of life* of Alosha. Their thirst and search have quite different *qualities*, even if, perhaps, both *thirst* eventually for the same. Every person has, besides recognisable and repeatable features, besides some character traits which can be shared with others, *above* all that which can ever be captured by the *actual* look, something – *je ne sais quoi* – which gives all these features a uniquely personal touch.

Unlike vital feelings, *qualities of life* are not *actual* expressions of the animated life energy nor of life in general, but of *my* life. Life in general may have all kinds of alternative qualities; it may be tragic *or* comic, meaningful *or* wasted, hard *or* easy, intense *or* peaceful. One's life, too, can have different qualities for which we need different words, but to the extent these signify the *quality* of one life, they are joined not by 'or' but by 'and'. One's life can be both tragic *and* comic, and then this conjunction, as well as the particular ways of its manifestations express this particular and unique *quality*. The whole *concreteness* of the *quality* lies in this 'and', in the peculiar way it connects the descriptions which, when applied to the *actual objects* or *impressions*, might appear contrary.

1.3.1.ii. Reflective signs

65. Verbal statements of such *qualities* involve already a *reflective* attitude. Roughly, they are preceded by "I am..." rather than "I feel...". "I feel nice" suggests a situated context in which this feeling arises. We do not say "I am nice" in the same sense. "I feel dissatisfaction" refers, too, implicitly to a dissatisfying situation. "I am dissatisfied" may be said in the same sense, but it may also be said in the broader sense of "My life is dissatisfying". The statements like "Life is..." are usually made in response to particular circumstances, in a specific context of paternalistic advice to a child or an intimate complain to a close friend. But these are only possible conditions for actually *making* such statements. The statements themselves are incomplete and imperfect expressions, the *general thoughts* concerning the *experienced quality* of one's life.

We are not concerned with the *truth* of such statements. They are never true in the strict, objectivistic sense. And yet, they do witness to *experiences* of a different order than the *experiences* of *complexes*, they witness to feelings of different kind than *moods* and *impressions*. One can claim that such statements are merely generalisations from a series of *experiences* and express nothing more than their common features. Yet, if one wants to maintain this empiristic view, one should also explain what the supposed subject of all these predicates is and what constitutes the need for such useless judgments. In fact, the statements are neither meaningless nor useless. Their meaning is grounded in *the experience* of one's life and even if they do not express *precise* content, they can communicate the intended *qualities*, they can be understood by a sympathy which need not *conceptual precision* but only *clear* indications. It is precisely the fact that such verbal expressions are always accompanied by the *awareness* of their insufficiency and inadequacy, which suggests the *unity* of the underlying experience. The experience of the insufficiency of words for an adequate expression of the *quality of life* is also the experience of the *unity*

of life which simply *transcends* any *actual* expressions.

Qualities of life do not involve any clear split into *the world* on the one hand and *myself* on   66.
the other. The *reflective signs* of the experience *that I am*, the *general thoughts*, emerging
from the standpoint of the *reflective dissociation* of *subject* and *object*, tend to set up a
distinction, often an opposition, between *myself* and *the world*. In spite of this, expressing
the *qualities*, they tell one as much about the world as about the speaker.

The properties ascribed to the world happen to reflect only the *quality* of my life and
vice versa. Repeating after Plato's *Laws* (804B, 644D-E) something like "All the world's a
stage,//And all the men and women merely players,"[50] one seems to characterise the world,
but this is only a matter of grammar. One actually states something about the life in the
world, about the *quality* of life. Certainly, one does not state any true fact, even less a fact
which could be verified. But one does not make any false statement, either – one expresses
general thoughts about the *quality of life*.

Discussing *actual* matters – the current political situation, the recent fashion in literary
criticism, the choice of furniture, the events at work, . . . – one can pretend to remain
half-anonymous, to keep an objective distance to the matter at hand which is, indeed,
impersonal and external. But the more general statements one makes, characterising the
totality of the world and the *quality* of human life, the less possibility to retain the distance
and the more one unveils *oneself*. Making a statement about the world or life in general,
one is bound to unveil *oneself*. "He who says 'life is real, life is earnest', however much
he may speak of the fundamental mysteriousness of things, gives a distinct definition of
this mysteriousness by ascribing to it the right to claim from us the particular mood called
seriousness – which means willingness to live with energy, though energy bring pain. The
same is true of him who says that all is vanity. For indefinable as the predicate 'vanity'
may be *in se*, it is clearly something that permits anaesthesia, mere escape from suffering,
to be our rule of life."[51] The medieval *memento mori* intends, almost paradoxically, to turn
the attention to *one's* life. But this turn amounts to nothing more than to understanding
of the passing value and vanity of the things of *this world*. A specific understanding of the
world induces a specific understanding of one's life. The universal doubt recommended by
Descartes is so much an expression of a shrewd, suspicious intellect, as of the understanding
of the world which – who knows? – might be under a spell of the Evil Spirit. We do not
know, but its mere possibility makes the world untrustworthy.

Statements "The world is. . . " and "My life is. . . " do not only appear *conceptually*
equally empty (in spite of their existential content). They are also equipotent, they say
the same about the same. They can be supported by various arguments and examples,
elaborated *ad nauseam* over a glass of beer or whiskey (and another glass, and another. . .)
Eventually, they tell you nothing about the world or life in general, but only about a
possible experience of the world and life, i.e., about the person making this statement and
his experience of life. "The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the
unhappy man"[52] and *general thoughts* are expressions of such different *qualities*.

1.3.2. This world

The *totality* of all things of *this world* is never given in *an actual experience*. But the   67.

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[50] W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*. II:7 (Jaques)
[51] W. James, *Essays in Pragmatism*. I;p.19
[52] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. 6.43

conclusion that there is no such unity as *this world* follows then only if one has reduced reality to *actual experiences*. If nothing more then, at least, our inability to give up the mode of speaking involving such general judgments about the world or life suggests that there may be some *experienced unity* which transcends the distinctions made within it. We do not look for proofs and merely claim the *presence* of such a *unity*. There are *totalities* which are reducible to their constituents, which are only sums of their parts. *This world*, however, is not such a *totality*.[53] If it can be *posited* as one *totality* which does not appear an arbitrary, *reflective* invention, it is only because it is underlied by an already *experienced unity*, which only calls for some *actual* expression or, as the case may be, an explanation. Like every *unity* which *transcends* some *complex* of *distinctions*, this *unity* which is not reducible to the *totality* of things is more primordial than their *posited totality*. Phenomenologists managed to coin the phrase "phenomenon of the world". But *the world* is not a phenomenon; it does not appear in the unity of a single *act* of consciousness. What appears in such acts is a *vague* idea of something close to void of any content, a mere *sign* pointing towards some all-embracing container. True, the *sign* is not entirely void and this is why one may be justified in analysing the assumed 'phenomenon'. But such an analysis concerns only series of distinct, *actual* phenomena. Their *unity* has no phenomenal content. The divergent analyses of the supposed phenomenon among various phenomenologists illustrate the failure of making *the world* into a correlate of adequate intuition. In our terms, it illustrates the irreducibility of its *transcendent unity* to the *actuality* of features, facts, things and observations. *This world*, emerging as the third hypostasis (I:3), as *chaos* turned into *recognisable experience*, precedes all the things which we later find within it.[54]

68.   Since we do not need adequate intuition nor exhaustive characterisations, we should be allowed to say that *this world* is the givenness of the *visible*, givenness not merely as an *immediate actuality* but as the field of one's activities, passions, goals, in short, the field of one's life. It does contain things, tools, situations, concepts but this is just an analytical statement – all these are just the *cuts from experience* circumscribed within the *horizon of actuality*. *This world* is the horizon of *visibility* within which everything *actual* appears. The Husserlian notion of a 'horizon' has much intuitive appeal, but it should not be taken as something merely surrounding the *totality* of *visible* things. It is something from which all *visible* things emerge. We could say, it is the *visibility* itself. If we were to use the language we have given up: it is not an accidental *totality* (*totality* is, in fact, always somewhat accidental) of *dissociated* substances but, on the contrary, it is the 'substance' of which all particular things are accidents.

   The world considered from the present level bears a resemblance to 'Lebenswelt' in that it manifests itself phenomenally only as the ideal horizon of the contents appearing

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[53]We would not even know what its supposed parts are. The interested ones may follow the interminable discussions trying to decide whether these are things, facts, matters at hand, states of affairs,...

[54]In general, *unity founds totality* and such a *founding unity transcends* the respective *totality*. In particular, *the world transcends* the multiplicity of things within the world. "That which in any multiplicity is unitary did not flow out of any of its elements, that which is unitary in [common to] all cannot come from one among all but remains characteristic property of that unitary one." [Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §21] It is like Cusanus' universe of 'all things' which, however "are not 'many things', since plurality does not precede each thing. For this reason, in the order of nature 'all things' have, without plurality, preceded each thing." [Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. II:5[117]] In the words of Heidegger's: "Neither the ontical depiction of entities within-the-world nor the ontological Interpretation of their Being is such as to reach the phenomenon of the 'world'. In both of these ways of access to 'Objective Being', the 'world' has already been 'presupposed', and indeed in various ways." [M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*. I:3.14 [H64]]

within it and, consequently, as the field of our activity and life. One has a strong tendency to see it only as a *totality* of things rather than as a *unity* of its own because *reflective experience* is unable to grasp this *unity* in the *actuality* of a single *act*: *the world* is not an *object* of *an experience*. But *the world* manifests itself in *any experience*, not as its thematic *object*, but as the constant *aspect* which connects all *actual experiences* and is the same, constant field of their unfolding. In every experience, it is *mitgegeben* but only as a kind of noumenal unity, as an indication of the *presence* of the totality of things of *experience*; not as the 'actual horizon' of related things, but as their background against which the things of *actual experience* appear. In this sense, *the world* is indeed in each thing, is *reflected* in every experience since its *unity* precedes all these *experiences*.[55]

1.3.3. I

 As we observed in §60, the *act* of *self-reflection*, attempting to *actualise* its intention, 69. is always aware of its insufficiency. On the one hand, it *posits* the *I* as its *actual* and *dissociated object*. On the other hand, it *re-cognises* the *concreteness* of the *I* which not only slips out of the *horizon of actual* givens but does so *essentially*. In it *I re-cognise myself* as something which never can be reduced to the *actuality* of an *object*.

 "Who am I?" is the question of adolescence which, emerging from the *egotic* preoccupations, begins to *recognise* the wider horizon of one's life. But the question never finds a final answer. One would like to know: I am (going to be) a carpenter, a family man, a dedicated father, a scientist, a politician, a charmer,... Or else: I am intelligent, I am pretty, I am weak, I am too vulnerable,... One would like to get an answer in terms of *actual, reflective* categories but such an answer would amount to reducing *oneself* to one's *ego*. The only answer is that *I am myself*, but to understand and accept it one has first to live, transcend one's *egotism*. To the *reflective* thirst for plain *visibility* it appears empty and disappointing.

 The question never finds any final and adequate answer because *I* is not reducible to its *actual* characteristics. *I* has a multiplicity of *egos*, none of which nor the *totality* of which exhaust *oneself*. The relation between *oneself* and one's *egos* can be compared to that between the residual correlate obtained in the process of variation (like eidetic reduction, only varying the whole life) in which the varied elements are *egos*. There are, for instance, persons with strong skills for social adaptation, perhaps actor-like characters who, behaving differently on different occasions, do not suffer from any identity crises. Or else, 'rich personalities' with a wide range of expressions which may easily seem incongruent but which are underlied some higher form of personal coherence and control. Every person has a similar multiplicity of *egos*, or 'persona': one for work, one for home, another for friends at one's place and another for friends at their place, one for children, another for a party. Strength of a personality is much closer related to the wide span of apparently incongruent *egos* the person possesses and controls, than to the uniformity of one's *egos* across different contexts and situations. Variations of *egos* across different *actual* situations

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[55]"But since the universe is in each [thing] in such a way that each is in it, in each thing the universe is in a contracted way that which this thing is contractedly, and in the universe each thing is in the universe, although the universe is in each thing in one way, and each thing is in universe in a different way. [...] Indeed, in a stone all things are stone; in a vegetative soul all are vegetative soul; in life all are life; in the senses all are senses; in sight all are sight; in hearing all are hearing; in imagination all are imagination; in reason all are reason [...]" [Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. II:5[118]]

unveil for *reflection* the underlying *unity* of *oneself*.

70.   On the other hand, the multiplicity of *egos* is also what makes personal disintegration possible. The question which an ideal theory of a substantial, atomic *subjectivity* must answer in negative is: "Is the disintegration of personal identity, the loss of one's consistency and continuity possible?" In the *immediacy* of pure *subjectivity* such a loss is impossible – there is no *time* for it. But identification of the subject, of the *unity* of human being with the *subjectivity* of *immediate consciousness* is of little help because, as we well know, such a disintegration is possible. It is possible because *I*, being stretched in time, can lose the continuity in time – *I* can be *dissociated* into a multiplicity of *egos*.

Dissociative identity disorder, DID, shows that one can possess a multiplicity of *egos*, each of which is sufficiently integrated to have a relatively stable life of its own and re-currently to take full control of the person's behavior.[56] Differences between various *egos* of one person may be astonishing – amnesia of other *egos*, changed wishes, attitudes, in-terests, hand writing, even different physiological indices like heart rate, blood pressure, EEG.[57] A person suffering from DID has, as a normal person, a multiplicity of possessions, namely *egos*. The difference is that, while a healthy person possesses *egos* keeping them under some degree of control, with a sick person it is *egos* which gain uncanny autonomy and possess the person. The relation between *I* and *egos* gets inverted, *I* becomes reduced to the level of *egos* and, unable to organise them, suffers their multiplicity – the higher becomes a mere *totality* of the lower.

71.   It is easy to misuse such examples to suggest that 'in reality' there is no *I* and only a multiplicity of somethings, e.g., *egos*. But the fact that we can demolish a building into a heap of bricks proves neither the unreality of the building nor that it is, 'in reality', only a heap of bricks. Phenomena like DID represent disintegration which is possible because subject (person, man) is not any ideal and extensionless point, but in its temporal duration possesses *complex* aspects whose configurations may change. But even such a disintegration can be taken as an extreme form of variation which we mentioned above. It changes certainly the feeling of life and the sense of oneself, but it does not change the fact that even such a person is *oneself* all the time. Each of the *egos* has only a "*relatively stable life of its own*". While psychologists focus on what constitutes the problem – the dissociation of the *sense of* identity – one should not forget all the rest – the *unity* prevailing *above* the *actual* multiplicity. For instance, usually there is one dominant personality (who 'knows' about others), and one can often change at will from one to another, through a process similar to self-hypnosis (DID patients are highly hypnotisable and susceptible to self-hypnosis). Who is it that does the changing? New *egos* can be spawned to handle some unbearable emotional problems (child abuse is the recurring theme in the etiology of DID, the first alter *ego* appears usually between the 4th and 6th year of life). But spawning presupposes a prior *nexus*. Although pathology of multiple *egos dissociates* this *nexus* into 'unrelated' *actual* entities, it remains in its *virtual unity* which only loses continuity with the *actual* appearances. It is the person himself who still keeps some degree of continuity.[58]

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[56]Milder forms of dissociative or organic amnesia, fugue states (flight from one's identity, frequent in war victims) can be mentioned here as well, even though some psychologists challenge the reasons for identifying such disorders. DID used to be called the "multiple personality disorder", which we might term "multiple *egos* disorder".

[57]D. Lester, *Multiple personality: a review*

[58]In the well-known Julie-Jenny-Jerrie case, Jerrie says: "I wish Julie would stop smoking. I hate the taste of tobacco." The split is there, but it is obviously maintained by somebody. Jerrie knows about Julie while Jenny, the original *ego*, knows about both other.

It is the person *himself* who addresses the therapist. And most importantly, even if the person loses completely the *sense* of self-identity, it is the person *himself* who suffers *dissociation*, who is being treated and, as the case may be, cured. A successful treatment of DID results in an integration of multiple *egos*, in merging them back into the *unity* of one person. It is not the multiplicity of *egos* which got cured – it is *the* person.

The *I* revealed to *self-reflection* is not explicable in the way *ego* might be. It is not transcendent in the way *ego* is, merged with the world and its *visible*, even if *unclear* affairs. *I* is something other, something beyond and above the world, something ... noumenal. *Reflection dissociates* and *posits I* against a foreign world – as opposed to it, thrown into it, confronted with it. It does not belong there among things and *complexes*, it does not belong among others who, for the moment, are just foreigners. The pure *I* of the abstract *reflection that I am* is, as Camus would repeat after so many others, a stranger. The strangeness is, however, only in the *externalised objects* and in their *posited totality*. *This* is indeed the kind of world in which *soul* is a stranger, the world viewed by the abstract *reflection* as a mere *totality* of things, of *dissociated* situations, eventually, of irrational and meaningless, even if logically comprehensible, events. Stranger is the subject *alienated* from such a *dissociated* world. 72.

Concrete self-reflection, on the other hand, marks the *experience* of one's life. We have purposefully not distinguished between the *qualities* of the world and the *qualities* of the *experience* of the world. We do not experience some *qualities* which then can be identified as properties of life or world. They are the same thing – as all *original signs*, they involve a valuation, here, *quality*. They become *dissociated* only when we insist on applying the *subject-object* opposition also at the level of *I* and its objectified correlate, world. But *concrete I* is not a noumenal subject *posited* by a *reflective act*. It is the richness of one's life. Experience of *myself* is equiprimordial with the *experience* of my life. One tends to think the latter as an accident of the former but this is because the former has still deeper roots to which we will return in 1.4. My life is not something which *I* of *self-reflection* has, it is something it is. *I* do not live my life – *I* am *my* life.

To use yet another word, we can say that the richness of one's life is one's *soul*. One can build one's life on an example of a person one respects, develop one's soul inspired by another, learn something from another's life. But one *soul*, the uniqueness of one life and its *quality* can not be repeated. There is nothing like '*a* soul'. Soul is always *concrete*, it is always this particular life, this concrete world. *Soul* is not alive, it is life. One's *soul*, *oneself* becomes emptied of life to the extent it is *posited* by *reflection* as an independent entity, an isolated being only potentially capable of an involvement in an alien world. Such a soul, imprisoned in the body, *Dasein* fallen within the world, is a gnostic abstraction. Some feelings in the face of dissolving values and depersonalised world and, primarily, the relation between *concrete I* and the depersonalised *totality* of *external* things, could be described this way. Yet, eventually, it is a harmful *sign* of *alienation* which finds no values in the world seen exclusively under its impersonal aspect. The *quality of life* is the *quality* of the *soul* and of its world – the three can be *dissociated* only by *reflective* abstraction. *The world* understood as the continuity of *experience*, as the *unity* preceding, and hence stretching beyond its differentiation into the *dissociated objects*, is the same as *my* life, is intimately *my* world. "The world and life are one. I am my world."[59] *I*, being *the world* of *my* life, precedes the things emerging within *this world* just like *the world* does. Not only the emergence of *the world* but also the creation of man "is prior to those things which

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[59]L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. 5.621, 5.63

were created with it or in it or below it."[60] Consequently, *soul* can feel stranger among the *external* things created *below* it, but not in the world which is but the field of its life.

73.   The *equipollence* of *I* and *my world* does not amount to any subjectivism which, at the current level, can be exemplified by the following. "Of course, you may confront me with: 'But are you sure your story is really the true and right one?' But what does it really matter what the *reality outside myself* is, as long as it has helped me to live, to feel that I am alive, to feel the very nature of the creature that I am."[61] In fact, it matters quite a lot, unless one is willing to assume the attitude of a decadent aestheticism which, by its very *self-reflection*, sets itself apart and above the world; the attitude which *opposes* the two, which feels forced to claim that "nothing is 'given' as real except our world of desires and passions, that we can rise or sink to no other 'reality' than the reality of our drives."[62] The very fact of opposing *oneself* and the 'reality outside' witnesses to a disturbance, to a breach, a doubt not only about the 'reality outside' but also about *oneself*. This latter doubt arises from the identification of *oneself* with the *egotic* 'desires and passions', reduction of *onself* to the *ego* or even *subject*. In a sense, it is true that "[t]here can be no progress (real, that is, moral) except in the individual and by the individual himself."[63] But such a progress is not the matter of one's *subjectivity* but of one's individuality. It is the matter of *oneself* as much as of one's world. The two, being the same, change and progress together or not at all, "and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."[64]

Wanting to change one's life, not only this or that aspect of it but *oneself*, one has to change the world. Say, good soul cannot live in an evil world, for no matter to how much evil *the world* exposes the soul, the good soul will still see – in *the world* – goodness and reasons to be good. To be good *in spite of the evil* in *the world* is to assume an attitude which, at some point, does not reflect one's being. To be good in *the world* which is evil is to be a rigid moralist, a pharisee or, in a more lofty variant, a resigned Stoic who is only a tiny step from the apathy of a bored intellectual, gnawed by the unreality of his lofty ideas and ideals. To be good is not only being good but also finding goodness, finding the need and reason for it not only in the self-goodness of one's inner life but in *the world*. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." The treasure of the heart is not any private 'subjectivity' of one's 'inner life'. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."[65] The treasure is something found, given to *me* from *above* and not something *I* assume or decide to value. This treasure is that which shapes *my* heart, *my soul*, while its lack leaves the *soul* empty.

Wanting to change one's life, not only this or that aspect of it but *oneself*, one has to change the *world*. One's life changes not because one realises something in a momentaneous illumination but as a consequence of a new way of *experiencing the world*, of finding a new treasure. Certainly, there are pathological cases against which a mere analysis, psychoanalysis or other form of psychotherapy can help. But their value is limited to the lower levels of *egotic* disturbances. The faith in their unlimited power can arise only

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[60] J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. IV:779ABCD.

[61] C. Baudelaire, *Paris Spleen*. Windows [my emph.] "Why could the world *which is of any concern to us* – not be a fiction?" [F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. 34]

[62] F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. 36

[63] C. Baudelaire, *My Heart Laid Bare*.

[64] Mt. VII:2

[65] Mt. XII:35/VI:21; Lk. VI:45/XII:34

from the assumption of the genuine *dissociation* of a person from *his world*, according to which each can be treated independently from the other.[66] Healing a true suffering of *soul* amounts to healing *the world* of this *soul* for, in deeper respects, one can hardly change understanding of the world without actually *experiencing* a changed world. Sometimes, a travel to a remote place may be needed to regenerate the *soul*. An emotional impairment resulting from the lack of love and warmth can hardly be changed by a mere realisation that this was its cause. It may need not only the will to change it but also the very *experience* of love and warmth. This is what often makes meeting new people worthwhile: they can make things which seemed impossible, even non-existent, to appear obvious and natural. They can show us a different world which cures the lacks of the world in which we used to live. This intimacy of *myself* and *the world* has nothing to do with the arbitrariness of *subjective* images opposed to the *objective* world.

My life, that is, *the world*, is the field of *my* expression. Its unlimited, though finite, scope 74. is no longer a stage of single *acts* or manipulative *actions* but of *activity* in the broadest sense of the word, *activity* which is not merely a sum of *acts* and *actions*, which is not directed towards achievement of some goals, but which expresses the *traces* of values, the *motives* which shape the horizon for selecting possible goals.[67] My life is just that – the way I spend my time. A common answer to the question "Who is he?" would simply tell what the person is doing for living. A profession tells something about that: what one does with one's time, or even better, to what one dedicates one's time. A (deliberate) choice of profession involves often, besides detailed considerations of specific demands and associated forms of activity, also a hardly expressible feeling of the *quality*, of the character of the profession, which should correspond to one's values and the sense of what is meaningful. One wants one's *activities* to reflect the (passive) feelings of *qualities* and values. The *activities* to which one devotes much of one's time express also the *quality* of one's life. And it is no longer talk about simple grasping-avoiding as in the case of *objects*, nor arranging-preventing as in the case of *complexes*, but about dedication, about accepting some values *transcending* the *actuality* and about dedicating one's time to their expression.

Not only changing one's life involves changing *the world* but also vice versa. If one wants 75. to change *the world*, not this or that thing but *the world*, one has to bring to it a changed *quality* of one's life. Achievements, deeds, reforms do change the objective world. But it is never certain if they also change *the world*. In most cases, they do not, and the more violent changes of the objective world make only the remoteness of salvation more clear. "How can an event which, like war, eliminates discussion and opens every possibility by

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[66]Many examples of the resulting oppositions can be found in the society of Victorian *fin de sicle*: positivistic scientism and utilitarianism are nervously opposed by the search for the freedom of the will and the calls to cultivate 'art for art's sake'; bourgeois norms and industrial routine is equally nervously opposed by the cult of intense experience, hashish, absinthe and Bohemian decadence; neurasthenic apathy and weary reflection call for passionate and heroic action; the progressing depersonalisation and society turning into masses, if not mob, are met with almost pietistic calls to personal concentration and authenticity. Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Wilde, Freud, Nietzsche, Spencer, Dostoevsky, James . . . It is hard to avoid the sense of artificiality – if not of the view of the world and of the involved oppositions, then of the individual attitude attempted *in spite of* and against the world (or was it in spite of and against *oneself*?). Much of the XX-th century's existentialism sailed under the same banner.

[67]Using the distinction of Scheler's, a specific goal corresponds to 'Zweck', a *motivation* to 'Ziel', e.g., M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics...*I:I.3. *Motivation* is a horizon of values which, on the one hand, functions as the *foundation* for choosing particular goals and, on the other hand, becomes *actualised* through their realisation – it comes both before and after the goals, it surrounds them.

denying every norm, bring salvation to humanity?"[68] How can it bring salvation even only to its perpetrators? Revolution as a means of abolishing *alienation* is one of the most tragic human inventions but it is only an extreme case of existential frustration turned into social destruction of which there are many examples. With respect to the personal dimension of *existence*, social activism more often than not witnesses to *alienation* which it is unable to cure. It suffers from the insufficiency, if not irrelevancy, for the *existential* dimension, which insufficiency hovers even over the satisfaction from the *actual* successes. No doubt, improving social institutions may be a useful *activity*. But taken as a medicine to cure *the world*, that is, to change the *quality* of one's life it is, at best, a misunderstanding, At worst, it expresses an instinctive resentment, the more dangerous because unchecked in its convictions about its beneficent intentions.[69] It is true that living in a particular world may promote some and not other ways of *experiencing* and only some, but not other *qualities of life*. But these are, at best, statistical tendencies. They never have a predictable effect on a particular individual whose *world* is much more than the objective world of tools and political, economical and social organisation.

1.3.4. Transcendence

76.   At the current level, one finds the distinction between the personal and impersonal, but the distinction between the 'objective' and the 'subjective' loses almost completely its meaning. It is *myself*, *my* life which is involved, in a sense, the most 'subjective' *aspect* of experience. On the 'objective' side there is, perhaps, the world, in the sense of 'everything but me'. But this phrase can signify here only the correlate of *my* life, the field of its unfolding. *The world*, *my* life and *myself* are not synonymous in the common language usage which always reflects the *subject-object dissociation*. But they are inseparably knitted *aspects* of the *nexus of experience*.

    To be sure, we do live in the objective world, we do make plans, manage worldly situations, use tools. But all these *complexes* are correlates of my *ego*, they are only 'parts' of the world and are *below* me. Viewing *the world* as their *totality* is a simpleminded, and always unsuccessful, reduction. Things, *complexes*, particular situations and singular *experiences* not only never exhaust the experience of *the world* – they do not even provide the ground for such *experience* which is *founded* upon the *unity transcending* their *totality*, *transcending* the objective world.

77.   The tension of the *horizontal transcendence* at this level does not arise from the *more* of *complexes* but from the basic opposition between *mine* and *not-mine*. It is immediately present in the *reflection that I am* which performs a highly artificial operation of *dissociating myself* from something – from *the world*, perhaps, from my life, apparently from that which is *not-mine* but eventually, as a matter of fact, from *myself*. This *dissociation* finds an expression in the opposition between the 'inner' and the 'outer', the 'inside' and the 'outside'. 'Inner' would usually refer to the 'inner life', as it did in I:§54. But here it may be related to anything which is in some way *experienced* as *mine*: *my* feelings, *my* things, *my* friends, *my* family. The 'outer' is then everything else, everything excluded from this 'inner' circle, everything for which *I* do not feel a slightest degree of responsibility, everything which perhaps influences *me* but is not influenced by *me*. The *sign*

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[68]R. Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*. I:Concerning the political optimism

[69]M. Scheler, *Resentment in the Building of Morals*. The just quoted book of R. Aron contains the classical analyses of a particular form of this sickness.

of the *transcendence* of that which is not *mine* may be, for instance, *my* indifference as opposed to care and responsibility I feel for what is *mine*. It can likewise emerge as *my* inability to draw borders between the two, 'to gather myself', as when *I* get lost among the challenges and temptations confronting me in my meeting with *the world*. In extreme cases, its manifestation can be the sense of being defeated by the complexity of the world. When manifested in *actual signs*, the *horizontal transcendence* involves the fundamental feeling of *me* being *only myself*, confronted with the rest which, being *not-mine*, is foreign, disturbing, unwelcome, even threatening and dangerous.

The *vertical aspect* of *transcendence* amounts here to the embrace of *chaos*. It is not merely uncontrollable *complexity*, but *chaos* hiding behind it, in the face of which the categories of *visibility* simply lose their meaning. It is 'something completely other', something which can no longer be treated in the familiar ways according to which I organise *my world*. This *chaos* may, but need not, mean disorder – it is only lack of *objective* order, lack of any sufficient reasons and explanations which determine relations *within* the world. Kierkegaard's *Angst* is a well known example of such an embrace. It confronts one with something inexplicable and irreducible to the familiar categories of *visibility*; something threatening with its unfamiliarity and uncanniness. Suspending the validity of all worldly categories, such an encounter amounts, in fact, to the question about *myself*. Manifesting irreducible otherness beyond *my* world, it oppugns the assumed foundations of *my* life and poses the question about *myself*. But *Angst* is only an extreme example. Love which begins to penetrate one's whole being without referring one to any specific object, which makes the whole world dissolve in a continuity of thankfulness and inspiration can be a good example, too. Love, also personal love, is not anything one chooses and arranges. It is something one meets, something coming from *above*, something *not-mine*. And yet, it is not a foreign, accidental event which only happens to *me* as do the *actual experiences*. Embracing my whole being, it is thoroughly *mine*, it involves *myself* to the very depth of my *soul*, to the point where *I* cease to be *myself*. Just like *Angst*, so also love, *transcending me*, is most intimately *mine*.

Thus, the *horizontal transcendence* of *mineness* involves alienation, confrontation with empty and meaningless, perhaps dangerous otherness of *not-mine*. It is something foreign, but something from which one can relatively easily retreat into one's privacy, behind the walls of one's home-castle. In the *vertical aspect*, on the other hand, the *not-mine* does not appear as a dissociated pole opposing *me*, but as a *transcendent* element *present* in a way which is, strangely yet *clearly*, intimately mine. The *chaos* is *present* as a most genuine element, as a most *immanent aspect* of *myself*. For it is no longer a mere disorder of *dissociated objects* and *complexes* but the limit beyond which they lose any significance. One cannot withdraw from it, as one can from the threats of the foreign, *not-mine* world. Once touched by it, one can only deepen the acquaintance. 78.

This element can become either a source from which one's *activity* draws strength and energy, or else an abyss capable of devouring one. The *transcendence* of *mineness*, especially under its *vertical aspect*, has these two basic forms: of dissolution or enrichment, of destruction or creation. Simply because where things are created, they can also be destroyed. Only at the limit of one's world (life, *soul*) can one become *oneself*, but it is also where one can lose *oneself*. The element of madness observed in every creative genius reflects this simple fact that creation – the secondary creation, that of which humans are capable – amounts to organising the disorganised, to bringing *experience* out of *chaos*. It must move on the border where the *visible* world begins to dissolve in its *invisible origins*.

Hence, any creative *activity* involves a deep personal engagement which arises only from a confrontation with *chaos* where *I*, meeting the *not-I*, can no longer draw a *precise* border between oneself and otherness, between *mine* and *not-mine*. Such a confrontation may result in a dedicated love, in a resolute patience, in new works of art or science or in madness. A creative genius organises *chaos* emerging, like Jonas, after three days from the depths of whale's belly. A madman is, too, swallowed by the overpowering force of *chaos* but, unable to wrest himself from it, remains there or else, if he returns, returns empty-handed.

1.4   Invisibles

79.   *Self-reflection* discloses my *separation*, but it does so under the mark of *reflective dissociation* – it posits *myself* as an independent entity which is therefore experienced as alienated. It centers around the category of *mineness* with its basic mode of *my will*. It is the level at which I can still choose and control and where all my decisions, actions and activities are referred back to *myself* as their protagonist. Even when I feel that, as a matter of fact, I am not in control, I still persist in the attempts to realise *my will*. And as long as I persist in this focusing on *mineness*, *my* goals, *my* wishes, *my will*, I also keep experiencing *separation* as alienation. Even if I recognise the world as *my world*, I do not appropriate it, it does not become fully *mine*. For *my* world should conform to *my* projects, while the world does not.

In *self-reflection I re-cognise myself* as transcending the *horizon of actuality*, but merely as some noumenal site of mere self-identity. *I* know intimately that it is *myself I* am reflecting over, yet this identity remains ideal, unexperienced. *Myself* discovered by the *reflection that I am* is the result of a rather artificial abstraction in which *reflection* dissociated *myself* from *the world*, even from *my life*, that is, from myself. As much as *I* know that *I am myself*, I also know that the reflecting *I* is not fully *myself*; the *I* grasped by the *reflective act* does not coincide with *myself* living *my life*; *I am myself* and yet *I* am losing myself, *I* am close to *myself*, but also remote – the same and different. *Alienation* is more than the estrangement from *the world*; it is first of all the estrangement from myself, the loss of contact with *my self*.

80.   There are situations in which one's self-identity remains unquestioned but its character and integrity are threatened by alien forces.

On the pathological end, many cases of schizophrenia provide examples of a split which affects not only one's *egos* but *oneself*. The etymology of the term coined by Eugene Bleuler – *schizo* = split, *phreno* = mind – does not intend multiple personalities but one split personality. The emotive and cognitive functions are not only disturbed but *dissociated* from each other and one's *actuality*, the *reflective subjectivity* becomes invaded by some higher, uncontrolled forces. Hallucinations or delusions of grandeur or persecution *invade* consciousness of a paranoid schizophrenic *Attacks* of silly and incoherent laughter, grimace, unmotivated giggle are symptoms of disorganised schizophrenia. One hears the complains that patient's intestines are congealed, that his brain has been removed or that some device has been implanted into it, that a slightest movement will provoke an enormous catastrophe (catatonic schizophrenia), etc. It is the patient who experiences some alien forces threatening – not his unity but his integrity, *himself*. One tries, initially, to resist the invading element which gradually takes over the control – of *one's* mind, *one's* behavior, *one's* surroundings. Unlike in the examples of *ego* disturbances, §§70.ff, here the person

remains *himself* also in his *reflective* consciousness. Only this makes the experienced forces, which threaten *his* autonomy, *alien*.

Within a more normal range, there are also experiences when I am not in control of *myself*, when *I* am seized by an impulse, an urge to act in a way which, to all *my* consciousness and knowledge, is not *my* way of acting, which does not originate in *my* will. "The primitive phenomenon of *obsession* has not vanished; it is the same as ever. It is only interpreted in a different and more obnoxious way."[70] An impulsive act, a 'murder in affect' may be followed by an outcry "It was not me, it was something strange in me!"

Such impulses and acts, although *mine*, emerge as if from *above*, as if they were coming from some higher or deeper layers which are not under my control, which, although originating 'in me', are not *mine* at all. "A man likes to believe that he is the master of his soul. But as long as he is unable to control his moods and emotions, or to be conscious of the myriad secret ways in which unconscious factors insinuate themselves into his arrangements and decisions, he is certainly not his own master."[71] "We have intimations and intuitions from unknown sources. Fears, moods, plans, and hopes come to us with no visible causation. These concrete experiences are at the bottom of our feeling that we know ourselves very little; at the bottom, too, of the painful conjecture that we might have surprises in store for ourselves."[72]

Experiences of this kind, when "one becomes two,"[73] make *present* something which 'lives in me but is not me', which is 'inside myself' and yet is not *myself*, which exercising often irresistible power over *myself*, stays 'outside' *myself*. Then "the greater figure, which one always was but which remained invisible, appears to the lesser personality with the force of a revelation. He who is truly and hopelessly little will always drag the revelation of the greater down to the level of his littleness, and will never understand that the day of judgment for his littleness has dawned. But the man who is inwardly great will know that the long expected friend of his soul, the immortal one, has now really come, "to lead captivity captive" [...]"[74]

The *reflection* necessary for overcoming *alienation* (once more, *alienation* from *the world* 81. is only a reflection of the *alienation* from *my self*) is to realise *that I am not the master* – not only of *the world*, but neither of *myself*, of my very being. My decision to achieve a goal may be opposed by external factors or my own inability or laziness. This is trivial at the level of *objects* (which are *external* and given rather than chosen) and of *complexes* (where there is always *more* which *I* cannot conquer). But *I am not the master* also in the more profound sense of not being the master even of *my* being, of not possessing even *myself*. My will to be good may never get realised, sometimes due to my obvious weakness or impatience, sometimes due to unclear and hardly *visible* obstacles; where failure can be blamed on my own incapacity as well as on bad luck. *I* do not decide to fall in love with a given person or not. *I* may do even if, as far as *I* can see or as the course of life shows, the person is not the one *I* would like to love. My hope for happiness may never find fulfillment – not only because *I* constantly find features of *myself* precluding it, but simply because *I* am unhappy. There are sufferings of which *I* can be acutely aware and which *I* can firmly defy but which last for years leaving hardly any hope that they may

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[70] C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*. p.32

[71] Ibid. p.72. For the time being, we ignore the difference between subconscious and *invisible* which will be explained in 1.4.2.i.

[72] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. IV:299

[73] F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. From High Mountains (the concluding aftersong)

[74] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. III:217

ever terminate. There are states offering no *signs*, no *visible* possibilities of redemption. Despair is to yield to this impossibility, is to accept it, but it is not something *I* choose voluntarily: it happens to me, and *I* only can not resist it.

And yet, one day, *I* may find that all that was ceased to be, that *I* am happy but *I* know neither when *I* became so or how that happened. *I* do not even know what it means – *I* only know that *I* am. *I* may find one day that the insecurity or angst which have been lurking in the depths of my soul disappeared and their place took tranquility and peace. But *I* know neither when nor how that happened – only that *I* had wished, that *I* had prayed for that to happen and that it did. "[T]his hell and this heaven come about a man in such sort, that he knoweth not whence they come; and whether they come to him, or depart from him, he can of himself do nothing towards it."[75]

1.4.1. The signs

1.4.1.i. Original signs

82.   A 'murder in affect' need not be followed by the outcry "It was not me, it was something strange in me!" It can be just committed and simply through that, by being committed, witness to the *presence* of a power greater than *oneself*. But this is rather an extreme witness. *Acts* and *actions*, involved in the texture of *the world*, are also involved in the broader context of *activities*. In this respect, they may be studied as *objective*, purposeful ways of achieving various goals or as expressions of various needs. But this does not exhaust their significance. *Acts* and, in particular, the ways in which they are carried out, are not determined exclusively by *my will* nor their *objective* context. Every *act*, in addition to its *objective* and *visible* content, involves an undefinable *rest*, a side which does not pertain to its *objective* determinations. For instance, "the value 'good' [...] is present as if 'behind' the acts of will, and this in the essential way; it cannot therefore be intended *in* these acts."[76] Intending goodness is sufficient to take it away from the *act*. An *act* directed by *my will*, aimed at a specific objective, has an involuntary aura around itself which indicates something else, often different, than what *my* intention has put into it.

One distinguishes the 'what' from the 'how', not only in the sense of knowing what versus knowing how, but also of what an *act* accomplishes versus how it does it. With Heidegger the 'how' of the acts is more important than their *objective* 'what', expressing their genuine, non-objectifiable ontological significance.[77] *Acts* are not any *dissociated*, isolated and mutually independent events, they are involved in the context of *actions* and *activities* and, eventually, *reveal* 'who I am'. Their *rest* (their 'how'), dissolves for *reflection* in a complete *vagueness*. It seems that nothing is ever the same, nothing is ever fully itself. The search for the ultimate 'in itself' always encounters some overlooked *rest*, which germinates underneath the grasped foundations. No amount of intentional deliberation is able to remove this 'unintended' *rest* from an *act*, to reduce an *act* to its *visible*, *actual* 'whats' and 'whys'. This *rest*, *experienced* though not grasped, is a *sign*, too. It is the terminus of the particular *trace* which, stretching through the current situation and *moods*,

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[75] *Theologia Germanica*. XI.

[76] M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics....* I:1.2;p.48. 'Der Wert gut' can be an example of *invisible*.

[77] Our 'how', cf. footnote I:8, tends more in the direction of explicit understanding, towards the *objectivity* of Heideggerian 'what'. Thus we may be using this pair in exactly opposite way. But the distinction is the same and here it is used along the Heideggerian line.

feelings and *qualities*, anchors the *actuality* in its ultimate *origin*.

Being in love finds its expressions in various *acts* and the ways of performing them. In 83.
so far as *I act* from love, these *acts* are *signs* of its *presence*. The *acts* unveil this *rest*,
their 'what' and 'how' indicate, if not prove: this guy is in love. *I myself* may not know
explicitly that *I* am in love. To begin with, *I* may only find myself acting in a bit unusual
way. The first *signs*, the *rests* hidding behind the unusualness of my *actions*, are *original*
and not *reflected*. *I act* this love, *I* am lead and almost forced to act in accordance with
some *vague* and perfecly *clear* intuition, according to some *invisible command* which *I* do
not grasp and certainly do not control. Love is not something one decides to experience
but something which one experiences (or not); love, perhaps, toward a person one would
never expect *oneself* to fall in love with, love which, perhaps, one did not even want. It
dawns on one and then haunts one.

And it haunts one to the most *actual* and specific details. Its *concreteness* lies in its
deep, *invisible* origins, but it penetrates one's whole being. It is not expressed only in the
vague intuition but also in the most specific elements of one's *acts*, both the usual and
unusual ones. Just like a single moment of the 'murder in affect' reveals the underlying
conflicts of the person going, perhaps, to the very bottom of his being, so a moment
of loving intimacy may reveal and express love completely, though never finally. The
expressed conflicts or love *transcend* the *horizon of actuality*, they are capable of infinite
manifestations reaching far beyond, that is, originating far *above* their *totality*. And yet,
a single moment can express them completely and adequately. Love finds its expression
in every moment and each such moment incarnates the whole 'essence' of this love. Love
is always more than its incarnations, 'overflows' any *actual* expressions and, at the same
time, is fully *present* in its every *sign*.

The word "intuition" in its usual sense (not in the sense of grasping the unity of a *complex* 84.
in one *act*, cf. §26) can be appropriate for the *original signs* of *invisibles*. Strong intuitions
have namely an inspiring effect, precisely by virtue of being on the one hand *vague* and,
on the other hand, *clear* and unconditional. It is this duality of *vagueness* and definiteness
which makes it so hard to ignore intuition and let it go. It nags one and, having no *precise*,
objective content, can not be ignored until one follows it and finds out what it is intimating.
But, usually, intuitions are only first announcements of something which, in due course,
may be unveiled and seen. As Jung says, intuition is *perception* via the unconscious. One
has intuition *about* or *of something*. With time and effort, it will give place to specific
explanations and *actual* reasons which reveal their place in the *complex* from which they
arouse. It turns out to be a *sign* of something *visible* which has only been hiding below
the threshold of consciousness. Thus intuition is, in general, relative to particular things
or region of Being.

The *signs* of *invisibles*, on the other hand, do not lead to any such final *actualisations*.
The first *signs* of love are *vague*, like mere hunch or nagging, and can even remain *actually*
imperceptible. Gradually, they become *manifest* in things one does and in how one does
them. But even when they become noticed and transparent, love is not reducible to any
actual insight nor to any *acts*, *actions* or a *totality* thereof. It does not reside in *acts*
or *activities* but, primarily, in their *rest*. Intuition may be an inspiration to follow its
thread and 'figure out'. Love, too, inspires before it finds an expression in *acts*. But
its *inspiration* does not end when one realises that one is in love. On the contrary, the
inspiration continues and even increases. It affects one's whole being with an atmosphere of
strength and unlimited potential, with the sense of possibility to perform not this particular

act or that, but any *act* whatsoever.

85.   This sense of the unlimited potential is not, of course, any conviction of the *actual* omnipotence. It is only an unlimited *inspiration*. It is *sign* of *openness*, of loosening the limits of *myself* and, opening up onto something *not-mine*, accepting it as a *gift*. In this sense, love is not limited to any particular domain of Being, it is not restricted to any particular object or person. Although focused perhaps on a particular person, it is *love* only to the extent it opens up the limits of *oneself* and impresses one's whole being with a thankful *quality* and *command*: "love, and do what you wilt"[78] – not a command to do this or that, but a *vaguest* (not limited to *any* particular domain of Being), and yet *clear* (intense and definite) *command* to do whatever you want *in* love. To what *precisely* it *inspires* remains undetermined and open, it will be determined by all kinds of details. The *command* is not a moral imperative to do this rather than that, nor to do things in a prescribed manner. It is only a *command* to listen to it, to remember its *inspiring* voice in all *actual* situations. The *inspiration* is *clear*: "Love is infallible; it has no errors, for all errors are the want of love."[79]   But also, since it does not *command* any specific *acts*, it is *vague*: it "does not perform any works; it is too subtle for that and is as far from performing any works as heaven is from earth."[80] Comming from *above*, it does not perform any works but *commands* to perform them. It is a *command* to fill the *distance* between its *invisible origin* and one's *actuality*.[81]

86.   The character of a *command* consists in the complete lack of reactive character. These *signs* neither are reactions to anything nor cause any specific reaction. Paradoxically as it may look, this is exactly the *command* – it challenges but does not cause, it calls but does not force. We can say about these *signs* exactly what Bergson says about the mystics: "They have no need to exhort us. They only have to exist, for their existence is a call."[82] *Immediate signs*, like sensations, exemplify the extreme opposite of a *command* in that there the *sign*, the signified and the reaction coincide. There is no *distance* between the *sign* and reaction to it, no distance which could leave doubt and possibility of reacting otherwise, no *distance* between the *actuality* and *non-actuality* allowing the *actual sign* to challenge, to *inspire* a movement towards the *non-actual*. The *commanding* or *inspiring* character of a *sign* is precisely this *distance* separating the *virtuality* of the *invisible* from its possible *actualisations*.

The *command* consists also in that it does not create any particular state like, for instance, feelings do. There is no particular emotional or mental state corresponding to love or holiness or damnation. There are as many variations and combinations of the lower elements coexisting with the *signs* of *invisibles*, as there are persons. A *command* can make itself heard at any time, in any situation, in any *mood*. Likewise, it can be followed

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[78]St. Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John.* VII:8

[79]William Law

[80]Eckhart, *German Sermons* Luke I:26,28. The subject of the quotation is grace which, too, provides an example of what we call an "*inspiration*". [M. O. Walshe, ed., *Meister Eckhart...* 29; J. Quint and J. Koch, eds., *Meister Eckhart...* 38; O. Davis, ed., *Selected Writings* 2]

[81]We might probably go as far as saying that any distance separating a *sign* from the signified is a command. In the most trivial case, it is merely the command to interpret the sign, to understand what it signifies, what it means. Here it has almost reactive character. We do not contemplate the commanding character of a road sign or a signpost – we immediately understand it. But the longer the *distance* separating the two (and it is something entirely different from the arbitrariness of an artificial sign), the more insistent the nagging to relate them.

[82]H. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion.*

at any time, in any situation, irrespectively of the *actual moods* and *thoughts*.

This independence from the *actual* situation marks its *absolute*, non-relative character. A *command* is *absolute* in the sense that it is not relative to any particular region of Being, which is the same as saying that it concerns the whole Being. It penetrates to and flows from the very depth of one's person, the point in infinity, which is but the reflection of the infinity of Being. It does not concern any being in particular and, by this very token, concerns every particular being. But it does so not by enumeration of all beings but by being seated in the very center of the person and spreading thence over all particular beings the person encounters. Such *signs* either are given *absolutely*, with unconditional validity, or are not given at all. A person can not be 'partially holy', just like one can be 'partially satisfied'. One can not 'love a little but not entirely', for such a thing is not *love* but something else.

Instead of presenting some recognisable content, instead of providing one with the imper- 87. ative to do this rather than that, a *command* merely says "you shall love". "For commandments from the Lord should not be expected in matters that have an obvious usefulness."[83] Lacking any precise, *actual* content, the *commands* do not give any reasons either, they do not provide any explanations or justifications. They do not try to convince but merely manifest and leave one free.

This aspect of freedom in the confrontation with a *command* does not change its commanding character. For it is often announced with an irresistible force. *Original signs* of *invisibles* may enter one's life in the most rare moments of revelation, moments when *invisible* enters the *horizon of actuality* with imperative intensity. They say that a dying person may experience his whole life compressed into a single moment. But one need not be dying. There are rare moments which reveal to us something fundamental, *inspirations* which may turn out to determine our whole future life, or else, which show us the meaning of our past life; moments, whether in dreams or in wake life, when the content and meaning of the whole life seems compressed into a single *sign*. Such moments have a character of foundation, they insert into our time *an experience* of meaning and value which exceed all *reflective* understanding. These are the moments establishing *axis mundi*, founding the cosmos out of chaos. Although, in our *experience*, we might have lived quite an orderly life before, confrontation with such moments has, then too, the character of founding something which either gives a new direction, or else lends extra strength of explicit *presence* to something which has been only vaguely and implicitly intuited before.

And here lies another, deeper aspect of freedom in confrontation with a *command*. It is not merely freedom of an arbitrary choice but, on the contrary, freedom of following a higher voice which emerges from the center of *oneself*. Although the *command* comes from *above*, this *above* is not alien and remote but most central and intimate. Indeterminacy of its *actual* content notwithstanding, it is the most *concrete*, and therefore meaningful, personal element which calls one from beyond the limits of *onself*.

1.4.1.ii. Reflective signs

Inspirations do not reveal any content, do not present anything which might be grasped 88. in *actual* consciousness. But they may be grasped by *reflection* precisely *as signs*. They appear empty since no *precise* content can be substituted for them. And yet, *as signs*, they are not empty. *Reflective signs* of such essential *non-actuality* which never can be reduced

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[83]P. Abelard, *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian.* I:§123

to an *actual* phenomenon are *symbols*. A *symbol* does not signify in the proper sense – it merely *manifests*; although it does bring forth something *vaguely distinguished*, its *inspiration* derives from the *virtual signification*, from its pointing beyond the *distinctions* towards their *origin*. The *symbolic* contents can never be sharply *dissociated* from each other, for one immediately and imperceptibly flows into another. What in the Jungian analyses of subconsciousness is called "contamination" is such a "moonlit landscape. All the contents are blurred and merge into one another, and one never knows exactly what or where anything is, or where one begins and ends."[84] The inseparability of *distinctions* is the main feature distinguishing the *non-actuality* from *actuality*, and it only gradually increases as we approach the ultimate *origin*. We can certainly speak about 'symbols of God', 'symbols of self', 'symbols of transformation', etc., but to the extent these are *experienced symbols*, they do not emerge as so definitely separated as they may appear when turned into *reflective* thoughts. Genuine *symbols* "cannot be exhaustively interpreted, either as signs or as allegories. They are genuine symbols precisely because they are ambiguous, full of half-glimpsed meanings, and in the last resort inexhaustible. [...] The discriminating intellect naturally keeps on trying to establish their singleness of meaning and thus misses the essential point: for what we can above all establish as the one thing consistent with their nature is their *manifold meaning*, their almost limitless wealth of reference, which makes any unilateral formulation impossible."[85] Being *signs*, that is, to the extent they appear, *symbols* are embraced within the *horizon of actuality*, but what they *manifest* is neither any specific content nor any definite referent; it is immediately *recognised* as *essentially transcending* this horizon.

89. *Symbols reflect* the *original signs*, the most individual *experience* of sacred numinosity, the *experience* which confronts *me* not only with *myself* but with *my self*. "When we attempt to understand symbols, we are not only confronted with the symbol itself, but we are brought up against the wholeness of the symbol-producing individual."[86] This individual is not, of course, *oneself* nor one's *ego*, but something greater than the individual himself. *Symbols* emerge through us but they are not created by us, they are better thought of as "natural and spontaneous products. No genius has ever sat down with a pen or a brush in his hand and said: «Now I am going to invent a symbol.»"[87]

Transcending thus one's personal sphere, *symbols* have a powerful collective aspect. As Jung's extensive investigations suggest, humans tend to express the *experience* of *invisibles* (which, for the moment, we can identify with his archetypes) by analogous, *symbolic* forms and ideas. Whether *manifested* in dreams, in myths, in religious conceptions, or even in philosophical *concepts*, the *invisible* sphere revealed by *symbols* seems to be the deepest layer of human being, the collective (to use Jung's term) aspect of the psyche, relatively independent from the personally 'subjective' context and cultural tradition. The deepest, the most personal is exactly that which, being universally *participated* does not become a commonality – the *absolute*, unrepeatable *concreteness* of *incarnation* of *invisibles*. To the extent this becomes expressed and embraced by a collective culture, it can happen only through *symbols*.

A 'holy stone', a 'holy tree', a 'holy brook' are *signs* announcing the *presence* of sacrum. As Eliade aptly illustrates, they are not worshiped 'in-themselves', they are not 'the holiness

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[84] M.-L. von Franz, *The Process of Individuation.* p.183
[85] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious.* I:80
[86] C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious.* p.81
[87] Ibid. p.41

itself'. They are worshiped only because sacrum has marked its *presence at* these places, because it has *manifested* itself *through* them. They are hierophanies, the *signs* of sacrum which infinitely *transcends* them and yet is *concretely present* in them. They may serve as simplest examples of *symbols*, the *visible, external objects* which *inspire* – awe, fear, wonder, reverence – and *command*, not any specific *acts*, but veneration and rituals which take their particular form from elsewhere, from the myths, from the tradition, from the religious culture.

Transcending one's private sphere, *symbols* are nevertheless most *concrete* and personal 90. because to be a *symbol*, the *actual sign* must be accompanied by the *original command*, must be experienced as a hierophany which announces, if not fully manifests, the *invisible presence. Symbols* are only *externalised* and objectified *reflections* of the *original signs*. Here lie of course unlimited possibilities of discrepancies and conflicts between the individual 'feelings' of the high, deep and reverent and the publicly recognised *symbols* and accepted forms of their reverence. The *distance* separating the *actuality* of the *sign* from its meaning is, in the case of *symbols*, virtually infinite. The relation of *signification*, once the *symbol* gets *dissociated* from the *original signs*, seems completely arbitrary. Almost anything can become a *symbol* and there is nothing easier than to ask: Why this tree? Why a tree? Why the cross? Why this and not that? Why anything at all? – and then conclude that there is no reasonable answer. *Symbols* become 'mere symbols' for all too intense *reflection* which notices that mere signs are *actually dissociated* from any real *presence* which they should announce with some forcing necessity. But even then *symbols* can act as reminders of this *presence*, whose *original signs* have been forgotten underneath the *visible* expressions.

Establishing *symbols* is one of the fundamental needs and activities, as they are the only 91. *reflective signs* connecting the *actual* consciousness with the sphere of *invisible presence*.[88] But *signs* become *symbols* only when they *actually manifest* the *invisible*, that is, only when they are met and experienced along with the respective *original signs*. What constitutes a *symbol* is the double aspect of the *invisible* flowing in through the *visible*, of the *inspiration* arising through the *actual sign*. The *inspirations* are not any emotions but, without picking on such details of expression, we could say that the archetypal *inspirations* "are, at the same time, both images and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. When there is merely the image, then there is simply a word-picture of little consequence. But by being charged with emotion, the image gains numinosity (or psychic energy); it becomes dynamic, and consequences of some kind must follow from it."[89]

   Reflection devoted exclusively to the petty and all-important matters of its *actuality* is simply unable to meet a *symbolic* expression, even if it meets its *visible sign*. The meaning of a *symbol* has close to nothing in common with the meanings discernible at the level of *actuality*, the meanings of *precise* words, *concepts* or particular *impressions*. And in the moment the *invisible presence* is declared unreal, a *symbol* degenerates to an empty *sign*. In the moment a *symbol* starts signifying something *visible*, it becomes an allegory,

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[88]It can be seen in the seriousness with which children, in their games, *are* mothers, fathers, policemen or arrange doll houses and build models – without slightest disturbance by the fact, of which they are perfectly aware, that these are only games, toys. Likewise, the pictures from Lascaux are hardly mere traces of boredom or depictions of daily activities. Extensive studies of Eliade and others suggest that the maintenance of the symbolic, and yet concrete, proximity of sacrum to the sphere of profanum is one of the founding aspects of the earliest cultures.

[89]C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*. p.87

eventually, a mere *sign*.

Put differently, a *command* is meaningful only in so far as it is not *dissociated* from its *origin*. It has unconditional validity only for the one who hears it. The living relation to the *actual* person is its true nature. Stripping *symbolic origin* of its intrinsically *invisible* character (that is, *externalising* it in an objectified form, *dissociated* from the reality of its *manifestation* through the living person) leaves only arbitrariness of an artificial *sign* and the incomprehensible 'so it is'. Such *symbols* may preserve some element of the mystical character, but they lose their *commanding* force. They may then function as mere messages, *signs* pointing to *another world* in an indifferent, anonymous way. This is what happens to *symbols*, whether in literature, painting or mythology, when they have been *dissociated* from their *invisible* meaning. They appear as arbitrary. Empty *symbols* are the *original commands* turned by tradition, culture, repetition or personal estrangement into *mere indications*, pointers towards nothing specifically discernible and therefore devoid of any concrete meaning. Their originally *vague* meaning and their lack of any identifiable referent turn into lack of meaning and emptiness of denotation. At best, they only try – deficiently and unsuccessfully - to indicate something vague, unknown, which "is never precisely defined or fully explained. [And one can not] hope to define or explain it."[90] But *symbol* never explains *what* it is saying – it only says it. It is a pure expression, totally open to misinterpretation, which in particular means, to being ignored. At the same time, it is entirely *clear* to the one who happens to grasp it, because to grasp it means to already know what it expresses – the *symbol* is only a means of *actualising* this 'knowledge', making it conscious. Hence "[t]o the scientific mind, such phenomena as symbolic ideas are a nuisance because they cannot be formulated in a way that is satisfactory to intellect and logic."[91]

1.4.2. The invisibles

There are things which do not belong to *this world* in the way tools, commodities, situations, daily objects, relations, feelings and thoughts do. There are things which are from *another world*, world which does not obey our dictates but which is the source of gifts and calamities surpassing our powers. They are from *another world* but this 'otherness' is not absolutely foreign, alien – *another world* is still the *world*. Although *transcending* the sphere of phenomena, of all *actual experiences*, they *manifest* their *presence* in such *experiences*, they too enter the horizon of one's *experience*. But even when encountered in a single moment, in a single *act* of *actual* consciousness, one always knows that what is so encountered is only a *sign* of something that is 'greater', something essentially *non-actual* which only *manifests* itself without exposing itself.

92.   The common feature of the unlimited variety of *concrete inspirations* and *symbolic* expressions is that they do not announce anything particular, anything specifically discernible. But they do announce. They *manifest* something *invisible*, something more than not only themselves but than any *actuality* of *an experience*. A mere *sign* "is always less than the concept it represents, while a symbol always stands for something more than its obvious and immediate meaning."[92] The *commanding* character of a *symbol* does not determine any immediate reaction. On the contrary, it only *inspires* to look for the possible ways of *actualising* the intimated *inspiration*, for the *actual expressions* of the *command* which, in

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[90]C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*. p.4
[91]Ibid. p.80
[92]Ibid. p.41

its undetermined open-endedness, remains unitary. It does not announce anything partic-
ular but only the *distance* to whatever it may be announcing. This *distance* reveals the
anchoring of the *actuality* in 'Something' which lies *above* specificity of *actual* distinctions.
It reveals the *presence* of some *sphere* rather than of any particular entities. *Reflection*
searches this sphere for the *visibly* discernible contents but it is always *aware* of inadequacy
of such attempts. This sphere remains unitary behind the variety of such announcements.
Its contents may be *vaguely distinguished* but, resisting any *precise dissociation*, remain in
the most intimate *unity*. *Invisibles* are the first and deepest *distinctions*, which remain in
the closest proximity to the ultimately *invisible origin*. Their sphere is like "the intellection
that remains within its place of origin; it has that source as substratum but becomes a sort
of addition to it in that it is an activity of that source perfecting the potentiality there,
not by producing anything but as being a completing power to the principle in which it
inheres."[93]

In terms of the figure from §1, p.98, the *invisibles* are the most dense nuclei on the
circle closest to the origin •, reflecting the part of the line to the left of L and right of R
which never enters the *actual experience*. They have no *objective*, nor even objectifiable
correlates, nothing *actual* can ever fully *represent* them, no *actual sign* can ever coincide
with them. The *invisible* contents may vary (say, depending on where, on the line, the
circle is), but the universal fact of primary importance is the very *presence* of this sphere in
our being and *experience*. The structural relation of this sphere to the lower ones remains
constant for a given circle and identical for all *existences* represented abstractly by this
figure.

The unitary character of this sphere is also expressed in its *absolute* objectivity. It is
not *objectivity* opposed to the *actual subject*, but one raised *above* it and enfolding it in
the element where no such opposition can be postulated. It is *absolute* in the sense of
not being relative to the contents of any *actual experiences* but being their constant and
necessary *aspect*. To the extent it is *experienced*, it might be called "internal", but this
'interior' is not opposed to any 'exterior'. At most, it is opposed to, as raised *above*, the
subjectivity of the *actual experiences*.

As Jung says about the archetypes, the *invisibles* are "sheer objectivity, as wide as the
world and open to all the world. [In the collective unconscious] I am the object of every
subject, in complete reversal of my ordinary consciousness, where I am always the subject
that has an object. There I am utterly one with the world, so much part of it that I forget
all too easily who I am. 'Lost in oneself' is a good way of describing this state. But this self
is the world, if only consciousness could see it."[94] Consciousness of archetypes, even though
it remains in the *actuality* of an *act*, involves suspension of the *reflective dissociation* into
subject and *object*. At the level of *invisibles* such a *dissociation* simply does not obtain,
because they mark the sphere where even the world and *experience* have not yet emerged.
Unlike the *qualities*, which characterise *one's* world and life, *invisibles* are *above* them and
one can at most live one's life *inspired* or, in a sense to be made more *concrete* in Book III,
determined by them. Their *presence* does not involve any opposition but is unconditional.
In particular, they not only do not have any 'outside', any *objective* correlates but exclude
their possibility and need. Sainthood has no *object*, just like genuine *love* does not have
any. They are not opposed to any 'outside' but contain the whole world 'within'. They do
not *act* on any *external objects*, for *actual objects* are not their *equipollent* correlates, are

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[93]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:7.40 [MacKenna's translation]

[94]C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. I:46

not goals of their *actions*, but only places of their *manifestation*. This constant *presence* of the *rest*, of *clear* if undefinable *inspiration*, and the character of expression rather than of directedness towards any external goals, marks the unitary and *self*-oriented character of the sphere of *invisibles* or, to use the old concept, of the intellect, this first hypostasis which "apprehends itself and is object of its own activity."[95]

In epistemic terms: "[t]he intellect's thinking is not true because it conforms to or corresponds to the ideas; it is true because it *is* the ideas, which are its thoughts."[96] As we saw already at the level of *mineness*, §66, the distinction between *the world* and *my world*, and then between *my world* and *myself* or *my life* is close to impossible to draw in a meaningful, not to mention *precise*, manner. Here we encounter the true Parmenidean identity of being and knowing. Of course, knowing and being must not be taken in the *reflective* sense involving the *actuality* of an *act* and *dissociation* of its *subject* and *object*. In the *spiritual* sphere there is as yet no such distinction. The differentiation of *invisibles* is the condition *founding* the very possibility of *experience* and of *dissociated experiences*. Without these primordial *distinctions*, no *actual objects* could ever appear. Consequently, in the *spiritual* sphere, at the edge of *nothingness*, being and knowing are synonymous – not because they happened mysteriously to coincide, but because they have not as yet been *distinguished*, because addressing *nothingness* there is not, as yet, enough material to *distinguish* the two. The *spirit* remains, since the beginning, "*above* the waters" and its *unity* is not affected by all the *actual distinctions* and affairs of *this world*.

94.   Remaining *above* the *distinctions* of *this world*, *invisibles* are *absolute*. They are not relative to any particular region of Being. Their *presence* precedes any *recognisable distinctions*, and hence embraces the whole person, before one can *act* and protest. They cast their shadow (or rather their light), as irrevocable as it is ingraspable, as intense as it is *indistinct*, on all particular beings and *actual objects*.

They remain thus independent from *actual* particulars, from any lower feelings and thoughts. They have no unique and well-defined expression because they can enter virtually any particular situation, any constellation of *actual* things and feelings. They allow almost unlmited variations at the lower levels which do not affect their *presence*. Love remains love independently from the feelings, *moods*, sensations one might experience in a particular situation. In fact, these more particular experiences will be affected by the love which *inspires* their specificity with strength originating *above* them.

The complete lack of *objective* correlate is thus here equivalent with embracing all objects. The *absolute transcendence* beyond any particular region of Being is not remoteness but most intimate *presence*, immanence. *Invisibles* can be called inaccessible only if by accessibility one means *visibility* of *precise* particulars, accessibility to the *subjective* grasp. Belonging to the personal center, to the very *self above* the *subject's* alienation and limitations of *mineness*, *invisibles* lie beyond beings but only in the sense of not pertaining to any particular among them. They are not exhausted by any particular being because they embrace all of them, the whole sphere of *actual*, *not-actual* and *non-actual distinctions*. A person is not holy 'over something' or 'in relation to something' – he *is* holy, nowhere in particular, that is, in his whole being and beyond it. A person is not damned for a particular *act*; a particular *act* can only reveal and strengthen the depth of damnation penetrating the person, that is, the whole world. One is not damned temporally, but forever. *Invisibles* penetrate the whole Being and lend their force and character to every

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[95]Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §20.
[96]E. K. Emilsson, *Plotinus on the object of thought*. 2;p.29

encounter with beings, to every *distinction*. They belong to *another world* but that world is not an inaccessible land separated from *this world* by an impassable barrier. It pours into *this world* its constant *inspirations*, remaining inaccessible only to the claims of plain *visibility*, of *external objectivity* and *subjective* self-confidence.

Lying *above this world*, *invisibles* hide the *virtuality* of ever new *manifestations*, like the 95. promise of eternal repetition, or better, of the repetition of eternity in time. They do not fall under the temporal dimension of *this world* – only their *manifestations* do. A bitter, tragic or trivial end of a love story does not mean the end of love. It is only the end of this *manifestation* of love, of this *experience*. Psychological difficulties notwithstanding, one may be equally able to cherish love, to long for its *manifestations*, to *recognise* and appreciate it when one meets it again. Psychological difficulties mean only that one tends to lose this ability, not that one cannot retain it.

Independence from time can be seen in all kinds of founding events in which a single *manifestation*, a single 'moment of truth', expressed and remembered in some *symbolic* form, *inspires* all future life of a community or a person. From the archaic ways of establishing the center of the new settlement – whether the placement of the totem, of the altar, of the temple tent – as the *axis mundi* along which gods intervene into the affairs of people; through the legendary foundation events, like that of Rome at the site where divine help had saved Romulus and Remus; to the laicized custom of commencing a construction by placing the foundation stone – *symbolic* expressions of the *presence* of the higher element accompany the events of foundation. This *symbolic* reference, by establishing continuity with the origin, anchors the *actual*, temporal event in the eternal element. For *manifestations* reveal truth which is not affected by the actual course of *this world*. Even if, at some later time, it loses its *actuality* and passes into oblivion, it still has left its mark which cannot be denied. It revealed something which remains *above* time, even if its *manifestations* and *actually* discernible consequences may diminish or disappear.

However, although *transcending* thus time, the *invisibles* are not timeless in the way of *objects*' which appear as if in a 'frozen time', on an abstract scene devoid of change and development. They are *eternal* and time does not contradict *eternity* but only, as Plato said, is its moving image.[97] *Invisibles* – *manifested* through all *actuality*, at the horizon beyond which it dissolves into *nothingness* – penetrate also time. They unveil in the sphere of *visibles* the order which remains *above* it, but which also embraces and enriches everything *below*. Every such *manifestation* reveals something *absolute*, something which is not relative to any particular person nor any particular region of Being but which, flowing from its *origin*, penetrates the whole of it. Every *manifestation* of *invisibles* reveals their deepest *immanence*, their involvement in time, their life.

In terms of our figure from §1, p.98, interpreting the interval between L and R as the range of *experiences* in the circle's life span, the changes – as the circle moves around – in the sphere of *invisible* contents will be only minimal (just like, when travelling, the movement of the remote objects is extremely slow). "Whereas we think in periods of years, the unconscious thinks and lives in terms of millennia."[98] The *invisibles* are the most constant *aspects* of *experience*: the movements of the circle involve major changes in the

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[97] *Timaeus*, VII. Strictly speaking, *eternity* pertains only to the *absolute*, the ultimate sphere of *invisibility*, the *confrontation* of the *nothingness* of the *one* and the *nothingness* of the *self*; the *absolute* contentless *fact* of the *presence* of the *origin*. But higher *invisibles* always reveal the *aspect* of *eternity* which has nothing to do with the 'infinite temporal duration', but only with the *absolute* validity which *transcends* time, space and any other aspect of *this world*.

[98] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. VI:499

actual contents (closest to the point where the circle touches the line), while the higher, *invisible* constellations remain virtually unaffected by the changes of the circle's position. Unlike changing *actual* news, *invisibles* are always *present*, even if not *manifest* in *actual signs*. This is the meaning of *presence* which is very different from *actualisation*. The latter involves explicit presence, *actuality* of the *sign* or *object*; it is a matter of the specificity of the moment which is dominated by a particular *sign* of a *visible* or *invisible* content. *Presence*, on the other hand, does not require any explicit givenness. It is the constant proximity of *invisibles*, felt or not, as if in the background of, and hence independent from, the *actuality* of our attentive observation. *Manifestations* are *aspects* of such *actual experiences* in which *presence* comes forth and becomes strongly *experienced*, even if it does not become the *actual object* of these *experiences*.

96.   The ultimately eternal is the ultimately *invisible nothingness* of the *origin*. The unitary sphere of *invisibles* is the first differentiated layer surrounding this *origin*. Although it marks only a stage on the continuous line leading to the *visible* contents of *actual experiences*, it *transcends* essentially such contents. A mark of this *transcendence*, of this essential *non-actuality*, is the same as of the unitary character of this sphere: the impossibility to capture its *distinctions* in the *actual*, unambiguous terms of *reflective precision*.

    To be *invisible* is to be *essentially non-actual*, is to be a *distinction* which can never be fully embraced – as a *concept* or *an experience* – within the *horizon of actuality*. "The gentle flame of eye did chance to get//Only a little of the earthen part."[99] Complexity of earthly *distinctions* escapes our grasp, hidding always *more distinctions* beyond the horizon of our apprehension. But *invisibles* do not mark only *more distinctions* which, in due time, might be perhaps uncovered. They mark *distinctions* of a different kind, *distinctions* without anything distinguished, where the fact of distinction and the distinguished content are not distinct. They are appearances without objects, phenomena without the noematic correlates, powers without any identifiable center. They "spring from a deep source that is not made by consciousness and is not under its control. In the mythology of earlier times, these forces were called *mana*, or spirits, demons, and gods. They are as active today as they ever were."[100]

    In terms of our figure from §1, the closeness to the *origin* means the inseparable connections, dense beyond the possibility of *dissociate re-cognitions*.[101] In terms of *actual reflection* we like to consider the problem of freedom, then of truth, then of meaning, then of love, each for itself. But we very quickly realise that to the degree we succeed in such a *dissociation*, the treatment and the results become so much more sterile. Any attempt to capture the 'essence' of love, sainthood, damnation or the like, to draw a border separating it definitely from other such elements, is immediately accompanied by the *awareness* of non-finality and some degree of arbitrariness. Each *invisible* "contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all [...] In our real all is part rising from part and nothing can be more than partial; but There each being is an eternal product of a whole and is at once a whole and an individual manifesting as part but, to the keen vision There, known for the whole it is."[102]

    Gathered densely in the unitary sphere closest to the *origin*, they can not be *precisely*

[99]Empedocles DK 31B85

[100]C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious.* p.71

[101]Cf. comments in Book I on figure in §117, especially, §119 and the footnote 98, p.75.

[102]Plotinus, *Enneads.* V:8.4 [MacKenna's translation]

differentiated from each other. They can, at best, be recognised as *commands* beyond the *symbolic* expressions: *commands* which do not dictate but *inspire*, overflowing with meanings which all point toward the *invisible unity* but which never reach any final form. The impossibility of *precise* division and description is due to this surplus of meaning flowing into an *invisible* once we attempt to isolate it from its surrounding. They simply can not be meaningfully *dissociated* from each other, even if some patterns seem to be discernible. "It is a well-nigh hopeless undertaking to tear a single archetype out of the living tissue of the psyche; but despite their interwovenness they do form units of meaning that can be apprehended intuitively."[103] This 'inuitive apprehension' amounts exactly to a discernment which cannot be completed in a *dissociation*. But the impossibility of drawing *reflective dissociations* does not mean the lack of any *distinctions*. *Invisibles* remain inaccessible to the *dissociated* categories of *reflective* thinking for the "diversity within the Authentic depends not upon spatial separation but sheerly upon differentiation; all Being, despite this plurality, is a unity still; «Being neighbours Being»; all holds together."[104] This *original unity* is no longer *one*, but involves already some differentiation: too weak to be grasped *reflectively*, but thoroughly real and effective. The *invisibles*, "the objects of intellection – identical in virtue of the self-concentration of the principle which is their common ground – must still be distinct each from another; this distinction constitutes Difference"[105] or, perhaps, *Différance*. And yet, the sphere of *invisibles*, although differentiated, is also unitary and indivisible. "All are one there and yet are distinct"[106] sounds certainly offending to the *reflective* axiom of non-contradiction. It does not, however, involve any contradiction but only two levels of experience: the 'intuitive apprehension' of differences and the impossibility of drawing *reflectively precise* borders between them.

The inexpressibility in *precise concepts* means essential irreducibility of *invisibles* to *actual* images. They can be *symbolised* but, as we have observed, *symbolic* relation remains empty and arbitrary if it is not accompanied by some *inspiration*. And *inspiration* refers exactly to the higher element which, calling for an *expression*, escapes any reduction. The characteristic of a genuine *symbolic* relation is, on the one hand, the connection of the image with its source and, on the other hand, the entire lack of reduction, of the identification or even similarity of the higher and the lower, of the *non-actual origin* and the *actual* experience. The former inspires the believer as much as the latter annoys the sceptic.

This irreducibly makes the *signs* of *invisibles*, when seen from the perspective of *actuality*, the most empty pointers, apparently arbitrary and unrelated to whatever they are pointing to. It is typical of all kinds of rituals, hymns, Song of the Songs, love poetry, and the vast mystical literature with its invocations, prayers and praising – a sceptic can, perhaps, accept them as inadequate *expressions* of experiences and attitudes, but not as *descriptions* of whatever they are praising. As Heidegger might have put it, *invisibles* ap-

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[103]C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. IV:302

[104]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:4.4 [MacKenna's translation] In the language of Eriugena, the primordial causes are one, although their *manifestations* vary, and so one speaks about them in plural. "For there is in them the inexpressible unity and the indivisible and incomposite harmony which go beyond every combination of parts whatever [...] before they entered into the plurality of the *spiritual* essences no created intellect could know of them what they were [...] [They] are always invisible and dark." [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. II:550BC;550D/551A;551B/C] They are comprehended by the intellect, through which they pass to reason before being diversified by the senses: "everything which the intellect by its gnostic view of the primordial causes impresses upon its art, that is, its reason, it distributes through the sense [...] All essences are one in the reason; in sense they are divided into different essences." [Ibid. II:577ABCD/578A]

[105]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:1.4 [MacKenna's translation]

[106]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:9.6 [MacKenna's translation]

pear only (as) disappearing, they are *present* without becoming *actual – distinctions* which immediately melt into one another and dissolve in the ever *present rest* of *invisibility* surrounding all *actuality*. Their whole and only possible objective, *actual* determination is to *manifest* – to point towards an inexhaustible source, ever indeterminate and forever distinct from all *distinctions*.

The irreducibility to *actuality* concerns not only a *symbolic* expression but any *actual experience*. As long as such *experiences* serve as the only measure of convincing us about anything, we can at best encounter *vague*, and hence never sufficient analogues, momentaneous feelings of 'oneness', mystical union, *coincidentia oppositorum*, which can only, and only at best, leave a mark, a *vague trace*, as they disappear from the *horizon of actuality*. These are only pale, even if intense, *actual* reflections of something which remains *essentially* – and hence forever – *invisible*. Openness to such experiences is one thing. But "[i]t is not possible to draw near even with the eyes, or to take hold of [it/him] with our hands, which in truth is the best highway of persuasion into the mind of man."[107] A search and constant thirst for such exceptional experiences witness to the confusion of the *invisible* and *visible*, the eternal and temporal, which feels entitled to 'being persuaded' of the *invisible presence* by means of the *visible signs*.

98. The irreducibility of *invisibles* to the *actual* determinations involves thus a series of aspects constituting their *vertical transcendence above* the *actuality*: *invisibles* can not be *precisely dissociated* from each other; they are *vague* and hardly identifiable; lacking any final, definite form, they are inexhaustible by the *actual* phenomena. However, as we have observed several times, the *vertical transcendence* does not mean any foreign remoteness but, on the contrary, the most *concrete presence*. *Concreteness* is the anchoring in the *origin*, which anchoring happens through the sphere of *invisibles*, I:§138. Evading *precise, conceptual* determinations, *invisibles* are not prone to *externalisation*, can not be turned into *objects* which are the more abstract and impersonal the more *precise* they are. They remain forever 'internal'.

Their *concreteness* is, in fact, *concreteness* of the personal *existence* which is constituted by two, apparently contradictory, *aspects*. On the one hand, it is the uniqueness of *birth* and *confrontation* which, in the *existential* order of *founding*, raises a unique world. On the other hand, this uniqueness is the universal aspect which every *existence shares* with all others as it emerges from the same *one* into the same, *shared* world.

Each person is an unrepeatable, that is, original source of variations, always unique variations over the same theme of *existential confrontation* which begins (just after *the* beginning) with the *invisibles*. Nobody can teach anybody exactly what love means and how to love except, possibly to some extent, by the very example, by offering the *experience* of love. Nobody can teach anybody exactly what it means to be a mother or father, for even the best (or worst) examples may eventually result in one being quite the opposite when playing the role oneself. Even the destitute children raised without one or both of the parents, know what motherhood and fatherhood means, if not in other ways then simply by living their lack and thirsting for them.

Human *existence* is a repetition, but a repetition of the unrepeatable. It is a repetition of the necessity to live one's life, accepting this most personal *gift*, and to live it from its unique source. *Concrete* life does not amount to 'filling in' the abstract 'form of human nature' with the actual 'matter', not to mention, the actual sensations. If we were to use such distinctions, we would say that it amounts to actually finding this very form, to

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[107]Empedocles 31B133.

forming it by drawing the borders – new or old – anew. This drawing of the borders is not any 'matching' of the particular contents to the pre-existing 'forms'. It affects equally the *visible* and the *invisible* sphere, involving their most intimate reciprocity and *concreteness*.

We can learn (from others, from the books) to understand many things, some *distinctions* between hate, love, friendship, indifference..., between hospitality, generosity, magnanimity, benevolence, largesse, lavishness, wastefulness, squander...But to live, it does not suffice to *actually* know, we must also draw these *distinctions* ourselves. To draw them amounts to *recognising* the particular *actualities* in their terms, as friendly or unfriendly, as an expression of love or not, as an *act* of hostility or a mere misunderstanding. To live is to *recognise actual* situations as *signs*. Was his smile, his remark, an expression of understanding, of sympathy, of irony, of superiority? Answers to such questions (only seldom stated explicitly) are not arbitrary because they arise as the results of *recognising* the *actual* events as *signs* terminating the respective *traces*, which originate in and lead back to the differentiated but hardly distinguishable sphere of *shared invisibles.*

So far, one might probably still see here only 'filling in' the abstract 'forms of invisibles' with particular contents. However, the interesting part only begins here because there is no given and pre-defined way of connecting the two spheres. The answers to such questions are not arbitrary but they are not determined either. The way of classifying the *actualities* affects also the *invisible distinctions* – not by making them *concrete*, because they always are so, but by drawing them at some *actual* limits, by bringing them down to earth. *Invisibles* live only through their *manifestations* and can be *dissociated* from them only by abstracting *reflection.* I may have a *vague* understanding of what friendship means and then, confronted with an act of minor opposition or egoism, conclude: no, if he could do *that*, he can not possibly be my friend, he can not possibly be a friend. There is, fortunately, no recipe-book for drawing such conclusions, and this is an aspect of *concreteness*, of repeating the unrepeatable. We do not live among shadowy images but in the middle of the highest realities. Saying "friendship" everybody will understand (or misunderstand) something, even if we disagree whether this particular conclusion, in this particular case was justified. We do not know where the borders go but we must draw them. Drawing the borders in *actual* situations we as if define, again and again, what friendship – as distinct from all that it is not – is.

We do not know exactly and *precisely* what friendship is. Yet, without knowing it at all, could we have friends? After some time, the friend who did *that* and whom I declared not-my-friend, turns out to be the most worthy person whose act followed from the most genuine friendship or, perhaps, from some restraining circumstances or passing problems. Even more, I may not only learn about some earlier unknown circumstances but may realise that the act does not actually contradict friendship after all, that its intension and significance was genuine friendhisp which only did not fit my (mis)understanding. He turns out to be, and to have been all the time, my true friend, and friendship acquires a new 'essence', the border separating it from all the rest becomes re-adjusted.

In this tension between the non-arbitrariness of *invisibles* and the constant need to find their *actual signs* lies the whole sphere of *concrete* freedom. It is not freedom to invent and decide, but to find and *recognise*; for instance, to *recognise* friendship and generosity where one could earlier see only enmity and egoism. Such *recognitions* amount to a true, if secondary, creation, which will be considered in Book III.

The *concreteness* of *invisibles* can be thus said to lie in the structure of the *existential* 99. *confrontation* making every *actuality* a terminus of the *trace* leading to the *invisible origin.*

But since the *invisible distinctions* lack any *precise* borders, this puts also an obligation – *existential* and not moral one – on the *actual subject* to recognise the *actual* situations as the *signs* of *invisibles*, to draw *actual distinctions* as expressions of the *invisible* ones.

Like Platonic forms, *invisibles* belong to the *other world* which *transcends this* one. But unlike the Platonic forms, they are not for this reason other-worldly entities, existing independently beyond the world of *concrete experience*. They are fully *experienced* and exist only through *actual manifestations*. Their *transcendence* means only that they neither are *objects* of *actual experiences* nor are reducible to such *objects*. But neither are *invisibles* abstracted from the *actual experiences* as their common features or concepts. *Actual* instances are usually too few and distinct instances may have nothing *visible* in common. One cannot be damned twice, just like one cannot commit suicide twice. There is no such thing as multiple 'instances' of love from which one could abstract any *precise concept*. There is not even *any experience of* love (even if grammar and habit allow us to speak this way) – there is only *experiencing love, participation* in something greater than onself, which can be complete even if, or rather only if, *experienced* only once.

This is much more adequate context for the application of Plato's *anamnesis* simile then the field of *concepts*, essences and generalities. *Invisibles*, the *eternal* elements of *absolute* validity, pertain to everybody's *experience*. They form the sphere of *shared* contents which *founds* the possibility of the genuine communion – with others as much as with the *origin* (Book III) and, in particular, of the *visible actuality* with something of which it reminds. We lack *precise concepts* of love, sainthood, hatred, but once we encounter them in *experience*, we do *recognise* them. And even if specificity and definiteness of such a *recognition* may intially leave much space for refinements, we *recognise* them already the first time we meet them. Encountering love, hatred, mystical experience, spiritual strength, we suddenly 'remember'. We never know for sure, at least not at once: is *this* love or not, is *this* sainthood or not. But the very doubt whether this is *it*, witnesses to the fact of *recognition* and, above all, to the *presence* of something which might be so *recognised*. Even if we never experienced it before, we know (*vaguely* and *imprecisely*) what we are meeting now for the first time. The doubt is almost unavoidable because it only reflects the complete lack of any universal and *objective* characteristics, the thoroughly personal dimension of such *experiences* and their irreducibility to any *actual signs*. The doubt reflects only the *concreteness* of the *command* which calls us to *actually recognise*, to find the *traces* of the *invisible presence*, known long in advance, in the *actual* situation.

1.4.2.i. Invisible or unconscious?

100. The juxtaposition of the Neoplatonic remarks on the intellect and the Jungian reflections on the archetypes is, hopefully, self-explaining.[108] One should certainly remember that Jung and Plotinus diverge drastically when it comes to the description of the contents of these spheres. While the collective unconscious contains only the archetypes of the most primordial elements of human experience, Plotinian intellect, although it does not include negativity and evil, suffers overpopulation similar to that of Plato's ideal world. It contains "qualities, accordant with Nature, and quantities; number and mass; origins and conditions; all actions and experiences not against nature; movement and repose, both the universals and the particulars: but There time is replaced by eternity and space by its intellectual

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[108] A few remarks on the similarities can be found in H.-R. Schwyzer, *The intellect in Plotinus and the archetypes of C. G. Jung.*

equivalent, mutual inclusiveness."[109] And this is only the beginning, because all items listed so far are forms of only sensible things. Yet, the obvious differences of language and concepts should not preclude us from discerning the similarity of the general characteristics which is hardly disputable and hardly accidental. Modern sensibility is certainly closer to the language of Jung than of Neoplatonism. It is easier to recognise fundamental themes in the personal *existence* than in the eternal essences. But in both concepts of the intellect and the collective unconscious we discern the attempt to capture the idea of the transpersonal and eternal element which *founds* and penetrates the *concreteness* of *existence*, rather than resides in the realm *dissociated* from the actual *experience*.

The collective unconsciousness does not contain any *visible* contents capable of being grasped within the *horizon of actuality*, any specific *representations*, nor any mythological images or motifs. *Invisibles*, or archetypes, stand for "a tendency to form such representations of a motif – representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their pattern."[110] This tendency, lived *concretely* and individually, is common to human *existences*. It is collective not because it gathers abstract commonalities of a wide range of particular instances. It is collective because all particular experiences *participate* in *one* and the same reality which *founds*, and hence precedes, their *actuality*. This *founding communion* of the *shared origin* involves only *original distinctions* which "grow up from the dark depths of the mind like a lotus and form a most important part of the subliminal psyche."[111] Their utmost importance is the consequence of their *founding* role. They do not, as yet, involve the *dissociation* into elements which could be opposed to each other and could contradict or falsify each other: they *found* the possibility of forming such oppositions. Or, put differently, they do not as yet involve the distinction between the original and copy, between the source and the image, which arises only with the *distinction* of *actuality* from *non-actuality* and, then, of one *actuality* from another. They are all *originals*. The particular characteristics of the Neoplatonic intellections and Jung's archetypes are distinct. But their very presence and general character corresponds to the character of the sphere of *invisibles*. Being *invisible* and *transcending* every *actual* 'what', they can not be expected to ever yield to a univocal and final description.

With respect to the Jungian archetypes, we should however clarify one important difference which concerns equally the difference between the subconscious (or unconscious) and *invisible* contents. 101.

There are many known examples of scientists 'receiving' solutions to their problems from unconscious. Often these come from dreams, like Kekule's dream of a snake biting its tail or von Neumann's dreams of the actual proofs of his theorems. Gauss tells about a theorem which he found "not by painstaking research, but by the Grace of God, so to speak. The riddle solved itself as lightning strikes, and I myself could not tell or show the connection between what I knew before, what I last used to experiment with, and what produced the final result."[112] Intense engagement in some well-defined problem will often stimulate the mind to carrying further work, apparently at the same level of *precision*, although not involving *active reflection*.

Fascinating as such events may be, they are not exactly what we are aiming at here. What emerges in such cases are *actual* contents expressed *precisely* in the categories of

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[109]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:9.10 [MacKenna's translation]
[110]C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*. p.58
[111]Ibid. p.25
[112]C. F. Gauss [after M.-L. von Franz, *Science and the Unconscious*. p.383/385]

conscious thinking. True, they emerge from the unconscious, but it is only the process which is unconscious – the initial input as well as the results are thoroughly *precise* contents of *reflective* thinking. A slightly different aspect may be adumbrated in the apparently quite analogous experiences of artists. Klee: "My hand is entirely the instrument of a more distant sphere. Nor is it my head that functions in my work; it is something else …"[113] Pollock: "When I am in my painting I am not aware of what I am doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about."[114] Although the process is equally unconscious, the initial input is probably of a different order than in the case of the scientists. Often, there may be no discernible input whatsoever, not even a hunch, but a mere impulse 'now I should/can paint'. Although much conscious work may precede and be involved in the process of artistic creation, the consciousness is here concerned with contents of a different order than those of scientific consciousness. What is received by an artist is not a ready-made solution to an *actual* problem, but a 'guidance', as if by a 'directing force', during the process ending with the *actual* expression which so, perhaps after a 'get acquainted' period, is seen as a 'match', as a satisfying *actualisation* not of any preconceived idea, but of the initial, *vague* intuition.

102.   This should indicate the fundamental difference: the difference not so much between conscious as opposed to unconscious, as between *actual* as opposed to *non-actual*. The two distinctions are orthogonal, they cut the horizon of experience along pretty independent lines. One can be

1.a *reflectively* conscious of the tree one is looking at or

1.b merely *aware* of it (which would be counted as being subconscious of it, since the fact that one does not stumble into trees, although one does not pay any *reflective* attention to them, is credited to unconsciousness or subconsciousness).

But one can also be

2.a *reflectively* aware of the indefinable thirst of one's soul, of a vague dissatisfaction with *je ne sais quoi*, or

2.b entirely unconscious (only *aware*?) of it.

Our distinction *actual* vs. *non-actual* is that between 1. and 2., while the distinction conscious-unconscious is, in each case, that between a. and b.[115]

103. Certainly, there is a big difference between being conscious and unconscious of something. But what matters much more is that *of which* we are conscious (or unconscious), and what we make of the contents of our consciousness.

    Freud made unconsciousness pretty much the same as *reflection*, only unconscious. Its contents where repressed *conscious* contents. Only for this reason one might postulate (as

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[113]P. Klee [after A. Jaffé, *Symbolism in the Visual Arts.* p.308]

[114]J. Pollock [after A. Jaffé, *Symbolism in the Visual Arts.* p.308] (By the way, these two quotations illustrate also, in addition to the common aspect which concerns us here, the enormous difference between the intellectual poetry of Klee's and the uncontrolled expressionism of Pollock's paintings.)

[115]We gloss over more detailed differences like, for instance, that with Jung consciousness involves necessarily opposites, while with us only sufficiently *precise distinctions*, of which opposites are extreme cases. Also, since our consciousness spans everything from *awareness* to *reflection*, we have obviously the degrees of consciousness. The extreme of *awareness* will often be the same as psychoanalysis' subconsciousness. Perhaps the most significant is that Jung's consciousness is the *totality* of contents related to his 'ego', which seems to be simply constituted as the subjective pole of this totality. With us, *reflection* is always only an *actual act*, and the 'conscious ego' is nothing but the *actual subject* of such an *act*. The *totality* of such *acts transcends reflection* and pertains to *oneself* but in no way constitutes it.

done constantly by Freud) that 'id' should be replaced by 'I', that 'I' should keep bringing under its control more and more aspects of the unconscious 'id', as if the ultimate (even though impossible) goal were to eradicate the latter making all its contents *visible*. The main complication in this extension of consciousness was a complex of mechanisms working to 'hide' the unconscious (though always principally *visible*) contents. Thus, for instance, for the dream interpretation, one had to invent a 'censor', a function of the psyche which twisted and confused all the *precise* contents of unconscious in order to hide them from consciousness. But the "form that dream takes is natural to the unconscious because the material from which they are produced is retained in the subliminal state in precisely this fashion."[116] It is natural in so far as the *non-actual* contents are not expressible directly in the *precise, reflective* form.

Even if to some degree unconsciousness indeed hides only repressed *visible* contents, there is much more which remains essentially *invisible*. Jung's departure from the Freudian psychoanalysis of merely *visible* but repressed contents, and his study of the collective unconscious, that is, of the transpersonal and not merely private and subjective dimension of the *experience*, is an admirable spiritual achievement of the XX-th century. The *invisible* contents which he finds through dream analysis carry this character of *anamnesis*, of something which, although appearing for the first time for consciousness, does not originate in it and yet can be *recognised*. "[...] I have found again and again in my professional work that the images and ideas that dreams contain cannot possibly be explained solely in terms of memory. They express new thoughts that have never yet reached the threshold of consciousness."[117]

The assumption of psychoanalysis (at least, in its folklore) is that there is nothing which, at least in principle, could not become conscious. The unconscious is most intimately *present* and we are *aware* of it, although there may be a long way from this *awareness* to the full *visibility* in *reflection*. The important thing, in so far as such a 'making conscious' is concerned, is that contents entering *reflection* still retain fundamental mutual differences. Becoming (*attentively*) conscious of the tree 'I did not see' is very different from becoming conscious of the vague dissatisfaction I have felt but did not realise. *Reflection*, whether of a tree or of dissatisfaction, is fully *aware* of such differences, even if they do not become its *objects*. They are *recognised*, so to speak, in the background of the *reflective acts*, in *self-awareness*.

The *invisibles* are essentially *non-actual* and not essentially unconscious. Yet, the consciousness of *invisibles* is of a very different kind from the usual consciousness of 'this or that'. The difference is established by the *distance* separating the *actual sign* from the content it signifies. In case of an *external object* like a tree, the *distance* is negligible. In case of Prague, it becomes more apparent, even if one sticks to thinking of Prague merely as a *complex* of *actual objects*. In case of the *invisible unity* of the world, of the *vague* feeling of the dawning love or despair, and then of the *clear* – and still equally *vague* – consciousness of love or despair, the *distance* is obvious and given in the immediate *awareness* that what one is *actually* conscious of does not capture that which one is *experiencing*, 'the thing itself'. Paradoxically as it may seem, the longer this *distance*, the more *concrete* the content, that is, the deeper it reaches into the texture of the personal being. With *invisibles*, the virtual infinity of this *distance* is an *aspect* of the *absolute concreteness* of the *experience* overflowing the *actuality* of conscious *signs*.

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[116]C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*. p.53
[117]Ibid. p.26

1.4.3. Transcendence

The *transcendence* of *invisibles* amounts to their *essential non-actuality*. They not only happen to be, like *complexes*, sometimes or partially *not-actual* but are *essentially* outside the *horizon of actuality*. They never *appear* within this horizon, because by appearing we mean an appearance *of* something, while here nothing definite becomes given. By thus *transcending* every *actual* appearance, they are also *above me*. They not only happen to be *not-mine*, while perhaps they belong to somebody else. Unlike *qualities of life*, they do not belong to some but not to others. They are equally *above* every one of us. But *transcending* particularity of every life and *experience*, they form their deepest sphere which envelops the personal center, the *invisible self confronting* directly the *nothingness* of the *one*.

104.   *Transcending this world*, the *invisibles transcend* the sphere of *mineness*. They are neither *subjective* nor *objective*. In their true *manifestations*, not involving any *object*, they do not involve any *subject* either, or rather, they erase the *subject*, «*aufheben*» it. But likewise, they are also neither *mine* nor *not-mine* and they «*aufheben*» also *myself*. Of course, they *manifest* themselves through *me*, through *you*. But neither *you* nor *I* are indispensable for their *manifestations*. Every one of us is merely their possible site, the place of their possible *manifestation*. The *manifested invisible* is not changed if it happens to be *actually* experienced by somebody else.

For an experience of beauty or love, it is not essential that *I* am their *subject*. In a sense, it is enough that they at all are. The *subjectivity* of an *actual* consciousness is merely the place of *manifestation* of their *presence*. For instance, creation of a beautiful work of art is a very different experience from its appreciation. But the beholder is given the same *gift* of beauty which was given to the artist. The latter was only the one who *actually* happened to bring it to the *expression*. *Manifestations* concern everything and everybody, they give joy to anybody who is able to *recognise* them as a generous *gift*. Such a recognition, however, is conditioned by the unconditional *openness*, by suspension of one's private claims and pretensions and by the acceptance of the non-relative validity of the *invisible gift*. "If you love a thousand marks which are in your rather than someone else's possession, than this is not right. [...] If you love your father and mother and yourself more than you do someone else, then this too is not right. And if you prefer blessedness in yourself to blessedness in another, that is not right either."[118] Every *manifestation* of holiness, of love is accessible to everybody. *Invisible* does not have to *manifest* itself through *me* if *I* am to find the deep peace and satisfaction in it, to experience its quality. They can not be grasped and so they do not have to be grasped. They do not offer any *visible distinctions* which might suggest attempts at understanding them. It suffices that they are – in fact, even if they do not *manifest* themselves. One can wish to attain holiness, peace, love and that is about everything one can do about it. *Invisibles* are not possible goals of any activity, they are not meaningful intentions of one's *will* and *acts*. Intending goodness one turns into a moralist, intending saintliness one turns into a hypocrite. For intending is relative to *oneself*, to one's *will*. *Invisibles* can not be approximated or acted upon. Any directedness towards them turns them into something particular, a specific motive or an *actual* goal and thus, violating their *transcendence*, falsifies their nature. They can be only *participated*, as implicit *inspirations* which putting uncoditional claims, require that *I* cease viewing *myself* as the *axis mundi* and, to the extent that *I* address

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[118]Eckhart, *German Sermons* 2 Tim. IV:2,5 [M. O. Walshe, ed., *Meister Eckhart...* 18; J. Quint and J. Koch, eds., *Meister Eckhart...* 30; O. Davis, ed., *Selected Writings* 4]

myself, *I* do so only forgetting *myself*.

Either there is *an experience*, a *manifestation* of the *invisible* which also makes me see *my* 105.
subordination to what is *above me*, or there is no such experience. This is the character of
absoluteness which either reveals itself completely or not at all. When revealed, it knows
no limits, in particular, no limits between persons who can *participate* in it, or the forms of
such *participation*. It is an inexhaustible potential for ever new *manifestations*, a surplus,
an untiring force which, fully realised in one situation, never ceases to look for new forms of
manifestation, which accessible to one person in one form, does not cease to be accessible
to all others in an unlimited number of other forms. *Love* without any *manifestation*
is hardly love, but in any *manifestation* and, not least, in any failure, *love* remains the
potential for new *manifestations*. Therefore it never coincides with its *sign* because, fully
manifested as it is, it also immediately overflows the *actuality* of this *manifestation* towards
the new ones. An *invisible* is a *virtuality transcending* every *actuality*, potentiality of ever
new *manifestations*. This marriage of *immanence* and *transcendence* underlies the crucial
feature of *invisibles* – they, and only they, can be genuinely *shared*.

Just like *indistinct* remains unaffected by all the *distinctions*, just like multiplicity of
selves is the primordial *communion* of the *one*, univocal event of *birth*, so *invisibles* can
be *shared* without diminishing. *Actual* goods, *objects*, *complexes* cannot be so *shared*,
because sharing them requires some kind of division between all parts which involves di-
minishing them. (Money is the paradigmatic example but this applies to the whole sphere
of *visibility*.) The fact that more people *participate* in *invisible* does not, in any way, di-
minish its quality, intensity and truth. *Love* can be *shared* without any restrictions, even if
its particular expressions and *acts* need to be limited to the *actual* context. But an *act* of
love, in addition to being directed and circumscribed within the *horizon of actuality*, has
the *rest* which is not addressed to any particular region of Being. If more people witness
to it, it does not lose any of the *love* it *manifests*; on the contrary, it only radiates the
more allowing everybody to *participate* in it. "All that is begetting in gods, emanates
according to the infinity of divine power multiplying itself and traversing all beings, and
its inexhaustibility manifests itself in particular in emanations of secondary beings."[119] An
invisible seed has no quantity. Like the five loaves and two fish which are enough to feed
five thousand people, so an *invisible* grain, of the size of a mustard seed, is sufficient for
any multitude of people.

This individuality conjoined with *sharing* reflects the apparent contradiction of unique- 106.
ness and repetition which we identifed in §98 with the *concreteness* of *invisibles*. Their
transcendence has the similar appearance of a paradox, in that it is most immanent, most
concretely experienced. They offer the ground for all *experience* and, as such, are them-
selves *experienced*. Although this *experience* can be clothed in various specific garments,
so underneath it involves always the primary element of the *distance*, of a sphere which,
only *vaguely* differentiated, remains *above* all *actual distinctions*. Experience of *invisibles*
is the *aspect* announcing in every *actual experience* the ultimate *transcendence*. They
lend thus all *actual experiences concreteness* by anchoring their *dissociated actuality* in
the *unity* of the *existential origin*. Their *experience* coincides with the *experience* of their
transcendence and reflects the elements which, in I:§131, we ascribed to the *one*:

- as the contentless indeterminacy, respecting one's freedom, the *invisibles* offer the
  experience of *nothingness*;

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[119]Proclus, *Elements of Theology.* §152

- as the unitary sphere endowed only with the inseparable *distinctions*, they offer the *experience* of *unity*;

- as the overflowing surplus and inexhaustible potential for ever new *manifestations* – the *experience* of the *origin*, the source of meaningfulness;

- as the *transcendence* unaffected by *my* choices and actions – the *experience* of eternity;

- likewise, as the *transcendence* and constant *presence* – the *experience* of *communion* and *participation*;

- as the *inspiration* and *command* – the *experience* of the *absolute* power

- . . .

1.4.4. Self

107. The empirical studies leading to the identification of some archetypical patterns, did not provide sufficient grounds for Jung to conclude the presence "in the unconscious [of] an order equivalent to that of the ego. It certainly does not look as if we were likely to discover an unconscious ego-personality. [...] Personality need not imply consciousness. It can just as easily be dormant or dreaming."[120] Indeed, "consciousness succumbs all too easily to unconscious influences and these are often truer and wiser than our conscious thinking."[121] This unconscious center, or rather, since no center can be discerned there, the hidden source of personality is what Jung calls "self". Its phenomenology in the symbols of 'wholeness', in particular mandalas, occupy a significant part of Jung's investigations which it is certainly not the place to review here. *Self* is the ultimate, *essentially invisible* source which remains always *above myself* without slightest traces of similarity to the 'ego-personality' – the archetype of archetypes, the contentless limit separating all relative *distinctions* from the *absolute indistinct*.

   As Ricour says, *self* can be apprehended only through 'text'. If we forget the hermeneutic bias towards the 'text' and interpret it liberally as *symbolic* expressions, also experienced *commands*, then the intuition seems to be the same: the *signs* of *self*, by their very nature, indicate *distance* to their *origin*, they *manifest* without revealing. *Self manifests* itself but is not reducible to such *actual manifestations*. Its *signs* reveal only, so to speak, its consequences, *commands*, *inspirations* – not any definable properties of the *self*. Its *manifestation* "is a sort of intimate understanding and perception of a self which is careful not to depart from itself by wanting to perceive more."[122] Plotinus refers here to the understanding in the moments of ecstatic union but it applies more generally. No matter what form *manifestations* of *self* assume, the attempts to perceive more, to *actually* see it, will never yield a satisfying result.

108. The *self*, the *trace* of *birth*, is the source from which all *my* personal aspects emerge and which *founds* the ontological unity of a person. "The Self can be defined as an inner guiding factor that is different from the conscious personality [. . .], the regulating center that brings about a constant extension and maturing of the personality."[123] The 'inner guiding factor', the 'regulating center' and the like never obtain any more specific content;

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[120] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. VI:503/508
[121] Ibid. VI:504
[122] Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:8.11.
[123] M.-L. von Franz, *The Process of Individuation*. p.163

any more *precise* description betrays immediately its inadequacy. Just like the coherence and relative consistency of my *ego* and my *acts* are grounded in the unity of *my life*, so the unity of *myself*, of *my world* and *my life*, is grounded in the *invisible* and *indistinct origin*, in the *self confronting one*. *Self* is the point in infinity, the *nothingness* of a point reflecting the *nothingness* of the *one*, it "has neither a past nor a future, and it is not something to which anything can be added, for it cannot become larger or smaller."[124] The *self*, the center of primordial *founding* remains *above* all specific *distinctions*. "For man does not subsist in these circumstances in which he now appears to be, but in so far as he exists he is contained within the hidden causes of nature after which he was first created and to which he is destined to return."[125]

This *invisible* point in infinity, the contentless fact of *confrontation* facing the bare *nothingness*, is in fact the origin of the idea of 'substance'. We have opposed all talk about metaphysical substances with respect to the *visible* or material things. But Aristotle and his followers always included living beings among the primary substances, and here our characteristics of *self* may comply with those of a substance. *Self* is independent in the sense of being completely non-relative; simple and indivisible in the sense of being *above* all *visible distinctions*; timeless and unchangeable in the sense of facing only the *absolute*. "The *self* is always the same,//Already fulfilled,//Without flaw or choice or striving.//Close at hand,//But boundless."[126] Such descriptions can also be applied to the *one* which then appears as the ultimate substance, but we will return to some differences below in 1.4.4.v.

1.4.4.i. Self vs. My Self

Self is initially experienced as merely 'inborn possibility'; *I* can recognise the sphere of *invisibles* centered around the *self* and *manifested* through *symbols* and *commands* – addressed to *me* but coming from *above*. At the same time, *I* also meet empty *symbols*, in texts, art, other people's relations, which *I* recognise as only possible *manifestations* of *invisibles*, as ones which do not appeal to *me*; *symbols* which relate some *invisible* story but a story which is not *mine*, which does not exercise the same *commanding* power as the *symbols* encountered in *my* personal experience.

One might want to extrapolate the obvious difference between such *experiences* to a genuine opposition between their origin(s). One may maintain the distinction *mine* vs. *not-mine*, constitutive for the level of *mineness*, also with respect to the *invisible* things of the *other world*. Approaching the *self*, *I* can experience it as *mine*, as *exclusively mine*. The concrete material of the phenomeonology of *self*, its *manifestations* entering *my experience*, can be viewed as *my self*. As opposed to it, *self* is entirely contentless remaining hidden beyond and *above* these manifestations. But viewing *my self* as somewhat opposed to *self* results only from propagating 'upwards' the *reflective dissociations*. It is grounded in the *attachment* to the relativity of *actual* consciousness which insists on the categories

109.

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[124]Eckhart, *German Sermons* Mt. V:3 [M. O. Walshe, ed., *Meister Eckhart...* 87; J. Quint and J. Koch, eds., *Meister Eckhart...* 52; O. Davis, ed., *Selected Writings* 22]

[125]J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon.* II:533C/B;532D. The definition: "Man is a certain intellectual concept formed eternally in the Divine Mind" [Ibid. IV:768B] might require some interpretation, so let us only add "And I am afraid of those who define him [man] [...] according to those things which are seen by the intellect to relate to him, saying 'man is a rational mortal animal capable of sense and discipline' [...] But the concept of man in the Mind of God is none of these; for there it is simple, and cannot be called by this or that name, for it stands above all definition and all groupings of parts, for it can only be predicated of it that it is, not what it is." [Ibid. IV:768C]

[126]*The Ashtavakra-Gita.* XVIII:5

of *mineness* and *myself dissociated* from *not-mine*. Talking about *my self*, one tends to assume such a distinction at the level of the *invisibles* as if *my invisible self* was only a particular form, a particular case of *self* which then becomes an abstract generality. This, however, is to confuse *myself* and *my self*. It is to apply the categories of *actual dissociations* and oppositions pertaining to *this visible world*, to the *invisible* world which does not offer grounds for such distinctions. *Self* is *separated* only from the *one* – this is its true and only counterpart.

Everything else, every other *distinction* is *below* it and thus can be, at least in principle, incorporated into it. The '*my*' in *my self* is only *my* experience of the *self*. *My self* is *self* experienced as *mine*, that is, in so far as the *commands* and *symbols* are received with all their obliging force by *myself*, or else, in so far as they actually, even if not consciously, exercise their directing force on *my* being, also while this being is involved in the opposition to *not-mine*.

My self is my experience of the self.

My self is *self* seen through the sieve of *mineness*, even of *ego* and pure *subjectivity*. The *commands* address *myself*, and thus they turn *self* into *my self*, but they do not originate in *myself*, they do not originate in anything which could be characterized as *mine*. They emerge from *above me*, from the ultimate *origin* and mark the ever *present trace* of *birth* – *self*. This *trace*, *haecceitas*, has no principle of individuation beyond the fact of *birth*. In terms of our figure from §1, p.98, *self* is the point of *birth*, the pole *above* all *distinctions* which, as the point in infinity, is only reflection of the *one*. Marking the place of the *absolute origin*, it is the element of *eternity* in man, the spark of the soul, as Eckhart would say or, perhaps, the 'seminal reason', *logos spermatikos* which Justin Martyr, having borrowed it from the Stoics, identified with the divine element "implanted in every race of men [as if] part only of the Word [...]"[127]

110.   Opposing *my self* to *self*, based on the *attachment* to the categories of *mineness*, involves also opposing *my self* to other selves. It views *my self* as if it were an attribute attached to *myself*, my subjectivity. However, as the *trace* of *birth*, the contentless point in infinity, one *self* is indistinguishable from others. One point in infinity is essentially the same as another – they are only numerically distinct. This contentless difference of *selves* reflects the fundamental character of *birth* as the separation of *self* from the *one* – it does not involve, as yet, any particular *distinctions* but only this *pure* one. Different *selves* are only *traces* of different *births*, of *separations* which established distinct poles of the same *confrontation* with the *one*. Thus one *self* is not opposed to others. Their numerical difference is a thorough *community* of *sharing* the same primordial event of *birth* and being *confronted* with the same *one*.

Self, the point of *eternity* in man, is *present* beyond and irrespectively of any *experiences*, in particular, any *experiences* of *my self*, not to mention, of *myself*. Yet, this point marks only the *eternal* truth of *confrontation*, *self* is just the simple fact of *existence*. Consequently, it can not be dissociated from the *concrete existence*, not to mention positing it as any self-subsistent entity. As such, one *self* is essentially the same as any other – they are only numerically distinct. The difference, if one insists, between one *self* and another is just the difference between one *existence* and another, is the difference between one way (of *existing*) and another, which is eventually the difference between one person and another, between *me*, *you*, *him*. These differences do not in any way contradict the

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[127]St. Justin Martyr, *Second Apology*. 8

genuine *community*, but this will be discussed more closely in Book III:§§120.ff.

1.4.4.ii. The 'sense of self'

I am my self, *my self* is *self*, *atman* is *Atman*, but as we said in I:6.1.4, being is asymmetric 111.
and none of these can be reversed. *Self* is not *my self* and *my self* is not *myself*. In
particular, *being self* is not dependent on any feeling or 'sense of self'. The *experience* of
the *self* is not *an experience* of any given identity *with* the *self*. *Self* is *above me*, 'greater
than' *me*, it is never given in any *actual experience* and hence is not reducible to any
private sense of being *oneself*. But at the same time, it is also the source and the ultimate
site of *my unity*, the source of *concreteness* which makes experience into *my experience*.

One may ascribe to schizophrenics double personality. And this may be the case,
although it implies only the notion of personality allowing for such a multiplicity in *one*
person. It seems, however, that a schizophrenic suffers exactly because he retains the 'sense
of self', because he notices terrifying elements invading *his* being, because he becomes afraid
about *himself* and finds a temporal calm in alluding – perhaps in an escapist way – to *his
self*. People suffering from the Korsakoff syndrome seem to have lost the hold over personal
memories and the continuity of their being seems reduced to only the most immediate, last
minute's past. However, they also preserve some childhood and adolescent memories which
indicate that the reduction is not that total. But even if it were, even if the 'sense of self'
and continuity disappeared completely, as may happen in geriatric dementia, we are still
dealing with *the same* person. If such a person is our friend or loved one, we try to help
him. He is no longer *himself* as he used to be, perhaps, he no longer has the 'sense of self',
that is, of the continuity of *himself* exceeding the *actuality* of the immediate stimulus and
reaction, but he is still the same person, the same *self*.[128] And when we find out that
nothing can be done, we grieve over *this* person, over our loss of *him* and over *his* loss of
himself.

Saying "He is not the same person", we know that *he* is the same. He only behaves,
acts, speaks in a way which is not his usual way. Perhaps, he has even changed completely,
he acquired a new personality, due to some mystical experiences, intense work on himself,
some personal tragedy. But he *is the same* person, even if completely different. The same
applies to a person who has completely lost his memory, who does not any longer 'know who
he is', to one with a severe dissociative disorder, to an unconscious person kept alive under
a drip. If this person is my loved one, I will care and treat him with all consideration and
patience which I owe him – because he *is the same person*. When we respect the decisions
written in the last will of a deceased person, we do it from respect for *this* very person –
this person remains himself, is still identical to himself, even when dead. Hmmm. . .

Thus, not only no two persons are identical, the same person can be vastly different
from oneself. Just like it is not any *externally* observable criteria which constitute the
identity of a person, so it is not either any 'inner sense of self'. If we feel insecure, we
may need some criteria to *convince ourselves* that the person is the one he says he is,
that he is not a spy, that my friend who just went out is the same who is now coming
back, that my wife today is the same person as yesterday, even, that I am today the same
person as I was yesterday. If we feel insecure. . . or, perhaps, if we suffer from the Capgras
syndrome.[129] But what we thus convince ourselves *about* is something different than the

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[128]Certainly, forensic considerations may call for a more specific notion of a person, or rather of a legal
subject, but we are not dealing with such issues.

[129]Capgras syndrome makes the affected person believe that some close friend or relative has been replaced

mere conformance to any universal criteria. What is it? Where does the idea of *it* come from, if criteria are only to confirm *it*? The *unity* of a person lies beyond any tests and the possible criteria are as numerous as the number of different people.

112.   The asymmetry of 'being' in general, and of being *self* in particular, involves a relative independence of the higher from the lower. A loss at a lower level need not mean a similar loss at the higher level. One's incoherent or inconsistent *acts* can witness to some disturbances of one's *ego* but, unless all too frequent and grave, need not contradict the latter's integrity. Similarly, suffering an inflation of *ego* can as easily lead to problems in one's social interactions as to a realisation of deeper aspects of *oneself*. One can lose *oneself*, which we would typically equate with the loss of the 'sense of *oneself*', an existential crises or a personality disorder. But this does not mean that one has lost *self*, that one ceased to be *self*, because this is impossible.

Identification of *self* with the 'sense of self' is a sad reductionism, a psychologism of extreme *subjectivity*. The 'sense of self' (which, to avoid all too detailed distinctions and lengthy exposition, we do not distinguish from the 'sense' of continuity or of unity) is not something which establishes *self*. On the contrary, it is possible to have such a 'sense' only because there is something *of which* this is a sense. Eventually, it is the sense of the *eternal* validity and uniqueness of the fundamental event – *confrontation* with the *one* – which establishes *haecceitas* and whose *traces found* all the lower modifications of selfhood like personality, *ego*, *subjectivity*.

1.4.4.iii. A note on scattered consciousness

113.   *Self*, the personal *unity*, is constituted at *birth* as the fundamental ontological and ulti-mately *transcendent* fact. Its *visible* account would amount to the reduction of this *unity* to the *visible* categories and can not be expected. What we have seen in this Book is the stratification of personal being into levels which can be taken as various levels of per-sonal unity. Accordingly, *I* can experience being more or less myself. The *self above* any particular *experiences* of *my self* marks the ultimate *unity*. If I stay *attached* to *myself*, this *invisible unity* slips out of *my* attempts to *see* it and appears as a merely noumenal identity – irreducible to and unaccountable for in the *visible* terms of *mineness* and of the 'sense of self' but which, nevertheless, remains unquestionable. Engaged exclusively in *my ego*, I become a confused collection of traits, features, functions and inclinations. And finally, trying to account for *myself* in terms of *immediacy*, I become a pure *subject*, entirely depersonalised *act* of *immediate* reactions, as spontaneous as indifferent because *external*.

114.   The more we narrow the temporal scope of attention and the more *objective* we try to be in inquiring into the nature of the 'subject', the less we find of any subject. Humean series of impressions provide an obvious example, and so does Locke's person who, eventually, seems to become merely a "forensic term" without any ontological significance.

Yet, "we perceive it so plainly and so certainly, that it neither needs nor is capable of any proof."[130] The awareness of personal unity makes it hard to accept the attempts to dissolve *self* in a flux of *actualities*. This 'sense of continuity', not to mention any real continuity itself, is as perplexing for more recent variations of empiricism and nominalism

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by a deceiver or an *alter ego*. This conviction persists even though one can still recognise all the usual signs – the face, the body, the behavior, etc. – of the other.

[130] J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. IV:9.3

as it was for Hume. His famous argument shows, indeed, that *self* can not be accounted for in terms of scattered *actual* perceptions and ideas. No such events reveal *self*, even if some might *manifest* its *presence* – the *presence*, however, which for ever *transcends* the *horizon of actuality*. As "there is no impression constant and invariable", and so none which could give rise to the idea of *self*, there are two possibilities: either stick to the method which tells us that only *actual* impressions and perceptions matter, or look for *self* somewhere else. According to the former, people "are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions."[131] But why then, when no unity is there, does one need the words like "bundle" or "collection"? What or where is the boundary separating one such collection from another? For something makes it this 'collection' as opposed to another one.

An analogous problem faces nominalism of less empirical flavour. "Guess what: everybody was wrong: there never was such a thing as the self [...]" Certainly, there never was such a *thing*. But one still says, for instance, that "self is the center of narrative strategies" or of "narrative gravity." What center? Why does one find it appropriate to use this inappropriate word? Or, perhaps, "self is nothing more than a nominal handle we stick on the thread of continuity that seems to wind through our lifetime". No matter how much one would like to dissolve self in nominalistic arbitrariness, one keeps trying to justify the use of the 'handles' and to describe on *what* they 'get stuck' with the 'seeming continuity'.

A variation of the empirical attempts to reduce subject, or consciousness, to the *immediacy* of atomic givens employs nowadays the *complex* of the brain with its intricately networked neurons and the binary minuteness of their firings. No I is, of course, to be found there, so one postulates as if a multiplicity of 'minute Is', more minute 'subjects', one such 'I' responsible for every reaction and bunch of such 'Is', each working in its own direction, 'competing' with each other for creating an overall, unified, conscious experience. Consciousness thus explained seems to say "We react, therefore you are". Now, one might in principle admit the possibility of such an explanation. But this would not be an explanation of any unity which, on this account, arises at most as some epiphenomenon without any reality. For the account is driven by the following principle for distribution of the labels "real" and "unreal": to be 'real', an x must be determinate, and determinate means that it is decidable whether something is x or not.[132] This is the same principle we have encountered many times earlier which, in the search for the ultimate atoms, declares unreal everything which slips out of the *immediacy* of the *precise* determinations and, in particular, which can be *dissociated* into more elementary particles. In the present context, it certainly squares well with the cases of dissociative personality disorders, some forms of schizophrenia, and the like. Indeed, such disturbances manifest a dissolution of the 'sense of personal unity' and a fall to the level of *dissociated* impressions and sensations. But does the fact that the sense of self can be dissolved mean that *self* does not (or did not) exist? This not only presupposes reduction of *self* to the 'sense of self'. It is also like saying that, since the building *could* be destroyed, it is not real.

We should be careful here. For our claim is not only that the *unity* of the *self* is real, 115. but that it precedes the atomic units of the empiricistic reductions. We face here the difference between the *objectivistic* and *existential* perspective (which we can recall, e.g.,

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[131] D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. I:4.6

[132] The precise bivalence of the principle of non-contradiction and of excluded middle serves here as the ultimate criterion of 'reality'. Since self is underdetermined (or even may seem to possess contradictory characteristics), just like are the characters fabricated in the novels, both are equally fictional – at least, according to D. Dennett, *The self as a center of narrative gravity*, D. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, and other authors of this trend.

from I:84). For the objectivistic explanations, the *existential origins* are only subjective instances of some objective laws. However, the objectivistic perspective is itself a developed mode, an attitude which must be arrived at in an *existential* development. Its ultimate atoms are limits of *distinctions*, never finally determined, and exposed always to further refinements and adjustments. Determinacy and decidability of x being x are misleading depersonalisations of the underlying process of *distinguishing*. *We and only we*, you and I, are the ones able to determine and decide. Attempts to reduce everything to the ultimate, *objective immediacy* of the givens, end up in the most intimate, if only confused, associations with the *subject*, consciousness, 'mind'. The empiricist is there all the time, experiencing, determining, deciding, and nothing helps getting rid of *himself*. Usually, he reaches his limit when the 'atoms' begin to slip out of his view, when the well from the bottom of which he hopes to dig out the 'atoms', begins to seem bottomless. "We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched."[133] This is only another side of the fact that his 'atoms', his 'reality' are but a function of his view; not necessarily of any voluntary decisions but of his sensuous, perceptive, reflective, conceptual, in short, differentiating mechanisms which furnish the *distinctions* necessary for arriving at any 'atoms' in the first place.

The empirical and nominalistic bias, nourished by the image of reality reduced to the *immediate* givens, can not admit any unity beyond *actual experiences*. From the *objectivistic* perspective of *actuality* there is no such thing as the unity of a person; there is at most the unity of an *act*. The empiricist's creed – whatever can be *distinguished* must be *dissociated*, because it is independent – with the accompanying ontology of exclusive 'reality' of indivisible atoms can not, if carried consequently, accept any *unity* stretching beyond the ideal limit of *immediacy* as real. Even if it finds the understanding and intuition of *unity* in its personal *experience*, its conceptual apparatus can only turn it into a multiplicity of Is, minute, determinable entities, the utlimate (at least, until the next turn of the empirical wheel) atoms. We prefer to see in the inability to *see* any *self* not any proof of its non-existence but simply the limitation of the *actual* ability to see. It does not imply that *self* does not exist but only that if it does then it is *invisible*.

1.4.4.iv. Descriptive vs. normative self

116. The scattering of the subject, the reduction of its unity to a conspiracy of cells or some minute movements, like many empirical projects, may probably contribute to increasing the control over particular aspects of environment and life. But as the theories of reality, they effect only its reduction to more and more minutely *dissociated* elements. Dissolving thus the *existential unity*, they increase *alienation*. There is a curious analogy to such a reduction in the spiritual tradition. According to it, all who merely live their lives without any spiritual concentration and effort, do not attain any genuine unity but are only collections of separate and independent 'Is', drives and desires, bits of consciousness.

Visions of God, in His terrifying rather than benevolent aspect, involve often demonic manifold of strange, incoherent creatures which appear and act in a dreadful autonomy. "And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. [. . .] As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four."[134] The eye, Jung observes, "is a symbol as well as an allegory of consciousness."[135]

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[133]L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. 6.52
[134]Ezek. I:6,18
[135]C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. II:47

Quite common motif is not only that of the Eye of God, but also of the multiplicity of eyes, for instance, as fishes' eyes which "are tiny soul-sparks from which the shining figure of the filius [divine child] is put together."[136] Also, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."[137]

Such examples witness to the old acquaintance with the possibility of single aspects of the whole acquiring autonomy in their functioning. In a harmless form, it may be recognised in daily experience. At one moment, I think or feel this, at another that, and for the most I do not even remember what I did a moment ago. I make a promise today, and in two weeks I forget what I promised, the situation has changed so that I act as if I never promised anything. I go around *thinking* that I am one person but, on a closer *reflection*, there is nothing *actual* which could account for this unity. It is dissolved in the multiplicity of transient moods, thoughts, actions and reactions.

But such harmless flow of *experience* without any *reflectively* identifiable center of unity, can also acquire more dramatic forms. As a bushman can 'lose his soul', so *I* can lose contact with *my self*, *I* can lose *myself*, dissolve into a multiplicity of *egos*, and suffer the associated personal and social problems. (Or, perhaps, it would only be suffering of these *egos*?) The multiple *egos*, acquiring the character of independent selves, degenerate into an autonomy of various lower functions. But even if, *objectively*, the relative autonomy of various lower functions is a fact, it would not help me (that is, them) the least even to lit a cigarette when I am (they are) feeling like having one (which one? what one?). The actual multiplicity of *egos* and their relative autonomy is a fact which only calls for the stronger active effort in order to maintain *concrete* personal *unity*. It would be hard to deny relative autonomy of various lower functions, not to mention cellular or molecular processes in the body. But if we forget the little word "relative", if such an autonomy is a *dissociation* of elements unrelated in any unifying whole, it becomes like demons which threaten, as they always did, with the abruptness of their uncoordinated movements, with the disorganised hysteria of a herd of pigs which "rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water."[138]

Self is the ontological *foundation* of the *unity* of the person which is independent from 117. the autonomy of lower functions or from any sense *I myself* might have of this *unity*. Yet, a strong personality will have a strong 'sense of self' and it is certainly desirable to have such a sense. This sense, the 'inborn possibility' of the *experience* of such a *unity*, of the continuous and lasting *presence*, is something we can recognise as the normative aspect of the *self*. This normative aspect is but a reflection of the ontological *founding*, it is the call "Become yourself!", the call to *concretely* realise the ontological anchoring of *myself* in *self*, to live *concretely*, also in *visible* terms, the *unity founded* in the *self*. For it is from *self*, from "this central nucleus (as far as we know today), [that] the whole building up of ego consciousness is directed, the ego apparently being a duplicate or structural counterpart of the original center."[139] "But this larger, more total aspect of the psyche

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[136]Ibid. II:46

[137]Prov. XV:3

[138]Mat. VIII:32. It is tempting to quote several fragments of Empedocles: "Limbs wandered alone./Creatures with rolling gait and innumerable hands./Many creatures were created with a face and breast on both sides; offspring of cattle with fronts of men, and again there arose offspring of men with heads of cattle; and [creatures made of elements] mixed in part from men, in part from female sex, furnished with hairy limbs." [DK 31B58/60/61] These might, perhaps, be only images of creatures arising from the mixture of elements. "But in Wrath they are all different in form and separate, while in Love they come together and long for one another." [DK 31B21]

[139]M.-L. von Franz, *The Process of Individuation.* p.169

appears first as merely an inborn possibility. [...] How far it develops depends on whether or not the ego is willing to listen to the messages of the Self."[140] The *unity* of the *self* is felt and experienced only as *my self* and that only to the extent that *symbols* are received as *inspirations*, as *manifestations* of something which is in constant need of *actualisation*. There is a long *distance* separating the 'inborn possibility' from the *actual* challenge, and the *actual* challenge from truly and *concretely* becoming *one self*.

As far as the experience and *reflection* focused exclusively on the *actual* contents are concerned, the *self*, the ontological *unity* remains merely an ideal noumen. "The actual process of individuation – the conscious coming-to-terms with one's own inner center (psychic nucleus) or Self – generally begins with a wounding of the personality and the suffering that accompanies it. This initial shock amounts to a 'call', although it is not often recognised as such."[141] Recognising it as a call means to recognise a *symbol* as a *command*, a *command* to *myself*. The challenge may seem abstract in its *vagueness*, but it is the most *concrete command* of becoming *one self*, of seeking a *concrete foundation* of the *unity* of a person, as distinguished from its merely ontological *foundation*. Unlike the latter, the former is not something simply given by nature – it is a possibility which nature only opens before man. Strength is the ability to live the tension between the *non-actual* and *actual* not as a conflict but as a *foundation*, and this amounts to *recognition* of the direction involved in the higher *command*, to *actualisation* of its *vague* imperative as a *concrete* value. The strong 'sense of self' is only a reflection of the success in such a following of the *command*, its final *visible* consequence. It has a moral, rather than ontological or epistemological flavour, and is a goal rather than a fact. We leave this normative aspect of *self* for the time being. It will return in Book III.

1.4.4.v. My self, self and one

The *transcendence* of *invisibles* does not any longer offer grounds for distinguishing its *horizontal* and *vertical* dimensions. It can acquire horizontal character when, for instance, viewed only through the *reflective, symbolic signs*. To the extent *symbols* are empty, they do leave a space for progress, they do call for being 'completed'. But true *symbols*, the ones which are experienced along with the *commands* and *inspirations* of the *original signs*, reveal only pure and simple *transcendence* of essential *non-actuality*. *My self* is the field of *invisibles* and *self* is, so to speak, its peak. *One* is beyond even that. We address now these three stages of the ultimate *transcendence*.

118.   *My self* is *self* but being is asymmetric and so *self* is not *my self*. *My self* is *self* to the degree the latter emerges as *mine*. At first, the contents of experiences of *my self* tend to be identified with *self*. But no matter how little or much contents *I* manage to discern in such experiences, the *self* is never exhausted by them. *I* can never grasp it. True, contents can *manifest* some truth, they can suggest some kind of direction and thus, being directed to *me*, make *self my self*. No *self*, however, appears. *Self* can never be content of any experience and saying that *my self* is *my* experience of *self*, the "of" must not be taken as indicating the content, not to mention the *object* of the experience. *Self* is an *invisible aspect* of every experience.

We have been speaking about *commands* and *inspirations* in the plural form. But the differences between various *commands* concern only their content. This can, to some

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[140]Ibid. p.163 ['Ego' in Jungian psychoanalysis is a mixture of what we call "*ego*" and "*I*" or "*myself*".]
[141]Ibid. p.169

extent, mean 'what' they command, but primarily it means only the circumstances under which they occur and the way in which they are received and interpreted. Certainly, *distinctionless Angst* is a different experience from, equally *distinctionless*, mystical union; the sudden feeling that '*I* am not living *my* life' is very different in content from the religious experience of God's *presence*. Yet, they do not command anything particular, and to the extent they do, it is close to impossible to say what. One experiences only *that* something fundamental has happened, some sphere of tremendous significance has penetrated *actuality*, but *what* was it?

Self manifested in various experiences of *my self* is not related to contents of such experiences. But it is *present* as their force: irresistible, binding, *absolute*. Contents of experiences can be entirely *vague* because their *objectivity* is nil. It is only the shaking intensity, the tremendous power and significance of such experiences – of revelations, founding events, archetypal dreams – which, clothed in the more definite contents of *my self*, signal the *presence* of the *transcendent* pole beyond any such contents.

This power and intensity, irrespectively of the content, is what makes such experiences the calls, the *commands* to accept the *invisible presence above* all discernible contents. All *commands*, irrespectively of the differences in content are, eventually, one and the same *command*, formulated by the tradition as "Become yourself", but which we would have to at least parse differently as "Become your self", and preferably rephrase as "Become self." The adolescent questions "Who am I? Who am I, really?" are, too, expressions of this call, which does not necessarily come as a particular experience at a particular time. They expect answers, expect to find something which one could *see*, some *actual* 'what' which distinguishes *me* from others – and thus dissolve in *egotic* divagations. Such questions do not help answering the call, although they may be a stage towards it. For what is *commanded* is to forget *oneself*, to stop viewing *my self* as *mine* in opposition to others, to stop viewing *self* as an attribute of *myself* (which view marks the remaining *attachment* to *visibility* of *mineness*) but, instead, as the *foundation* of *myself*. "Become self" is a call to accept the being *I* have always been, but which is not and never will be *mine*. Speaking a bit paradoxically, it is a call to accept what is *above me* as *mine* without, however, turning it into *my* property. It is a call to stop *dissociating my self* from *self* without, however, identifying the two. For *I* am *self* but *self* is greater than *me*. Becoming *self*, accepting this greateness *above* as my *foundation*, amounts to *opening* the limits of *mineness*.

The archetypes (the primordial causes or the *invisibles* of the intellect) form, as we said, a 119. sphere, a *nexus* where different *aspects* may be discernible but are impossible to *dissociate*. Its various points can be, so to speak, activated but this leads immediately to the activation of others. They may be distinguishable, especially in *reflection* or partial experiences, but not in their operation. One archetype leads inevitably to another and this interconnectedness, the unitary character of this sphere, is gathered in the most primordial 'archetype of all archetypes', 'archetype of wholeness' – *self*. Irrespectively of the differences in the experiences of archetypes, of primordial causes, of *invisibles*, what emerges behind them is their *unity*, the *transcendent self*.

Thus *self* might seem the final station, the ultimate point beyond which nothing remains and from which everything arises. And, in a sense, this is the case: beyond *self*, there is *nothing*, no more possible *distinctions*, only the *indistinct*. Phenomenologically, it is therefore impossible to say whether something comes from *self* or from *one* because everything, originating from the latter, comes only through the former. We can neither see nor tell whether *self* and Godhead are distinct and if so, what distinguishes the two. The

self, the archetype of wholeness and of all archetypes, so often and naturally *symbolised* as a mere point, the point in infinity, marks the *invisible origin*. It is the point *above* all possible *distinctions*, the only point present from the very beginning, the *trace* of *birth*.

But although we are unable to distinguish whether the primal movements, the original actions emanate from *self* or from God, we are far from identifying the two. Individual psyche, the level of *mineness* with all *visible* feelings, thoughts and experiences can be conflated with God only by a psychological reductionism. Our scheme will claim even further difference, the difference between *self* and *one*, established by *birth* and constituting *self* as the God-image: the *nothingness* of a point reflecting the infinity of the line, of the *nothingness* of *one*. And then, the differentiation of life and thought, distinguishing the *indistinct*, conducts a constant dialogue with the *one*. Everything is but a reflection of *one* and thus *one* is always *present* (I:6.2.2), it is *present* only through *self*, and *self* is *one* because it is *separated* only from *one*. But *one* is not *self*. The *separation*, *birth* is exactly what establishes the *confrontation* of *self* with the ultimate *transcendence*, and what precludes their coincidence – precludes, that is, until death, which is the only return to the calm *indistinctness*. *Birth* does not establish a being which then, somehow, becomes *confronted* with *transcendence*. The *separation* of *birth* is *nothing more* than such a *confrontation*. There is no substance, no essence, nothing more to this fundamental aspect of being *self*, than being alive, that is, being *confronted* with the *transcendence*, *distinguishing* the *indistinct*. If the essence of *one* is *that* it is, the essence of *self* is *confrontation* with *that*. This *separation*, and the eternal primacy of *one*, is what we can understand by *one's transcendence above self*, I:§§127.ff.

2   Above and below

In Book I we followed the *ontological founding* of lower levels by the higher ones, the subsequent hypostases through which the *original virtuality* reaches the level of *actualisation*. This Book describes the *reflection* of these levels in the *reflective experience* which begins and proceeds upwards constructing the *concepts* from the *dissociated* units, but which is grounded in the ontological hierarchy. Our being is structured into different levels according to the temporal scope and forms of *transcendence*, and this structure reflects the ontological hierarchy of regions of Being, the generative order of hypostases. The hierarchy is experienced through different *signs* and their juxtapositions in any *concrete experience*, as well as by the *rest* which surrounds every *actuality* with the *traces* of its origin.

This section summarises schematically, in 2.1, the differences between various levels described so far in section 1. In 2.2 and 2.3 we then discuss in more detail the co-presence of all levels in every *actual experience*, addressing thus in a preliminary fashion the *concrete unity* of *existence* which will be treated in Book III.

2.1   The hierarchy of levels

120.   We have seen different character of *signs* pertaining to the (contents of) different levels. The modifications on this *trace* of *signification*, with their *original* and *reflective aspects*,

can be summarized schematically as follows:

	original signs	–	reflective signs
4. :	*commands, inspirations*	–	*that I am not the master*: *symbols*
3. :	*qualities of life*, 'soulful' feelings	–	*that I am*: *general thoughts*
2. :	*moods, impressions*, vital feelings	–	*that it is so-and-so*: *concepts*
1. :	sensations, instantaneous images	–	*that it is*: substances, *objects*

Although one is used to oppose, for instance, concepts to moods, we view them as the limiting cases of the *signs* at the level of *actuality*. The same applies to the *signs* of other levels. In each case now, only some common features are addressed which constitute their belonging to the respective level.

The varying element accross the levels is the *distance* separating the *actuality* of the *sign* from its content. This *distance* is marked strongly by the degree to which the contents of the *actual experience* are mere reactions. At the lowest level, the *sign* coincides with the *immediate object* and gives rise to a merely reactive response relative to a particular organ, a point of the body, a nervous nexus. Sensations are pure reactions, the *sign*, coinciding with the signified, is simply the elicited reaction. (On the *reflective* end, the *objective substances* are the basic 'givens', and in that their role is analogous to the mere reactions.) The higher we move in the hierarchy, the more *clear* becomes the *distance* separating the *sign* from the signified and, consequently, the less reactive and determined the possible response. *Moods* can be viewed as purely reactive, in that they are experienced passively, as invading and embracing one. Yet, they are affected by the *presence* of *not-actuality*, for instance, by deliberation, which defers the possible reaction and renders it partially indeterminate. The reactive character of *moods*, like of the *concepts*, is their subordination to the corresponding *complexes*. The *qualities of life* and *general thoughts* are not reactions to any specific situations. They announce something which can be only accepted, though what the acceptance means in practice is far removed from the *quality* itself. No particulars of any *actual* situation are determined by the *general thoughts* or *qualities*. At the level of *invisibles*, the *distance* becomes virtually infinite and the *symbolic commands*, having no *actual* content, act at most as *inspirations* for one's freedom to find their *actual* form.

The non-reactive character of *signs* is proportional to (can be "measured" by) the extent to which they are influenced by our attention and will. The significance of the lowest *signs* can be to a high degree determined by it. One can lessen the feeling of pain, virtually removing its relevance, by an effort of will to overcome it, for instance, by turning away one's attention and concentrating on something else. And, of course, one can easily produce painful *experiences*, just like one can arrange circumstances so as to produce pleasant effects for sight, touch or taste. To some extent, one can also arrange the circumstances so that they will produce agreeable or repulsive *impressions*. One can have some knowledge about kinds of circumstances which result in particular *moods*. But the higher we move in the hierarchy of levels, the less power one has over the respective *signs*, not to mention their correlates. One can try to lead one's life so as to give it a specific *quality*, but this *quality* is never entirely under our control. One can crave happiness without ever achieving it, while the regrettable *qualities* of one's life can be impossible for one to change. (One can, of course, always do something, but the eventual effects of one's *acts* and *actions* are not determined by one's intentions.) With respect to the deepest aspects of being like holiness, despair, *love*, one's will has nothing to say. They are *gifts* which one can neither refuse nor provoke, one can neither cause their *presence* nor make them disappear. At

most, one can try to invoke them, when absent, or ignore when present. In both cases, apparently without any immediate consequences but, in the long run, affecting one in the deepest way. Their *manifestations*, although not dependent on one's will, require a kind of *openness*, submissive acceptance. They are *commands* which call one to *reflect* their *presence*, to bring them down on earth. The *open* response is not any focusing of the will on their content, but merely a humble cooperation with these primordial causes in forming the *visible* world. We should emphasize here the difference between the *presence* of *invisibles*, and their *manifestations* in *actual signs*. Their *presence*, the ontological fact, is independent of our attention and cooperation. But the experienced form of this *presence*, the character of their *manifestations*, is conditioned by such *spiritual openness*.[142]

121. The *nexus* of *sign* splits at all lower levels into two complementary *aspects* of its 'objective' content and the 'subjective' counterpart. At the highest level of *invisibles*, this split is just the point of *original confrontation* of *existence*, or *self*, with the *one*.

in experience	–	objectified		in experience	–	objectified
4. : origin	–	the *one*		**4.** : *my self*	–	*self*, sacrum
3. : *the world*	–	universe		**3.** : *my life*	–	*myself*
2. : situation	–	*complex*		**2.** : body	–	*ego*
1. : the *sign* itself	–	*object*		**1.** : organ	–	ideal subject

As we move higher in the hierarchy of levels, we leave *actual* determinations. We lose *objective* categories, the *distinctions* become less rigid and *precise* and do not present us with any definite *objects* – they become *vague*. But by the same token, they become more intimate, they penetrate deeper into our being. The intensity of *signs* increases and so does the depth of satisfaction found in *experiences* – they become *clearer*.[143] A momentaneous elation, a simple joy over some particular event which passes in an instant, can be as natural and authentic as superficial. It does not last, it does not reach the depth of the person, it is contextual and localised. A peace of soul, a joy of life, humility of sainthood are *experienced* without any such localisation, independently even from the context where they may happen to become *manifest*. Entering the *horizon of actuality*, their *signs* give a deep, spiritual satisfaction which, reflecting their breadth, is as *clear* as it is undefinable.

Vagueness means also that the *clarity* of the *signs* is merely indicative, alluding, as if inviting, rather than forcefully demanding, imposing its *objective* presence. It is calm and spreads calmness. As Plotinus says it: "The Good is gentle and kindly and gracious, and present to anyone when he wishes."[144] *Vagueness* of the *signs* and *experience* of the higher levels is just another side of the lack of definite *objective* correlates. And this means that they are less relative, they are less restricted to particular regions of Being, are able to embrace more varied *experiences*. Eventually, the *invisibles* are *absolute* – free from any

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[142]The spiritual and mystical writings abound in variations over the theme of inner concentration, focused attention, presence of mind in the face of spiritual life. "Recueillement" is a technical term of spirituality denoting the action or fact of concentrating one's thought on spiritual life in detachment from worldly preoccupations. In so far as it refers to *acts* or facts, it can be concerned only with *manifestations*. Much of 'spirituality', especially its degenerate and more hysteric versions, have never managed to reach beyond the realm of *actual signs*. Book III considers the *spiritual* dimension of *existence* in more detail.

[143]Big parts of this subsection, in particular, this and the following paragraphs, are due to Max Scheler, in particular, M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics...*, M. Scheler, *Anthropological Writings*. One difference consists in that Scheler addresses almost exclusively the hierarchy of ethical values. Yet, except for the aspect of temporality and transcendence, the characterisation of the differences between various levels, as well as the levels themselves, are very similar. A more significant difference concerns the relation between different levels which here, unlike with Scheler, is not just that of *founding*, cf. 2.2.1.§126 and 2.3.

[144]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.12

limits of *objectivity*, not relative to any particular region of Being.

The lack of *objective* determinations, in turn, means that the higher levels of *experience* 122. are more constant, remaining unchanged underneath the variations of lower levels. A particular *mood* can allow a variety of sensations which do not change the *mood*. A *quality of life* will remain the same irrespectively of the variation of particular *moods* and *impressions*. Conformance to the *absolute command* will remain unaffected by any variation in particular *moods*, *thoughts* and may *incarnate* into very different *qualities of life*. And even a failure in conformance leaves the validity of the *command* unaffected.

Time acquires quite different character depending on the level addressed by *reflection*. The further down we move in the hierarchy, the more we approach ideal *immediacy*. In terms of objective time, it means simply shorter time. But objective time offers only an analogy of limited value. It would require to say that the level of *invisibles* corresponds to infinity of time, which is a rather poor picture. The further down we move, the more we approach the actual experience of *objective* time, while the further up, the closer we are to the *origin* of time. The level of *invisibles* lies *above* time in the sense that its *distinctions* are not prone to objectification and hence are not involved into the temporality which is but an *aspect* of *objectivity*. It is the level involving only essentially *non-actual distinctions*, that is, *distinctions* whose value and structure, if not the content, is not affected by the temporality of *experience*. As lying *above* time, they may be called eternal, while the lower levels are only a "moving image of eternity."[145].

Trying to understand the world in terms of pure *immediacy* alone, positing the pure *here-and-now* as the only reality, would imply that there is no time but only a point-like pure 'now'. Perceiving the world in *objective* terms of *complexes* and their relations yields the objective time, succession of ideally *dissociated* time-points. Perceiving it in terms of *mineness* or, more generally, in terms of a unity of a living being, yields the 'time of life' and, in fact, the 'lived time'. Bergson's *durée* is an excellent and most thoroughly worked out example of this perspective. Less inspiring examples are provided by some phenomenologically grounded existentialistic theories of time as unity of past, now and future centered around the ecstatic actuality of lived experience. Finally, *reflection* focused exclusively on the level of *invisibles* leads to denying the reality of time. Unlike in the first case, however, it does not posit the exclusive reality of pure *immediacy* but, instead, some form of supra-temporal eternity, of which *here-and-now* is but a manifestation.

	experienced – objectified time
4. :	*above* time – infinite
3. :	time of *my life* – finite and unlimited
2. :	time of things – finite and limited
1. :	'shortest experienced time' – ideal now
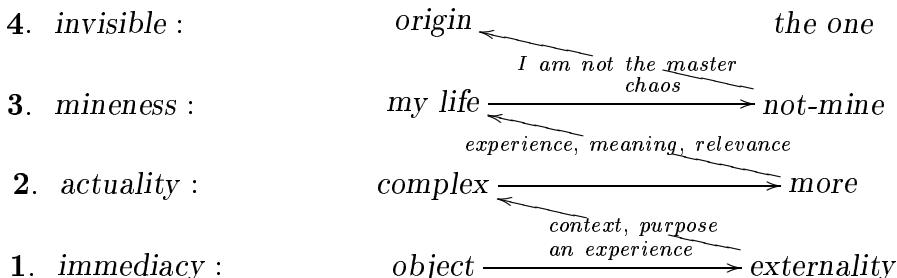
Although we tend to refer the *vague* intuition of eternity to the permanence of some ideal limit of atemporal 'objectivity', it is only in the *actual* passage of time that we *concretely experience* permanence. The sense of permanence is only another side of the sense of change and passage of time and it is naturally acquired and recognised in the *experience* of getting old. *Mundus senescit*, "The world has aged", is not *any experience* of childhood. That *this world* ages – and aging, withers – is only a reflection of the fact that so does its *experience*. This withering of the intensity of the *experience*, which one tends to ascribe to old people, is but a modification of the level from which old people *experience* their life. Old age simply experiences time (and the world) differently than the young one. The

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[145]Timaeus VII

approaching death, the knowledge that most things one was to experience have already happened, make one think of one's life as a whole, if not quite completed, than in any case as not consisting merely of petty *actualities*. The significant time span is no longer a mere moment, a brief actuality but years, perhaps, decades. The details wither but they give place to a new quality of *experience*, which with time becomes itself *an experience* and which younger people will simply find irrelevant, if they find it at all.[146]

Above all, the changes of the surrounding world notwithstanding, one sees that nothing has really changed, that something fundamental, even if undefinable, remained the same since the earliest days of one's childhood. One may recognise the same curiosity or indifference, the same feelings of wonder or disenchantment, the same *vague* motivations and fascinations. The difference is only that one has already seen all that before, that one knows that some things need time and thus single moments, enchanting and gratifying as they may be, are no longer of the highest importance. Shall we also mention the quite so frequent turn towards various forms of religiosity? It is not, however, as one often wants to interpret it, a mere fear of facing the death, or else a mere disillusionment and dissatisfaction with one's life (possible as these are). On the contrary, it is rather the sign of reaching the level of *experience* at which one realises the limits of *this world*, its insufficiency, if not vanity. The 'objectified' permanence gives place to the sense of *eternity*, not any infinity of time, but a lived *eternity*, the constant *presence* of *invisibles*, perhaps even of the ultimate *nothingness*, which has been strangely known all one's life. It is neither necessary to get old to meet such *experiences*, nor does getting old necessarily imply that one will meet them. But you have seen their signs in old people more than once and more often than in the young ones.

123. The *experience* of *distance* involved in the *signs* of all levels is a reflection of the form of *transcendence* of its contents with respect to the *actuality* of *reflection*. *Transcendence* is the *presence* of *non-actuality* and its *traces*. At each level below the *invisibles* it has two *aspects*: the *vertical* one, relating directly to the higher level, and the *horizontal* one which is a reflection of the *vertical aspect* in terms and categories of the given level. For instance, the *more* at the level of *actuality* is but a quantitative 'more' of *complexes* of which *reflection* 'knows', even if only implicitly or potentially. But this *more* is only a reflection of the horizon of *the world* and *my life*, which are as if projected into the objective context where all that is are *complexes*. The *more*, rendered as the flux of *experience*, throws *reflection* back onto itself and establishes meaning of *complexes* in relation to one's life. Similarly, the *horizontal aspect* at the level of *mineness* comprises that which is *not-mine*. This, however, is still a determination in terms of *mineness* and it merely reflects the *vertical transcendence*, the *presence* of *invisibles*. Schematically:

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4.  invisible :        origin ←                          the one
                              ＼   I am not the master
                                        chaos
3.  mineness :        my life ────────────────────→ not-mine
                              ←
                        experience, meaning, relevance
2.  actuality :       complex ────────────────────→ more
                              ←
                          context, purpose
1.  immediacy :        object ──an experience──────→ externality
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The *horizontal aspect* has always a negative character: it is that which is not *here-and-now*,

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[146]We are not concerned with the tasteless caricatures trying to the last moment pretend that they are experiencing the world with youthful intensity. *Attachment* and despair will be addressed in Book III.

not *actual*, not *mine*. Using it is the criterion of progress might easily lead into a Hegelian kind of dialectics. But this negative, *horizontal aspect* reflects only the *vertical aspect* which is known and *experienced* not as a mere lack, limit and negation but positively. It penetrates the quality of the *experiences* at the given level, placing them on the *traces* which reach to the deeper, that is higher, sources. It is this higher level, the level less dominated by the *actuality*, which is the source of the mode of *transcendence experienced* at the lower level. The *horizontal aspect* reflects the *vertical aspect* in the multiplicity differentiated according to the categories of the lower level. It refers thus always to the higher, *founding* element – but only indirectly. Its negative – or quantitative – character signifies, in terms of *reflective* development, encountering a limit – a limit beyond which the categories applied so far seem to lose their meaning, beyond which there is nothing left except, perhaps, a routine repetition stiffening the soul; a limit showing worthlessness of the things and categories which so far have been experienced as the ultimate. Encounter with the *vertical* aspect, on the other hand, is *an experience* of something fundamentally new, something which, at first, appears only as a *vague* promise, but which with time discloses a deeper meaning, a new way of seeing also earlier *experiences*. This encounter is a true *anamnesis*, a *re-cognition* of something which has been known for a long time, but only dimly and indistinctly, as a *vague* intuition, an indefinable *rest*.[147]

2.2   As above, so below

We have divided *experience* into levels and talked as if our life was composed of them, being but a . . . *complex*, a *totality*? But every life is an unrepeatable *unity* which is not constituted by various parts and elements. We are not four separate souls, but one, for it is not "a diversity of parts – if we have to assert that it has parts – which is distinguished in the soul, but a variety of functions and movements."[148] All such functions and movements are *actual* expressions of deeper aspects and, eventually, of the personal *unity*. Every *immanent* unity is *founded* in the *transcendence*, every *actuality* draws its vital juices from the *non-actual* roots. The *concrete unity* of *existence* will be discussed in Book III. Now, we will review only the more formal aspects of this *unity*, namely, the co-presence of all levels and, in particular, the *presence* of *invisibles* in *actual experiences*.

2.2.1. Presence and co-presence

It is common to distinguish various aspects of an act like, for instance, the intentional correlate, the pragmatic aspect, the ethical import. The *immediate* correlate of an *act* is its *object*. But being involved in the context of some *action*, the *act* has always also some goal, it has a pragmatic aspect. Whether the goal is immediate or remote does not change its character as the *actual* objective intended by the *act*. We have then distinguished between the *objective* goals and their *motivations* which, encircling the horizon of possible

<div style="text-align: right">124.</div>

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[147]The *vertical aspects* of *transcendence* endow the lower elements with meaning by anchoring them in the higher level. This could be described as what Paul Tillich called "forms of meaning". If one includes in this term "**1.** all particularities of individual meanings and **2.** of all separate connections of meaning and even **3.** the universal connection of meaning, then in relation to the universal connection of meaning **4.** the unconditioned meaning may be designated as the import of meaning." [P. Tillich, *What is religion?*. I:1.1.a [my numbering]] And the "import of meaning is the ground of reality presupposed in all forms of meaning, upon whose constant presence the ultimate meaningfulness, the significance, and the essentiality of every act of meaning rest." [Ibid. I:Introduction.c.ii].

[148]J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. IV:787B

actions, are themselves counterparts of *activities*, expressing the lived and, preferably, also the declared values, §74, p. 147. This level is much broader and comprises much more than merely ethical issues but, being the level of *mineness*, and hence of the relation to *not-mine*, it certainly embraces also the ethical element. Finally, every *act* is surrounded by the *rest*, expressing the *present* but *invisible aspects* which do not become thematically *actualised*, 1.4.1.i. Thus, every *immediacy* of an *act* expresses all the levels, carrying their *unity* in its structure.

125.   The higher levels of *experience* remain more constant and allow a large variation at the lower levels. The increased constancy (in the upward movement) is an experiential counterpart of the co-presence of all levels.

If I am in a good *mood*, I can accept a lot of small, insignificant annoyances which do not bring me out of this *mood*. In fact, the *mood* I am in will influence the way I handle these small situations, it will remain *present* in all these *actual* situations. Similarly, a person may remain generally dissatisfied with his life through all his particular experiences; no positive event seems to be able to change this general *quality* of his life. And again, this *quality* makes itself felt and efficient, *present*, in various ways in all concrete situations. Perhaps, by finding negative aspects in any, even most positive experiences, perhaps, by awaiting always the inevitable end of such experiences, that is, awaiting always for a bitter and unwelcome continuation. It would be too strong to say that this *quality* determines the character of all concrete experiences. But it casts its shadow over them, it moulds them in a specific way so that they seem to conform to the general scheme of things which pollutes all *actual* experiences.

But one should be careful with the criterion of constancy when applied to the highest level. For instance, the *quality of life* of St. Francis, his amiability and goodness seem to have accompanied him from the very childhood all his life, while with respect to his sainthood, the dream on the way to the Fourth Crusade marks a break and begins a new chapter. St. Paul, before and after the vision on the way to Damascus, was the same person and many *qualities* (zeal, dedication, resentment, *je ne sais quoi*) where present in his life before as much as after the conversion. The constancy of *invisibles* is different from the possible constancy (and transience) of their *manifestations*. It is not relative to one's life but consists in transcending the temporal dimension and the categories of *mineness*. There is nothing like '*my* sainthood' or '*your* sainthood', and sainthood remains sainthood whether it is *manifested* or not, or whether it is *manifested* in one person or in another. And yet, the *invisibles* are *present* in *any experience* as its deepest aspects, the *invisible* personal traits, the source which does not create the specific details of *actual* situation but merely lends it an aura and puts a personal signature underneath. *Manifestations* are only particularly intense and *visible signs* of this *presence*. The constancy of *invisibles* is independent from any personal and *actual manifestations* – it is their *eternal* validity.

126.   Now, higher levels do not create the specific contents of the lower ones nor vice versa. Each level, determined by its specific tension between *actuality* and *non-actuality*, has its own characteristic contents and ways of their presentation. The *invisibles* do not determine one's life. The *quality* of one's life does not determine the *actual* situations one gets involved in. The *actual moods* and *impressions* do not determine any particular sensations. The full range of lower phenomena can be *experienced* along with any configuration of the higher aspects. In short, the higher aspects of *experience* do not *found* the contents of the lower ones, in the technical sense of phenomenological founding (i.e., as necessary conditions).

But the higher aspects influence crucially the lower ones, they sink in and penetrate

whatever qualities may emerge at the lower levels. An annoyance is an annoyance but it changes its character when encountered in a good or in a bad *mood*. A joy or sadness of a pessimist is different from the respective feelings of an optimist. The drive and energy of a saint are different from the similar *qualities* of a person nourished by negation, hatred or bitterness. A joyful feeling of a person who is generally dissatisfied with life will still be joyful. Yet, this joy will be limited to the level of *actuality*. It will be, so to speak, 'blocked' if it 'tries' to penetrate deeper into the personal being; 'blocked' by a remainder of its transiency, by painful memories, or simply by the general dissatisfaction with life. It won't be able to spread over the totality of the personal being, but will remain localised. You might have, for instance, heard the difference between a short, nervous, almost involuntary laughter which seems to be disturbed by the immediate bad conscience, as if there was no *real* reason to laugh and one did it only because one could not resist it, and, on the other hand, a cordial, warm, full-blooded laughter which seems to flow from the very bottom of the heart, in which the laughing face is but an expression of the soul which embraces the whole world with its hearty laughter. In the former case, the *actual* level is not in conformance with the higher level of one's being and the inability for a hearty laughter modifies the *actual* one. It is still laughter, over the same funny thing, but it testifies to another personal involvement than the latter.

This penetration of lower levels by the higher ones in *an actual experience* reminds a bit of the founding relation. But it is not founding, in any case not founding of the *actual* contents, because the *actuality* of a given lower content, of laughter or joy, is not conditioned by the *presence* of any particular higher aspect – the former is only *modified* by the latter. This modification, this *rest* and aura which the higher elements extend to the lower, witness to the unity of *an experience* involving all levels.

An *immediate experience* is obviously involved in the context of the *actual* situation. As phenomenologists show, especially with respect to perceptions, the *actual* contents are surrounded by other, as they say, *mitgegeben* (co-present) aspects which do not fall within the focus of consciousness but which, nevertheless, are *present*. Focusing the sight on the entry door of a house, one still sees, albeit only subconsciously, only in the corner of one's eye, the windows immediately to the left and right of the door. Furthermore, although one sees only the front of the house, its sides are also included, *mitgegeben*, in the *actual* phenomenon. The question now is where to stop such inclusions. One knows that behind the house there is a park. It does not seem to be given, but is it *mitgegeben* too, or not? And in the park, there is a lake, behind which there is…It seems implausible to assume that all this is *mitgegeben*, for then all things ever experienced, an unlimited if not infinite number of them, would belong to every phenomenon. There is the *horizon of actuality*, which seems to circumscribe the scope of *Mitgegebenheit*. In I:4.3.1, §§64.ff, we had the problem with the phenomenology of time, which did not account for the continuity across the limit of *actuality* towards the remote past. Likewise, here we encounter similar phenomenological break in which what is *mitgegeben* dissolves in the emptiness surrounding the *horizon of actuality*. And as in the case of time, so also here, there is a *distinction* but no sharp border because we have to do with a continuity of *experience*.

Mitgegebenheit of the *objective* (or, if one prefers, noematic) contents has its limit which is the limit of the *horizon of actuality*. Somewhere, at the end of the front wall, behind the house, behind the lake, behind the park, *objects* and *complexes* cease to be *mitgegeben*, there are no more *objects* and *complexes* which gradually disappear behind the limits of the *actual* phenomenon. Of course, it is enough to redirect one's attention to bring in other,

new or expected *objects* and connect them to the ones *actual* at the moment, but we are now considering an abstract, isolated *actuality* of *an experience*, so let us not stroll, not move sight around. What is *mitgegeben* behind this line are no more *objects* but *moods*, *impressions*, feelings, intuitions, *qualities*. *Mitgegebenheit* becomes eventually *presence* of *invisibles*. *Moods*, feelings, *qualities*, etc. are the concrete forms under which the potential infinity (of things, of *experiences*, of *Lebenswelt*) is *present* in every experience. If we were to use the objectivistic way of speaking, we might say: they do not bring in any *objects* but only unified *signs* which comprise the overwhelming number of possible *distinctions* within the limits of the *horizon of actuality*; although they do not make any more *objects actual*, they make them *present*, by providing *actual signs* which are just multiplicities of *objects* comprised in unified *impressions*, feelings, intuitions, *qualities*. But the objectivistic way of speaking loses its adequacy as behind the line of *moods* and *qualities*, behind the line where even the *actual* feelings become blurred and indistinct, there are still *invisibles*, the *inspirations* which oversee the whole *actual* situation. We can illustrate it on our figure from §1, p.98. The *not-actual* points on the circle (above the line of *actuality*) are all reflections of the 'objective' points from the line. They belong to the *actual experience* but only in the form of the *signs* on the circle. And the closer to the sphere of *invisibles* and the pole of the circle, the denser condensation of these images, with the pole reflecting the infinity of the line. This density of the images, the density of the increasing multitude of remote points of the line comprised into decreasing segments of the circle, corresponds thus not only to the inseparability of *invisibles* but also to the unobjectifiable content of the *signs* of the higher levels *present* in the *actual experience*.

128.   The *concrete, invisible presence* seems to underlie the intensity with which Merleau-Ponty investigates the structure of sensibility. Although we might disagree with the almost exclusive focus on sensibility, in his case it reflects only the intuition of *presence* of the whole hierarchy of Being in every *immediate experience*. Let us quote a longer passage which describes this involvement of *immediacy* in the deeper and eventually *invisible* texture of *experience*. "Visible actuality is not *in* time and space nor, of course, *beyond* them, for there is nothing in front of it, after it nor around it, which might compete with its visibility. And yet it is not alone, it is not everything. Precisely: it occludes a further view, that is, both time and space extend around it and are *behind* it, hiding, in depth. In this way visible can fill or embrace me only because I who see it, do not see it from the depth of nothingness, but from its own interior, and seeing it I am also seen. Weight, density, content of every colour, every sound, every tangible tissue, of actuality and of the very world come from that that the one who receives them feels as if he emerged from them through a kind of spiral or splitting movement, being originary homogeneous with them, from that he is a self-directed sensibility which, in turn, is in his eyes as if doubling and unfolding of his bodily tissue. Space and time of things are splinters of his own, of his spatiality and temporality, and not any multiplicity of units separated synchronically and diachronically; it is a relief combined from that which is simultaneous and that which follows after itself, spatial and temporal mash in which, on the way of differentiation, units emerge. Things are now not in themselves, on their place and time, here, there, now, sometime; they exist only on the border of this spatial and temporal radiation emanating mysteriously from my sensibility. Their content is not the content of a pure object observed by the mind from a distance; I experience it from inside, as I am among the things, and they communicate through me as a feeling thing. Actuality, visibility – as the veil of memories for the psychoanalysts – has for me an absolute valor only because of its hidden, unlimited content of past, future,

and that which is beyond it and which it announces but also hides."[149]

Just like we have equated *transcendence* with the *non-actuality*, we can equate *immanence* with pure *actuality*. *Immanence*, the *actuality* of the given content, arises at the limit of the process of differentiation, as the final stage of encircling the 'hidden, unlimited content' within the *horizon of actuality*. Although this allows *reflection* to oppose it to the *transcendence*, the latter does not disappear in the process of *actualisation*. It penetrates the *actuality* with all the levels lying above it. *Presence* is an expression of this insoluble involvement of *immanence* into *transcendence*.

    The eventual *transcendence*, the *origin*, is never accessible to the categories of *immanence*, is neither this nor that, is never *visible* and yet, is always most deeply *present*. *Self* is, after all, its *trace*, the *trace* of *birth*, and the eventual terminus of this *trace* is the *actual subject*. All levels are *present* in every *actual experience*, and the *invisibility* of the *origin* is what remains the same across all *experiences* and their temporality. Using the categories of *reflective* oppositions, the *actual* is the opposite to, and hence incommensurable with the *non-actual*. But, in fact, the most *transcendent*, the ultimately *invisible* is that which penetrates all *visibility*, which is most intimately, even if not *visibly*, *present*, and which therefore is the most *immanent*. The *original rest* remains *present* throughout the life, in every *actual* situation, but only as the *rest*. It cannot be grasped, but it gives taste – the taste of a *gift* – to every *actual* appearance.

129.

The father said: "Place this salt in water, and come to me tomorrow morning."
    The son did as he was told.
    Next morning the father said, "Bring me the salt which you put in the water."
    The son looked for it, but could not find it; for the salt, of course, had dissolved.
    The father said, "Taste some water from the surface of the vessel. How is it?"
    "Salty."
    "Taste some from the middle. How is it?"
    "Salty."
    "Taste some from the bottom. How is it?"
    "Salty." [150]

130.

2.2.2. Traces

We have distinguished *invisible presence* from its *actual manifestations*. In the most general, but also most *concrete* sense, every *actuality* is a *manifestation* of the *origin*, "everything that is understood and sensed is nothing else but the apparition of what is not apparent, the manifestation of the hidden, [...] the materialisation of the spiritual, the visibility of the invisible,"[151] the *distinction* of the *indistinct*. The *invisibles* might be thought as simply 'being there', in some sphere raised above *this world* and merely accompanying it as a higher double, unconnected to and unaffected by it. But this would be only an abstract, conceptual construction. The *invisibles* not only are but are *present* and their *presence* is thoroughly *concrete*. They not only sway somewhere in perfect indepenence and self-sufficiency, but penetrate the whole reality from its highest to its lowest level. The *dissociation* of higher *nexuses* into more *actual* elements proceeds only gradually and every *actual distinction* carries the character of the *nexus* from which it arose, as the *actual*

[149]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*. Inquiry and intuition;p.120-121
[150]Chandogya Upanishad [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. p.4]
[151]J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. III:633A, 678C

sign terminating a continuous *trace*. Such *traces* connect not only the adjacent levels but traverse their whole hierarchy. We have, for instance, seen in Book I how the *immediate objectivity* arises on the *trace* passing through *actuality*, *signification* and, eventually, the event of *confrontation*. Or else, how the objective time and space arise from the *nexus* of *spatio-temporality* which leads back to (that is, emerges from) the *chaotic* simultaneity of *distinctions* following the *original separation*, etc. In the first part of this Book, we have seen the *traces* of subject, object, sign and transcendence. Every *actuality* is a *sign* – primarily, not of another *actuality* but of the *nexus* from which it arose. Following such *nexuses* – from any *actual* thing or property all the way back to its ultimate *origin* – marks the *trace* of its *existential* history and of its meaning. Although such a backtracking can, in principle, stop anywhere, to grasp the entire meaning of any *actuality*, its *trace* should be followed all the way to the *origin* where it meets *traces* of all other *actualities*. We give now two more examples of *traces* for notions of identity and truth.

2.2.2.i. Identity

We have seen the variations of the identity notion through the preceding sections: in the idealization of *immediacy* as the residual, self-identical substances, in constitution of things as limits of *distinctions*, in the *posited totalities* of the world and *myself*, in the *unity* of *self*. These variations reflect different *aspects* encountered on the *trace* of identity, different resting-places on a continuous line passing through all the levels.

Leaving and then returning to a room, I *re-cognise* the cup on the table as the same which was there a while ago. The cup *here-and-now* points to the one *there-and-then*. True, it points in a very specific way making the identification of the two immediate, but it does point nevertheless, that is, it is now a *sign as a sign*, a *sign* whose non-identity with – as the possible difference from – the signified is given along with the identity of the two. The difference is the difference of the *actuality here-and-now* and the *actuality there-and-then*. Identity connects the two, stretching across the time interval which separates them. *An experience* of identity arises as an instance of a repetition which, in turn, seems to presuppose memory. So we will start with a few remarks on that. Then, still in a preliminary fashion, we will comment briefly on the role of language in establishing identities. After this introduction, we will discuss various forms of identity.

Memory

We forget many things. But what does it mean? Do they simply disappear, as if never happened? Hardly. What we usually mean by memory concerns particular facts and *actual* events which can be fetched with a satisfactory exactitude of detail. This ability varies greatly for it happens often that the *precise* things and pictures get dissolved in subconsciousness and fetching them back requires a laborious process, as it may happen in psychoanalysis. But not even Freudians would assume the possibility of a total recall of everything that ever happened. Some things just get lost, not in the subconsciousness from which they might be restored in an apparently unchanged form, but in a complete *virtuality*. They are not kept 'the way they were experienced' but get compressed, mingled with other contents losing their rigidity and *precision* – losing their identity.

131.   What happens to the things which disappeared from the *actual* consciousness? Having once learned the Pythagorean theorem, one can be able to reconstruct its formulation, perhaps even the proof, and use it when the need arises, even after significant time. And even if one

forgot many details, it is much easier to reenact them anew than it was to organise them when learning the theorem for the first time. They did not disappear completely, they only as if waned away, but are still – somewhere, somewhat – around. In spite of the difference, the two processes, of learning and recollecting, or of thinking and remembering, share a fundamental characteristic. Learning the theorem, one can work intensely setting its various elements explicitly before one's eyes, trying to connect them, deduce consequences. This is the most active, *attentive* thinking. When, after several trials, one gets stuck unable to reach the desired solution, the best thing to do can be to forget the whole problem for a while. To literally *forget* it, erase it from the horizon of conscious attention. It happens almost typically that the solution, or a new creative suggestion, will just appear, as if by its own force, after some time (cf. 1.4.2.i). 'Thinking' is obviously going on in the background while one is not thinking actively and deliberately. What we call "a thought" is, more often than not, only an *actual* result of such a hidden process, a *precise, visible* formulation.[152] It should not be all too daring to propose that such a subconscious 'thinking' works not only with materials which one could, if one wanted to, bring to *actual* attention but also with contents similar to those which started to wane away but did not quite disappear from the memory. In fact, the creative solution one obtains in this way involves often exactly such elements which were not available to immediate introspection. We might say, 'thinking' reaches here into deeper layers of memory than does the active, *attentively* controlled thinking.

To suggest the character of this deeper layer, we can borrow some observations from Wittgenstein. "The image [*Vorstellung*] of pain is not a picture [*Bild*] and *this* image is not replaceable in the language-game by anything we should call a picture. [...] An image is not a picture, but a picture may correspond to it."[153] What do you remember remembering, say, Eiffel Tower? Wittgenstein would ask: try to describe it! Try to describe what you see (with your closed eyes) recollecting Eiffel Tower. You end up describing what you would draw if you were asked to, you end up describing a 'picture'. But you do not *see* this 'picture'. With your eyes closed, trying to recall Eiffel Tower, you are trying to *actualise* it as a 'picture'. But what are you trying to *actualise*? What is 'there' to be *actualised*? While 'picture' is what can be given as an *immediate object*, what can be re-produced and re-presented, so 'image' corresponds to a more *virtual* element which simply does not have any unique *representation*, it only has many different *actualisations*. Recalling Eiffel Tower you can draw it in various ways, you can describe it with various words and pictures. "«The image must be more like its object than any picture. [...] it is essential to the image that it is the image of *this* and nothing else.» Thus one might come to regard the image as a super-likeness."[154] Suggesting that 'image' is *virtuality* of a 'picture' (of many 'pictures') we have stretched its meaning a bit further.[155] For remembering Eiffel Tower is not so very

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[152] Just like 'nows' mark only particular peaks of intensity in the flow of time, I:4.3.1.§68, so 'thoughts' are like *visible* 'substantive parts' marking the resting-places between the 'transitive parts' of the continuous – subconscious rather than conscious – stream of 'thinking'.

[153] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:300-301.

[154] Ibid. I:389. Let us also point out the close connection between 'image' and 'aspect': "The concept of an aspect is akin to the concept of an image. In other words: the concept 'I am now seeing it as...' is akin to 'I am now having *this* image'." [Ibid. II:xi] Different as these concepts may be in Wittgenstein, both are closely related to our *nexus* and *aspect*. Discerning, eventually, 'words of thought' as only a germ in our mind, Wittgenstein concludes: "If God had looked into our minds he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of." [Ibid. II:xi] What is there 'in our minds' seems more like *virtual nexuses* than like any *visible, precise* pictures.

[155] Primarily, in that Wittgenstein seems to see it only in the context of (sentences describing) *actual*

different from understanding/knowing pain: we have some (yes, a bit mysterious) 'image' which can only be *actualised* in various 'pictures'. To recognise pain of a burning moth or wriggling fly, you have to see them as *actual* 'pictures' of a *vague* 'image': pain. Just like to recognise a particular drawing you have to see it as an *actualisation* of the 'image' of Eiffel Tower, and like to use a theorem in the *actual* situation you have to find the 'way it applies', you have to subsume the situation under the generality of the theorem. Even if the last case is simply a subsumption of a particular instance under a general rule, it can be seen as related to the other cases where a particular 'picture' illustrates or *actualises* an 'image'. This 'image' is no longer any *actual representation* but a more *vague nexus*. It no longer has a *dissociated* existence of an *actual object*, but is rooted in the deeper layers of *virtuality*. The difficulty with remembering is to reproduce an *actual* 'picture' from this *virtual nexus*, is to recall anew various aspects of the understood theorem. "The difficulty is not that I doubt whether I really imagined [Eiffel Tower, pain or] anything red. But it is *this*: that we should be able, just like that, to point out or describe the colour that we have imagined, that the projection of the image into reality presents no difficulty at all."[156]

132.   Bringing things back into *actual* recollection, we *dissociate* them from the element where they are not networked as distinct entities but are enmeshed in *virtual nexuses*. We *actualise* them, give them their identity anew, convert a *vague* 'image' into a definite 'picture'. This process is not different from *attentive* thinking which brings a *vague* intuition into the *actuality* of a *precise* thought.

   Strong connections of memory and intelligence were emphasized by many following Piaget's claim that "the development of memory with age is the history of gradual organisations closely dependent on the structuring activities of intelligence."[157] But it is not only one way dependence of memory on intelligence. Understanding organises the world integrating particular elements into appropriate contexts; integrating, that is, making them available in appropriate situations for particular purposes. Likewise memory organises the world including ('images' of the) remembered things into deeper, more *virtual* layers of our being, from which they can be fetched as *actual* 'pictures'. The 'image'-like character of a remembered thing is just like the 'image'-like character of an understood theorem. It marks the involvement in a more *virtual nexus*. An effect of this involvement, of an element becoming an integral part of a whole, is a partial dissolution of its identity – no longer a *precise* 'picture', an *actual* statement, but a *vague* 'image', a *nexus*. This dissolution is but an aspect of the integration. The deeper, more *virtual nexus*, the less *dissociation* of its *aspects* and the wider the scope of its possible *actualisations*. In the same way, the deeper, more integrated understanding, the wider the scope of its possible applications and connections with apparently unrelated elements.[158]

   Most people would probably object that memory is a mere recording machine. It involves a successive and constant re-organisation, "active and selective structuring."[159] It

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imagining, so that "[s]eeing an aspect and imagining are subject to the will." [Ibid. II:xi] Even if it (always) were so, it still would not imply that also *forming* the 'aspects' and 'images' is voluntary activity.

[156]Ibid. I:386. The *relation* of subsumption under a general rule, of instantiation is no less mysterious than that of exemplification or *actualisation*. "This schematism [...] is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us discover." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. The schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding;A141/B181]

[157]J. Piaget, *Memory and Intelligence*. p.381 [after H. J. Silverman, ed., *Piaget, Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. p.75.]

[158]We can recall the increasing 'density' of the images close to the pole, as the projected points of the line lie further and further away from the circle – I:6.1.§117.

[159]J. Piaget, *Memory and Intelligence*. p.378. By the way, this fundamental point of *active*, that is,

is not such a machine because (perhaps with the exception of photographic memory) it *actively* organises the material. But few would probably agree that this active organisation is of a very similar character to that effected by understanding. The more one is forced to remember, the greater the need for formation of, eventually, only subconscious structures, *nexuses* organising the material into more and more *vague* units. All our adult "memories, no matter how trivial, isolable, or individualised, involve a host of spatial, temporal, causal, and other relations, and a whole hierarchy of planes of reality."[160] The crucial phrase here is "other relations", for they are not only of the *visible* kind as those listed explicitly. They are also deeper and more intimate, dissolving the 'images' in the more *virtual nexuses*. This makes explication of the *precise* structure of memeory such a precarious task.

Redressing Freud's analysis of the Wolf-man dream in terms of Piaget's theory, Casey arrives at the following schema:

$$\left(\dots \Big(\big((M_0 \rightleftharpoons M_1) \rightleftharpoons M_2 \big) \rightleftharpoons M_3 \Big) \rightleftharpoons \dots \right) \rightleftharpoons M_r$$

M_0 is the original event and the following M_i's the successive memories (or other influencing experiences) of it until the present recollection M_r. The arrows $\rightleftharpoons$ at each stage represent the interaction and mutual influence of the involved elements. You can not remove your past – you can only change it.[161]

Our central point is that an analogous picture can be applied also to events and things which 133. we do *not* remember. They get surrounded and modified by other events and experiences, conscious or not, remembered or not, and gradually lose their identity retreating further and further into the sphere of *virtuality*. "As the time-object withdraws into the past, it shrinks and therewith becomes dim."[162] This dimness is exactly dissolution of its identity in the *virtual unity*. At the present moment, M_r is confronted with the whole past which is not given as a collection of bits and pieces glued together, but as a *virtual* unity of the past. It involves things we remember, and can *actualise*, as well as those we do not, and which we can not. Some might have been lost forever for *actual* recollection, yet they remain present, albeit transformed beyond possible recognition, dissolved and de-identified. The

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autonoumous and unconditioned structuring by memory, is consistently ignored by all pedagogy which, assuming its artificial *dissociation* from thinking, tries to convince pupils about purposefulness of every single step and to develop 'understanding' before, or even instead of 'memory', by releasing them from the boring memorization drill. Memorization develops deeper, more *virtual* and *concrete*, structures of organising *experience* than mere smartness (if one prefers, intelligence) developed by puzzle-solving and tested in IQ questionaries.

[160]Ibid. p.131

[161]E. S. Casey, *Piaget and Freud on Childhood Memory*. This picture is to some extent consistent with the memory built as a retentional continuum in which the current retention of the previous phase retains also the retention of this previous phase, which itself contains retention of its predecessor, and so on. The crucial difference (besides the fact that we are not concerned exclusively with consciousness) is that here it is not a mere accumulation of the past phases, but that each stage may influence both its successor *and* its predecessor. Also this observation goes back at least to the phenomenologists around Husserl. For instance: "every experience of our past remains unready with respect to value and undetermined with respect to meaning, as long as not all of its inherent effectualities have been released. Only in the totality of the whole life, when we have died, the experience will become an unchangeable fact with ready meaning, like the past natural events are from the very start." [M. Scheler, *Repentance and Rebirth*. p.34]

[162]E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*. A:1.2.§9.

picture is not exactly like the one above but rather something like:

$$\left(\ldots\left(\left(\left(\bullet \rightleftharpoons \begin{matrix} \vdots \\ M_1 \\ \vdots \end{matrix}\right) \rightleftharpoons \begin{matrix} M_2' \\ M_2 \\ M_2'' \end{matrix}\right) \rightleftharpoons M_3\right) \rightleftharpoons \ldots\right) \rightleftharpoons M_r$$

This picture is but another form of our figure from I:§117, p.75. It represents the general relation between the *actual* situation, M_r, and the deeper layers of our being. Consequently, it represents also aspects common to all processes mentioned above: of understanding, of learning, of remembering and of forgetting. (Some differences between them will be addressed in §135.)

134. Well known examples – of integration of the *actual* facts and observations into the totality of our *experience* – concern learning almost anything, in particular, some skills like riding a bicycle. The scattered pieces of advice from the instructor, the failed attempts to master one particular movement at a time, the intense consciousness trying to organise all the bits in proper sequences and alliances of movements – all that continues until one 'gets it'. And although we tend to focus on the exact moment when we 'get it' for the first time, it is not the moment which is important but the fact that all the labourious details, all the minute successes and failures recede into the background of almost unconscious automatism. The emerging consistency of the totality is a qualitative change in relation to the tiny details which led to this emergence. The moment of 'getting it' represents the formation of a new *virtual unit*, which 'falls in place', gets integrated with the *totality* of other elements. The examples are not, of course, limited to acquiring motoric skills. Learning to solve differential equations has exactly the same structure of painful details receding gradually into the background of the acquired skill.

These examples illustrate only cases where one is still able to voluntarily *actualise* the acquired skill. But transition into deeper *virtuality*, beyond the horizon of will and *actuality*, happens in the same process which only proceeds further.

As we described in the opening sections of Book I, the lack of memories from the earliest days of our existence is not due to the lack of memory but of anything specific to remember. In the beginning we do not collect memories of any *actual* things or events, but only some *virtual distinctions* whose *traces* only later get differentiated into more *precise* forms. These primal *distinctions*, the primordial causes, may, too, be called "memories", albeit only in our generous sense of the word. For we know that experiences, influencing later life, accumulate from the very birth, although we never know what *precisely* is being experienced nor how exactly it will influence the future.

A more specific example may be that of imperfect memories, memories which lost not only some of the original details but *all* of them. Proust describes the cases when some *actual* element triggers the search for its past counterpart which search, however, fails. "[...] I sensed the smell of the cherries on the table and nothing else. [...] I could not, however, choose anything from the confused, known and forgotten impressions; eventually, after a short while, I ceased seeing anything and my memory for ever immersed itself in sleep."[163] One might say: the smell triggers a recollection which either became completely unrecognisable, or at least is so in the current moment; (an event of) memory without anything remembered.[164]

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[163]M. Proust, *Against Sainte-Beuve*. Introduction

[164]A similar, common example: "I know this person, I am sure I know him but ... who is he? Where did I

In many situations, what remains are not any specific details but only *vague* feelings of the atmosphere, of the character of the situation, of the general impression which was *actual* then or, perhaps, which is so only now and in some way becomes 'connected' to the original experience. Particular things may, as with Proust, play a role but only auxiliary one, of a trigger. Memories, according to Proust, do not *live* in things, they are only imprisoned there. Memories, "every hour of our life, once it has passed into the past, incarnates into some material object and remains hidden there, imprisoned until we meet it on our way."[165] This 'imprisonment' should be taken as a metaphor of the potential to trigger a recollection: the *actual* things are needed only to *awake* the memories from their sleep, to awake the mind from its sleep in mere *actuality* devoid the enlivening presence of memories. Particular things, and their remembrance, are only expressions of the true life of memories; "voluntary memory, the memory of intelligence and eyes reproduces the past only as an imperfect picture, which resembles the original as much as the pictures of bad painters resemble spring."[166] "Compared to this past which is an intimate part of ourselves, the truths of intelligence seem little real."[167]

Such 'emotional memory', which is an intimate part of ourselves, is more frequent than we commonly admit. For in *actual* terms what counts is the 'voluntary memory', are the *precise* details which we are able to recount and recollect in the *actual* context, not any 'subjective' feelings. Yet, much of the childhood memories consist often of exactly such *moods* and *impressions*. Reading a book for the second time after 10 years, only some details will re-emerge from memory as you encounter them again. Many of them you simply do not remember. Yet, you will quickly re-cognise the general impression the book made on you, you will recognise the 'image' by means of a few 'pictures'. Only some accidental *actual* element is needed: to hear the sound of a dropped tea-spoon to recall Combray and the childhood home, to stumble over the uneven pavement in front of the palace of the Guermantes to recall the walk in Venice. The recollections need not come back in all details but only with the details sufficient to establish the connection between the *actual sign* ('picture') and the *virtual* 'image', the atmosphere and mood without which the memories would remain *dissociated* and lifeless chips.

According to §133, the passage of *actual experiences* into memory is the same process as 135. forgetting these experiences. This may seem to draw the analogy a bit too far, so we should clarify some differences.

What makes these processes similar is well visible in the last examples of 'emotional memory'. It is the contribution of all *actualities* to the formation of *nexuses* which form the deeper, more *concrete* layers of one's being. Such a contribution finds place even if they are *actually* forgotten or remembered only imperfectly. 'Voluntary memory', the memory of intelligence, is only the lowest layer of memory, enabling one to recollect the past events with the *precision* of *reflective objectivity*. It is this layer which one typically means by "memory". Its specificity is just the character of the expected memories, their *precise, objective* form.

"A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come

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meet him?" *Recognition* of the remembered 'image' precedes here the *actual*, conscious remembering. The person emerges from the surrounding (*virtual* background) already marked with the sign of his identity (the 'image' is like a super-likeness of its object), even though consciousness still needs to decipher the tokens of this identity, to fetch the detailed 'pictures'.

[165]Ibid.

[166]M. Proust in a letter to René Blum.

[167]M. Proust, *Against Sainte-Beuve*. Introduction

the day after tomorrow? – And *what* can he not do here? – How do I do it? – How am I supposed to answer this?//Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life."[168] Recall two kinds of time (consciousness) from I:4.3.1.ii.§§64.ff: the phenomenal time of *actual now*, with its retentions and protentions vs. the objective time of 'inauthentic consciousness of time, of remote past'. Expecting somebody's arrival the day after tomorrow (or next year) presupposes consciousness of objective time, simply because having at all the idea of 'next year' requires such consciousness. We could say: if dog does not expect his master to arrive next week, this happens for the same reasons for which he does not wonder how the ball he is playing with feels in the hand of his master nor, for that matter, where *this* very ball was made.[169] We do not imagine dogs to relate to the possible difference between *this* very ball and another though indistinguishable one, that is, to have consciousness of objectivity. But a dog can await and expect its master's arrival, and long for him the more, the longer is his absence. For dogs, too, live in the temporality with its past and future. They live in the same time as we do and are *aware* of it – only this *awareness* does not reach the crispness of *objective dissociations*.

Reflective signs as signs, constituting the *foundation* of language, enter likewise into the *nexus* of *objectivity*. Serving as important tools of 'freezing' some (limits of) *distinctions* (I:5.1), they serve likewise as tools of 'voluntary memory' or, as we also could say, *objective* memory. We may have vivid 'emotional' recollections of some particularly significant events from our remote past. But for the most, what happened to us five years ago is not remembered 'in flesh' but merely as abstract descriptions. One can say: "Five years ago I was in Prague, I walked past *Malostranské náměsti* almost every day, I ate dinner several times at this place," etc., but all these events are recalled as merely *objective* facts which would feel and could be described the same way if one were relating events from a movie or sketching an imaginary story one planned to write. Of course, one is relating one's own past and it is still some *virtual* 'image' which underlies these recollective descriptions. So, in principle, one might manage that also without objective time? But the role of objective time, and words, is quite crucial. Objective time allows us to refer to such a remote event which has been 'emotionally' forgotten, just like single *objects* or situations trigger, according to Proust, vivid 'emotional' memories. One asks: "What did you do in the summer for five years ago?" Without objective time such a question would not make any sense. Events in our life do not carry any inherent time stamp on them. One can remember meeting somebody and have no idea if it was two, three or five years ago. One can remember two distinct events and be unable to say which happened before which. One only knows that they happened some time in the past. *Experiences* become mutually

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[168]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. II:i

[169]Promising is another good example of this crossing point, of *actuality* lying at the point where the *foundation* in the deeper *unity* across time meets the 'frozen' objectivity. It is will, determination, patience which are capable of stretching the influences of *actuality* to remote future. They all presuppose objective time but also they, so to speak, domesticate it, make it *existentially* relevant. Opposing the autonomous man with independent will to a mere moralistic follower of custom, Nietzsche observes how the *unity* in the objective time is internalised and existentially grounded in the former and only *externally* accepted by the latter: "the sovereign individual who resembles nothing except himself and who again is freed from the morality of custom [... is] the man possessed of a personal, independent, and long-lasting will and who is *competent to make promises*." [F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. II:3] The *competence* to make promises, unlike the mere customary ability to make them, is an expression of the lived *unity*, of the lived understanding that I am one person, immersed in but also independent from the flow of objective time. Evading promises one had made amounts to estranging oneself from one's past which, eventually, means *alienating* oneself from oneself.

related and *precisely* organised along the line of *objective* time. Without it they would only interlock in a *virtual* mesh, losing their identities and hence disappearing for future, *objective* recollections. Even if we could, in some unclear and unspecified sense, remember our whole life while living at some pre-*reflective* and pre-*objective* level, we would have no means to fetch these 'memories' and *actualise* them. And what is a memory which can not be recalled? The events would simply keep dissolving in the *virtuality* of our past, forming us, as experiences form also the character of a dog. But the whole process would remain un*reflected* and hidden in the same *virtuality* which *founds* it. It would remain *invisible*.

 Just like *actuality* of *reflection* is *founded* in the hierarchy of higher *aspects*, so also the **136.** *reflective*, 'voluntary' memory has its deeper presuppositions. The first is that it is needed at all. And it is because life and world are not a whole given in the unity of one *act* but are split into diversity of separate *actualities*. The need for the *objective* memory arises with the *dissociating* activity of *reflection* and is the stronger, the more *precisely dissociated* become the contents of our attention. (It is not unusual that extraordinary intelligence is accompanied by the excellent memory, even if this excellence is often limited exclusively to the memory of the things occupying the intelligence.)

The second presupposition is that it is what actually takes place, that one *actually* remembers *the same.* This repetition as recurrence requires the possibility of *re-cognising* identity of the same across time. As we suggested discussing time in I:§§70.ff, and as we will elaborate below, this is possible because new things and *experiences* are not 'added' to any given collection but, like everything else, emerge as results of differentiation from the *indistinct origin.* More specifically, such repetitions express the *recognitions* which are not necessarily limited to pure *horizon of actuality*. They arise from *virtual nexuses* whose *unity* precedes *dissociation* of *actualities*. Memory, as *reflective re-cognition*, is *an experience* of a *recognition* transcending the *horizon of actuality*.

And thus we arrive at the most fundamental, even if entirely trivial, presupposition: memory can only appertain to a being whose unity stretches across time, whose unity is not an *immediate* self-identity limited to pure *immediacy* but *transcends* its horizon. "All beings confessedly continue the same, during the whole time of their existence. [...] All these successive actions, enjoyments, and sufferings, are actions, enjoyments and sufferings, of the same living being. And they are so, prior to all consideration of its remembering and forgetting [...]"[170] Memory does not establish identity nor is it constitutive for personal unity – at most, it can help establishing the sense, the feeling of it. Losing memory, one does not necessarily lose *oneself*, and even without remembering anything of one's past one can still know *that* one had a past. It does not establish any identity but, on the contrary, presupposes it. It is not, for this reason, a mere ontic accident or an epistemological device. It is one of the fundamental aspects disclosing in *actual experiences* the *foundation* of this *actuality* in the temporal continuity and, in the last instance, in the trans-phenomenal *unity* of *existence*.

Language

Language provides the colletction of common, solidified *distinctions*, whose usefulness and **137.** practicality is not based exclusively on their *precision* but often, on the contrary, on their roughness. If I cut off the branches, what is left is a 'trunk' and no longer a 'tree'; if I cut the whole 'trunk', what is left is only a 'stump'. But, of course, there is no *precise* measure of

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[170] J. Butler, *The Analogy of Religion.* Appendix I

how low the stump must be to be a 'stump' and not a 'trunk'. Growing up into a language which has only one word for, say, both "pain" and "suffering", one would tend to consider the two as identical and, in any case, *reflective* establishment of the distinction would probably take much longer time and might even appear as a deep discovery. If eighteen or so Hebrew words for different shades of purity get translated by the same Greek word "*katharos*", then the meaning of the Old Testament must undergo some, hopefully only slight, changes.

The linguistic relativity of identities and their systems can be illustrated by some differences between languages.

Slavic languages provide almost unlimited possibilities for modifying the nouns by means of suffixes – not only to form chains of diminutives, but also to indicate features and impressions of things, as if stretching and comprising the stem, which in many other languages would require unbearable series of adjectives.[171] Most nouns can be turned, or dissolved, by such means into adjectives. The ontology, the collection of identities, seems to dissolve in a landscape of grades, variations and qualities without any definite and final substances. In Germanic languages, the opposite operation is much more frequent and standardised: one forms nouns from adjectives (the suffix -ness in English, -heit in German). This suggests a more substance-oriented ontology. Moreover, a language like German, where the etymological connections between words are still very tight, but variations less flexible, where the formation of compound words (in particular, of nouns, practically absent in Slavic languages) seems to reflect the structure of entities, will suggest ontology of structured hierarchies and systematic relations of basic entities, and by the same token, emphasize the division between the natural and the rational, between the given and the constructed. A language like English, an enormous collection of words from multilingual sources, which provide great flexibility, but even when expressing very closely related phenomena remain etymologically and morphologically unrelated, will suggest ontology of minute, mutually independent elements. The identities are instinctively established here in terms of dissociated atoms, as unrelated as the respective words.

More specifically consider, for example, the word for 'reality'. For the first, its very presence in a language indicates a distinction (underlying every word) between that which falls within its designation and that which does not. Its lack in a language would suggest a fundamentally different approach to the things which do not fall into two distinct categories of real and unreal. Given its presence, we are asking about its folk-etymology, that is, associations which subconsciously accompany its usage. We are not asking for any genuine etymology. It is the superficial, pseudo-etymological or even merely phonetic associations, rather than the true etymology, which may influence a child long before it might start studying linguistics.

English "reality" gives hardly any immediate associations. Sure, one can think of some Latin origins from "res" but these are too advanced considerations for us. It is but another word, as unrelated to "house" as to "thing" or "activity". The conceptual correlate, something like the definition of reality in Merriam-Webster dictionary: "something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily", reflects some philosophical view but not any deeper linguistic connections.

German "Wirklichkeit" is an entirely different matter. It is bound to be associated, unconsciously and often consciously, with "Wirkung", "wirken", etc. "Wirklichkeit" is some-

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[171]In Polish, for instance, "ptak" is a bird, "ptaszek" a small bird, "ptaszyna" an even smaller one, "ptasior" is a rather large and ugly, possibly dangerous bird, "ptaszydlo" is a particularly repulsive "ptasior", etc.

thing that acts, works, is efficacious, it is a power rather than a thing or a state. "The world of the real is a world in which this acts on that, changes it and again experiences reactions itself and is changed by them. [...] What value could there be for us in the eternally unchangeable which could neither undergo effects nor have effects on us? Something entirely and in every respect inactive would be unreal and non-existent for us."[172] Spoken by a true philosopher of language.

Polish "rzeczywistość" brings immediately associations with "rzeczy" – "things". The suffix "-istość" has no inherent meaning (it is used to form many other words), but it may easily lead a layman to something like "istność"/"istnienie" – "being"/"existence". Thus, 'reality' seems to be the state or order of things, something given rather then acting, and acting only in the way 'being' acts – by simply being.

Could we not dare to look here for some grounds of the differences not only between the national characters but also between the philosophical schools dominating the spheres of different language groups? Just as it was argued that Aristotle's ontology, if not whole metaphysics, was firmly grounded in the structure of the Greek language, so English suggests empirical atomism, German – the tension between the given and the constructed, French – equal precision of the material and the spiritual, Polish – the dissolution of the ontological in the existential.[173] Each language has its *mood* and *quality*, not to say metaphysics, which, to some extent, can be traced to its grammar, morphology and etymology. Vague and abstract distinctions will be usually drawn across different, though hardly disjoint, semantic fields. Some languages are richer than some others, providing more flexible, varied or succint forms of expression. But in spite of all such differences (reflected also in the indeterminacy of translation), different human languages have approximately the same differentiating and unifying power. In general, the *distinctions* expressible in one language can be reflected (even if sometimes only clumsily) in another. After all, and in spite of indeterminacy, translation is possible, and so is communication between persons with vastly different lingual backgrounds. 138.

The claim that language contributes to the ways in which we experience the world can hardly be denied. But claiming that it determines all our experience would be like claiming that the lack of names for many colours and their shades makes also experiencing their actual differences impossible. The identities and distinctions sedimented in language express roughly the average relevance and the cultural background. They are passed as pragmatic guidelines, but they *never determine* the range of the possible *experiences* of identity and difference. Although language provides means of solidifying *distinctions*, contributing thus implicit assumptions to culture and even philosophy, its contribution is only statistical and determines at most the average common-sense. "Language [...] represents the mass mind."[174] It is *founded* in the *distinctions* and identities which are established prior to 139.

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[172]G. Frege, *The thought: a logical inquiry*. p.103/104. Emphasizing relativity of every *distinction* to the *distinguishing existence*, and claiming that to be is to be *distinguished*, we come very close to the idea of this last sentence. Every *distinction* makes a difference. However, the difference need not imply any activity and even less any effects of physical kind, which can be naturally associated with "Wirklichkeit". Besides the Scandinavian languages, similar associations appear also in Russian (where "deystvitelnost", although including the aspect of an almost passive happening, is also related to being efficient and active, "deystvenny".)

[173]Curiously enough, structures of the Hopi language described by Whorf represent striking analogies, one could say, linguistic equivalents of some central aspects of our philosophy; see B. L. Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality*, in particular, B. L. Whorf, *An American Indian model of the universe*.

[174]B. L. Whorf, *The relationship of habitual thought and behavior to language*. 11:Historical implications.

their linguistic sedimentation, which are more fundamental and wider than all *signs*, not only the linguistic ones. So we will leave language to the linguists and the fascination with its mystical (or, perhaps, post-analytical) influences on the mind to those who have nothing better to influence their minds, and start discussing identity.

140. **1. *Immediate self-identity:* $x = x$**

The original *repetition* is a *reflective* 'doubling' of the same, extraction of something from the background and *positing* it as an independent, because *dissociated object*, I:§40, p. 21. The doubling brings forth the self-identity which is just the expression of the fact that doubling did not change the original phenomenon. The thing remains itself, it only gets doubled in the perspective of the *reflective representation*. "«A thing is identical with itself.» – There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which yet is connected with a certain play of imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted. //We might also say: «Every thing fits into itself.»"[175] Every *object*, *dissociated* in the *reflective* 'doubling', remains itself, remains the same as the 'doubled' object of *experience*.

Self-identity is the obviousness of the *immediacy*, of the fact that, within a timeless 'now', nothing can change and everything is itself. Everything, that is, which can be grasped in the unity of a single *act* and, preferably, in the limit of *immediacy*. The disappearing point... Self-identity (to be completely distinguished from any identity of the self), the empty formula $x = x$, becomes the paradigm, the governing norm of all further considerations of identity. The problems of these considerations concern 'fitting a thing into itself', namely, determining the criteria of identity. They reflect only metaphysical arbitrariness of what, among all temporal objects, could count as the ultimate 'substances'. The problems of the criteria of identity are the problems of classifying several *actual* appearances as the same, of fitting them into the limit of *immediate*, substantial self-identity.

141. **2. *Actual equality:* $a = b$**

The original *repetition* is the *reflective* 'doubling' of the same. In most abstract terms, this is what also repetition as recurrence is – the same thing seen from two, or more, different perspectives. But now, these perspectives are perspectives in a more intuitive sense of the word, they are 'snapshots', different *actualities*. Equality arises as a relation of sameness across distinct *actualities*, where a point a in (the context, situation, *actuality*) A turns out to be the same as b in (*actuality*) B. As Frege observed, the difference between $a = a$ and $a = b$ concerns the form of presentation. Just like the statement $a = a$ does not say anything, the statement $a = b$ says quite a lot – their *Erkenntniswert* is very different. The former states merely the *immediate* self-identity, it "is valid a priori and, following Kant, is called analytic."[176] The latter, on the other hand, says that a and b are two different perspectives, two different snapshots of something. This something, this ever transcendent x, arises precisely as the equality of a (i.e., x viewed as, or in the context of,

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It should be clear from what we said about only *relatively* creative power of words in I:4.1.2, that we are not maintaining Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (mis)interpreted as linguistic determinism. There is plenty of evidence that this is not the case. (For instance, there is nothing which prevents the concept of the active 'Germanic' *Wirklichkeit* from appearing in the Latin of 50 BC.: "whate'er exists, as of itself,//Must either act or suffer action on it." [T. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*. I:4]) We only acknowledge the deep and hidden import of language, its possible influence, which is the more determining, the fewer languages a person knows and the less reflective he is.

[175] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:216

[176] G. Frege, *On Meaning and Denotation*.

A) and of *b* (i.e., *x* viewed as, or in the context of, *B*).[177]

Leaving and then returning to a room, I *re-cognise* the cup on the table as the same which was there a while ago. The cup *here-and-now*, *a*, points to the one *there-and-then*, *b*. True, it points in a very specific way making the identification of the two immediate, but it does point nevertheless. It is *a sign as a sign*, a *sign* whose non-identity with the signified is now given along with it. As such a sign, this *here-and-now*, the *actuality a* of this cup, has been *dissociated* from its *actuality b*, and their connection, although experienced as their equality, is not *actually* given in the same way as *a* is. The cup is one and the same and, at the same time, different from itself.

Under *self-reflective* look, the very identity of I who am *reflecting* becomes only a mysterious quality for which *reflection* can not account in terms of pure *actuality*. How can I know, *actually* know and be sure, that I *reflecting* in this very moment am the same as I a while ago? There is no logical impossibility in assuming that the two are different and that everything is re-created anew in every instant, with the amazing precision creating merely an illusion that it is the same. At a deeper level of *experience* I obviously know, i.e., *experience* the cup *here-and-now* and the one *there-and-then* as the same thing, and I know myself to be the same person today as I was yesterday. But where is the proof, where is the unshakeable certainty of the two being the same?

There is none. For *reflection*, burdened with the *dissociation* of all *actual experiences*, this identity is problematic, to say the least. Given two things separated into different *actualities*, their identity can not arise in (yet another) *actuality* otherwise than as some ideal, because not *actual*, *x* which binds them across and in spite of the gap in time. Such an *x* is never *actually* given. Since Plato, one has been more than willing to say Alas! An ideal entity. The cup here and the one before are just instances of the same. And what is this 'the same'?...A universal or, perhaps, an ideal form, 'cupness', an *x* existing beyond the *horizon of actuality* and binding together the cup *here-and-now* with the cup *there-and-then*.[178] To account for the identity across different *actualities* – from the perspective of *actuality* – *reflection* ends up postulating ideal entities. Identity is a *trace* of that *dissociation*, and so is the noumenal *x* which keeps forever receding beyond the horizon of all *distinctions*.

What makes it so mysterious that the two appear the same? It is the assumption that the true givenness happens only within the *horizon of actuality*. Whatever exceeds this horizon becomes suspicious, prone to deceiving us, uncertain. The paradigm of cer-

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[177]Frege says that *a* and *b* are simply different signs and that identity is an epistemic relation between signs, which obtains when both have the same denotation, *Bedeutung*. (Essentially the same idea of identity being not a 'real' relation 'in' the object, but arising only as a consequence of different perspectives under which mind views the object was proposed by Duns Scotus, according to whom it "can not be anything but a relation of reason, because it is not between things distinct except by reason only." [J. Duns Scotus, *Questions on the Metaphysics*. IX:1-2 [after A. Santogrossi, *Duns Scotus on potency opposed to act*....(Although the quoted phrase concerns potency, identity is given as an obvious example of the same kind of relation of mere reason, namely, one which not only is mind-dependent but also *caused* by the mind.)]]) This is what it becomes, eventually, in the *actual world* with its ready-made *objects*. Our point here will be, primarily, that this relation is *founded* in the prior *dissociation* of various *actualities*, which it then tries to 'reconnect'. The ambiguity can be discerned in the naming. "Identity" refers to the fact, while "equality" to a relation between *a* and *b*. We will use both terms at the present level.

[178]One would be cautious to distinguish a trivial repetition of the same (thing) twice from instances of a universal but the meaning and the pattern are exactly the same. As argued in 1.2.2, universals are but special cases of *distinctions transcending* the *horizon of actuality*. A single repetition, an appearance of the same only twice, presents already all the problems of indeterminately long series of repetitions, of ideal entities or universals.

tainty is the *immediacy*, presence within *horizon of actuality* – this horizon, eventually
the evanescent point of *immediacy*, is implicitly taken as the only point of contact with
reality. Taking thus units of *reflective experiences* as the atoms of reality, one is, indeed, in
dear need to invent ideal entities to keep the scattered *actualities* together. Ideal entities
are *reflective* tools useful for organising *reflective experiences* – but the problem of their
(ontological or other) status is based on the implicit conviction that the real is only the
actual and that everything else requires a justification in terms of *actuality* and preferably
of *immediacy*.

142.   If we, instead, start from the *unity* of *experience*, eventually of our being, which only
subsequently gets diversified and split into *actualities*, then repetition is only *an experience*
of the same from different perspectives, from different points of *actuality*. Actual re-
cognition of X as the same as another *actual* (but not actual now) Y is a *recognition*,
that is, *an experience* of XY which has manifested itself in two distinct *actualities*. It
is not one, *actual* I perceiving X who somewhat has to establish a relation to another I
who perceived Y. The moment of perceiving X is but an *actuality* emerging from the
background of *experience* where X is but the *actual* aspect of XY. Its definite separation
is only the result of *reflective dissociation*.

        Does it mean that every X which is *experienced* as (a repetition of) Y, is actually the
same as Y? Can't one be mistaken in taking X for Y? Well, no and yes.

        One can't be mistaken because any such *experience* of repetition has a reason, there is
always something which – in one's *experience* – founds the *re-cognition* of X as the same
as Y. It is a *cut* through *experience* which, *distinguishing XY*, precedes the dissociation
of the *actual* X from the *actual* (though not now) Y. One may not know what it is, one
may even in principle be unable to account *reflectively* for this XY, and yet the very fact
of repetition could not take place without such an XY. Eventually, every equality can be
justified, if only *vaguely* and trivially, by the fact that everything is only a manifestation
of the *one*.

        But, on the other hand, one can certainly be mistaken. There may be thousands of
reasons and further *distinctions* which, if taken into account, could force one to consider
X and Y as different entities. In the extreme forms of empiricism, one is alwyas mis-
taken because the mere fact of appearing in two different *actualities* can be taken as the
justification of a difference.

143.   At some point the *distinctions* are suspended establishing the identity of the *actual* thing.
If I take at first moment the person entering the room to be my friend Yngve, then this
is the current limit of *distinctions*. In the next moment I realise that it is not Yngve but
Xavier, but to see this, I have to bring in more *distinctions* – I have to see his face more
precisely, see some of his movements which are totally un-Yngve-like, etc. Yet, even then,
the *experience* of the same, the first impression which confused the two (that is, which
did not distinguish XavierYngve), remains valid, it has revealed something which it was
possible not to *distinguish*.[179]

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[179]As usual, we are not talking about the *attentively reflective* activity which starts with the ready
dissociated objects and inquires only into the relations between or possible abstractions from them. Such
an activity, in a pure form, is itself an abstraction which never obtains without being involved in more
fundamental processes which we are describing. It is, by the way, a good example of the *dissociative* result
of *reflection*. In the moment I realise that it was Xavier, Xavier becomes *the object* of reflection and
thus also *the objective* aspect of the prior XavierYngve situation. It becomes opposed to the *subjective*
impression of this having *only seemed* to be Yngve. Although XavierYngve remains and merely withdraws
behind the curtain, it seems to disappear completely as it gives place to the two aspects of *reflective*

Identity is the actual limit of distinctions.

It is the point beyond which, or rather the boundary within which no more *distinctions* are made. At which moment does the Theseus' ship cease to be itself and becomes a new ship? At none, because it has never been 'itself', it has never been any metaphysical (or ontological) 'substance' with intrinsic, self-identical 'essence'. It was the limit of *distinctions* which it was purposeful to terminate at this point, at the point at which we said "This is a ship", or perhaps even "This is *this* ship". Replacing the planks, we begin introducing further *distinctions* which suspend the validity of the previous final boundary of *distinguishing*. Its supposed 'essence' was nothing but such a boundary. But assuming that it is something positive, something which constitutes thing's identical 'being in itself', we can not avoid being perplexed by this ingenious puzzle.

An *aspect* of the crystallization of *object*'s independent subsistence and identity is time, 144. which involves *experiences* of change. This might seem to contradict the claim that identity is but a limit of *distinctions* since change implies additional *distinctions* which should differentiate the object before and after the change. It does not, however, contradict the claim but only shows the (metaphysical) arbitrariness of where the boundaries are drawn, of what counts as identity. For all practical purposes a river is a river, one and the same. And it remains one also after the observation that "[o]n those who enter the same rivers, ever different waters flow"[180] pushes the limit of *distinctions* beyond that used for the ordinary purposes. In principle, every issue can be dissolved (one might be tempted to say today: deconstructed) into interminable series of aspects, views, perspectives and possibilities, every object can be divided and gradually dissolved into finer and finer distinctions. But this is so only in principle, that is, in abstract terms of ultimate *dissociations*. In practice, it is not quite so. The fact that a house can be deconstructed does not prove its unreality. And even if later generation will build different houses in very different ways from ours, does not prove that we are building unreal houses. Even if *actual* truths change over time, at each particular time they are given in quite a stable fashion, in fact, sufficiently stable for people of similar interests and intelligence to be constrained in their formulations in approximately the same ways. Objects, issues and situations arise relatively to those who participate in them and, in particular, relatively to their ability to terminate *distinctions* at some specific points. But this relativity means neither subjectivity nor lack of any objective counterpart.

Identity is established as some *actual* – not absolute – limit of *distinctions*. Beyond this limit, more *distinctions* may be possible and actually take place. In many cases, these further *distinctions* will be considered mere 'accidents' of the identical 'substance', but in the extreme cases they may lead to the puzzles like that of Theseus' ship. I cut a branch from a tree; then I cut another; then yet another; when I am finished with all the branches, I begin to cut, piece by piece, the trunk, from the top to the bottom. I end up with a heap of wood, but at what point does the tree cease to exist? This is realtive, that is, dependent on the circumstances. If I left a part of the trunk standing, even if dead, one might say that *this* is the same tree which stood here yesterday – only dead and without branches. And since what is relevant here might be the fact of something standing at this particular place, we may ignore the change which occurred. If, however, the tree was the favorite one on which children used to climb and play, then *this* tree has actually *ceased to exist* – it is

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dissociation: the *objective* fact of Xavier entering the room and the merely *subjective* impression of him being Yngve.

[180] Heraclitus DK 22B12

no more, and what is left is not the same.

Does it mean that, to begin with, there were two trees and one survived cutting off the branches while the other did not. Certainly, there were different trees for people who considered it only as something standing there and for the kids climbing it. But this question of Chrysippus concerns the 'objective' state of affairs: are there, 'out there', two trees or not? And if there are two which one survives? Since we do not subscribe to any 'objective substances' existing 'out there' no matter what or who is around, we should be allowed to claim that it still depends on who is looking at the matter. If somebody must reach some absolute compromise, let him say that there is a sense in which there is only one tree which survived the process, namely, the tree identified as the limit of *distinctions* remaining at the end. He should not, however, try to convince the kids about it. Another problem with such a compromise is that one can remove something more from this rest and ask the question again. One won't find any substance but will end up postulating a residual point of self-identity. In our view, it is not only uninteresting but directly inadmissible. Any answer to the question about Theseus' ship – *at what point* does it cease to be the old and becomes a new? – has an aura of arbitrariness which has always threatened 'substantialism'. For it represents an antinomy arising from the insistence on the yes-no answer to a question which does not have one, an antinomy of applying the *immediate* category of self-identity at the level of *actuality*, of attempting to view a temporal object as if it were timeless, *precisely* delineated, self-identical substance.

Before refining this point and the thesis from §143, let us comment a couple related issues.

Indiscernibility and relativity

Identity of a thing is always only relative to the drawn *distinctions* – consciously or not, intentionally or not, *actually* or not... It is thus relative to the involved *existences*. Does this mean, as also the claim in §143 might suggest, that we are simply stating identity of indiscernibles? Not exactly, but the difference may be rather subtle.

145. First, the principle itself is an ingenious and more *precise* variant of the dictum: "plurality must not be posited without necessity."[181] Its objective is to attune our understanding of identities to their metaphysical realm, to bring epistemological distinctions into agreement with the ontological 'facts'. Viewed (perhaps with some degree of bad will) as such a project, the principle is quite different from our view according to which identity is not recovered but constituted as the limit of *distinctions*. Identity is not any metaphysical, supra-human quality of things. It is a purely pragmatic (albeit not voluntary) fixing of the limits of *distinctions* at relevant points. What makes it relevant is not given by any laws, but by the context. Identity of indiscernibles is indeed a good rough expression – do not *distinguish* what need not be *distinguished*. But since we do not have any 'substances', any 'essential' nor 'accidental' properties, a process which has been thus terminated at some point, at some identity, can always, at least in principle, be carried further, for it never reaches any 'metaphysical identity'.[182] Returning home every day one does not wonder if

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[181]E.g. W. Ockham, *Quodlibeta* V:q.1;p.97, *Ordinatio sive Scriptum in librum primum Sententiarum* I:Prologue 1.3 [after R. Heinzmann, ed., *The Medieval Philosophy*. p.242] Earlier variants of the razor figure, for instance, in Plato, *Parmenides*; Aristotle, *Physics* I:187b.10; J. Duns Scotus, *A Treatise on God as First Principle*

[182]The current discussion of *actual* identity, and these remarks in particular, do not apply to *existences* which, being limits of *distinguishability*, are also the sites of ultimate *unity*.

the sofa standing there now is *really the same* as the one from yesterday, and if one does one should visit some specialist. It is the same because there is not the slightest reason to distinguish the two. It is only the assumption of some 'substances in themselves', an extension of the metaphysics of immediate self-identity to temporal duration, which could make one wonder how to prove that nobody in the meantime entered the flat and exchanged the sofa for another but 'identical' one.[183]

A more extreme exposition of the principle might be given which also might seem to make it identical to the claim from §143. Its variant often plays a crucial role when one tries to attune knowledge to 'facts' by actually *getting rid of* all transcendence and pretending that one is in the possession of a complete logical language, fitting perfectly the external world. It underlies equally the attempts to reduce to the mere language all truth ("Whatever we cannot speak about, we should keep silent about"), or even all reality ("Reality is the names we give to it"). It amounts to reducing identity to the *actually* discernible criteria of identity.

The problem with this variant is, just as above, to determine the ways and limits of its application, what to admitt as the criteria. What counts as the properties to be considered when deciding indiscernibility? One will use *actual* observations but, of course, not exactly, because no two observations, made at different points of time, are exactly the same. If we include even time, then we are left with pure *immediacies*, as *dissociated* from each other as the atomic monads. If we allow difference in time, then the question arises: how do we determine that the two appearances have the same – that is, identical – value of all the relevant properties? In particular, among all properties there is the property of 'being equal to *a*' and so such a definition is circular.[184] So Leibniz wanted to limit the principle to 'substances' and comparisons to the values of their properties, others started to distinguish intrinsic and extrinsic, pure and impure properties, the linguistic bias would include everything – and only – that can be expressed in (a particular) language, etc., etc..

Identity of indiscernibles may appeal to epistemological optimists. However, as one tries to determine the criteria of deciding indiscernibility, one runs into the problem that identities are not *subjectively* constituted but, for the most, found as given. Consequently, one keeps working with the idea of objective identities which subject only tries to capture. | 146.

In a sense, but only in a sense, our philosophy of *distinctions* and *distinguishing* goes along with the indentity of indiscernibles: whatever is not *distinguished*, remains *one* and the same. The main difference lies in that we take *distinction*, and not indentity, as the primitive notion. Even if our thinking is, to high degree, concerned with determining which things can be considered equal and which not, our being does not amount to reflecting 'given' identities but to establishing them as limits of *distinctions*. The only metaphysical, objective unities 'in themselves' are the *indistinct one* and its *imaginis*, *selves*. All other identities are relative to the *existential distinctions*, are limits of *distinctions* drawn by *existence* from the *indistinct*. This relativity, however, does not mean any *subjectivity*. It is very different from saying that *existence* has some determining or constitutive power over identities. Identities, like *distinctions*, are for the most *found* and not created (produced, posited, generated, projected) by the *actual subject*. Relativity, expressing only the specificity of *confrontation*, marks the middle ground between objectivity and subjectivity.

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[183]The two are indiscernible not only because one can not discern any difference although one might suspect some to be there. 'The two are identical, I cannot possibly distinguish them *but* they still might be distinct!' – such a suspicion is already a discrimination *dissociating* the two *actualities* from each other.

[184]Recently, B. Brody, *Identity and Essence*, argued that it is only impredicative and not viciously circular, but we leave it to the concept analysts to decide if such fine distinctions do us much service.

It is the *trace* of the prior *unity* which, once the *object* becomes *dissociated* from the *subject*, remains only as their relation although it is more primordial than either. *Distinctions* comprise much more than any *actual* differences, whether of linguistic, mental, physical character. Although relative, they are not necessarily *subjective*. Most *distinctions*, even though relative to *me*, or rather to a form of *existence*, are not *made* by *me* (nor you) but are encountered. And so are most of their limits, that is, most of *actual objects*. The relative, yet *transcendent* character of many *distinctions* sets us apart from any understanding of the principle which usually appeals to empiricism by reducing the discernibility to the *actually* observable differences. We do not postulate objective, in the sense of non-relative, identities. But we do not make them *subjective* either, because the limits are, typically, set *above* the level of the *actual subjectivity*.

Consequently, there is no designated set of *actual distinctions* providing necessary and sufficient criteria of identity. In one context color, material, cause... may count, in another none of those may be relevant. Two identical ships can be legitimately considered the same by a captain who needs only one for the travel and views both equally fit for it. (For him, the situation is entirely the same as it would be with only one ship available.) Claiming, on the other hand, that every possible distinction is relevant makes at once the two distinct. Relativity of identities, like of what counts as particular substances, means the lack of such metaphysical, universally valid criteria. There is no meta-level for the *distinctions* which could provide such criteria. There are only sub-levels of more and more specific classes of *distinctions* and *actual* things are their limits.

Furthermore, saying "relative to *existence*", we often (and in the current context almost constantly) mean relativity to a *form of existence*. Most identities are not decided voluntarily by a subjective *fiat* and what appears equal will typically appear so to most (if not all) *existences* of the same form. We will all agree on the identity of this table here, or that tree over there. Just as there are pragmatic, and this involves also natural, reasons for drawing some *distinctions*, there are similar reasons for terminating them. The sensuous apparatus of humans will, under normal circumstances, deem some things identical almost irrespectively of who *actually* is involved in the situation. But as the concerned contents become more *vague*, less prone to the narrow look of *actuality*, the differences can become more significant. Is the feeling of joy I have now, the same as the one I had yesterday? Is the love I experience the same as that experienced by the one I love? Is the city in which I live the same city in which my neighbour lives? Wait! Here it is obviously the same city. Well, yes, but what constitutes its identity? Where does it end and where does it begin? I always counted this particular suburb as a part of the city, while for my neighbour it was already outside. The city does not have any 'essence', any sharp boundary, although it seems to have some kernel, something which makes it *this* city. All people may agree on the presence of such a kernel, on suspending the *distinctions* around it, without agreeing on the precise boundaries – they all may terminate the *distinctions* at slightly different points. "There are no sharp divisions of reality."[185]

147.   As there is no meta-level for the determination of such limits, this suggests quite fundamental and primitive, that is preceding any criteria, character of identity. There are two aspects of identity which tend to determine two opposite camps (perhaps, of Fregeans and Quineans, respectively): either identity is a primitive notion, irreducible to others, or else it is in fact reducible to some criteria. Variations of the latter reflect variations over identity of indiscernibles. We have agreed with it in so far as identity is a limit of *distinctions*. A

[185]S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*. VI:4

thing is, after all, just the other side of the totality of everything it excludes, it is, so to speak, the 'complement of its outside', 1.1.2. An *actual* thing, its identity, is the border drawn between the 'inside' and 'outside' and there are no metaphysical standards for where it must be drawn. However, the very *fact* of it being drawn at all, of establishing a *limit* of *distinctions* is a primitive event (usually, not an *act*) not reducible to merely drawing the *distinctions*. In this sense, and in spite of its pragamtic and relative element we have been emphasizing, identity is not merely a *conceptual* device for simplifying thought, as Avenarius or Mach would have it. It is an *a priori* condition of thought, which extracts from the continuity of *experience* 'substantive parts' and locks them within the limits of *actuality*. It is not a mere device of *reflective* thought but its very presupposition, an inseparable accomplice of *actuality*. To understand a thing is to circumscribe it, is to grasp it as a limit of *distinctions*. Although what exactly is identified may vary and be relative to the actual persons and situations, the identification itself, the circumscription is an indispensable condition of every *actual* thought and intensional *act*.

The pragmatic relativity of identity is about as far as the possible analogy with the relative identity theory, as well as with Locke and empiricism in general, goes. For we have no atoms, no logical objects, no basic ideas, perceptions, impressions, nor substances. We do not share the dream to differentiate everything which can possibly be differentiated and, having thus obtained the ultimate atoms, to reconstruct the reality from them. We only acknowledge the necessity of suspending the possible *distinctions* at some limits, which necessity is an *a priori* condition not only of thought, but of *objects* and any *actual* appearances. 148.

Ireno Funes from a short story by Borges about perfect memory and insomnia would be a dream-hero of empiricism, nominalism and their associate identity theories. "Not only was it difficult for him to see that the generic symbol 'dog' took in all the dissimilar individuals of all shapes and sizes, it irritated him that the 'dog' of three-fourteen in the afternoon, seen in profile, should be indicated by the same noun as the dog of three-fifteen, seen frontally. [...] He was the solitary, lucid spectator of a multiform, momentaneous, and almost unbearably precise world."[186] The perfect *precision* of minute distinctions does not disclose any eventual atoms but, on the contrary, dissolves all identities. The search for such atoms can always be carried on further. It stops, from the point of view of metaphysics of principles and sufficient reasons, at a completely arbitrary point; it stops at some point only because for one reason or another, typically unconscious, sometimes confused, but usually a good reason of avoiding unbearable precision, we stop to *distinguish*. "My *life* consists in my being content to accept many things."[187] Just like the ability to handle a wide variety of distinctions tells us something about one's intelligence, the points at which one stops distinctions and rests satisfied tell us something about what kind of person one is. "What people accept as a justification [and as identities] – shews how they think and live."[188]

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[186] J. L. Borges, *Funes, his Memory*.

[187] L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. 344. A more existential expression of the search for the ultimate foundation and despair over its invisibility is decadent boredom trying to entertain itself with merely aesthetic variations and refined distinctions which only deepen the sense of emptiness. The pompous distinctions of the advertisement industry and ever new fashions, artificial needs craving only for more novelties, reflect on the social scale the despair over the lack of substance, that is, of genuine *unity*, mistakenly identified with the 'objective substances'.

[188] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:325.

Returning to the thesis from §143, identity presents a problem for *reflection* only as far as time is concerned. One may wonder "How do I know that this sofa today and the one yesterday are the same?", not "How do I know that this sofa here is the same?" nor "How do I know that this sofa here and the one over there are (not) the same?" Since time and space are *equipollent aspects* of *spatio-temporality*, a brief comment might be in place.

149. Seeing a building so high that one can not simultaneously see both its top and its bottom, one does not wonder. Perhaps one should? If one can never see it in its totality (say, it is surrounded by other buildings which make it impossible to see it whole from a distance), if one can not perceive it in a unity of one *act*, isn't the problem the same as with the same sofa today and yesterday? Recalling one of the multiple senses of unity listed by Aristotle in *Metaphysics*, V:6, one will point to the possibility of a continuous perception of the whole building from top to bottom; the continuity which does not obtain with the sofa yesterday and today. Let us first refine the claim §143:

Identity is a limit of distinctions represented by a sign, that is, contrived to the actuality of a single act.

This *sign* will be often an abstract *sign*, not merely an aspect of the thing but, for instance, a word or an *x* which can be made fully *actual* even though the thing itself can not. It is not the *sign* which establishes identity – it only *represents* and solidifies it. It *represents* the limit of *distinctions* within the *horizon of actuality*. This horizon sets the limit on the possible *experiences* of identity – identity is always *an experience* consummated fully within this horizon where the *not-actual* aspects of 'the identical' appear through the *sign*. The continuous perception of the building, even if not circumscribed within one *actuality*, is important because it does not create any 'gaps' in time. For the *actual reflection* this continuity amounts to the unbroken presence of the *sign* and (aspects of) its perceptual correlate. One sees the different stories of the building but the *sign*, 'this building', is kept continuously (even if not *reflectively*) as the sight moves along the walls. The *sign*, like a name, does not establish the identity but reflects the relevance of solidifying the *distinctions* at *this* boundary – it 'freezes' their limit.

The identity of things seen only in their spatial, simultaneous dimension is unproblematic – it is the self-identity of *immediately* given *distinctions* and their limits. The 'gaps' in space are the *distinctions* we *recognise* as separating different things. The 'gaps' in time have another import – they reflect the *dissociation* of *experience* into separate *actualities*. As long as we can maintain the continuity across time, the identity of a given object might remain as unproblematic as in its spatial *immediacy*. (Although it is unproblematic only because one implicitly assumes identity of the *I* which conditions the very idea of continuous experience.) The problem for *reflection* is that such a continuity does not, in general, obtain for things which it would like to consider the same. The continuity between the sofa yesterday and today is broken. And *vice versa*, whenever such an ontic continuity is broken, it involves time. Trivially: time is the dimension along which things may cease to be the same. And a bit less trivially: identities are *the reflective means* of keeping them the same across *dissociated actualities*. The question whether my sofa today is really the same as the one yesterday is asking about the reasons I might find to conclude they are not. "The reasons I might have" means simply the *distinctions* it might be possible to draw between the two. There are none (none of relevance, at least), and the sofa *here-and-now* remains continuous with (the same as) the sofa which has receded into the past *actuality*

of yesterday – this 'gap' in time has been covered up.

Thus, identity is a truly *transcendent* relation when viewed exclusively from the perspective of *actuality*. It represents a noumenal x which lies beyond every *actual* appearance. Some such x's can arise as results of *reflective* constructions. But most common and natural ones precede it and are solidified as limits of *distinctions* prior to conscious, let alone attentive efforts. In either case, the *experience dissociated* into separate *actualities*, temporality split into a succession of 'nows', call for an account of the *experienced* continuity.

Identity is a reflection – a representation – of the experienced continuity; it is the trace which, 'filling the gaps' of objective time, makes up for its broken continuity which is no longer actually experienced through the dissociated nows.

Actual identity, the repetition as recurrence, the (relation of) equality of a and b, is an *aspect* of conscious *experience* which lives time through *actualities*. But it becomes *a problem* for *reflection* which, accepting only the obviousness of *immediacy*, tries to account by its means for the *unity* which *transcends* every *actuality*. For such a *reflection* the identity of things and ideas is a very fragile *aspect* of their *experience*. For just like analysis can dissolve every issue, it can dissolve every identity, presenting it as 'unreal' because not given *immediately, objectively*. And from the threat of 'unreality' there emerge ghosts of 'ideal' entities – ideal x of which a and b are only different appearances and whose recurring appearances could be, in principle, repeated *ad infinitum*. We have earlier seen universals which could be viewed from exactly the same angle: accounting for the recurring repetitions of the same. Their 'unreality' is the same as the 'unreality' of identity and results from the dissolution of everything which stretches beyond the limits of ever narrower *immediacy*. It is thus the ultimate expression of the *objectivistic illusion*, of the thirst for the 'givens' whose *precision*, requiring *immediacy*, makes them temporally 'unreal'.

3. *Totality of visibles:* $a_1 + a_2 + a_3 + \ldots = x$

Consideration of equality, of identity at the level of *actuality*, took some space because it is where it belongs. Equality binds *dissociated actualities* together. It appears as a *transcendent* relation, stretching beyond the *actualities* scattered across different points of time and bringing them together. But it *can* do it only because our being is not exhausted by the *dissociated actualities* but has itself *unity* which *transcends* every *actuality*.

Identity may be an *object* of *an experience*, as happens every time one realises that a is *the same as* b. This, inadvertently, requires both a and b to be themselves *actual*, or in any case thought as such. Thus, every statement of equality requires, or as the case may be reduces, its object to be at the level of *actuality*. There are however cases when such a reduction is hard, if at all possible to imagine. What about the infatuation which I felt a week ago and I am still feeling? Is it the same or not? It is the same, it concerns the same person, it has some continuity. But a week ago it had a slightly different flavour, I did not then see this person to have something of vanity in herself, while I see it now. But it is still the same because... Because I *re-cognise* the feeling and give it a name? The tendency to consider it the same is stronger than that, but only as long as it retains enough of the similarity. With time it may simply – and continuously – change, perhaps even into disgust, pity, repulsion. Then one may find as many reasons to call it the same as to call it different. It is the same infatuation turned into repulsion, the same fascination turned into boredom. Or was it, perhaps, from the start repulsion disguised as infatuation, boredom disguised as fascination? We may have difficulties with describing it precisely and unambiguously. But even if the *actual impressions* and feelings change drastically,

we retain the sense of continuity and some unity. For all these varied impressions and feelings arise from some unitary, *virtual nexus* and are only its distinct *actual expressions*, *actualisations* of its distinct *aspects*. We may, to some extent, characterise it by listing the totality of such various expressions. But this totality never establishes any unity which lies above it as a condition for the very attempts to form *one* totality.

152.   The limiting case of *non-actual unities* which seem to appear only as *totalities* of *actual* manifestations is that of the world and the *I*. They were discussed in 1.3.2 and 1.3.3, so here we only comment briefly on the *reflective* attemps to endow a *totality* with unity.

Saying "external world" one identifies it with the *externality* of *objects*. How do we think, what do we mean by "the external world"? Easy, look at this table in front of you – obviously, it is 'there', it is *objective*, *external*. The external world is just the *totality* of such external things. This is how much we are able to make out of the world's externality. But, recalling the *objectivistic illusion* from I:5.2.2, one should at once ask: What *totality*? There is no *totality* of *all* things, there are just *external objects*, plenty of them, but that's it. And certainly, the *totality* of *all* things is inaccessible. It is never experienced, never given, nothing like that ever confronts us in *any actual experience*; there is no *totality* of things, for they do not sum up to anything, least of all to any world. At best, this world appears as an ideal, that is, impossible and inaccessible limit.

Trying to account for the unity of a *totality*, one looks for a unifying principle. But although such a principle can often be found for the *actual complexes*, making it obvious what makes a car a car and a house a house, the situation with *totalities* exceeding essentially the *horizon of actuality* is more precarious. For, unlike *complexes*, they are never given in *an actual experience* against which the principle might be verified. Pierce, for instance, says that "unity is nothing but *consistency*."[189] We certainly won't attempt to improve this criterion trying to determine in what it possibly might consist. We won't because the possibilities may be innumerable and one might propose other principles like common function, cause, goal, etc.. In either case, the unity is only ideal, because not *actually* given, and the principle serves only to give the *actually* discernible direction for the construction of the ideal limit approximated by the *actual experiences*. As Kant has observed, the analogy to convergence of infinite series in mathematics is not applicable, and the fact that our *actual* thiking may be governed by some regulative ideas pointing in the direction of imagined limits, does not in any way constitute these limits. We can choose to utilize such principles for the purposes of practical investigations, but they do not reveal any truth about the investigated totality. In particular, they do not reveal that it is *one* totality, unless one turns things up side down and defines the totality as that which conforms to the principle.

Totalities are not any unities but only "illuminations of combinations"[190] or, to put it directly, just heaps of stones. This is as much as *actual* thinking is capable of making out of the world, or personal identity – the sum total, the *totality* of its *visible* elements. For as long as the distinct *objects* are taken as the only building blocks from which the world is constructed, their unity can be thought only as yet another element of this same kind, possibly, a relation between these elements. The meaning of asymmetry of Being, I:6.1.4, is that lower things never sum up to give something higher – higher level is inaccessible in the categories of the lower ones. *Above* the *totality* of *objects* there is the *unity*, we might

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[189]C. S. Pierce, *Some consequences of four incapacities*. p.71. We give the word "unity" a different meaning, but for the moment let us keep it this way.

[190]Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §64

say, of the world, or perhaps, of the horizon of *experience*, which precedes *experiences* of individual *objects*. The *posited totality* is but an imperfect *sign* of this *unity*. Bracketing this *unity* and then trying to account for the externality of the world, one ends up accounting for the *externality* of an *object*, while trying to account for 'the world', one ends up accounting for nothing but only *positing* the ideal limit, the *totality* of things.

By its very nature, it is impossible to have *an experience* of the world – as a *totality*, it always extends beyond any *actual experience*. So, perhaps, every experience is only a partial experience of the world? Perhaps, but a partial experience of x is not an experience of x but of its part, and if one insists on it being a part *of x*, then x must come from elsewhere. Every *actual experience* is *an experience of* its *object* or situation, but not *of* the world. And yet, the world stays constantly in the background, the one unified world haunts every *actuality* and is *experienced* underneath every particular experience.

Invisible unity: ●

The *unity* of the world is not constituted in terms of *actualities*. We feel compelled to accept it as a *totality* (and this always means, *one totality*) because, lack of any unifying principle notwithstanding, its *unity* is *experienced* as another pole of the *unity* of *oneself*. We would not get the idea of any *totality* (of the whole world, of *ourselves*, nor even of a composite substance), if no *unity* were *experienced* prior to it. "Every whole composed of parts participates in a unity preceding these parts."[191] Every whole participates in the *unity* which *founds* its 'wholeness'.

But we have not seen any *unity*. So far, it might rather seem like there is nothing really identical, nothing possessing *absolute unity*. *Immediate* self-identity of a *dissociated object*, equality across distinct *actual* appearances, the mere *totalities* of things – all result only from the suspension of *distinctions* at some limits relative to us. Is all that remains only such "a permanently tentative look?"[192] Indeed, every *visible* determination of anything *invisible* is by its very nature only tentative and approximate. So, is life a story in a search – and that implicitly means, constantly failed search – of a narrator?[193] But "thou wouldst not seek, if thou hadst not found."[194].

As we have remarked in passing, our considerations so far do not apply to *existences*. We definitely distinguish the question about the identity of the dog Oscar before and after the loss of one hair or, for that matter, about the identity of my friend Paul before and after the accident which made him lame and, on the other hand, the ship of Theseus being the same before and after exchange of all the planks. Knowing particulars amounts indeed to making *distinctions* and setting their limits. Knowing one cup is exactly the same as knowing another, though indiscernible, one. The situation is entirely different with human beings. Knowing Paul is something infinitely more than knowing his 'human essence', than knowing him as being a man *simpliciter*. Knowing Paul is as different from knowing

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[191]Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §69 "If something is many, there must be a one before the many." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:6.3] We should, however, be careful with embracing all variants of Neoplatonic units too enthusiastically. The 'wholes' and 'unities' have much more conceptual flavor, and are not distinguished from the *immediate* identity. The contentless self-identity of the most immediate object is taken, here as elsewhere, as an epitome of unity. The following formulation is more illustrative of our understanding: "Every genuine irreducible «sphere» of being is an eidetic unity which is *given* as a «background» *before* positing the 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]

[192]M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. 346-7

[193]P. Ricoeur, *Life: a story in search of a narrator*

[194]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. VII:553 [modified]

Peter, as Paul is different from Peter, and they are infinitely different (even though they are twins). We know individuals (that is, *existing* individuals, not merely particulars) not because they are only limits of *distinctions* which always can be refined further, but because they never can be. To know a person amounts to a *recognition*, beyond the character traits and psychological features, of the unrepeatable uniqueness of this person – not as an abstract property but as the most *concrete* fact. In short, we distinguish between the *unity* of *existence* and a mere identity of *actual* things.

154.   The *unity* of *self* is the uniqueness of the event of *confrontation* established with every *birth*.[195] At first it is only a *virtual* kernel from which the individual will develop in all *actual* manifestations. But this naked simplicity of *nothingness confronting* the pure *virtuality* of *self* is all that is needed to make the latter's uniqueness *absolute*. It does not contain any 'complete notion', it does not contain all the future and past 'contingencies' which this individual may encounter in life, and which might be needed if the unity of a substance were constituted by its concept or properties. Irrespectively of the conceptual indistinguishability from any other *birth*, it is the *absolute* beginning *founding* the ontological and not only conceptual uniqueness. It establishes an ineradicable, numerical *unity*, *haecceitas* of this individual, which is his *origin*, the point not relative to any thought and *experience*, where he touches *nothingness*.[196] No *visible* criteria account for this *unity*. "If we take wholly away all Consciousness of our Actions and Sensations, especially Pleasure and Pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal Identity."[197] It is not easy to imagine what 'taking wholly away' might mean, but allowing that, it would be exactly the place where to look for 'personal Identity'. "[I]f we had nothing distinct in our perceptions, nothing heightened, or of a stronger flavour, so to speak, we would be in a permanent stupor. And this is the condition of the completely naked monad."[198]

Self is confronted only with the *one* and its *unity* is not relative to any lower concepts or properties but reflects the *absolute unity* of the *one*. In *actual* terms, *one's unity* might require viewing it as an identity of discernibles, as the incomprehensible *coincidentia oppositorum*. But we do not need such a *coincidentia*, because *actuality* is not our beginning. The *one* is that which precedes all possible discrimination, something always assumed, never deduced. Its *unity* is not reducible to *actual* observations, for it *founds* their very possibility just as it *founds* the unity of each level. The *one* is the *unity* of the *chaos*, *chaos* is the unity of *experience* and *experience* is the unity of *experiences*. Or more specifically, *virtual signification* is the unity of *recognition* which, in turn, *founds* the unity of *aspects* involved in *representation*; or *simultaneity* is the unity of *spatio-temporality* and of *awareness* which *found*, respectively, the unity of space, of time and of *reflective consciousness*. But these *founded* differences do not change their *founding unity*. They leave it untouched *above*. "If many participate in one, they are unified in their relation to the one" even though "they are different from each other to the degree, in which they are

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[195]"Unique" and "unity" originate in the same Latin "unus" – one.

[196]Thus we must finally admit the misuse of Scotist *haecceitas*. According to Duns Scotus, every particular thing has such an individuating entity which, so to speak, follows after and in addition to the being of its essence, *esse essentia*, endowing it with the actual and individual existence, *esse existentia*. We do not worry so much about the identities of *actual* things, and we do not see so much difference between human *existence* and its 'essence' – the unique individuality constituted by the *confrontation* with the *one* can be equally identified with both, and our *haecceitas* does not refer to any entity but to this property of *existence*, this triple identification.

[197]J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. II:I.11.

[198]G. W. Leibniz, *The Monadology*. §24

many."[199] The highest *unity* does not dissolve the differentiation of the lower levels, does not mingle distinct elements in a flat uniformity. On the contrary, it lets them remain differentiated, even opposed to each other, for all such lower oppositions and conflicts do not contradict the genuine *unity*. The *indistinct one* is the *absolute unity* as the ultimate limit of all *distinctions* and of the very possibility of *distinguishing*, remaining forever beyond their horizon.

Actual repetitions and recurrences are not mere accidents. They reflect in the abstract, that   155. is *actual* and often *precise* way the character of all our being – *experiencing* the repetitions of the *one*, *recognising one* through Many, *experiencing* it always in new ways, in new *actualities*, from new perspectives. The *one* is not an *object* of any *actual experience*, but its *unity* is experienced in all such *experiences*. All *distinctions* are but manifestations of the *one*, always under different forms, in different *actual* clothes. The *one* is *experienced* but only through, or under, these variations – it is *one* and the same, and yet, *actually* always different, as one *actual experience* is different from another. The *one* is *experienced* only through all the *distinctions* and thus it is the ultimate violation of indiscernibility of identicals. In *actual experiences* it is thoroughly different, it is never given, and hence never given as the same, and yet it is always itself, always identical.

Our being – and our understanding, in particular – is stretched between these two limiting poles: on the one hand, the idealistic, Platonic intuition of everything being but a manifestation of *one* and the same and, on the other hand, the Aristotelean analysis, the incontestable fact of *reflective experience* that everything is a separate entity related intricately to everything else. It might be tempting to construct a contradiction but the two do not contradict each other. They are only the extreme and complementary *aspects* of *existence* which *experiences one* only through many. The deepest *thirst* and the only challenge of *reflection* starting from the *dissociated experiences* is to *re-construct* (parts of) this variety as manifestations of the same: star movements and falling apples as gravitational force; matter and work as energy; addition and multiplication as monoidal structure; God of the New Testament and God of the Old Testament as the same God, perhaps, even as the God of Muslims and the non-god of Buddhists; the yesterday's pleasure and today's conflict as aspects of the same loving relationship.

And so, it is no accident that insights of the *unity* of differences are among the greatest intellectual pleasures. "What a shock of *recognition* it was (as it actually happened to me) while studying with wonder the plate of Corot engraving – to see it suddenly as a delicious episode from 'Parsifal'."[200]

> *Wer rechnet userer Ertrag? Wer trennt*
> *uns von den alten, den vergangenen Jahren?*
> *Was haben wir seit Anbeginn erfahren,*
> *als dass sich eins im anderen erkennt?* [201]

The *absolute unity* is the *unity* of the *one*. It underlies – that is, in the order of ontological   156. *founding*, precedes – all the *distinctions*. It finds its *concrete* place, its *imago*, in the *existences separated* directly from, and hence *confronted* directly with the *one*. *Self*, the *virtual* center of *existence*, *founded* in the *one*, is the *absolute unity* of the person. The lower form of this *imago* is the fact of *myself* being a repetition, a repetition of the unique

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[199]Proclus, *Elements of Theology*. §66

[200]P. Valéry, *About Corot*. p.143

[201]R. M. Rilke, *Es winkt zu Fühlung...*

event of *birth*, and then of *my self*, of the 'inborn possibility'. *My* uniqueness is not constituted by anything more particular, but is given to *me*. Every *existence* is unique and as such but a repetition of any other *existence*: to the extent they "participate in *one*, they are one in the relation to the *one*." I am unique and you are unique and in this uniqueness we are both the same. There is no paradox here – only the primitive, ontological character of the *unity* of *existence* (if one likes, of the numerical difference of indiscernibles) which is not reducible to any lower, conceptual distinctions. At the level of *actuality*, this *unity* is in turn reflected in the repetitions as recurrence of the same, in the temporal identity of *actual* things, as well as in *me*, seen as the merely *actual ego*, being the same now as I was yesterday. Finally, in the *immediacy* of a single *act*, the *unity* finds its *reflection* as the self-identity of the *immediately* given *object* and as the unproblematic self-identity of the *subject*, of the *immediate act* of *cogito*. In all cases, these lower identities are only borrowed, are only *founded* manifestations of the primordial *unity* which *transcends* them all and, hence, remains unaffected by their differentiated multitude.

2.2.2.ii. Truth

As another example of a *trace* which, however, will turn out to be closely related to the previous one, we consider the notion of truth.

What can be true

157. "Please, close the door!" Can this be true? No, of course, it is a command, not a statement expressing a proposition. But then, suppose you close the door and he says: "No, I did not mean it, I was only joking". The command was not true or...? The command was not meant as a command or even better, the sentence, the *sign* which usually means a command in this particular situation did not mean it. It was a joke, not a true command. One would probably wish that we get rid of this "true", but we will not. The word "true" used about a command, a work of art, a feeling or almost anything is "put in front of another word in order to show that this word is to be understood in its proper, unadulterated sense."[202] Thus a true command is a command, and not a joke. But if a *sign* expressing a command can be a joke, is it not fully natural and legitimate to speak also about "true command" and distinguish it from, well, "untrue" ones? This is not much different from distinguishing a command from a non-command, but the crucial issue is that we have a *sign*, a sentence, which although usually is one may also be the another. Just like Tarski formed the biconditionals for propositions

$$\text{The sentence “X” is true if and only if X.} \tag{i}$$

one can form a biconditional for almost every word and a thing x

$$\text{“}x\text{” is a true “P” if and only if } x \text{ is P.} \tag{ii}$$

The meaning of "true friend" might thus seem no different from the meaning of "friend" and this is probably what one would make out of it, if one were to construct any formal theory.[203] But we are not after reducing anything to anything, and this schema is not fully

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[202]G. Frege, *The thought: a logical inquiry.* p.86

[203]The schema (ii) is, more or less, the same as the basic case of the inductive definition of the satisfaction relation in, e.g., first-order logic.

satisfying. "True friend" can easily mean the opposite of what "friend" happens to mean in a given situation, and then it can mean at least as many different things as "friend" can. We do not believe in any genuine, primary, 'true' meaning of a word, of which others would only be derivative or adultered versions. The genuine and inherent *vagueness* of *signs* was discussed in I:4.1.§§44.ff. One recognises, of course, the difference of accent and emphasis. As prosententialism, or variants of deflationism might claim, "true" functions at best as a means of emphasis or indirect reference. However, the emphasis can amount to new *distinctions*: the increased need to emphasize that things are *truly* what they are, that "*x* is a *true* friend", that "*y* is *truly* useful", etc. signals certain linguistic degeneration, one might say, deflation of the meaning of the words where, like in the Orwellian world, "friend" no longer means what it truly means.

On the other hand, even if "true friend" tends to mean the same as "friend", so "false friend" does not simply mean a non-friend. A friend is false when, contrary to all appearances, contrary to all *signs* indicating and usually meaning friendship, he turns out not to be one.

Signs are *actual* points terminating the *traces* of *transcendence*, *actual* expressions of the 158. *not-actual* and, eventually, *invisible distinctions*. *Signs* which we usually do not consider to carry truth-value (because they do not express propositions? or even worse, because they are not declarative sentences?) can be considered true in the generous sense of drawing the *distinctions* in accordance with the *rest* of relevant *distinctions*, whether *actual* or only *present*. "Please, close the door!" may be true – with respect to the actual wishes of the one who pronounces it. Similarly, a question normally suggests that the person asking it does not know, and can be true with respect to this. Rhetorical question is exactly an untrue question, a non-question, which only appears as a question. In short, there is hardly any linguistic *sign* which could not be endowed with the element of the truth-value (which does not mean, that it must be its primary element). But truth is not restricted to linguistic *signs*. "If you were in a place where you knew that there were both healthy and poisonous herbs, though you did not know how to distinguish between them, but there was someone else there whom you did not doubt knew how to distinguish them, and when you asked him he told you which were the healthy and which poisonous, and he told you that some were healthy yet he himself ate others, which would you believe, his word or his deed?"[204] His deed tells the truth which his words tried to hide.

This could be easily misinterpreted as follows: what we consider as possibly true need not have the appearance of a proposition, but must be expressible as a proposition. If a question can be true, it is because it expresses also some proposition. "It is easy to think of a language in which there is not a form for questions, or commands, but questions and commands are expressed in the form of statements, e.g., in forms corresponding to our 'I should like to know if...' and 'My wish is that...'"[205] So a command could be a joke or else a true command but then there is a corresponding proposition which is false, respectively true. If one insisted obsessively on this point, we might even let it pass but the problem is with the status of propositions, not to mention their actual content. There is a much deeper sense – than a mere rewriting of its meaning as a declarative sentence – in which a command, and every *act* or *action*, can be true or untrue. It can be true in the sense of being a good command, a command which agrees with the human nature, a command the following of which will help one to realise one's true goal, a command which commands to

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[204]St. Anselm of Canterbury, *On Truth*. 9
[205]L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. Appendix III:1

do what should be done, in short, by agreeing not only with the *actually* given facts and observations but also with the deeper *distinctions* drawn across the field of whole life. One can certainly deny the very existence of such things, but such a denial will be rather only an expression of the uncertainty (or the lack of consensus) as to which particular commands are good and how they can possibly be distinguished from the bad (false?) ones. On the other hand, one might object that this is an illegitimate stretching of the meaning of the word "true". But such an accusation starts from the assumption that only propositions, if not merely declarative sentences, can be true (or false) and this is exactly the assumption which we do not share. In a deeper sense (to which we will return later) the truth-bearer is *actuality*. Every *actual sign*, every appearance (whether a friendly attitude, a command, a statement) makes a difference and hence carries an element of truth-value – namely, of its relation to a broader horizon of *distinctions*.

159. ## *Excluded Middle*

All *actuality* is a *sign*, and *signs* are truth-bearers. In a sense, one could therefore say that, since every *actuality* is surrounded by the horizon of *presence* and hence can agree or disagree with it, every *sign* is true or false and the scope of the *tertium non datur* is unlimited. But we would prefer to view truth as an explicit norm which arises only against the possible falsehood. As long as such possibility does not arise, there is no need for truth or, as one could also say, truth is implicitly granted. The fundamental claim is that truth is secondary in relation to meaning, that *sign* is a *sign* in so far as it means something, as it makes a difference by drawing a *distinction*, but it need not be true or false for that.[206] We traced an aspect of truth even in commands and questions but typically the meaning of such *signs* overshadows the truth-aspect completely. Better examples are given by the traditional paradoxes.

(L) This sentence is false.

The impossibility of assigning any truth-value to (L) has been declared a paradox. But this appears so only for the bivalent logic requiring all statements to have one of the only two truth-values. The additional identification of meaning with truth-conditions forces then one to declare the statement meaningless. But one can not meaningfully claim that it is meaningless, since one arrives at this conclusion by analysing its truth-value as a function of its meaning.[207]

We do not see any paradox here nor, for that matter, in Tarski's general formulation of such phenomena, the undefinability theorem, stating that a semantically closed language can not obey the rules of classical logic.[208] The proof shows that such a language contains sentences which, like (L), do not have any well defined truth-value. Why should it cause any worries? Why should it be so that every statement must have exactly one of two possible truth values? We know, in fact, that it is not so – besides (L) and other paradoxes, there are other dubious cases like "the sea-battle tomorrow", "the current king of France who is

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[206]"What a picture represents it represents independently of its truth or falsity, by means of its pictorial form." [L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* 2.22]

[207]If (L) is true, than *what it says* holds, but it *says that*... One might object that it is only the meaning of the components of (L) which is known, while the whole statement fails to have one. But this looks like splitting the hair. We do not combine arbitrarily the meanings of "false", "statement", "is", "this" but do it exactly according to the rule specified by this statement. It is only this compound meaning of the whole statement which causes the trouble with assigning to it any definite truth-value.

[208]To avoid technicalities, let us think of a semantically closed language simply as one containing its own truth predicate and the self-referential capacities. 'Classical logic' means here primarily two truth-values.

bald", etc. Various ways may be designed to endow such statements with a truth-value, but they tend to over-interpret the intuitive meaning. All the theorem says is that the truth-value of (L) can not be determined in the world of boolean functions working (according to the classical rules) on the two standard truth-values.

It is only the assumption that the world is a given and fixed *totality* of things or facts 'in themselves' which leads to the conviction that every sign (at least, proposition) is either true or false, and that with the absolute – that is unchangeable – finality. The lack of such a finality does not mean relativism in the sense of subjective arbitrariness; it only means that any particular truth can happen to be extended/adjusted/modfied, and that the *absolute* truth does not belong to such particulars but only to the *absolute*. 160.

The absence of precise bivalence and the limitations of the principle of excluded middle go even further: truth, and hence also falsehood, is a matter of degree. Saying that "*x* is blue" about an *x* which is pink is trivially false. Is saying that "*x* is blue" about an *x* which is dark blue true? Yes, if darkness does not matter. And no if it does. But when it is not true, is it false? Perhaps, perhaps only to a degree. A half-truth is often a falsehood but, then, it is also a half-*truth*. Proliferation of various theories of fuzzy sets and fuzzy truth, of vague and probabilistic variants of the notions treated traditionally as rigid distinctions, witnesses to the changing understanding of these notions. Truth, admitting of degrees, is not simply opposed to falsehood which, too, is a matter of degrees. They are opposite but the opposition is not a pure, univocal bivalence. Just like most *acts* are neither good nor evil, so most *actual signs* are neither true nor false. There is a large grey zone between the two extremes, and *signs* falling in this zone may often be declared true *and* false or, as the case may be, as neither.

Truth

Truth is a possible property of *actuality* and, consequently, also of the *actual signs* and their linguistic expressions. It is a relation between two (sets of) *distinctions*: the truth-bearing *actual signs* and the truth-giving (*actual* or not) *distinctions*. Denoting the former by S and the latter by D, "S is true" means "S is true with respect to D". Frege's objection (actually, to the correspondence theory, which here can be extended to D), that truth cannot consist in a relation for this "is contradicted by the use of the word "true", which is not a relation-word and contains no reference to anything else to which something must correspond"[209] is a funny example of the strange assumption that language, and in fact already its common usage, contains all and only truth.[210] D is hardly ever mentioned explicitly because it is determined by the *shared* background of communication, by the context of discourse. We mentioned the possible disagreement between the *represented* and given *actuality*. The *distance* between the two can be seen as the difference between S and D, when not only the former but also the latter involves (primarily) only *actual distinctions*. Saying "It is sunny", we do not specify "at present, at the place where we are talking, with respect to the actually observed weather conditions, etc." – all such indexicals are implicitly given. Saying "Life is a disappointment", we do not specify that we do not mean 'at present, at the place where we are talking, etc.' In practice, D is usually fully 161.

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

[210]There are few traces of the relative motion in ordinary language use, so that claiming that trees along the alley actually move as I am walking would be not only unnatural but *actually contradicted* by the *usage* of the word "move".

transparent, given implicitly along with the meaning of S and the situation.[211] Thus, not only context disambiguates the meaning but also vice versa, meaning narrows the context of interpretation – the two are *aspects* of one *nexus*.

The *meaning* of S is some set of *distinctions* which itself constitutes a part of the world and hence this *meaning* is by its very nature woven into the texture of the world, into the *rest* of *distinctions*. The statement "It is sunny" draws some *distinctions* in the actual situation and these are related to other *distinctions*, for instance, to those which we can drawn by looking around or by (not) feeling raindrops on the head. The meaning of "Life is a disappointment" draws some *distinctions* in the actual situation: perhaps, it is a general statement about life, perhaps, only an expression of the depressive period in one's life, perhaps, only a sarcastic comment on the train of somebody else's complains. The *vagueness* of the statement amounts to indeterminacy of meaning which, in extreme cases, can make search for its truth futile. But even without any *clearer* indications, one will recognise in such a statement an expression of some *quality* which may seem more or less in agreement with one's own understanding of life. The *distinctions* (D) implied by the meaning of the statement are completely different from the previous case, but the truth of both has the same general form of agreement between the respective sets of *distinctions*.

162.   The question about the nature of truth reduces almost to the question about meaning; it "depends on just two things: what the words as spoken mean, and how the world is arranged."[212] The crucial issue concerns, of course, this last phrase. In our case, 'the way the world is arranged' corresponds, in every particular situation, to some more *distinctions*, or else to some *distinctions* made by other means than the (linguistic) *signs* whose truth is under the question. Very schematically, we can express the required relation between S and D as follows:

$$\text{S is true with respect to D iff } m(\text{S}) \subseteq \text{D} \tag{iii}$$

i.e., a *sign* (a collection thereof, an *actuality*) S is true with respect to D iff it means/makes only *distinctions* made in D.[213]

163.   The relativity to D certainly will not lead us to any relativism or scepticism. But it is not only apparent. Truth of a *sign* depends on the object it addresses; truths about relative beings are, by this very fact, relative, while *absolute* truth can only concern the *absolute*. The stick lying at the bottom of a river is more like a snake, bending, swinging and swaying, drawn half-way out of the water it is bent, and drawn completely out it is straight. Descartes concludes that our sense-perceptions delude us (at least in the first two cases) and can not be trusted. It remains unclear why they delude us in the two former cases but not in the last one, and the particularly suspicious minds keep playing the games of total illusion, brains in the vats, and the like. It rather seems that our senses are equally truthful in all three cases: in the first two what we see is true with respect to the visual distinctions (to put it blatantly: what we see is what we see, and there is no falsity about it); in the third case, what we see is true also with respect to other *distinctions*, say, those

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[211] This meaning involves what Austin calls the "demonstrative conventions" [J. L. Austin, *Truth.*] correlating the words with the actual, historic situation in the world. But likewise, it involves also indications that some words are not to be so correlated. All such relations and correlations are aspects of *meaning* in our generous sense of all the drawn *distinctions*.

[212] D. Davidson, *A coherence theory of truth and knowledge.* p.139

[213] As a curio: this can be reformulated so that every truth comes out as an identity, for instance, using the equivalent formulation of the subset relation: $m(\text{S}) \cup D = D$. Of course, we use this pseudo-formalism merely as a symbolic abbreviation. It may be helpful, but $\subseteq$ may equally well be replaced by some other form of 'fitting' or 'conformity'. We do not intend any formally *precise* theory of anything.

made by the sense of touch and, for that matter, our knowledge that the stick remains unaffected by the way any particular person might see it.[214]

The relativity to D is the common feature of truth theories which differ primarily with respect to what they consider to be the relevant D. The schema (iii) contains the abstracted elements involved in most discussions of truth and thus allows us also to see some of the differences between various approaches. For instance:

- Truth-conditionalism uses the same formula but to define $m(\_)$ and not truth. Instead of assuming given $m(\_)$, it takes as fixed D (the world, totality of facts, or the like) and the understanding of the left hand side. The truth-condition, corresponding to the subset inclusion, amounts then to a definition of the meaning function $m(\_)$.

- Correspondence theories take D (and hence also the target of $m(\_)$) to be the external world. (How this is to be understood is another matter.)

- Deflationists take D to be the whole universe (i.e., make any inclusion in D trivial, which amounts to removing D), and let $m(\_)$ simply remove the quotation marks around S.

- Coherence theories also fix D but take it to be some set of accepted beliefs.

- Pragmatists would like D to be some ideal, eventual conditions to be judged as desirable (or, perhaps, just that which will remain 'there in the end' (let us not ask where 'there' is and when 'the end' might be)), with $m(\_)$ assigning to its argument the outcome of actions done in accordance with it.

It is impossible to dissociate the discussion of truth from ontology. The differences above concern the understanding of the reference frame D. With the latter theories (coherentism, pragmatism) it is not, perhaps, ontology in the usual sense, yet it acquires the fundamental meaning for the theory *because* it functions as the measure of truth, as the element of a transcendent character, if not as the transcendence itself. A critique of some theory of truth amounts usually to a critique of this frame, of the presupposed (or implied) ontology. In the following, we will distinguish the kinds of truth depending on D, on the addressed level of *distinctions*. But first one final remark.

Truth is a *trace* of *transcendence* surrounding the *immanence* of the *actual signs* and the reference frame D can vary according to the possible variations in the scope of *transcendence*. Something can be considered true with respect to: the actual situation, some given set of observations and experiments, the life experience, the (un)imaginable *totality* of all *distinctions*. Consequently, truth admits of degrees and a statement true about the factual appearances can be false with respect to other dimensions. But although D may vary as much as S, it is the same schema (iii) from §162 which governs the relation at every particular level. Only having fixed D, one can possibly speak about *the* truth.

In a particular situation, it is often much more important and difficult to agree on which aspects to consider relevant, than on the content of each aspect, it is more difficult to agree

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[214] The point expressed traditionally by saying that truth is not the matter of perception but of judgment, e.g., "truth or falsity seems to me to be in opinion rather than in the senses. For if the inner sense is deceived, the exterior does not lie to it. [...] This is the case when someone similar to someone else is thought to be him, or when hearing something other than human voice we think it to be a human voice. But it is the interior sense that does this. [...] So it happens that interior sense imputes its mistake to the exterior sense." [St. Anselm of Canterbury, *On Truth*. 6] "It is therefore correct to say that the senses do not err – not because they always judge rightly but because they do not judge at all." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2nd Division.Introduction.1;A293/B350] Judgment was supposed to relate to the ultimate sphere against which all particular cases were to be judged, while we have replaced this sphere with D.

on D than on m and S. This is a local reflection of the more general fact, namely, that even the most stubborn realists have not managed to come up with a convincing model of the world, of the ultimate D which could serve as the invariable measure of truth. The world we live in is the world of *distinctions* which we are able and forced to recognise. Now, the more *distinctions* D, the more truths but also the more falsehoods. There is some limit beyond which more differentiation, needed as it may seem in the search for further knowledge, breeds only more confusion and idle dispute and where, in the words of Goethe, "every solution to a problem is a new problem," where every new step, multiplying the truths, or rather only probabilities and possibilities of truths, removes us from the truth. Saying too much (thirst for *precision* shares at least that much with its frequent companion – the fear of triviality) is more often than not a violation of the truth. "And it is no easie matter, being in the midst of the cariere of a discourse, to stop cunningly, to make sudden period, and to cut it off. And there is nothing whereby the cleane strenght of a horse is more knowne, than to make a readie and cleane stop."[215] As La Rochefoucauld remarked, the problem of thoroughness is not that it does not reach the end but that it goes beyond it.

As D varies, and various sceptics, relativists or post-modernists misuse the fact, one might want to imagine it being fixed once and for all, as some ideal *totality* of all facts, the ultimate reference frame where truth of all possible truth-bearers is to be evaluated. 'The one world' would waive the degrees of truth and the unpleasant suggestions of relativity, if only one were able to determine what it is. We have dispensed with such ideal *totalities* but this issue, as well as the question about the *absolute* truth, will return towards the end of the discussion of the levels of truth.

The levels of truth

Truth-bearer is *actuality* or, in a bit more specific sense, the *actual signs*. Truth is a *trace* of *transcendence* reflecting the anchoring of these in the wider reality. What is taken as this 'wider reality' determines the understanding, if not a detailed theory, of truth. The level, or depth, of a truth reflects only the level addressed by the *signs*, which corresponds to D in the schema §162.(iii).

165.   **1. *The immediate truth***

Sensation, if not also perception, can always be taken as true with respect to itself, and this is the way of immanent truth taken by sensualism or phenomenalism, whether of empirical or idealistic flavour. Every sensation is true with respect to the fact of its occurrence. In fact, every *sign* is true if taken only with respect to the trivial *distinction* of its mere being given: it makes a difference whether "qukkda" is given here or not. It is, however, such a trivial and irrelevant difference that one will hardly ever take it into account. We are, after all, not interested in mere *immediacy* but in what it means.

The rationalistic variant of this level of truth takes into account not only the trivial coincidence of the *immediate signs* and their meanings but the possible *distance* between meanings of abstract *signs* and the addressed reality. It appeals to *immediate* ideas which appear as self-evident, that is, unconditionally true. We will not repeat here the remarks on idealized *immediacy* from 1.1.2 (in particular, §§7.ff), but only notice again that, all the differences notwithstanding, phenomenalism and rationalism join the ranks in so far as the infallibility of the truth they are searching for is found in the *immediacy*, whether

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[215]M. E. Montaigne, *Of Lyers*.

of sensations or self-evidence. In either case, the reduction to *immediacy* means reduction to pure *subjectivity*. This conclusion was not necessarily drawn by the proponents of the respective ideas, but as the understanding of truth it amounts to solipsism: the whole truth is the pure *immediacy*, that is, pure *subjectivity*.

But truth, being a *trace* of *transcendence*, refuses to be dissolved in any subjectivistic reductions. It can hardly be dissociated from ontology. Cartesian ultimate certainty, *Cogito ergo sum*, places itself in the *immediate subjectivity*: the point of self-evidence which, however, unless helped by God, would leave one in the perfect self-satisfaction (or shall we rather say, despair?) of a solipsist. Exactly the same threat appears to Philonous who, having reduced the existence (and truth) to being *immediately* perceived, has to invoke higher consciousness to ensure any *real* existence and truth.[216] 166.

To avoid solipsism one has to give up the limitation to the irrefutability of the *immediate signs* and admit some *distance*. As we have seen, the *objective aspect* of this level, its ontology, is a disappearing point, an *immediate, external object*. Supported by all the common-sense one can invoke, truth becomes thus correspondence of the *immediate, subjective sign* and the equally *immediate* but *external object*. This conception has been dominating since Aristotle's famous: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true."[217] We won't analyse it in detail but want to show its association with the principle declared by much of the tradition to be the fundamental law of thought and being.

"[I]t is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be."[218] Indeed, the *objects*, the self-identical, indivisible 'substances', solidified complete notions whose reality is consummated in the *immediate* limit of *actuality* make the principle of non-contradiction most natural and obvious. The condition 'at the same time' is decisive and it is this condition which narrows the horizon of attention to pure *immediacy*, the ideality of extensionless 'now'. Within so narrow limit, an *object* can not both be and not-be, and as it is assumed to possess only equally *immediate* properties, it can not both be-so and not-be-so. 167.

Let's also notice that, although the principle is stated few lines earlier in a more epistemological terms, "it is impossible for the same man at the same time to believe the same thing to be and not to be", it is immediately turned into an ontological principle. In search for infallible and *visible* certainty, not only understanding and *reflective* knowledge, but also being get reduced to the pure *immediacy*.

But what is this, apparently so obvious, 'at the same time'? An x can not be simultaneously black and not black. OK, but the whole issue is this 'simultaneity'. It is not even some imagined 'least possible passage of time', but a residual and timeless point of immediacy. If I see an object having and not having a property (or being and not being), I 'know' that some passage of time must have been involved. (An alternative way of dissolving the contradiction would be to postulate different objects.) We do not deal here with a fundamental principle – of non-contradiction – but with a *nexus* of which this principle is only an *aspect*. Simultaneity, taken for granted in the quoted formulations, is needed to obtain the principle but, equally well, the principle itself can serve as the definition of simultaneity – as the limit of differentiation, as the limit excluding any possible contradiction. Such a temporal limit coincides with the imagined space point; each is only the *posited* residuum of the respective dimension. This spatio-temporal residuum is, in turn,

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[216]G. Berkeley, *Three Dialogues...*, II
[217]Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. IV:7
[218]Ibid. IV:4

an image of the absolutely self-identical *object*, the ideal substance. Thus to this ideal limit of *reflection* addressed in 1.1.2 – the *nexus* of *immediacy*, space-time point, substantiality – we can now add also the principle of non-contradiction.

The associated law of excluded middle expresses then the completeness of the notion, of a 'substance' which is *precise* and definite. In the narrow scope of *immediacy* it must either be or not-be, and for any equally *immediate* property, it must either be-so or not-be-so. This also expresses the absolute character of negation, as the *reflection that it is* isolates its *object* excluding everything else from the horizon of attention. Indeed, in the *immediacy* of an *act*, an *object* has only two possibilities of either being here or not being here. This narrowing of being to the ideal point constitutes the bivalent *precision* of 'yes' vs. 'no', 'being' vs. 'not-being', and underlies the bivalence of truth and falsehood posited as an equally *precise* opposition.

168. **2. *The actual truth***

The above correspondence theory, arising from the *subject-object dissociation*, applies equally at the level of *actuality*. An *actual complex* underlies the idea of the 'fact' or 'state of affairs', as these arise in variants of the correspondence theory. This is the scope within which all indisputable trivialities of the kind "Snow is white", "The cat is on the mat", etc. have their *locus* – both expression and confirmation. Consequently, it is from this sphere that correspondence theorists fetch all their incontestable examples.

Although emerging directly from the assumed ontology of *objects*, the truth becomes a bit more multifacet than the contradiction of 'yes' and 'no'. Negation does not any longer have the absolute and determinate character. It is no longer the mere binary 'yes' or 'no', but a mulitfacet *complex* of contraries. A thing can be blue or green or red or... Various predicates do not stand to each other in relation of contradiction, yet they may exclude each other. For a property P, the absolute negation not-P becomes less informative – it can be now taken only as an abbreviation for an extensive, perhaps even infinite, alternative of all its contrary properties.

169. The *horizontal transcendence* of this level is *more* of *complexes*, and the search for truth, for the conformance to or even domestication of *transcendence*, keeps multiplying the analysed phenomena and truths about them. Truth of a theory is the issue of this level. As has been observed, it is not reducible to the truth of its empirical consequences and the correspondence begins to stumble for what, possibly, might be the entity corresponding to a theory? The problems begin even earlier for all the 'entities' like negations, disjunctions, implications seem to reside only 'in the mind'. They seem to have no *visible* correlates in the 'reality outside', the correspondence to which would constitute their truth.[219]

The question of the degree of truth, or comparison of two theories, becomes of interest. Various approaches, even if severely distinct in conceptual constructions, seem nevertheless

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[219]One would say that true statement corresponds to a fact, or a state of affairs, or something that actually obtains in reality. The problem is to clarify the understanding of such entities – what exactly is a fact? (We won't follow the lengthy debates whether 'facts' are something 'in the world' at all. It often seems that attempts to distance oneself from philosophy end in bad philosophy rather than outside it.) If 'the cat on the mat' is a fact, then is it also the fact that 'there is no cat on the mat'? What kind of (objective! external!) fact is that? There seems to be no satisfying answer from the proponents of the ontology of facts. We would not, however, take it as a final demolishion of the correspondence theory which may retain its validity within a limited scope. If 'mental' vs. 'outside reality' has any significant meaning, and any meaning for the theory of truth, then what with the statements like "I love her."? One may attempt behavioristic reductions but most would probably agree that if it is true then the fact, if any, to which it corresponds is pretty 'mental' and not external.

to be always variations over the concept of truth as an approximation to an ideal limit. For we have seen better – more true? – theories replacing the worse ones. As Newton superseded Aristotle, as Einstein superseded Newton, so progress seems to belong to the notion of (such a) truth. But like every declaration of progress – either it is only a reflection of a prior ideal goal or else posits immediately the question about such a goal. Unless one feels satisfied with sociological accounts of the mere fact of *acceptance* of one theory instead of another, one should somewhat account for the primacy of some theories over others. The changeable nature of most formulations and theories accepted as true, combined with the image of absolute and unchangeable truth, lead to the truth as only an ideal goal.[220]

Pierce: "experience shows that the calm and careful consideration of the same distinctly conceived premises (including prejudices) will insure the pronouncement of the same judgment by all men."[221] It is very, very uncertain if experience really shows anything of this kind. But even if it did, of what concern could it be to me or to you, to any concrete human being? Everything "which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real, and nothing else."[222] How long shall we wait to see what is real? The essential questions concerning when such a common pronouncement can be obtained and how could we possibly know that it has been obtained (and won't be challenged any more) are not only open but also impossible to close. As all forms of eschatology, such calls to the infinite waiting for the end of historical times, forget almost everything. I am sitting now in the sunshine eating a tasty ice-cream. It is extremely real, as real as the heat of the sun, but I doubt anybody will ever, ultimately, on the day of settling the accounts, care to devote any thoughts to this fact. Whether anybody would or not, its reality *hic et nunc* is completely independent from what such a committee of minds might eventually decide.

The *horizontal transcendence* of *actuality* is *more* of *objects* and *actualities*. Correspon- 170. dence theories manage to some extent to account for the truth of simple propositions in terms of the *actual complexes* to which they correspond. The dissatisfaction with them arises from their inability to specify the ultimate *external* entity embracing *more* and *more* specific truths into the whole truth of everything. Perhaps, there is no such *external* entity and one should rather dispense with it? This brings us gradually outside the sphere of pure *actuality*, but some variants of this turn can be still considered at the present level.

First come some simple questions. Where is the *precise* distinction between *sign* and signified, between meaning and what is meant? Nobody ever gave a rigid, *precise* definition of it, and some feel justified to conclude that there is therefore no distinction.

But there is also a mightier argument with which Berkeley might seem to have discredited any attempts to maintain correspondence. For "so long men thought [...] that their knowledge was only so far forth real as it was conformable to real things, it follows they *could not be certain* they had any real knowledge at all."[223] "How given that we 'cannot get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence' we nevertheless can have knowledge of, and talk about, an objective public world which is

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[220] This is, in fact, inherent in the very questions "How?" and "Why?" asking for an explanation. They are possible only on the prior assumption that things are *not* what they appear, that every encounter has some hidden essence (whether cause, goal or structure). This (we could say, transcendental assumption) turns the discovered solution of one problem into a new problem because it, too, is only an appearance in need of a new explanation. The postulated infinity of the process of explanation is only a reflection of turning this *dissociation* of things from their meaning into the image of absolute, eventually-to-be-reached truth.

[221] C. S. Pierce, *Some consequences of four incapacities*.

[222] C. S. Pierce, *Critical Review of Berkeley's idealism*. p.82

[223] G. Berkeley, *A Treatise....* §86 [my emph.]

not of our making?"[224] Since we indeed "cannot compare belief with non-belief to see if they match,"[225] then let us better reduce truth to some form of its corroboration which, at least in principle, should be possible inside 'the world of our making'. One seems forced to replace truth with the corroboration of truth. The more radical representatives claim that the criteria they arrive at actually constitute the concept of truth, while the more sober ones admit that establishing acceptable criteria of truth need not necessarily require or imply the grasp of the concept of truth itself.

But such a critique (motivating idealistic coherentism or, most generally, immanentism) seems to rest on some all too strong, if not directly wrong, assumption. The assumption amounts to absolutisation of the dualism: the 'objective public world' is 'out there' and we are trying to reach it from some 'closed inside' – not just a duality, presence of two distinct aspects, but an absolute dualism. The world and the mind (or language) are posited as totally incommensurable entities which, by the all underlying assumption, *are not* and *can not* come into contact with each other: "we cannot compare belief with non-belief." As this makes the conflict indissoluble, the only thing which remains is to get rid of one of the elements. Mind (or language) must stay, as it is doing all the consideration, so the only element which can go away is the extra-mental, or extra-linguistic reality. This form of idealism has been the background for the coherentism from its beginnings with Bradley and Joachim.[226]

171. Of course, you cannot both lock the box and have it open. But who has said that the box is locked, that language does not refer to anything extra-linguistic, that mind is able to relate only to itself? This, as we said, is motivated by the wish to account for everything in the *visible* categories and, in the present context of truth, to reduce it to the *visible* criteria of its verification.

The reduction of the 'outside' (reality) to the 'inside' (mind, or language) amounts to the observation that saying that truth is a relation of language to the 'outside world', we remain 'within' the language. But do we really? Hearing that

(iv) "There is a funny guy on the square."

one convinces oneself about the truth of this statement by looking out the window – not very linguistic act and certainly not one keeping me 'inside' the *actuality* of my solipsistic 'mind'. We have – we *do have* – the relation between the linguistic expressions and the world (or between S and D, or between the abstract *signs* and the *distinctions* possibly *transcending* the *horizon of actuality*), represented pictorially as:

(v)   "There is a funny guy on the square." $\xleftrightarrow{\quad r \quad}$ the funny guy on the square

Now, applying (i) from §157 and saying that

(vi) "To check if "There is a funny guy on the square" is true one looks for a funny guy on the square."

is indeed a linguistic expression which, in a sense, has turned 'is true' into a higher-order predicate, has 'internalised' the r from (v). Just like the universal possibility of

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[224]D. Davidson, *A coherence theory of truth and knowledge.* p.141

[225]R. Rorty, *Pragmatism, Davidson, and truth.* p.334

[226]If not with Berkeley. Statements like, e.g., "It is a hard thing to suppose that right deductions from true principles should ever end in consequences which cannot be maintained or made consistent." [G. Berkeley, *A Treatise....* Introduction §3] may not announce a full-fledged coherence theory of truth, but they signal the presence of its essential elements.

objectifying anything leads to the *objectivistic illusion*, so the universal possibility of such an 'internalisation', the mere fact of the relation (v) being expressed linguistically as (vi), can be misused for reducing everything to a mere linguistic expression. But just like the *objectivistic illusion* mistakes the possibility of turning everything into an object for the reality of everything being an object, so this reduction mistakes the possibility of linguistic expression for the only reality and takes the fact that communicable thoughts are expressed only in language for the lack of any reality beyond the linguistic one. All such reductions forget the very first fact, the original relation (v), and dwell exclusively at its *reflection* (vi), the mere *signs* over which they do have some power. And since all that can be said, can be said in language which has become the exclusive focus of attention, one may safely keep writing and speaking as if the box were locked and nothing connected it to the outside.[227]

In our view, language is connected to the much wider field of *distinctions* which, in turn, remain embraced by the ultimate *transcendence* of the *indistinct*. Only trying to explicate everything in purely *actual* terms alone, one may be forced to negate any outside connections of the system of *signs*. But language remains connected to the whole world of life and "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life."[228] This form of life, the *distinctions* drawn by an *existence* in experience, condition the character of the language itself, constitue both its origin and its limit. 172.

"The limit of language is shown by its being impossible to describe the fact which corresponds to (is the translation of) a sentence, without simply repeating the sentence."[229] There may be as many relations r in (v) as there are linguistic expressions, for each draws the *distinctions* in another way, and words do nothing more (nor less) than that. Consequently, trying to specify it, we have to start every time anew, for every utterance, drawing the *distinctions* in its unique way, gives a new relation. (Recall, for instance, the differences between the German "Wirklichkeit" and English "reality". The relation between "blue" and blueness is as different from the relation between "hate" and hate, as blueness is different from hate.) Now, there is no doubt that what "hate" means is conditioned by what "antipathy", "repulsion", "love" and many other words mean. But this inter-dependence of words' meanings is not an immanent linguistic phenomenon. To some degree, it is certainly conditioned by the richness of the language. But it reflects primarily the ways *distinctions* are drawn in the world. A person not experiencing any difference between antipathy and repulsion will easily confuse the use of these words just like, being reminded that the two words mean distinct things, may lead to drawing the respective *distinction* in experience.

This intimacy between language and reality does not mean their identity. There may be little sense in trying to *prove* the limitation of the language using the language, especially since this limitation is language's very pressuposition. (Besides, since it is not linguistic, attempts to define it might be compared to the attempts to define exactly, using only language, the difference betwen two shades of blue.) But even if it can not be *precisely* specified within the language, its *presence* can still be shown, *clearly* indicated. This is one of the fundamental, even if usually ignored, functions of language – allowing us to speak about something we cannot say, to point towards something we cannot define *precisely*.

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[227]This philosophical linguisticism has a powerful counterpart in the mathematical theory of formal, that is uninterpreted, languages and mathematical logic underlying the design of computers (which are just tools for manipulation of uninterpreted symbols). Both express one of the central aspects of the intellectual *Zeitgeist* of the XXth century.

[228]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. I:19

[229]L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*. Or else, extending the schema §157.(ii): the meaning of "W" is W, as observed, e.g., in M. Dummett, *What is a theory of meaning?*, p.108

This openness is the whole strength and flexibility of natural language.[230] Unlike a formal language (or any language when raised to the status of the exclusive object of study), natural language is not an isolated and *dissociated* entity existing exclusively according to its own definition and norms. On the contrary, it is only an *aspect* of *existence* involved into its world. The limitation of the language is that one can hardly explain the meaning of any word or phrase to one who does not understand it, that one cannot explain what "blue", "taste" or "hate" mean using the language alone. The limitation of the language is that new words emerge almost exclusively because of the insufficiency of the language in dealing with new distinctions arising in experience. The limitation of the language is that it cannot exist alone and this limitation is what underlies its whole meaning. Language lives only through the relation which words and sentences carry by being (used as) what they are: abstract *signs* reflecting (and also drawing) *distinctions* in the matter of experience, epiphanies capable of forgetting their origin but incapable of functioning without it.

173. This discussion of meaning is relevant here because truth is only meaning's adventure and the attempts to reduce truth to mere coherence involve a similar reduction of meaning. If the meaning of linguistic expressions does not reside in the language alone but involves some *transcendent* element, then neither can truth amount to merely immanent coherence.

Let us remind that what we mean by *transcendence* is not any inacessible reality 'in itself'. The square *transcends* the *immediacy* of the expression "the square". But the square, too, is a limit of *distinctions*, even an *actual object* and, as such, remains immanent. Hate *transcends* any expression "hate" in a much more dramatic way but one might still claim that, being relative to our experience, it is immanent. Since all we have are *distinctions* relative to the *distinguishing existence*, we might seem to remain in the sphere of immanence and our objections to the coherence theories of truth and linguistic immanentism of meaning may seem to affect our own position.

To address this, which we will do in the remaning part of the considerations of *actual* truth, let us consider perhaps the most dramatic variant of immanentism which says: "Nothing beyond the text." Text is absolutised as *the only* carrier and container of meaning and, consequently, if it is still a legitimate idea at all, of truth. Imagine two reading scenarios. 1) I have a book, B, which I know was written by an author (whom I may know or not, does not matter). I read it and find a lot of interesting stuff, meaning, even truth, in it. 2) In the other scenario, I have exactly the same book B only I know that it was written by an 'intelligent' machine. Will the meaning, and consequently the truth, of the book be the same in both readings?

The champions of pure textuality would like us to either abstract away the difference or pretend that no difference obtains. However, even if in 2) one were able to understand exactly the same from B as in 1) (except, perhaps, how the heck did a machine manage to write *this*?), one would still not be able to attach to it equal value, and hence neither equal meaning, as in 1). It does not matter if one knows who exactly the author was, how much one possibly knows about him and his time, although these things certainly may influence the reading and understanding of the text. But what matters is that one knows *that* the text was written by a human. This, *in and by itself*, makes the text a possible revelation of truth which can be trivial or deep, simple or involved but, in any case, possibly relevant and touching reader's humanity. Reading is a form of communication with other humans, and hence also with one's own humanity, even if the author remains unknown. The fact

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[230]Like every genuine strength, it is not owned by the one to whom it is given and can sometimes even appear as weakness.

that the text can involve much more than the author ever intended is as uninteresting as the fact that an accidental slip of a tongue can mean something much more than the one to whom it happened is conscious of. We are still dealing with humans and this is the universal horizon, the eventual reference frame encircling every text.

And finally, if one got the same book B without knowing who, or what, wrote it, but knowing that it might have been written by a human or by a machine, its reading would be different from both 1) and 2). Yet, reading it and gradually discovering (in the text only) some understandable, human meaning, one would form the image of the possible author in terms of 1), in terms of a human who possibly might have written such a text. One would think, good author, he says a lot of interesting things, while in the moments where things get a bit dubious one would, as usual, try to ignore them but, perhaps eventually, use them to construct a more refined understanding of the *message*; perhaps, by augmenting the dubious parts with what one has understood, perhaps, by ascribing them to the idiosyncrasy of the author. The point is only to repeat, after hermeneutics, that we do treat a text as a possible message worth deciphering. It is such a message only because it was sent by another human. If it were sent by an ant or an extracelestial intelligence, we would be deciphering a different thing.

In short, many texts of accidental, merely informative or purely entertaining value might be written by anybody, even machine. But in the moment one assumes, expects, or discovers, some deeper meaning in the text, the text itself becomes a medium of human communication – this is, eventually, the universal context of every text.[231] We are not assigning any particular importance to the actual authorship of a text. But we are assigning the highest, even if always obvious, importance to the fact that *there was a human author*. This personal *presence* and the character of a text as a message from another human is the first aspect going against any reduction of its meaning to the textual immanence of *actual signs*.

"Nothing beyond the text" does not limit the attention to any single text but to the 'textuality as such'. A single text, a book is but a piece of 'interminable text', where other texts are the only reference frame for any given one. It is supposed to mean that there is no ground for assuming "anything beyond the signs, anything whose sameness and existence would not be conditioned by the process of naming."[232] Given our objections to the metaphysical substances and absolute identities, this sounds almost acceptable – disquietingly so. . . Let us ignore the tendency (of ones who seem to do nothing but reading and writing) to call everything which involves signs "text".[233] Still, a sign which is not a

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[231] The *individuality of the particular person* who happened to write the text may, but need not, be of significance. "[A] book is created by another I than that which appears in our habits, in company, in weaknesses. If we want to understand this I, we must try to recreate it in our own depth [...] Man who lives in the same body with a great genius has little to do with the latter, but he is the only person known to his acquaintances; consequently, it is absurd to evaluate a great poet, as Sainte-Beuve does, according to what kind of person he is or what his friends tell about him." [M. Proust, *Against Sainte-Beuve*. The method of Sainte-Beuve's] Unlike those who, dissatisfied with the petty *ego* of personal folk-psychology, claim subject's total superficiality, here dispensing with the former serves only the purpose of emphasizing text's origin in the deeper layers of *self*, of genuine human subject(ivity).

[232] B. Allen, *Truth in Philosophy*. p.106 [after A. Szahaj, *Irony and Love*. p.77]

[233] We take notice of the remarks that "text" does not mean text but some unspecifiable *totality* of *distinctions*, the *totality* of meanings or, perhaps, meaning-carriers, a web of beliefs, a kind of network of interconnected – or rather a magma of free floating and hardly identifiable – units; eventually, a pantheistic substance overriding identity of its parts. The arguments of idealistic flavour, which point to the impossibility of a contact between two dissociated substances, yield one substance which, as also in our

sign *of something else* is not a sign! It is, perhaps, a thing, a 'that', but what makes it a sign? Only the *distance* between it and its meaning. A more drastic change of language seems to be needed, but what is the point in changing the meaning of the word "sign" to such an extent that it ceases to denote 'sign'? Baudrillard's "*simulacrum*", a copy without any original, tries to take care of that, of reducing the *sign* to its purely *actual* dimension and dispensing with anything signified, anything lying beyond its abstract *actuality*.

Most things exist and function completely independently from the process of naming but, indeed, they emerge only in the process of *distinguishing*. The difference might seem to concern only the wording, but it is quite fundamental, as fundamental as that between *actual signs* and the general *distinctions* or else, as that between *actuality* and *presence*. Certainly, *distinctions* arise only gradually and at every stage form a whole system – there is no such thing as a single *distinction* existing 'in itself' independently from others. Similarly, what is meant by "love" is related to, perhaps even dependent on, what is meant by "sympathy", "affection", "hate", etc. So, in principle, we can agree that meanings of all words are woven into a total web of the language. But this inter-dependence is only a reflection of the *distinctions* drawn in the matter of *experience*, between things, feelings, understandings. The plasticity of the *web* of language at best reflects only the plasticity of the *experience*, like the *actual signs reflect* only *distinctions* drawn also beyond the *horizon of actuality*. But it does not mean that every single, *actual* element of this web has a meaning only by its relation to the rest and is conditioned exclusively by such a relation. On the contrary, unlike a scientific theory (which, according to Quine, is a vast theoretical super-structure only at its outer boundary touching the world of experience and experiments), natural language meets *experience* at *every* point. The fact that meaning of a particular statement can depend on meanings of other words and statements does not in any way cut this particular statement off from its relation to the extra-linguistic aspect of *experience*, from the extra-linguistic *distinctions* which it draws and addresses.

'Text', any system of *signs*, or language is indeed, as Merleau-Ponty says, "life itself, our and thing's life. [But] not that *language* conquers and appropriates them, for what would be left for saying, if there existed only things said? It is a mistake of semantic philosophies to close language as if it spoke only about itself, because it lives [by] silence; everything we throw to others grew up in this great, mute country which will never leave us."[234] Expanding a bit this statement, we would add that the 'mute country' can itself be organised by *distinctions* and even *signs* which themselves need not have linguistic character, but even these are *signs* only by the force of their meaning (eventually, *non-actuality*) which they bring into the horizon of our attention. *Sign* is the paradigm of *actuality*, and *dissociated sign as a sign* the paradigm of *immediacy*. The insistence on pure textuality and absence of anything beyond the *signs*, in its attempts to escape from simplified correspondence to *actualities*, falls straight back into the midst of 'metaphysics of actuality' which, de-mitologised by the removal of the last element of *transcendence*, becomes pure *immediacy* of a mere sign, or else the *totality* of such signs. The *simulacrum* of *transcendence*, the 'interminable text', appears as the ultimate form of *subjectivistic illusion* which sees nothing beyond the *horizon of actuality* but other *actualities*, now not even *objects* but only *signs*. Perhaps, it is only an accident, perhaps, an intellectual sickness. *Thirsting* for a *visible* unity, it keeps removing the *transcendence*, narrowing the

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case, is the *one* underlied differentiation. The absolutisation of 'text', underlying the claims of nothing lying beyond it, amounts to applying a similar argument which, however, can be legitimately applied only to the ultimate 'substance'.

[234] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*. Inquiry and intuition;p.131

attention to what, being *immediately* given, deludes *reflection* with the promises of *unity*. But the unity which leaves the essential, even if conceptually ingraspable, element outside, is never satisfying. The attempts to remove *transcendence* are, at bottom, the attempts to appropriate it. But the multitude of *signs* and *simulacra*, their free and uncontrolled play, do not fill the emptiness of the soul which, trying to appropriate the world, loses the truth of its own being. "For everything seeks not another, but itself, and the journey to the exterior is foolish or compulsory."[235]

If we were willing to see in the 'text' a *totality* of meanings, a plastic *totality* of fluid elements with always unsharp boundaries, we might see in it an analogy to our *chaos*. But beyond *chaos*, there is *nothingness*. The moment in which this *transcedent origin* of all *distinctions* is ignored marks the beginning of immanentism. There is something beyond the 'text', something that may seem infinitesimal and insignificantly small, but which, exactly by lying beyond all differences, weights more than their whole web. It is a moment of silence, of silence which is tranquil and not intense, grateful and not awaiting anything. A moment of silence which neither grasps nor reaches for anything but makes all the things and meanings light, weightless, which suspends all meanings and thus, almost paradoxically, endows their totality with the deepest meaning – the touch of eternity *above* in which all meanings and differences disappear, this 'transcendental signified' which halts the regress of potentially infinite re-interpretations of *signs* by *signs*, of one *actuality* by another. It is only from such moments, from such a mute country, that the 'intertextual' web arises. Just like everybody enters this web from there, so in the moment of genuine silence one also leaves this web and touches eternity *above* it. Although such moments may be very rare, they do occur and, easy to ignore as they are, they testify to the tremendous difference between the interminable search for the truth in the *totality* of *visible signs*, which can rest only in the ideal limits of eschatological phantasies, and the *truth above* the actual facts which is *present* in the life one is living. 175.

3. *Truth of totality* 176.

The *objectivistic illusion*, underlying versions of correspondence theories, is manifest as the *subjectivistic illusion* in coherentism: first, in the fact that the whole becomes a mere 'text', a collection of mere *actualities*, *signs*; and then, in the usual multiplication of facts and truths (here, *signs*) as one tries to embrace the whole which refuses to appear as anything more than a *totality*. The main problem we have with truth as mere coherence is, besides its immanentism, the fact that the whole is only a *totality*. Extending beyond any reasonable limits of inquiry, the postulated coherence is only an ideal goal and so the truth must be postponed until indefinite future. As all ideal limits, it betrays the attempt to capture something higher in terms of a *totality* of lower elements. *Totality* is a project of *mineness* and so coherentism belongs to this level, although it often tries to account for the *actual* truths. Now, the *horizontal transcendence* of this level, the *not-mine*, has the particularly significant modification: the others. Focusing on this aspect of *transcendence* leads to replacing the more or less conceptual coherence with the social consensus.

Coherentism may touch some deeper, than mere *actual*, aspect of truth. However, with respect to the *actual* issues, it seems insufficient, if not pretty arbitrary. Starting with a given set (*totality*) of opinions, T, a new opinion O may happen to cohere with it just as well as its opposite. If a choice has to be made, I may end up with T and O while you with T and not-O. There are many coherent totalities and the choice between them seems to be arbitrary. But nobody wants to be swallowed up by the arbitrariness of subjectivity.

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[235]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:6.1

Beyond *me* there are others, the whole community, tradition. The sociological aspect appears (albeit in as yet limited and not aggressive form) already with Pierce since, for some reason, the eventual usefulness of an opinion cannot be judged by its own standards, it requires an eschatological consensus. "And the catholic consent which constitutes the truth is by no means to be limited to men in this earthly life or to the human race, but extends to the whole communion of minds to which we belong, including some probably whose senses are very different from ours, so that in that consent no predication of a sensible quality can enter, except as an admission that so certain sorts of senses are affected."[236] One seems thus to pay the due respect to the *transcendent* character of truth not only removing it to the indefinite fullness of times but also overcoming solipsism by assigning the constitutive role to a community.

But taking thus care of the *transcendence* of *not-mine* by replacing objectivity by inter-subjectivity, typical for the sociological invasion of philosophy, amounts really to its removal. As we observed in I:§150, if none of two persons were able to relate to the objective truth of his views, together they might establish consensus which might even strengthen the common views but not introduce any new quality of their objectivity. Inter-subjectivity may cure solipsism but not subjectivity. It only raises it to the higher level. And as no *transcendence* enters the horizon, one obtains only a community of immanent interactions, of writing and speaking, a community of 'narratives'. Then there seems to be only one goal: let's interact, talk and "keep conversation going". Strangely enough, one drags in all kind of extra-conversational, extra-textual things like ethics, solidarity, tolerance...So, after all, does not conversation suffice? It seems it does not. For pragmatical mind, conversation is only means of action, and a good conversation brings in powerful narratives, effective metaphors. But appeals to descriptions and metaphors which simply work, which are effective, which serve the purpose seem rather empty if keeping the conversation going is *the* goal. (Sure, it is not *the* goal because there is no such thing as *the* goal. One is only pressed by 'wrong language game' to say what *the* point possibly might be.) But even the strictest codes of a court etiquette, enabling one to spend time conversing without saying anything, had always left an opening for actually saying something. Reducing everything to a game of *simulacra* one would still like to escape the resulting arbitrariness, that is, to retain the possibility of saying something. And so one needs something – tolerance, solidarity, respect...– which sounds sufficiently convincing *in itself*. But is it convincing? Sure, because 'decent fellows like us' do accept such values. But what if I am not one of the conversational club, if I am not a decent guy and do not accept such values? I guess, I am not part of the game, I am not admitted to the conversation. But then, since one talks about solidarity and tolerance, of constant extension of the horizon of 'we', so please, extend it, perhaps even to the guys who bomb your home town. This, after all, is only an expression of a yet another, powerful narrative metaphor.

177. Replacing truth by inter-subjectivity, consensus theory reduces possible truth to that about which all might reach an *actual* consensus, and that is close to nothing. Failing to escape *my* subjectivity in the sphere of social subjectivity, one invents the ideal of consensus allowing everybody run his own business, the ideal of plurality and non-conformism. This is only a slight variation on the pragmatic ethics in a 'pluralistic universe' taken over by the recent masters of manifold and variety. Having lost, in the plurality of disparate opinions and 'discourses', any means of saying that something is more important, more valuable, higher, deeper or more true than something else, and thus of saying what possibly

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[236]C. S. Pierce, *Critical Review of Berkeley's idealism.* p.83

might be a meaningful goal for which things should 'work', the only possibility left is to embrace everything. One even imagines systems (political, cultural) allowing for non-conformism. (Positive, as the intentions behind such, as behind most other utopias, can be, the result reflects only the origin: the absolutisation of atomism on the social scale, only claimed to have positive value.) However, just like a sign which does not signify is not a *sign*, so a system open for everything is not any system but a lack thereof. Also, non-conformism which is allowed as an option, as if calculated into the system, is not any longer non-conformism. A system allowing non-conformism, by this very token, abolishes its possibility. One could, perhaps, keep conversation going. But everyone should know the situations where this becomes a mere gesture of unbearable politeness, because what the other is saying, no matter how intelligent and well-argued, is either completely uninteresting or nonsense. Universal pluralism and tolerance would have one main consequence – total de-individualisation and indolence, uniformity, the exact opposite of the intended variety. Discourse in such a setting would, too, cease to have meaning, because where everything is allowed, where all goals are equally good, where everything is acceptable, there is no need to argue (not to say fight) for anything. When everybody is entitled to be heard, eventually, nobody bothers to listen. Sure, these are only idealizations, regulative ideas since no such thing can ever happen. But a regulative idea directing one towards a goal which, in itself, is not desirable seems very dubious. Besides, there are some who speak as if they wanted them to happen.

Certainly, admitting *every possible* variety of narrative metaphors, not to mention be- 178. haviours, is a bit too generous. But saying what should be excluded, by the very fact of excluding something some members of the all-embracing community might defend, points always beyond the limits of possible consensus. If one does not want to place everything in the hands of the eschatological community of minds as the ideal goal, consensus theory must turn ethnocentric by choosing some more specific community, consensus with which would constitute truth. However, having only narratives without any inherent and mutual values, such a choice is entirely arbitrary. And if anything at all might possibly be meant by "truth" it can not stand all too much arbitrariness. The convenient words one tries to invoke – "solidarity", "universality", "communicability", "tolerance" – point towards something which one believes would cure this arbitrariness, something fundamentally human. Ethics seem to replace truth; not in the Kantian way, though, as complementing the project of knowledge of appearances, but simply *replacing* it. Ethics, moreover, devoid of any truth, that is, an arbitrary 'ought' of mere worship of manifold, plurality, growth, increase. The popular medical term for that is "cancer". As a cure agains the uncontrolled growth and diversification, one praises the *powerful* metaphors, the *powerful* narratives, namely, the ones which gather communities providing an axis of consensus. But what makes a metaphor, a narration *powerful*? What is it that makes some language "strike also the next generation as inevitable"[237]? Communism was once a powerful narrative, many next generations were struck by it as inevitable. And its prolific, powerful consequences... Yet its power was not very different from – in fact, was founded in – its falsehood. Is it so that people somewhat intuit that this and not that narrative can be made effective, used to change things? Change to the better, perhaps? These are, of course, 'wrong questions', which assume that there is some 'what' behind the actual event of a narrative simply happening to be powerful. Consensus, being the measure of truth, should stay the primitive notion. It just happens, and so does truth. So let it happen in most prolific ways, with no interference or

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[237]R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity.* I:2;p.29

persecution of its possible happenings. Why such a proliferation is to be any better than unification is not clear – after all, consensus seems closer to the latter than to the former but, we might guess, one wants to be politically correct.

179.   We might seem to be confusing two distinct issues: consensus theories of truth and the politically motivated views promoting free unfolding and multiplicity of views. It is not, however, our choice because the two, arising from the same perspective putting the social aspect in front of any other, typically go together. The problem of non-conforming groups and individuals is equally annoying to the consensus theories as to those preaching unrestricted proliferation of narratives. The latter have to exclude deviant individuals and dangerous narratives, while the former, in addition, also admit for those who announce some truths before the times are ripe for a general consensus about them. Somehow, they must take non-conformism into account and, trying to do so, step beyond the purity of their basic claim. Freedom of unfolding, as well as consensus, must be qualified by some additional element – of respecting the limits, of being reasonable, of not coercing others. But if we need to exclude persecution to upgrade a mere consensus, the power of narratives or a pluralistic non-conformism to the level of truth, why not dispense with all such upgraded concepts and only say that it is enough not to persecute? "Truth is non-persecution." Well, it does not sound bad, does it? Why not? Because it again touches something which one wants to recognise as humanly correct, not to say true. The servility of praising something that 'strikes also the next generation as inevitable' is as astonishing as the depersonalisation and de-individualisation implied by the unrestricted pluralism. It is an invitation (the less intended, the worse) to following the mob psychology, like that which made many victims of Marxism (in all its variants) follow voluntarily the development proclaimed inevitable for all future generations. If some element of ethical value is added, one may, perhaps, avoid the arbitrariness of mere consensus. But thus it ceases to be a pure consensus *simpliciter*.

180.   The absolutised sociologism of consensus theories reflects the mentality of a stock market and agents of public relations, or else the wishes of the ministries of propaganda. No doubt, there are sociological dimensions and situations in which mob's convictions are sufficient for action or, as is usually the case, mass hysteria. But have we not heard enough lies which, consented to and repeated sufficiently many times, refused to become truths? Inter-subjectivity, no matter how total or totalitarian, is still a *subjectivity* which can not constitute any truth but only, and only at best, reflect it.

   There may be an element of virtue in the consensus theories. Consensus, just like co-herence, need not exclude truth and it is often important to achieve an agreement with others which means, to accept the same truths with respect to the same horizon of *distinctions*. But one must always watch for the fear of all *distinctions* of relevance becoming *only* those agreed upon by the community. Petty-bourgeois conformism, not to mention horrific submission to the powerful narratives of Stalinism or Hitlerism, are certainly not intended by the proponents of the view, but they can be avoided only by introducing elements which have nothing to do with the sociological consensus.

   The element of truth hiding behind the consensus theories concerns the *vague* intuition of truth's transpersonal *aspect*. Unfortunately, in the search for *visible* criteria, this aspect gets conflated with the opinion of plurality. (Thirst for *visible* criteria ends typically with conflating the criteria with the things they were only supposed to be criteria of.) Truth, however, is not transpersonal because it resides only in some communal consensus but, on the contrary, because, being *present* in every human, it *transcends his reflection* and the

subjectivity of his mere *representations*. It is the *aspect* of the *non-actual foundation* in the layer *transcending* one's *subjectivity* not, however, merely in the *horizontal* dimension of others and *not-mine*, but in the *vertical* dimension reaching towards the deeper level of one's humanity.

4. *The absolute truth* 181.

"Truth in its essential nature is that systematic coherence which is the character of a significant whole. A 'significant whole' is an organised individual experience, self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled."[238] Translating it into our language, the 'significant whole' is the *existence* and the 'systematic coherence' its *unity*. But *this unity* is not consistency; it is the original fact of *existence founding* the possibility of any *actually* consistent whole and unity.

Recalling again our figure (I:§117, p.75), as we move up the circle (above its horizontal diameter), there are not *more distinctions*, in fact, there are less, or if there are more, they become dense beyond recognition. It is the sphere where the clue is not to include *more* heterogeneous facts into a unifying theory but rather to understand that less is more, that the same *eternal* things penetrate all variety of *actualities*. The truth of *invisibles* is contained in simple words of wisdom rather than in complexity of smart arguments.

Truth, like every *trace*, reaches eventually to the *unity* which is its *absolute aspect*, the unchangeable *one*, common to all who know it and to those who do not. But "[t]hough the truth is common, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own."[239] Manifestations of *unity* need not and do not conform to the *visible* rules of agreement between the particulars which, usually, only unknowingly and involuntarily happen to manifest the same eternal truth. The *absolute* truth does not embrace all the lower, *visible* ones – it abolishes them. The *distance* separating the *actual signs* from their meaning is here so remote, that no *visible* rules can govern the expressions of truth. And only the exclusive reliance on the *visible* rules and criteria can confuse their lack with arbitrariness and the absence of truth.

The *unity* of one being certainly admits contradictions. Viewing this *unity* in its temporal aspect, there is nothing contradictory in being, at one time P and, at another time, not-P. But much more can be said. *I* can, at the same time, both like and dislike a person. And it is not of much use to say that then *I* like and dislike distinct properties of the person, because persons are not *complexes* of properties but individual beings. Sure, *I* can like the person for 'being x' and dislike for 'being y'. But *I* can also, simultaneously, both love and not-love the person, the whole person. "I hate her and I love her. Why I do so I don't know.//It's just the way I feel, that's all, and it's tearing me in two."[240] *I* can have a *vague* feeling about something which, when attempting to specify it, results in saying that it is both pleasing and displeasing. This can be blamed merely on the inadequacy of the language to express the actual feelings. But blaming it for such an inadequacy, one has already assumed that the feelings must be prone to a *precise* description in terms of *immediacy*, that is, non-contradiction. Higher things seldom are prone to such descriptions and, indeed, their descriptions can often be most adequate by using contradictory predicates. Coming to terms with such higher aspects of one's life, it is necessary to realise that simple yes-no questions can have no answers. One sitting there and trying desperately to figure out "Do I love her or not? Do I or do I not?" is probably still in his adolescence, trying to capture the accumulated tension of *vagueness* and *clarity* in the categories of recently developed *precision* and *reflective visibility*. When, eventually, some *action* must

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[238] H. H. Joachim, *The Nature of Truth*. §26 [after S. Blackburn and K. Simmons, eds., *Truth*. p.50]

[239] Heraclitus DK 22B2 [Instead of "truth", the fragment has "logos".]

[240] Catullus *Odi et Amo*, 60

be undertaken, one may have to bring everything down to the *actual* choice between yes and no: "Shall I invite her for a dinner or not?" This is now a question about the *actual* course of action where, indeed, contradictions can be intolerable.[241]

182. The eventual *transcendence* is *nothingness*, the lack or the empty set of *distinctions*, so the only *signs* true with respect to it are those which mean *nothing*, $m(S) = \emptyset$, "nothingness", "one" or just ...silence. Let us notice in passing that a *sign* meaning *nothingness* is very different from a *sign* meaning nothing, or from the lack of *sign*. Silence meaning *nothingness*, *Stille und Ewigkeit*, is different from silence which does not mean anything or, as the case may be, which is only tensely expecting its own termination waiting for somebody to say something.[242] Also, as intentions belong to meanings, there is a fundamental difference between a *sign* which both intends and means *nothingness*, and one which, intending something, means nothing, between a *koan* and an overlooked contradiction.

The *absolute* truth is *that*: *that* there is, or else, *that* there is truth. And what is *that*? *Nothing*, *that* which makes it impossible for any person or any community to *arbitrarily* decide what is true. At the same time, *that* makes it possible to oppose any particular 'truth' which *actuality* might attempt to *posit* as the truth, as the *absolute* truth. Falsehood with respect to the *nothingness* is not its plain negation, something; it is not anything specifically distinguished as such, because no particular thing, no *distinction* opposes the *absoluteness* of *indistinct*. *Indistinct* remains untouched *above* the whole world, *above* all *distinctions* and falsehood with respect to *that* amounts to projecting some *distinctions* into the *indistinct*. *Absolute* falsehood is something particular *only when* predicated about the *absolute* or, what amounts to the same, absoluteness predicated about anything relative – in short, an *idol*.

183. *Idolatry* divides because, *positing* something relative as *absolute*, it *alienates* from *that* which is *one*; trying to make it *visible*, it not only veils but also falsifies it. Relativity means limited scope and validity, and *positing* it as *absolute* sets one against all that contradicts this absoluteness, namely, all that falls outside its scope. And so, he that tries to unify under some *visible* slogans, ends up dividing, "he that gathereth not [in truth] scattereth abroad."[243] The scattered pieces, the pieces left outside the scope of the *actual* unity remain, however, as the seeds of constant restlessness, disquieting reminders of the refusal and exclusion. And "[t]he stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner."[244] The new building, to last, must not be just a rearrangement of the old pieces including, in addition, a few pieces previously excluded. It lasts only accepting relativity of the relative and ceasing to search for the *absolute* among the *visible* pieces.

Truth is the way of – and, as a *trace* of *transcendence*, a norm, a call to – *unity*, keeping

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[241]Nicholas of Cusa could be quoted extensively to illustrate the disappearing role of *actual* contradctions in the spiritual sphere and the true *equipollence* of opposites in the *origin*. His *coincidentia oppositorum* concerns "the Uniting Beginning, [where] we see opposites prior to duality, i.e., before they are two contradictories. [It is] as if we were to see the smallest of contraries coincide (e.g., minimal heat and minimal cold; minimal slowness and minimal fastness, etc.) [...] Hence, just as an angle that is minmally acute and minimally obtuse is a simple right angle, in which the smallest of contrary angles coincide, before acute angle and obtuse angle are two angles, so too is the situation regarding the Uniting Beginning, in which the smallest of contraries altogether coincide" [Nicholas of Cusa, *De Beryllo*. §41;p.810] or, perhaps, have not been *dissociated* yet.

[242]Thus, on the one hand, "Silence alone is Thy praise." [Ps. LXV:2; St. Jerome's translation] But not all silence is praise, for there is also silence of emptiness, of lack turned into disappointment: "Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence." [Ps. XCIV:17]

[243]Mt. XII:30/Lk.XI:23

[244]Ps. CXVIII:22

heaven and earth together. It is the *transcendent unity* and as such a contra-distinction to the falsehood of the *actuality* taken as *absolute*. It is the element of *transcending* – beyond *actuality* – which establishes it primarily as the *call* to *unity*, as the *norm* of preserving the *unity*. Following this norm unites, but not necessarily in any trivial sense of a conceptual agreement – it unites primarily in a complete disagreement, *above* and in spite of all *actual* conflicts.[245] It is not a trivial acceptance, which often means just absolutisation, of all the differences. It is rather an admittance that these differences are only of relative value, are manifestations of something which, remaining *invisible*, unities. The image of truth as the absolute either-or, not admitting any degrees and compelling everybody to unconditional acceptance, as both *absolute* and *visible*, is a fallen angel reminding of the lost paradise. "The urge to possess absolutely *only certainties* is a residual religious drive, and nothing more."[246] It is the *trace* of the *absolute* truth which, however, concerns only the *invisible* *absolute*. Among the relativity of *actual* facts, truth can hardly conform to such standards. Any demand for it to *actually* and *visibly* unify and gather only reduces its meaning and power. For *absolute* truth is not relative to any particular aspects of our *actual* world and life, but exercises its power *above*, as the ultimate norm, ever reminding us about the only relative significance of whatever we manage to capture under our *actual* look and grasp. Reducing it to any *visible* norms and criteria falsifies its character of being exactly the *absolute* norm which remains valid when all *actual* criteria have failed or been violated.

Every *actuality* is a *sign* which may be true or not with respect to the *absolute*. In the deepest sense life, viewed as a constant *confrontation* of *actuality* with *transcendence*, can be true. To live in truth is to live in conformance to the *origin*, in the *unity above* *visible* dispersion. To use Luria's inventive imagery, to gather the dispersed pieces; in the constant process of restoration, *«tikkun»*, to keep repairing the divine vessels broken in the earlier stage of dispersion, *«shevirath ha-kelim»*.[247] Successful *«tiqqun»* concerns the whole hierarchy of Being, *unifies* all its levels around the highest truth; not in any coherent theory but in the full recognition of the relative differences, even incommensurability, of lower *distinctions*, whose possible consistency and compatibility never sums up to the ultimate *unity*. The *signs* can be true in different degree, depending on the level they address. An *idol* is seldom a complete lie. It can be promoted to the special status precisely because it harbours some truth. But the status of the *absolute* is undeserved because it is only *relative* truth. I saw once a professor (of philosophy!) conducting a proof in first-order logic for the statement that God who is both omnipotent and good cannot possibly exist. Formally, the proof was correct and His Professorship seemed very pleased with himself – he almost seemed to believe that he actually proved anything of interest. But correctness and truth with respect to the mathematical *precision* need not reflect any truth with respect to the deeper aspects of life. One can be both right and wrong at the same time.[248] Truth of most statements terminates at the level which they address, and in this very fact there hides an

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[245]"What opposes unites, and the finest attunement stems from things bearing in opposite directions, and all things come about by strife. – Graspings: things whole and not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant. The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one." [Heraclitus DK 22B8-B10.] We are, of course, very far from any pantheistic interpretations of the slightly unlucky phrase opening the last sentence.

[246]F. Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. 16

[247]The same intuitions seem to underlie the Orphic myth of Zagreus-Dionysus' rebirth – return to the original unity – from the pieces scattered in the souls of all people.

[248]In a particular case, it can be hard to say if rigidity is an expression of pride, of insecurity, or of both, but it is easy to notice that one can be both intelligent and stupid. Such observations might be taken only as a preliminary to the observation 'the smarter, the more stupid' from §54.

additional aspect of truth, of knowing and respecting the limits. But there are also other modes of speaking. The similes, invoked in wisdom literature and various Biblical stories, are true at several levels – not because they can be interpreted in various ways but because their plain meaning extends to and merges with the senses at deeper and deeper levels. This is the rare *unity* of wisdom which is able to embrace the truth of whole human being in the *actuality* of one image, in a few simple *signs*.

In the deepest sense, a life can be true, a life which is lived in conformance to the *origin*. This does not in any way assume any 'essence of human nature', but it does suggest that there are some fundamental aspects of the *existential* situation which, deserving respect and recognition, can be ignored and forgotten. (We will address them in Book III.) Truth in the strictest sense of an access to the unchangeable reality applies only to the deepest sphere of life. Simply because this ultimate *invisible foundation* is the only unchangeable reality, and its relations to the sphere of *visibility* the only constant aspect of human experience and history. "Our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent times."[249] But the fact that they have been able to preserve themselves is not an accident of the historical development prone to pragmatic verification. They were able to preserve themselves only because they reflect the deepest aspects of human situation. The lower aspects and, eventually, concepts, ideas and theories are certainly prone to steady re-evaluation. But this in no way affects the truth concerning the ultimate reality of our being. This truth needs no arguments and demonstrations, it is *above* all truths, unaffected by their passage and indefeasible by their pretensions, waiting in its eternal silence until the skirmishes which future times fight against the past fall silent too. "We have incapacity of proof, insurmountable by all dogmatism. We have an idea of truth, invincible to all scepticism."[250] This truth is what it always has been and every human being can only attempt to live it *concretely* or, as the case may be, fail to do so. To dissolve the *absolute* in the relativity of *visible* truths is to falsify it, for "it is absurd to make the fact that the things of this earth are observed to change and never to remain in the same state, the basis of our judgment about the truth."[251] An unmistakable sign of such an absurd is ascription of *absoluteness* to some relative truth. This is the *only absolute* untruth the human history has ever seen.

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185. Let us summarise briefly. The particular ways in which particular judgments or theories are checked vary tremendously leaving hardly any universal criteria to stick to. This, however, does not mean that I can judge as I please, and all theories of truth try, in one way or another, to account for the absence of such arbitrariness. Arbitrariness is the pure *immediacy*, the pure subjectivity of mere *hic et nunc* which, *dissociated* from all the *rest*, seems to offer its contents in a wild spontaneity. Arbitrariness is pure immanentism, *dissociation* of *immediacy* from its context, surroundings and, eventually, origin. To account for non-arbitrariness of truth one does, willingly or not, point to some form of *transcendence*: correspondence to *externality*, coherence to the *more* of the context, consensus to

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[249]W. James, *Pragmatism*. p.83 [after G. Cotkin, *William James: Public Philosopher*. p.165]

[250]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. VI:395

[251]Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. XI:6. We will not, of course, follow this observation with the conclusion that, since only heavenly bodies are "always in the same state and suffer no change", they have anything more to do with the *absolute* truth, for this is already reducing the *absolute* to the *visible*, if only remotely so.

the *non-mineness* of other humans or culture, and the last one (which does not have any established name nor any strictly philosophical tradition) to the revelation of *invisibles* and silence of the *origin*.

The tradition correcting the views which bring truth all too closely to subjectivity observes that denying any sphere of *transcendence*, one denies also the meaning of the word "truth". Such a denial indeed solves all the problems in one stroke: there is nothing to talk about. There may be some dose of positive intentions behind such claims. But the word itself refuses irresponsibly to die and, moreover, it refuses even to be reduced to any other word. Perhaps, we are playing our 'language game' a bit wrongly? A bit too ecstatically? A bit too immanently?

Yet, this tradition (of correspondence theories, or realism) encounters the problem of dualistic ontology which it can neither ignore nor solve. To some extent, we follow the opposing tradition (of immanentism, or idealism), namely, to the extent that every 'what' is relative to (our) *distinguishing*. In the world of *distinctions*, there is no strict dualism: the meanings of our *signs* and the *distinctions* with respect to which their truth is constituted are essentially of the same kind: they are both *distinctions* in the same *indistinct*. Almost as Frege demanded of a correspondence that it "can only be perfect if the corresponding things coincide and are, therefore, not distinct things at all."[252]

There is, however, a difference between the two in that the *actual distinctions* of mere *signs* can merge into the *non-actual* ones. Our 'immanentism' of relativity goes along with the fundamental importance of *transcendence*, of *non-actuality* serving as the measure and corrective of the *immanent signs*. We disagree with any forms of verificationism, pragmatism or utilitarianism trying to reduce the whole truth to some, preferably observable if not measurable elements of experience.[253] If one wants to insist that "only what serves life is true", then one must also add that "only truth serves life", if "truth is what it is expedient to believe in" then also "what is *really* true it is good to believe and evil to reject."[254] Thus, although pragmatism, if only understood very generously, captures an aspect of truth, it has nothing to say about the *absolute* truth nor, leaving *everything* relative to the possible aims, about what might be expedient to believe.

We get closer to the correspondence theories observing that if truth gets reduced to any criterion then we have really dispensed with the very idea of truth which is exactly the last norm remaining when all other criteria have been violated. In particular, along with all criteriology, there disappears also what for it appears as a big problem: the truths which might remain forever unknown.[255] Taking D (in our 'definition' §161.(iii)) to be 'the

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[252]G. Frege, *The thought: a logical inquiry*. p.86. Or, as Plotinus observed, albeit with a profound reference to human reality, only with respect to the intellectual realm: "the contemplation must be the same as the contemplated, and the Intellect the same as the intelligible; for, if not the same, there will be no truth." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:3.5]

[253]Pragmatic truth has both aspects of verificationism "Truth *ante rem* means only *verifiability* [...]" [W. James, *Pragmatism's conception of truth*. p.61] and utilitarianism, according to which truth "is distinguished from falsehood simply by this, that if acted on it should, on full consideration, carry us to the point we aim at and not astray." [C. S. Pierce, *The fixation of belief*. 5] Unfortunately, as Russell pointed out, it is not only highly problematic to specify the 'point we aim at'; the criterion of eventual betterness or usefulness is often useless for determining truth. It is much easier to ascertain that "snow is white" than to figure out what might be the use of such a truth. Likewise, the later Wittgenstein's practice for which "«The proposition is either true or false» only means that it must be possible to decide for or against it," [L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. §198, §200] falls within this category, even if he does not attempt a closer specification of the acceptable decision procedures.

[254]C. S. Pierce, *Critical Review of Berkeley's idealism*. [my emph., p.87]

[255]Certainly, our ontology of relativity to *existence*, makes also all truths, except the *one*, disappear when

number of brontosauruses that ever lived', then we may meaningfully say that the sentence "The number of brontosauruses that ever lived is precisely 75,278" is true (or false) with respect to D, although we will never know which one it is.

We follow the correspondence theory in that truth expresses an agreement: between the *immanence* of a *sign* and the *transcendence* where its *meaning* resides. But this agreement is not between two incommensurable elements. Truth is a *trace* of *transcendence*, of the fact that, eventually, *I am not the master*. But this ultimate *confrontation* is lived as the *unity* of *actual* and *non-actual*, of the *distinctions* which reside on both sides of the boundary of *actuality*. We do not live in two incommensurable worlds of mental and external affairs – we live in one and the same world emerging through the *distinctions* relative to our *existence*, which we draw and recognise *in* the *indistinct*. Truth is the correspondece between a limited number of such *distinctions* and their *rest*, the agreement between the way in which such a limited number, S, structures the world, and the way in which the *rest*, D, does it.

186. The limited scope of applicability of each of these two views reflects the general fact that truth depends on the level addressed by the *signs*. The relevant *aspect* of *transcendence* is, except for the highest level, the *horizontal transcendence* corresponding to the level of things addressed by the statements (theories, views) which one wants to judge with respect to their truth or untruth.[256] And so, even if we grant some plausibility at the level at which the respective theories operate, they hardly retain it with respect to the lower, or higher levels. The kind of theory of truth one is able to propose depends primarily on the kind of things addressed, because things of different levels are involved in different forms of *transcendence*.

Thus truth borrows its specific character from the things addressed but it is all the time a *trace* of the *original confrontation*. As the *horizontal transcendence* of every level is but a reflection of the *vertical transcendence*, the norm of truth keeps always reminding one that the particular truths one might have obtained are not self-sufficient and must conform also to the higher levels of *experience* and, eventually, to the *absolute* truth. "Thus veritable truth is not accordance with an external; it is self-accordance; it affirms and is nothing other than itself and is nothing other; it is at once existence and self-affirmation."[257] From this *original foundation* every truth borrows the expectations of addressing something – and hence itself being – unchangeable, one and shared by all. But as long as it is concerned with relative beings, it can only be relative. Only what concerns the *absolute* can be *absolutely* true. Relativity of truth means only relativity of all possible 'whats', of the addressed *distinctions*. But given the addressed subject-matter or situation, the truth with respect to this relative context can be definite and 'absolute' – the *actual signs* can conform fully to the addressed *distinctions*, the relation between S and D may be a matter of degree but not of any relativity. *Above* all relative 'whats', the *absolute* truth is only the ultimate *that*, the reminder *that* there is (truth) which can be expressed and manifested but never

no *existence* is left. But it does not imply that all the truths a particular *existence* discovers during its life time disappear when this *existence* dies.

[256]"It is hot" is confronted merely with the immediacy of the sensation; "There is a cat on the mat" will be confronted with the *actual* facts (as will be "There is no cat on the mat"); an elaborate theory will be confronted with observations of its predictable consequences, with the requirements of internal consistency and, perhaps, of conformance or commensurability with other accepted theories, etc.; the general ideas, like "Man is what he leaves behind him", will be confronted with other, similarly general ideas, with the personality of one who pronounces them, with the pronouncements of others and, eventually, with the personal intuitions and convictions.

[257]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.2 [MacKenna's translation]

captured and exhausted by any *actuality*. Truths of the lower levels need not conform to such absolute standards. The lower need not mimic the higher, need not attempt any similarity, for this is impossible. But it must not forget the higher either, for then correct observations can turn into false ideas, true propositions can turn into false theories, correct arguments into wrong causes and series of right decisions into disastrous mystifications. Truth, let us say, is a *concrete participation* in the *traces* of *transcendence*, and as there are different forms and levels of *transcendence*, so truth of a lower level may turn out to be a falsehood of a higher one. Truths which stop short of the *absolute* remain relative, and this is a common lot. But if they forget it, if they forget the *absolute*, they start imperceptibly to claim absoluteness for themselves and thus turn into falsehoods. "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness."[258]

2.3   As below, so above

The impression might have accumulated that relations between the levels concern only *founding* of the lower by the higher ones. Such ontological *founding* is, indeed, the fundamental relation as described in Book I. But it concerns primarily only the *foundation* of the structure of the subsequent levels. *Distinctions* emerging at a lower level are not necessarily any reflections of the higher ones. In general, the lower *distinctions* arise as dissociations of various *aspects* of higher *nexuses*, that is, they are new elements specific for the lower level not determined by the elements of the higher one. In part 1 of the current Book, as well as in 2.2.2 we have followed the *traces* of various elements encountered at the lowest level of experience in the bottom-up direction. This bottom-up flow is not only the matter of exposition but also of life. Lower *distinctions* are involved in the *unity* of *existence*, contributing to the formation of higher, more *virtual nexuses*. We encountered examples of this process towards the end of §98 discussing the *concreteness* of *invisibles*, and then discussing memory in §§131.ff. We give now a few more examples and general characteristics of this influence of lower levels on the higher ones.

Acts are limited to the *horizon of actuality* in that the unity of a single *act* is consummated within this horizon, with the *equipollent aspects* of the *actual object* and *actual subject*. But, of course, we do not *act* in a completely spontaneous, that is, *dissociated* and meaningless way. Every *act* has a *rest*, is anchored in a wider context. The unity of a complex of *acts*, of an *action* or even *activity* is constituted not by their *objects* (they may vary and change) but by their objectives, *motivations* and, eventually, *inspirations*. An *object* of an *act* follows (in the sense of being chosen from a sphere circumscribed by) the purpose of the *action*; the purpose of the *action* follows the *motive* of the *activity*; and *motives*, often life-long *motivations* and traits, are in turn *expressions* of the *inspirations*.

This following is not, however, uniquely determined by the higher *aspects*. They only circumscribe some, usually *vague*, sphere of possible choices. In particular, at the lowest level, there remains the choice (not always voluntary) of a specific *object*, direction and character of the *act*. This choice, as an intentional *act*, concerns exclusively the *actual* contents but it influences higher element which can not be its intentional *object*. To the extent one tries to make it such, it withdraws and changes its character. If one thinks "I have to learn swimming. I have to learn swimming..." while trying to follow the

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[258]Lk. XI:34-35/Mt. VI:22-23

instructor's advice, one will have very hard time. The best one can do is to concentrate on following the *actual* instructions. If the intention of one's *act* is 'to be good', one may happen to do a fine thing, but the *invisible aspect* of the *act* has then withdrawn beyond the horizon of this intention and made *present* something more than what was intended (namely, what motivated one in the first place *to try* to be good.) It is not that one is not conscious of what hides behind one's *acts* – it is only that one *can not possibly* intend it *reflectively*. This *rest* of every *act* is the witness, on the one hand, of its anchoring in the wider sphere of one's being and, on the other, of the *act*'s possibility to influence it.

188. An example can be formation of more and more advanced *concepts*. One starts with a rough and simplified understanding of something, but by prolonged study one's *concepts* get refined. One tends to confirm it only by observing an increased ability to solve *actual* problems, to relate specific elements and provide more sophisticated *actual* descriptions. But more knowledge does not simply accumulate as a collection of separate items in a big sack. It gets organised. How exactly it gets organised is not easy to say, but we know that education forms the minds. Selection of topics and problems for a prolonged study, as well as of the ways to approach them, determines to some extent the resulting formation of the mind, the scope of its interests, the ways of addressing new issues. (This is what happens whenever an extraordinary mind gathers a group of pupils who, their intellectual differences notwithstanding, form a school.)

We have observed the same process in connection with memory. With the possible exception of photographic memory, a person forced to memorise more will also form more or less explicit structures for arranging the increasing amount of material. More *or less* explicit! The less explicit ones may not be accessible to observation or introspection but, the claim is, they are formed nevertheless. Studying mathematics, one will identify more central results and theorems which allow one to derive secondary results. But this is only a plain *visible* illustration because the arrangements will vary between individuals and, as also may happen, make some of them come with new creative ideas reflecting the *virtual* connections established above the level of conscious control. We do not inquire into specific ways of such an organisation because we do not believe in any such specific, yet universal, schemata. We recognise here only one general structure of 'compressing' a manifold of *actualities* into a more unified *nexus* which, to some extent, can be compared to gathering them under the unifying *sign* of a *concept*.

As noticed earlier, this general structure does not concern only memorisation and learning. The 'compressed' *actualities* can, in fact, slip out of memory. But they contribute to the formation of something which we might identify with a *virtual* center. In the case of *conceptual* constructions, this can manifest itself as the acquired ability to 'intuit' a large number of related problems in one *act* (called often an "act of intuition", but what matters to us is only that it is *one act*). Prolonged and dedicated study of an area leads to a *development of intuition*, to the state where a person is able to grasp, in one *act*, a variety of aspects and to know that, even if not exactly how, these aspects are related and might be *actualised*. "The successful practice of intuition requires previous study and assimilation of a multitude of facts and laws. We may take it that great intuitions arise out of matrix of rationality."[259] The same happens when learning some skills, like swimming. At first, every movement has to be consciously attended and actively controlled. It is only through

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[259]S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*. V:1. Although intuition as described above concerns only unity of *visible complexes*, the mechanism of the great and deep intuitions, which are the primary concern of Radhakrishnan, seems to be of the same kind.

repetition and exercise that one, or rather one's body, 'gets it', that all the movements, their sequences and mutual relations converge into an intrinsic and organised unity.

Such processes happen not only when we try to learn something but also when we do not. The level to which the involved *actualities* can be brought may vary, but the idea is the same – they get organised, or disorganised, they get stored for an easy access in long term memory, or they get forgotten. As they 'move upwards', they enter various (and hardly recognisable) complexes and, eventually, disappear in *virtuality*. But although they may thus disappear in their *actual* form, they are retained in the *invisible* centers to the formation of which they have contributed. 189.

In such a process, *invisible* centers can be formed, from which it may be hard or even impossible to extract the original parts as, for instance, in the subconscious formation of complexes (in the Jungian sense of the word). Saying that time heals all wounds we refer to the same process of 'covering up' or, perhaps, 'suppressing' some *experiences* by a long series of *actualities*. The original experience and its memory seldom will disappear, but they can gradually dissolve, lose the possibly violent or damaging potential, in an aura of works and days surrounding the violent experience and dissolving it in the calmness of routine activities.

As the process forms more *virtual nexuses*, that is, penetrates to the deeper layers of *existence*, it is thoroughly individual. "Sow an action, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny."[260] True, but which action will lead to what habit, which habit to what character, etc., are things which can be stated only as vague and general approximations. "When a man dwells on the pleasures of sense, attraction for them arises in him. From attraction arises desire, the lust of possession, and this leads to passion, to anger. From passion comes confusion of mind, then loss of remembrance, the forgetting of duty..."[261] Plausibility of such observations depends always on more specific and personal aspects and traits which determine *concretely* what is and what is not "dwelling", "lust", etc. Apocryphal stories describing childhood of a saint or a hero reflect often such a rough and general understanding of the ways lower events and actual experiences accumulate into higher traits of character and personality. But as the process itself is invisible, they are usually expressed in the only terms in which its results appear for the *actual* observations, namely, as a predetermined destiny, as being marked by the gods. 190.

Dependency on the *concrete* personal traits is reflected by the fact that each step upwards requires, of course, time. A single event or *act* has seldom deep consequences, and repetition of prescribed *acts* may even have consequences quite opposite to the intended ones. For between any two controlled *acts*, many things happen, and even when we do not *act*, we still *experiences*. Very few are lucky enough to have a wise tutor who is able to give a constant, personal advice. For the most, we learn and acquire our habits and character through roughly accidental interaction with parents, family and immediate surroundings. Which, for the most, means, we do not acquire much character and even less destiny. The less advice, control and guidance in upbringing, the less strength and character, that is, unity of the personal being. For loose and free confrontation with the indefinite, perhaps only freely chosen, objectives, as many a pedagogue would say nowadays: "promotion of independence and individual creativity," by avoiding obstacles and high demands, breed perhaps individualism but hardly individuality. Tedious work, perhaps boring work is,

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[260] James [after G. Cotkin, *William James: Public Philosopher*.p.69]
[261] *The Bhagavad-Gita*. II:62-62

more often than not, a blessing which teaches a young person more than free unfolding and superficial overstimulation, though here, as elsewhere, the crucial issue is the combination of the personality of the pupil with *how much* and *how tedious*. We always get what we sow, but we do not always know what we are sowing. Wisdom, which is also knowledge of the future consequences, is a rare exception. It requires, above all, the understanding not only of the seeds but also of the soil into which they are sown.

To some extent, pupils may need some motivating answers to the questions "Why and what for?". But such answers concern only psychological *actuality*. A much deeper need is that of a wise guidance and instruction: *wise*, in the sense of transcending pupil's ability to comprehend the eventual motives and effects. A wise teacher knows how to proceed and what to teach, knows it and follows the course even if none of the pupils understands 'why' and 'what for' at every single step. Similarly, an adult may be in a need of a good advice. A good advice may be something one just did not realise but recognises once it is given. But more profoundly, a good advice tells one to do something which one does not understand and is *not able* to understand. Surely, a lot of trust is needed to follow such an advice. But if it was a wise advice, one will learn once one arrives, because acting in the recommended way (and if heavens so wish) will lead to a new *unity*, most probably, not to the place one had imagined and wished, but to a better one. Wisdom is able to give a good advice which, like a teacher's knowledge and instruction knowing deeper effects of the accumulated activity over time, may transcend the horizon of the one who is in need of it. It is the ability to recognise *traces* connecting the *actual* appearances with the deeper layers of being, the *virtual* germs of the future, and to utilise these *traces* in guidance to the truth.

191. Summarising these examples, we can only repeat what has been said at their beginning. The ontological *founding* of lower levels by the higher ones concerns specific contents only as far as the lower *distinctions* arise from the *aspects* of higher *nexuses* (which specific *distinctions* actually arise is already relative to the lower level). Primarily, this *founding* concerns the general structure and character of the lower level. The influence of the lower levels on the higher ones, on the other hand, concerns specific contents, simply because the lower *distinctions* are more specific than the higher ones. Again, which particular *nexuses* they will contribute to form is not entirely determined at the lower level. But the range of the particular lower contents and their frequency (the kind of *actual experiences*) has some significance on what *virtual nexuses* can be formed or strengthened. We will consider such a more specific relation between the contents of various levels in the following Book. But before that, we conclude the current one by venturing on a small excursion.

3 The origin of mathematics

This part is a digression because we are interested in a unified picture of *existence*, not in philosophy of any particular region of Being, let alone of (any particular) science. The current Book does not present epistemology as any 'theory of knowledge' guaranteeing any certainties or – what appearing more modest is even more presumptuous – offering a method for resolving doubts which might possibly arise. Our epistemology (if epistemology it is) addresses only the general ways of meeting *transcendence* and its *actual reflections*. The search for truth and the ineradicable conviction that it not only means something but also is better than falsehood, is only one special form of this fundamental *thirst founded* in the *awareness* of the insufficiency of *visibility*. Curiosity or fascination,

confusion or boredom, bafflement and even despair, are others and all can occur in various combinations with each other. Our epistemology (if epistemology it is) presents only some *reflections* reinforcing the continuity in the tension between the *actual* contents and their *transcendent* origins; the tension without which *dissociated actuality* turns into emptiness devoid of the sense of meaning and reality. Scientific activity can be an expression of such a confusion or curiosity, but questions about the *actual* scientific contents, the *actual* results of *objectivistic* reductions, fall entirely outside our considerations.

Yet, this digression has its reason. Mathematics has always held a particular place among the sciences. Indeed, to such an extent that most other sciences try desperately to approach mathematical standards (sometimes for better, usually, for worse). Good reasons for the prominence of mathematics can be discerned at the level of abstraction at which we are moving. One shouldn't probably go as far as to say that the beauty and purity of mathematics have, in themselves, existential import. But they are reflections of the spiritual dimension of *existence* in the degree unmatched by any other science. The *a priori* character of mathematical objects and constructions makes one suspect, if not *clearly recognise*, the ultimately *transcendent* origin of mathematical truths.

192. In every science one finds the hard seed of pre-scientific reality and beautiful flowers of scientific imagination. The former, the origin, is rooted in our intuition and *experience*. As the virtual origin it neither contains all possible details of future results nor determines the ways in which science can develop. It only precedes any such development, lies beyond and before it, and lends its basic notions some intuitive content which can be appealing even to the uninitiated laymen.

Origin is not a foundation. In fact, laying down a foundation marks a definitive break with the origin. It amounts to internalising the original intuitions in terms of a language which from now on will develop according to its own standards. We do not want to review the arguments between formalists, Platonists, intuitionists, etc. We do not even want to see the differences between classical and non-classical mathematics, between geometry, arithmetics, algebra, topology, etc. Such distinctions involve one into mathematical arguments. The question about origin is, on the contrary, the question about what makes all these branches into branches of one and the same mathematics, what makes the results of Pythagoras, Fibonacci, Viete, Riemann, Cantor, Tarski equally mathematical.

Quine's statement that a (mathematical) theory commits one to the ontology determined by the range of bound variables, is certainly very clear and convincing. Indeed, the entities a theory describes are those which can witness to the truth of the existential statements – "there exists an x such that..." Any particular, not only mathematical, theory has to specify such entities. But our point is very different. As we will argue, any mathematical theory addresses, eventually, only one kind of entities. But we will say even more: various branches of mathematics address, eventually, only one kind of entities. Differences between, say, algebra and topology might suggest that they not only address different mathematical properties but also different kinds of objects. But as one arrives at algebraic topology and topological algebras, it turns out that these very different fields not only can smoothly interact with each other but can be related in the description of the same mathematical structures. (Algebra and topology are, of course, only an example. This possibility of interaction between *any* fields of mathematics is the general phenomenon.)

Quine's ontology – the range of bound variables – is still entirely *objectivistic*. The theory represents here an epistemological apparatus which deals with particular entities, that is, a particular ontology which is different for algebra and for topology. One is concerned

exclusively with the objects explicitly treated by the actual theory. But these are objects defined already *within* a mathematical world. As such, one does not at all address the issue of origin but at most of foundation and, in fact, a much more specific issue of differences between the local ontologies of various theories or formalisms. One mathematical theory can postulate complex mathematical objects vastly different from those postulated by another such theory. But to the extent they are both *mathematical* they address, eventually, basic mathematical objects and therefore, can be smoothly related to each other.

Asking about the origin of mathematics we are not asking what objects can be addressed by algebra and what by topology but what makes them all equally *mathematical* objects. We are not asking what objects can possibly be constructed mathematically but, on the contrary, what primary objects give rise to the mathematical constructions. The origin of such objects will be found at the very first stages of differentiation, in the sphere where ontology has not as yet got dissociated from epistemology.

3.1   What is a point?

193.   "A point is that which has no part."[262] It is the residual unity "beyond which there cannot be anything less."[263] Intuition of a point is the same as the intuition of a 'substance', of a purely *immediate object*, the residual site of its self-identity. It is like the least something which still is, the least something from which nothing can be removed without removing the thing (that is, the point) itself. The evanescent site of ultimate *immediacy*...

Now, it might seem that to come from *actually* given *objects* to mathematical points there is a need for abstraction, since an *actual object* is always a particular thing with all its properties, while point is only the residual site with no properties whatsoever. It might seem that a point results from a process of abstraction in which "we obtain from each object a more and more bloodless phantom. Finally we thus obtain from each object a something wholly deprived of content; But the something obtained from one object is different from the something obtained from another object – though it is not easy to say how..."[264] It might indeed seem so, but only when we assume that *actual objects* are the only original givens. Then, indeed, anything lacking any *actual* content seems to arise from the *actual* givens only by abstraction.

194.   But *objects* are not the original givens. On the contrary, *objects* are abstractions from the *concreteness* of *experience*, results of an interplay of *distinctions* within the *horizon of actuality*. Consequently, the process of *founding* does not proceed from *objects* towards their "bloodless phantoms", for these phantoms are there, are given along with the *objects* themselves. An appearance of an *object* is equivalent with the narrowing of the *horizon of actuality* to *immediacy* which *dissociates* some *distinctions* from their background. The apparent independence of *objects*, not only from the *subject* but also from each other, the fact that "something obtained from one object is different from the something obtained from another object," is the result of this isolation.

What precedes, in the order of *founding*, appearance not only of *objects* but of anything is *distinction*. And as in *any experience*, its whole structure, that is, its whole *foundation* is also *experienced* in the *immediate self-consciousness*: *distinguishing* particular contents we also *experience* (though not thematically) the very fact of *distinguishing*.

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[262]Euclid, *The Elements*. I, Def.1
[263]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:5[13]
[264]G. Frege, *Review of Husserl's Philosophie der Arithmetik*.

Furthermore, even if there are no rigid *distinctions*, that is, no sharp boundaries *distinguishing precisely* and univocally one content from another, the fact of their *distinctness* is given sharply and *precisely*. Just as one can be uncertain where one stripe of a rainbow ends and another begins, so one is certain that they are different stripes, that each has, if not a sharp boundary, then some kernel which is distinct from the kernel of another stripe. This fundamental fact of *distinguishing*, with the immediate *awareness* of distinctness, is *pure distinction*, I:§15. It has the same character as the *precision* of givenness of an *object*, its mere 'being there', in the *immediacy of reflection that it is*.

Intuition of a point is the same as the intuition of a pure distinction. [265]

Consequently, no abstraction is needed to arrive at a point, "we have a direct awareness of mathematical form as an archetypal structure."[266] This structure present in apprehension of any *object*, is an *aspect* of every *actual experience* and as such is itself *experienced*.

True, abstraction may be needed to posit a point as an *actual object*, to *reflectively* isolate 195. this *aspect* of *an experience*. But this does not change the fact that it is an *aspect* of every *experience* and emerges from there only as a result of *reflective* isolation – it is not a mere construction, an empty, or conceptual abstraction. Taking a point in this way, as an *object* of *reflection*, we can specialise the above thesis:

A point is a representation of the fact of distinguishing, of pure distinction.

Pure distinctness can be characterised as the fact that points are mutually indistinguishable yet distinct, they are distinctions without content, differences without reasons: like the *posited* ultimate 'substances' or, more *concretely*, as the absolute beginnings, identical in so far as the mere fact of beginning is concerned, yet distinct by virtue of the absoluteness of true beginning. *Pure distinctions* are the fundamental objects of mathematics, the objects which are not results of any mathematical foundation but which mathematics inherits from *experience* –

Mathematics is the science of pure distinctions.

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[265]Intuition here is not be taken in a thetic sense as an 'intuition of. . . ' positing some *object*. It is an aspect of *an immediate experience*, a *non-reflective*, non-positional *self-consciousness* of the structure of *the actual experience*. Such an intuition, a 'point-awareness' is the same as the *awarenss* of *pure distinction*.

This identification can seem to go counter our differing images of the two: point is a mere dot ·, while distinction a line | splitting the space in two. But these are only pictures. We could bring them closer, for instance, if we imagined distinction as a circle ∘ (still splitting the space in two, cf. I:§10). Since no distinction is rigid, the exact circumference of the circle is blurred. But this does not make the fact of it being made less clear – the fact which we could imagine as the point at the center of the circle. So understood, *pure distinction* corresponds to the Neoplatonic monad responsible (albeit always in an unclear way) for the generation of actual numbers. "In the case of numbers, the unit remains intact while something else produces, and thus number arises in dependence on the unit: [...] there is, primarily or secondarily, some form or idea from the monad in each of the successive numbers – the latter still participating, though unequally, in the unit [...]" [Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:5.5 [MacKenna's translation]] "The cause is in it [monad], and they [numbers] are causally in it because it subsists as the beginning of all numbers. [...] intelligible numbers are so poured out from the monad that in some way they become clear in the mind; next flowing out from mind to reason [...]" [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. III;p.172] Distinction between monad generating the numbers and The One is maintained but never entirely clear. (Eriugena calls even Creator a Monad: "Monad which is sole Cause and Creator of all things visible and invisible [vs.] created monad in which all numbers always subsist causally, uniformly, and according to their reasons, and from which they emerge in many forms." [Ibid. III;p.172-3]) Very close conceptual associations between the two are handled by intricate hierarchies of (degrees of) units, like The One, monad, henad, henads, etc., into which we will not inquire.

[266]G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*. Introduction; p.xxiv

3.2 Numbers – multiplicity of distinctions

196. Introducing us to the notions of number and counting the teacher started to put apples – one after another – on the table. "We have one apple. What happens if I put another apple? Well, now we have two apples. And if I put yet another one? Well,..." Did not your teacher do a similar thing?

What should happen if he run out of apples? What should happen if he suddenly pulled out a pear and put it on the table after a series of apples? Can you imagine the confusion? An apple, yet another apple, more apples, a pattern begins to emerge and, suddenly, a pear!! Not that the kids would for ever lose the chance to acquire the concept of number but how much extra work for the teacher! How would he proceed to explain now that the fact that a pear is not an apple does not matter at all? How to explain that a pear is simply yet another object – a fruit, perhaps – distinct from all previous ones? An apple is so much an apple that the sixth apple put on the table is the same as the fifth one – except that it is the sixth. A pear after the fifth apple would not be the sixth – it is too different from the apples. It would be the first pear rather than the sixth fruit. The difference of content would intrude on the explanation of the *pure distinction* of number.

We do usually count apples separately from pears. And if we count both we say we are counting fruits. Thus Frege says that "number is the extension of a concept"[267] because as soon as we count quite different objects together we seem to subsume them under some common, more general concept. "In fact, we do not ask 'How many are Caesar and Pompey and London and Edinburgh?' "[268] In fact, we do not – but we could! And counting cities is no different from counting cities and persons, counting fruits is no different from counting fruits and houses and the nasty persons one met last week. Do we then subsume them under a more general concept? What concept? Insisting on the positive answer, we would eventually have to say: the concept of a 'mere something', a point, a *pure distinction*.

Number does not express a property of any concept, but rather the unlimited ability to ignore any properties, any conceptual differences of content. It precedes all concepts.[269] Eventually, we count somethings, *pure distinctions*, points. Frege's "bloodless phantom" is point – the residual site of the self-identity of the thing he started with.[270]

If one wanted to object that apples on the table are not meant as an analogy of *pure distinction* because they have different positions, appear on the table at different times, and

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[267] G. Frege, *The concept of number*. §68. Literally: "the number which applies to the concept F is the extension of the concept «equinumerous with the concept F»."

[268] The idea is, of course, old and renowned. "For reason counts different things together with things of the same kind, so that clearly persons are counted with persons, qualities with qualities, and so forth with other things." [Clarembald of Arras, *The Gloss on Boethius' "De Trinitate"*. I:§46] Ockham refers to those who similarly, though with a much stronger empirical bias, "[c]oncerning discrete quantity [...] maintain that number is nothing but the actual numbered things themselves." [W. Ockham, *Summa totius logicae*. I:c.xliv]

[269] We could hardly disagree more with any empirical reductions of mathematics like those suggested in the previous footnote. On the contrary, "[w]ise men, indeed, do not say that the numbers of animals, shrubs, grasses and other bodies or things are related to the knowledge of the arithmetical art; but they assign to arithmetic only the intellectual, invisible, incorporeal numbers established in knowledge alone and not placed substantially in any other subject." [J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. III;p.163]

[270] This fundamental importance of distinction is well illustrated in the logicist's attempts to define numbers. E.g., R. Carnap, *The logicist foundation of mathematics*, follows the procedure suggested by Frege: for number 2, one begins by stating that at least two objects fall under a concept $f : 2_m(f) \Leftrightarrow \exists x\, \exists y : x \neq y \wedge f(x) \wedge f(y)$. Then, number 2 is said to apply to a concept f iff: $2_m(f) \wedge \neg 3_m(f)$. Identity (or rather its negation, distinctness) needed in the first formula is the undefinable primitive relation of the logical language.

so on, that is, because they fall within the extension of a concept where other differences are needed to distinguish between the objects, then we would only repeat the question: why do the teachers not count fruits but only apples? The objection does not change their procedure which is: make the difference as small as physically possible, make the objects so similar that removing this last amount of difference would erase the distinction itself. If one feels a need for it, one might define the empirical analogue of a *pure distinction* as such a smallest possible difference (whatever that might mean). 'Numerical difference' is the notion corresponding to *pure distinction* as distinct from 'difference of content'.

But we still have some road to travel before we arrive at numbers. For the present, we only have the 'numerical difference'. Now, no *distinction* occurs alone, there is nothing like *the first distinction*, only a transition from the undifferentiated *one* to the gradually increasing manifold of *distinctions*, I:§14. The *horizon of actuality*, which is like a 'snapshot' of *experience*, contains always a multiplicity of *distinctions*. Viewing these as *pure distinctions*, that is, focusing only on this *aspect* of *an actual experience* which determines the mere distinctness of *actual* contents, yields the intuition of a proper multiplicity, that is, multiplicity of *pure distinctions*. Each *actual experience* is also *an experience* of such a multiplicity. This is well reflected in the most primitive, unary notation for numbers, which merely marks the *distinctions*: I, II, III,... or even better ●, ●●, ● ● ●,...

Multiplicity as mere distinctness of the *actual* contents, as the *immediate self-consciousness* of *pure distinctions*, is the experiential origin of a set. It is not yet a number which brings us already closer to a possible foundation. What makes a number into a number is not any mystical quality but its relations to other numbers[271] and an elaboration of such relations is already a matter of mathematical *reflection*. Let us only sketch the most elementary beginning which follows from the origin, from the *experience* of *pure distinctions* and their multiplicites.

A primitive shepherd who not only cannot count but does not even have a slightest idea of a number, had probably proceeded something like that. To check if all his many sheep return in the evening from the pasture, he let them out in the morning one by one, marking each leaving sheep as a cut on a stick. In the evening, he let them in one by one, marking each entering sheep on the same stick, with another mark next to, or across, one of the marks made in the morning. If every morning mark is matched by one evening mark, everything is fine. If, however, some morning marks remain unmatched by any evening mark, some sheep are missing.

The shepherd performs the most natural, in fact, the only possible operation one can perform on two *actual* multiplicities – he relates them by associating points in one with those in the other. He does it in a particular way serving his particular purpose: he matches each evening mark with only one, but always distinct, morning mark – he establishes an injective relation (indeed, a function) from evening marks to morning marks. If this happens to be also surjective (every morning mark gets matched by one evening mark), then the conclusion is that the multiplicities of sheep in the morning and in the evening are equal – there is the same number of sheep. If the function is not surjective (some morning marks remain unmatched), the number of returning sheep is less than the number of sheep which left in the morning. This is the well-known set-theoretical definition of ordering of cardinal numbers.[272]

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[271]P. Benacerraf, *What numbers could not be*

[272]A set A has cardinality less than or equal to the cardinality of a set B, if and only if there exists an injective function from A to B. They have the same cardinality if there exists a function which is not only injective but also surjective (bijective). G. Frege, *The concept of number*, §63, quotes Hume: "If two

Such an operation is performed not so much on the actual objects (sheep, marks), as on their collections viewed as mere multiplicities of *pure distinctions*. Indeed, to pose the problem in the first place, to have the possibility of even asking the question about *all* sheep returning, the shepherd had to *recognise* that the relevant aspect is the *multiplicity* of *distinct* sheep. But any multiplicity is proper – even if one uses some particular, *objective* tokens, it is always multiplicity of *pure distinctions*.

The set-theoretical construction of cardinal numbers (as representatives of classes of equinumerous sets) is already more than their *reflective experience*. The number 2 does not emerge exclusively as an abstraction from different collections containing exactly 2 elements. What would be the basis for such a generalisation? It would have to be the notion of 'the same number of elements' in different collections, as set-theory says, of a bijective correspondence. But such a correspondence presupposes that one has already abstracted away all differences of content, that all such differences *already are ignored*. The shepherd could not form the idea of representing the sheep by the marks on his stick, if he did not already have the notion of the proper multiplicity of sheep. The marks on the stick *represent* something – this something are not sheep but their multiplicity.[273]

198. It shouldn't be necessary to go any further, since we already have the basis for a number system: multiplicites of *pure distinctions* (various 'numbers') and the basics of an ordering relation between them. The rest is left for the creative imagination of the mathematicians. Thus, we would limit even the famous saying of Kronecker's: "God created the natural numbers, the rest is the work of man."[274] Already a number system consisting of three numbers only: 1, 2, 'many', contains all essential – "God created" – features.[275] The mathematics one can do with such a system is extremely poor but it is *mathematics*, a

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numbers are so combined that the one always has a unit which corresponds to each unit of the other, then we claim they are equal."

[273]This should suggest our attitude towards accounts like *The origin of geometry* in E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology* [Appendix 1; also II:9], which is not phenomenology of mathematics but of socio-historical emergence of geometry. One could be tempted to apply a kind of ontological argument (as that quoted in footnote 269) against such and similar approaches which all repeat, in one form or another, the idea from Herodotus, *The Histories*, II:109, that the art of geometry had its origin in the challenge presented by the Nile to the Egyptians, and only later became an abstract science. But although *origin*, and the *original foundation* of mathematics in particular, exists only through the *actual* manifestations (and, one might want to add, its empirical history), it is in no way dependent on, let alone reducible to, such manifestations. If *pure distinctions* were not given originally (and originarily) in intuition, if relations of *pure distinctions* were not available to us *a priori*, we would never be able to form an idea, to encounter a phenomenon of, say, a circle. "No [sensuous] image could ever be adequate to our conception of a [circle] in general." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. The schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding;A141/B180] A circle, an ideal circle is determined and given *only* by a center, a point, and a radius, that is, *equinumerous multiplicites* separating each point of the circumference from the center. It could never arise as an abstraction from experiences, or as a repeatable correlate of acts, in short, as a perfected *Limesgestalt* of imperfect circles, no matter how often encountered in nature. (What would determine the direction of such a generalisation, of such a "conceivable perfecting 'again and again'..."? Husserlian repeatability may be taken as a characteristic of ideality, but it is founded upon this ideality and not other way around.) We could, perhaps, by accident come across and use flat objects which rotate and roll, but we would never invent a wheel. Because wheel is not a generalisation of round objects. It is a circle, an ideal circle (even if in practice it is not) which could not be even thought without the relations of number and equality of multiplicites.

[274]Even accepting this remark, we would never draw from it Kronecker's conclusion, anticipating the early XX-th century's focus on finitary methods (whether of logical axiomatizations, constructivism or computability theory), that only explicitly constructible objects are legitimate mathematical entities.

[275]P. Gordon, *Numerical Cognition without Words...*, studying the Pirahã tribe of Brazil, concludes that this limit concerns not only their language but also their number system.

system of multiplicities. Although it remains still in a virtual form close to its experiential origin, it expresses already the basic intuitions underlying also advanced number systems.

3.3 Infinity

Thus point is a *reflection* of *pure distinction*, the *pure immediacy*, while number, initially ⟨199.⟩ as mere multiplicity, is the corresponding *representation* of simultaneity in terms of *pure distinctions*. Comparison of multiplicites, not to mention the total ordering relation, are more advanced constructions which bring us already close to a possible foundation. Just like a point marks the limit of *immediacy*, this intuition of a number, of multiplicity, is consummated fully within the *horizon of actuality*. Even if sheep enter the farm over some period of time, no time is involved in the fact of having a given multiplicity of them.

Now, just like *distinctions* do not come alone, so the numbers do not appear separately. There is no *recognition* of a single number without *all* other numbers being given around it. Just like *distinctions* emerge in the midst of *chaos*, so numbers emerge in the midst of infinity and its intuition is given within the *horizon of actuality*.

Just like *transcendence* is an *aspect* accompanying every *actuality*, so infinity is an *equipollent aspect* of multiplicity itself. It is not some late and advanced addition to the simple intuition of finite number. For instance, it is not only a consequence of, say, positional number notation, where generation of ever greater numbers is a matter of a mechanical principle. In the Pirahã system with three numbers: 1, 2, 'many', the last one does play the role of infinitely large number, comprising everything which is 'more than 2'. In the Roman number system, instead of "two" one had "thousand" and names for numbers greater than thousand were compound expressions of which the highest component was "thousand". Roman notation made it hard, or rather simply impossible, to write arbitrarily large numbers.[276] But it would not be plausible to infer that Romans did not have the idea of an infinity of numbers, although the *precision* of this idea might leave much to be desired. The problem was observed already, for instance, in M. Capella, *Arithmetica*, where the ambitions of arithmetics are expressedly limited to low numbers, preferably below 9000. But this limitation concerned only the correctness of calculation, not the universe of numbers. The question "Is there the biggest number?" is almost as natural as "Is there any limit to the possible distinctions?" or, perhaps, "Is the world infinite?".

It may seem that the basic intuition of infinity comes in the form of potentiality, with ⟨200.⟩ perhaps the most obvious experiential counterpart being *more* of *complexes*. There is always something *more* than what, at any time, one can see and comprehend. "[Y]et there be those who imagine they have positive ideas of infinite duration and space. It would, I think, be enough to destroy any such positive idea of infinite, to ask him that has it,– whether he could add to it or no; which would easily show the mistake of such a positive idea."[277] Although there is no limit, yet one *actuality* can always become next one; one

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[276]So did the Greek notation, from which the Roman one developed. One can certainly see here the possible impediment in developing more advanced number theory or algebra, which the Greeks learnt mostly from the Babylonians whose positional notation, as well as number theory, was vastly superior. Even the primitive concept of a number, which with the Greeks included only positive integers and rationals – while with the Babylonians it included irrational numbers (if treated only by means of linear approximations) and, at least from the Seleucid period, also zero – might be referred to the notational insufficiencies. But these are already considerations of the foundations, not of the origin.

[277]J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. II:17.13. We have to ignore here that Locke is speaking about infinity of time and space – the same argument was used against any idea of actual infinity.

can always add 1 to whatever is there already. We never arrive at anything, but as usual in such cases, we obtain (or rather *posit*) a shadowy ideal limit, or only a regulative idea, the possibility of indefinite progression, which in this case amounts to potential infinity.

Various forms of rationalism used to be less reductionistic than empiricism and showed in general more liking for actual infinity. The following might be almost a direct answer to Locke: "if an infinite line be measured out in foot lengths, it will consist of an infinite number of such parts; it would equally consist of an infinite number of parts, if each part measured only an inch: therefore, one infinity would be twelve times as great as the other. – [...] all these absurdities (if absurdities they be, which I am not now discussing), from which it is sought to extract the conclusion that extended substance is finite, do not at all follow from the notion of an infinite quantity, but merely from the notion that an infinite quantity is measurable, and composed of finite parts; therefore, the only fair conclusion to be drawn is that infinite quantity is not measurable, and cannot be composed of finite parts. [...]"[278] 'Measurement' seems to have to do with composition of finite (and discrete) parts, with successive progression. The conclusion is then that such a progression does not lead to any infinity for infinity turns out to be incompatible with 'measure'. It is present *a priori* or it is never reached in any way.

201.   Now, we do not intend to review the history of the conflict of actual vs. potential infinity, because most of the involved arguments can be easily dismissed once we have the precise concepts of infinity and cardinality.[279] Indeed, philosophers seem to be less occupied with infinity since mathematicians got the control over the concept. We know that infinity is irreducible to progress (actual infinity irreducible to potential one), and those who do not like it may simply refuse to deal with infinity but not claim any reduction.[280] Technically, this irreducibility is reflected by the need for axioms of infinity – in set theory, the axiom "There exists an infinite set", but also in Euclid, the axiom "Any line can be prolonged indefinitely." In the case of continuum, any use of progression is known as, at best, a way of approximating the actual results.

But we do not intend any review. The crucial point is that although the concepts and understanding of infinity have reached a very sophisticated stage, they have been discussed for millennia – perhaps, in a confused manner, but on the purely intuitive basis. No matter the concepts, one has always been aware of one or another form of infinity. Even the mere unboundedness of indefinite progression is already the idea of actual infinity in disguise – it is infinity reduced by the epistemological scepticism to *actuality*. The fact that from a finite set of observations we nevertheless make the spring to the potentially infinite indicates, in a manner of the ontological proof, that the infinite is there already. All the emphasis one has to put on "potentially" (while, so to speak, the unfortunate word "infinite" sneaks in through the back-door), like all too insistent a need to deny something, suggests the *presence* which only one's bias tends to label "unreal".

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[278]B. Spinoza, *Ethics*. Note to Prop.XV

[279]Dedekind's definition (a set is infinite iff it is equinumerous with its proper subset) makes Locke's argument above obsolete, or rather simply wrong; while Cantor's calculus of cardinalities shows that the intuitions about number of elements in finite collections often do not generalise to infinite sets (already for the least infinite cardinal $\aleph_0$, we have $\aleph_0 + \aleph_0 = \aleph_0$; so, for instance, $12 \cdot \aleph_0 = \aleph_0$). One can admire Spinoza's foresight that such apparent absurdities, perhaps, are not absurdities. He nevertheless uses them as such to dismiss the idea of measuring the infinite. As often happens, an acceptable argument can serve to support a wrong conclusion.

[280]One can obtain some sub-branches of mathematics, but these are only sub-branches. Intuitionism is a good example, but likewise Hilbert's programme of finitariness, and then also the computability theory are expressions of this potent idea of the early XX-th century's *Zeitgeist* of finitude and discretisation.

Potential infinity is only a conceptual reduction of actual infinity to the epistemic *horizon of actuality*. But infinity, the actual infinity itself, is *founded* in the *chaos above experience* and in the eventual *transcendence* of *nothingness*. This *experience*, or rather, this *aspect* of *any experience*, the *chaos* viewed as *chaos* of *pure distinctions*, is what *founds* the immediate intuition of the 'largest possible' multiplicity, of the 'totality of everything', "maximum beyond which there can be nothing greater."[281]

The experiential *foundation* knows *nexuses* but not necessarily all the distinctions which are so dear to later *reflection*. The Greek *apeiron* can be and is translated *either* as 'infinite' *or* as 'indefinite' *or* as 'unlimited', and we mean *all* these when speaking about *foundation* of the idea of infinity.[282] And, of course, meaning *all*, we must mean *none*, for all these distinctions are later than their common origin. Infinity, in particular discrete, countable infinity is the final *actualisation*, an *actual* expression of the *transcendence* which has become a mere totality of *actualities*. It is the horizontal projection of the unlimited/ubounded/infinite which are so many ways of *representing* the *indistinct*, 'everything'. Potential infinity arises as a still further *reflection* which insists on the primacy, perhaps even the only reality, of the limited *actualities*.   **202.**

A *reflection* of the original *apeiron*, as the *chaos* which underlies every experience, will be present in one way or another in every original mathematical intuition. Its mathematical counterpart will vary depending on the level of sophistication of the mathematical apparatus. It may be '3', or 'more than 3', 'many' or 'infinity'. The most recent version seems to be the 'totality of all mathematical objects'. Having tamed infinities, Cantor retained the intuition that the universe of *all* such objects can not possibly be a mathematical object, which was a premonition of future problems. The paradoxes of the 'set of all sets' can now be rendered mathematically manageable (e.g., by restricting the axiom of comprehension or as in various axiomatisations of classes), but the trick is always to exclude the 'totality of everything' from the consideration. Whether represented within or expelled from the formal system, the totality keeps always pointing to the same intuition of the eventual *transcendence*, of the *indistinct* limit of *distinctions*, and reminding that the limit of the world does not belong to the world.

The ineradicable presence of infinity can be better seen on the example of geometry. We started with the intuition of a point which was equated with the (intuition, respectively *representation* of) *pure distinction*. But points do not appear alone. Even if point's counterpart is residual *objectivity*, the 'mere being' in the *immediacy* of the *reflection that it is*, such a *reflection* is also immediately aware of the *transcendent* horizon surrounding its *actuality* – positing a point, it posits an *actual* multiplicity of points. Sure, we can *reflectively dissociate* an *act* of imagining a point, from an *act* imagining a multiplicity of points. But this is only *reflective dissociation*. A point appears always 'surrounded' by a background, even if this be only a black, undifferentiated something – shall we say, space? – against which the point is imagined.[283] They emerge only against this undifferentiated background, and here "undifferentiated" means continuous. Points represent thus   **203.**

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[281]Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:2[5]

[282]"[Earth's] part beneath goes down to infinity." [Xenophanes DK 21B28] "The unlimited is the original material of existing things [... It] is immortal and indestructible." [Anaximander DK 12B1/3] Etc., etc. One might be tempted to admit also the translation as 'unfinished' suggesting, as Greeks would certainly like, incompleteness and some unreadiness of the infinite.

[283]Here, space may be understood not only as *spatiality* – simultaneity of *distinctions* (I:2.3), but rather as the background from which the *distinctions* emerge. It does remind about Kantian space as the *a priori* form of intuition.

a discretisation of continuity transcending the points of *distinctions*, that is, of an actually infinite continuity. But while the primordial infinity of this continuous background is actual infinity, so the multiplicity of points gives rise to potential infinity: no matter how many points are (imagined, posited, thought to be) there, there is always a possibility of 'extracting' more points from the undifferentiated background. Once we have a point, we have not only a multiplicity, but an infinity of points. For an *actual* point (whether imagined or drawn) is only a sign of a 'point which already was there', it merely marks the focus of our attention. Imagining a space, say, a plane, and 'putting' a point on (or rather, 'extracting' a point from) it, the important thing is not *where* we 'put' it but that it can be 'put' *anywhere*. This is, in one, actual infinity and continuity (of course, not in the technical sense), the pure heterogeneity of *chaos* arising from the *indistinct one*.

Geometry, which with its points and planes gives the primordial intuition of continuity, is also the first stage where the duality of discrete-continuous arises. The duality forms, as Brouwer put it, 'two-oneness'. After the *distinctions* have occurred it becomes perplexing to decide whether continuum consists of parts or not, whether things are infinitely divisible or not, whether infinite series can sum up to finite magnitudes and whether Achilles will ever catch up with the tortoise – whether *one* is a *chaotic totality* of many or else whether *chaotic* many is really *one*.

204. The differences between geometry (starting with infinity of *pure distinctions*, discrete points on a continuous background and the axiom of actual infinity) and arithmetics (starting with multiplicites of *pure distinctions*, for which potential infinity is a theorem, and which only after long labour arrives at the continuum of real numbers), interesting as they might be, are not essential for us, because they involve us already into a consideration of foundations, if not of mathematics itself. Like the distinctions of actual vs. potential infinity, infinity vs. unboundedness, infinite time vs. infinite space, etc., it only witnesses to the multiplicity of possible ways of reflecting the origin, possible ways of *actually* relating *pure distinctions* to each other and to the *indistinct* background from which they emerge.

3.4   A note on foundations

What makes mathematics is not its mere origin and the mere *pure distinctions*, but a structure and relations built on the top of these basic intuitions. The ordering or, at first, only the two-term relations 'less than', 'equal to', 'more than', arise from a particular way of relating the multiplicites of various *actualities*. Structures proper to mathematics are founded on *actual reflections* of such relations. These *representations* can proceed in different directions and lead to different foundations, not to mention different branches of mathematics. It is not our objective to review the historical schools of foundations but we will give a few short examples and remarks illustrating how the origin from *pure distinctions* is reflected when forming various foundations.

205. "[A] universe comes into being when a space is severed or taken apart. The skin of a living organism cuts off an outside from an inside. So does the circumference of a circle in a plane. [...] The act [of original severance] is itself already remembered, even if unconsciously, as our first attempt to distinguish different things in a world where, in the first place, the boundaries can be drawn anywhere we please." This quotation from the introductory Note on The Mathematical Approach in G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*, should be self-explanatory at the present point. Starting with the space,   , in which a distinction is (to be) made, ⌐, and postulating two laws, that i) drawing the same distinction twice makes

no more distinction than drawing it only once, $\neg\,\neg = \neg$, and that ii) crossing a boundary of a distinction and then crossing it back amounts to no distinction, $\overline{\neg} = $, and applying these equations as rewrite rules to various combinations of distinctions, the basic laws of arithmetics, algebra and propositional logic are derived which, although do not develop the full mathematics, make the possibility of such a development at least plausible. The texts on foundation of mathematics and, of course, "mathematical texts generally begin the story somewhere in the middle, leaving the reader to pick up the thread as best he can. Here the story is traced from the beginning."[284] One can, of course, discuss the laws and the details of the development, but the presentation is the most accurate expression of the idea of actually founding mathematics on *pure distinction* alone. The reader is referred to this book which, if it can appear a bit esoteric and idiosyncratic, so only because it has been undeservedly and unjustly ignored.

A much more successful story, at least from the point of view of scientific development and fashion, can be told about category theory.[285] Its initial motivations, as well as the subsequent focus and power, lie in the ability to capture structural aspects at a high level of abstraction (often referred to, by other mathematicians, as "general abstract nonsense"). Category theory assumes, as it were, given multiplicities and studies their relations. In fact, it does not even assume multiplicites but just arbitrary objects whose properties are determined exclusively by their mutual relations (morphisms between the objects, required to satisfy only a few simple postulates). It is only morphisms, and not any internal structure of the objects, which account for all the differences between the objects. In this way, if we allow the interpretation of morphisms as observations (or just 'source of distinctions'), category theory exemplifies the observational approach (which, as discussed in §§145.ff, p. 206 in connection with identity of indiscernibles, is a variant of distinguishability). Indeed, objects obtained by all categorical constructions are determined only up to 'indistinguishability', that is, up to isomorphism.[286] The theory by far exceeds in mathematical generality and sophistication intuitionism which reduced the notion of observability, or intuition, to finite constructiblity. (Incidentally, the ghost of 'category of all categories' haunts the theory just as the 'set of all sets' haunts early set theory. As the definition of a category starts with two *collections* – of objects and morphisms – the foundational problems seem to lead back to those familiar from the set theory.)

The best known and most thoroughly developed foundation of mathematics is set theory. Its fundamental primitive concept of a set connects it to the origin. For Frege a set seemed to be an extension of a concept, but this is a heavily logist position influenced, as it seems, by the search for empirical foundations. To begin with, it was much simpler: "a set is a many which can be thought as a one."[287] Notice how the word "many" suggests the

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[284]G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*. p.xxix

[285]A very simple introduction, accessible even to a person with only basic knowledge of set-theory, is W. F. Lawvere, S. H. Schanuel, *Conceptual Mathematics*. The origins go back to 1940-ties, and S. MacLane, *Category Theory for the Working Mathematician* is the standard reference.

[286]Various strict versions are studied but they represent only special cases. Identity still plays the important role but only when applied to morphisms, that is, observations.

[287]G. Cantor, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*. p.204. Or in an earlier formulation: "In refusing to allow the manifold to remain manifold, the mind makes the truth clearer; it draws a separate many into one, either supplying unity not present or keen to perceive the unity brought about by the ordering of the parts." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:6.13 [MacKenna's translation]] Introducing, as Cantor did, actually infinite sets amounts to following this intuition of the possibility of 'being thought as one' all the way through, and has the obvious relation to the Neoplatonic creed of unity preceding multiplicity, invoked in G. Cantor, *Foundations of a General Theory of Aggregates*, e.g., Plotinus, *Enneads* V:6.3;VI:6.11, Proclus, *Elements*

irrelevance of any actual contents for the considered multiplicity, which is to be given in the simultaneous *immediacy*, is to "be thought as a one". Cantor attempted alternative formulations – "by a set we are to understand any collection into a whole of definite and separate objects of our intuition or of our thought"[288] – and one can certainly recognise here the importance of having 'sharp and separate' objects as members. But the basic intuition remains unchanged, namely, the intuition of a multiplicity, of a collection of *precisely* distinguished somethings, in general *objects* or mathematical objects but, eventually, only of *pure distinctions* which are *posited* simultaneously as an *actual* unity.[289]

Unlike category theory which studies properties of objects only to the extent they are reflected in the *relations between* the objects, much of the foundational effort in set theory went on actually constructing the universe of sets. Even in such a construction, which does not presuppose any given multiplicites, we can find *pure distinction* as the fundamental building block. The construction starts with nothing, emptiness, that is, with the empty set. But is not there a difference between nothingness and a set which contains nothing? The former is, perhaps: , while the latter: {   } (written usually $\emptyset$). This, one could say, is only the matter of notation, of the need to indicate emptiness. But it is much more. There is a difference between nothingness and nothingness captured, between emptiness and emptiness confined, between nothingness and a set containing nothing. The pair of parentheses { } applied at this very beginning reflects the *pure distinction*, the fact of difference which has been extracted from nothingness; we could almost say, an *act* of *actually* addressing nothingness as distinct from the unaddressed nothingness itself. This *actuality* brings at once also the intuition of multiplicity, of a simultaneous givenness of *pure distinctions*. For once the pair – the *act* – { } is there, it can be applied to everything (even to nothing) and thus the rest follows. The only set we can obtain at the next stage from $\emptyset$ is $\{\emptyset\}$ – the set containing one element, the empty set $\emptyset$. Of course, $\emptyset \neq \{\emptyset\}$ – the set $\emptyset$ has no elements, while $\{\emptyset\}$ has one. We can then continue adding the parentheses, obtaining new, mutually distinct sets $\emptyset \neq \{\emptyset\} \neq \{\{\emptyset\}\} \ldots$ This looks boringly similar to unary numbers and, moreover, produces different sets only in so far that they all contain different elements – but they all (except $\emptyset$) contain exactly one element. This does not open up for internalising mathematics, in particular arithmetics, *within* the set theory, so one has to show more ingenuity (as is done in von Neumann's construction of ordinals). But the main point has already been made – enough *distinctions* are available and they are obtained from the original { } which represents both *pure distinctions and* their simultaneity. The rest – possible axiomatisations, postulated constructions, resolution of appearing paradoxes – is a matter of mathematical ingenuity in elaboration of this foundation.

208.   One final remark before leaving the subject of foundation. Sameness is complement of distinctness so, instead of saying that mathematics is the science of *pure distinctions* we might, perhaps, say that it is the science of equality (or even identity). It might be an exaggeration to claim that identity is the only form of mathematical theorems, but it is certainly the basic form of mathematical statements.

Equality arises as a special case of relation between multiplicities, namely, when we find a function which is bijective. Equipotence of A and B is the first moment when equality

of Theology §69 (cf. I:6.2.1).

[288]G. Cantor, *Contributions....* [also in G. Cantor, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, p.282]

[289]In Fraenkel's set theory with *Urelemente*, different *Urelemente* were distinct but indistinguishable (any permutation of *Urelemente* could be extended to an automorphism of the whole universe). The formulation "distinct but indistinguishable" might cause some worry, but to us seems a perfectly reasonable expression of the idea of *pure distinction*, *distinction* without any content or prior reason.

enters the stage of explicit representation. But implicitly it has been there earlier. The very fact of relating some point a of A with a point b of B means, in a sense, identification. If r relates a with b, especially, if the relation r is functional, it amounts to saying that the image of a under r is, i.e., is equal to b, $r(a) = b$. It depends, of course, on what r is. Our shepherd did not identify sheep with marks on the stick. But establishing a(n injective) function amounts to identifying the points of the source with their images. Equality emerges as a relation, that is, it presupposes and is based on *distinction*. Nobody would bother saying $a = a$ if the threat of $a \neq a$ was not there. This possibility is the primordial reality: *immediate* things, viewed *only* from the point of their *immediacy*, are different before they become the same.

Of course, this 'becoming the same' has only epistemic aspect because proving that $a = b$ one only discovers the fact, an x, hiding behind the actual representations a and b, and which has always made $a = x = b$. As we observed in 2.2.2.i, especially §§141.ff, equality across *dissociated actualities* is a transcendent fact, a *trace* of earlier unity. This fact cannot be accounted for within the mere *actuality* and identity remains, on the one hand, a hardly questionable (ontological) intuition and, on the other hand, an (epistemic) ideality which 'has to be constructed'. Likewise in mathematics, this relation remains forever as fundamental as undefinable. On the one hand, equality is not axiomatisable – any set of axioms valid for the identity relation will also be valid for other relations (congruences, i.e., indistinguishabilities).[290] As Frege says "Since every definition is an identity, identity itself can not be defined." But, axiomatisable or not, one works with equality and knows its meaning. Equality is a semantic notion: it has to be introduced into the mathematical foundation as a primitive, as if 'from outside'. This is yet another reflection of the *purity* of the addressed *distinctions* which are given, always and only, in the sphere of timeless *immediacy*. In this sphere, everything is *dissociated* to the extreme, everything is but an *immediate* point *purely* and absolutely *distinct* from all the others. Equality of two such *distinctions* enters the sphere as a transcendent event, connecting the *immediacy* of a with the *immediacy* of b which connection, ideally, should be equally *immediate*. But, strangely, b, appearing as distinct from a, must reside in some other place, and their equality is what connects these two places. Once the equality is established, the two become one, *immediate* x $(= a = b$ which becomes likewise the mere, *immediate* self-identity $x = x)$. But the very event of this 'becoming one' happens elsewhere, in the sphere transcending their *immediacy*. Whether one want to call this sphere "the mind of the working mathematician", "the mathematical activity" or else "the eternal world of ideas", we leave to everybody's discretion. In either case it transcends the sphere *immediacy* where the equated objects of mathematics have their *locus*.

3.5 Summarising

Pure distinction is the most *immediate*, because entirely contentless, event amenable to a grasp by a single *act* as the univocal distinction of 'yes'-'no', 'being'-'not-being'. But

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[290] This applies to first-order logic. In a sense, but only in *a* sense, second-order logic allows one to define identity, i.e., force a relational symbol to be interpreted as such. The reservation concerns the need for additional semantic assumptions, in particular, that one works only with the standard model (all subsets of the domain) and not the general models (admitting various choices of the collection of subsets). Then, the definition of identity of individuals amounts to requiring them to be members of exactly the same sets, in particular, the same sets with only one element. Even if technically possible, it seems to leave too many holes (e.g., sameness of all, also one-element sets is presupposed) for a philosopher to agree that identity has thus been defined.

it is also the primary event of the ontological *founding* which, therefore, accompanies all other events. This primacy makes *pure distinction* the *a priori* of all experience. Never occurring alone, it makes possible and accompanies all *distinctions*. Mathematical objects have thus this double aspect: of the *immediate precision* and contentless univocity and, on the other hand, of the *representations* of the primary event of mere *distinguishing*.

209. **A priori**

The given account can remind of Kantian *a priori* forms providing conditions of possibility of experience. *Distinction* is an event of *any experience* and, with it, *pure distinction* its *a priori* condition. This, however, is only an analogy of form, in that *pure distinctions* play similar role to *a priori* forms which are not thematical contents of *experience* but necessary aspects underlying *any experience*. Unlike Kantian forms, *pure distinctions* do not provide any more specific form of *experience*, in particular, they do not arise from the temporal and spatial dimensions which are much later *aspects*. Furthermore, and this is perhaps the main difference (concerning the concept of experience), they are not only *present* in every experience but are themselves experienced in the immediacy of *self-awareness*.

Even if mathematical concepts have developed, evolved and proliferated, there is something which makes Phytagorean and modern mathematics *equally* mathematics. This primal ground, reflecting its origin, has proved immutable unlike in any other science. Learning physics we never hear about the Ionic philosophy (misconstrued, as is typically done, as the philosophy of mere nature), or of Aristotelean principles. But learning mathematics we still go through the theorems of Thales, Phytagoras, Euclid which were also much earlier known to the Babylonians or Egyptians. Even when we go as far back as Egyptian engineering, Chaldean astrology or Babylonian accounting, we find sound *mathematical*, not pre-mathematical calculations. As the contributions to the mathematical knowledge they are as valid, relevant and *mathematical* as the theorems of Gauss, Banach or Skolem. Unlike other sciences which have either gone through the processes of essential changes before reaching their modern form or else appeared only very recently, the character of the fundamental mathematical objects and the validity of even earliest results have remained unchanged since the very beginning. Various socio-cultural factors might condition development of distinct branches of mathematics, and mathematics of other intelligent beings might be very different from ours. But to the extent it is mathematics, it must rest on the same, *a priori* origin and, as such, can not contain theorems contradicting the theorems of our mathematics.

210. **Abstraction**

All other sciences emerge as a consequence of extracting from the whole human experience some restricted domain – of specific objects or problems. The notions of such a domain may then undergo a gradual abstraction which eventually yields quite abstract entities with which most advanced sciences are occupied. The abstract character of a science is always the end result, never the beginning. But this schema obviously does not work for mathematics. If we try to elucidate the basic notions of point, number and the like by a reference to the process of abstraction we would have to explain what made our remote ancestors so astonishingly able to carry out just this extreme abstraction and made them ignore more or less all others. Why did Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks carry out this abstraction to its very extreme while in all other areas stop at a very elementary level? Perhaps, simply because nobody had to abstract himself toward the notion of a multiplicity by disregarding more and more properties of actual objects. If the *experience* of *pure distinction* lies both in the background of our being *and* at the origin of mathematics, then

there is no need to make our ancestors so mystically different from us, because there is no need for abstraction at all.

"[Number] may well be the most primitive element of order in the human mind [...] Hence it is not such an audacious conclusion after all if we define number psychologically as an *archetype of order* which has become conscious. [...] It is generally believed that numbers were *invented* or thought out by man, [...but] it is equally possible that numbers were *found* or discovered. In that case they are not only concepts but something more – autonomous entities which somehow contain more than just quantities. [...] then on account of their mythological nature they belong to the realm of 'godlike' human and animal figures and are just as archetypal as they [...]"[291] In short, "we have a direct awareness of mathematical form as an archetypal structure."[266]

Abstraction lies only in positing the original intuition of *pure distinction* as an *object* of study, in turning this intuition into an explicit *representation*, turning from the origin towards a foundation. Thematic study of mathematics may be difficult and abstract. But it does not mean that its fundamental, original *object* is an abstraction which has nothing to do with *experience*.

Synthetic and universal 211.

Mathematics is not only *a priori* but also synthetic – it applies to *experience*, in fact, to *any experience*, simply because it addresses elements present in *any experience*. *Distinction*, *chaos* and *actuality* are constant *aspects* of all our experience, knowledge and activity. All *experience* is *self-aware* and so with any *distinction* there is associated the *awareness* of the fact of distinctness, the *pure distinction*. Similarly, with the *actuality* of *an experience* there is given multiplicity, or multiplicites of *pure distinctions* and with *chaos* – their infinity. These intuitions, even if not *represented* explicitly in mathematical or other concepts, accompany all our *experience*.

But this universal applicability amounts also to a reduction. Mathematics is applicable to *an experience* only to the extent we view it through the glasses of *pure distinctions*. Mathematics applied to engineering, to sociology, even to psychology is always the same mathematics and it says equally much (or little) about each area – it says only that much as can be expressed in terms of *pure distinctions*. Counting houses is no different from counting sheep, nor from counting sheep and apples and friends, because counting is always only counting of multiplicites, of points, of *pure distinctions*. We can apply mathematics to any experience only to the extent we are willing to disregard all possible differences of content and consider only differences of number. The synthetic character of mathematical enterprise is really the same as its *a priori* character – the fact that experience is an experience only to the extent it is differentiated. Mathematics is synthetic and truly universal: not because it can say something about the content of *any experience* but because it does not say anything about such a content – only that each content must be distinguished. As usual, the price for generality is the loss of *concreteness*.

Necessary vs. universal 212.

It might seem that universality accounts also for necessity, that, as Kant meant, "the two are inseparable". But they are not only separable but very different.

Universality will say "something is always valid", necessity "something can not be otherwise". The former is quite a natural concept. If it is empirical, then it is exactly what makes it natural. To some extent everybody makes generalisations and arrives at some universal formulations. Now, one may say "all ashtrays in this room are green" but we

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[291]C. G. Jung, *Synchronicity....* The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, §870ff.

should not confuse the syntactic form (the mere presence of the universal quantifier) with universality. Universality involves generality and is concerned with the totality of *the world*. That we always distinguish, that so it is, is a universal statement. But such "so it is" is not sufficient for necessity because necessity is concerned not only with the actual world but with all possible worlds. It cannot merely say what is always the case in *the world*, it also has to exclude its opposite from all possible worlds. Only by confusing the universal quantification over the objects within the world with the universal quantification over the possible worlds, can one confuse universality with necessity.

Since universality is concerned with the actual world and necessity with all possibilities, the former does not imply the latter. Necessity, on the other hand, might seem to imply universality. But this is only a superficial, formal implication. Universality involves not only "for all x" but also a kind of generality, wide and common applicability. Necessity does not require anything of the sort. "In the experiment which started at the Ridiculous Labs, CA, USA, on the 26th February, at 14:03':52":18"', the generated positron had to turn left, the electron had to make a U-turn and, colliding, they had to annihilate." Without making any claims to the physical plausibility of this statement – it says that something was necessary. It says that no matter what, given the above conditions things could not have happened otherwise. But we would resist calling it a universal statement. Replacing "the generated positron" with "any positron satisfying the conditions of this one" would give it a syntactic appearance of universality but hardly any generality.

We arrive at the laws which we consider necessary only by designating more and more specific conditions, by isolating a situation or an *object* and excluding the possibility of interference from the unpredictable surroundings. If the result above is claimed to hold with necessity *only* because there is a general law saying that any positron and any electron will necessarily annihilate under given conditions, then it is just another level of the same – isolating and narrowing conditions to specify sufficient reasons for some effect. The "any" may give an impression of generality but it is only an impression. This apparent generality merely hides the specific definitions of electron, positron and the 'given conditions', the 'other things being equal' which underlies every claim to necessity.

213.   Thus the way to necessity goes via increased *precision* and specialisation, i.e., in the opposite direction than the way to universality. The more content, the less necessity. The richer the perception of a situation, the more possibilities it unveils, the less tractable and the more difficult to control it becomes. And hence the attempts to design a grand theory of everything, to subsume the whole world under the rule of necessary laws impoverish the world. Certainly, some parts of the world can be reduced to simple entities which are prone to the descriptions in terms of the necessary. (Such descriptions seem always to conjure the possibility of control.) But the dangerous impoverishment occurs when the drive is uninhibited, when it is the drive to defeat everything escaping control. Only disappearance of content makes perfect necessity possible.

Necessity is thought, at least by the common sense, *de re* – it is a property of objects, relations and states of affairs. Saying "this statement is necessary" we mean "what it claims holds with necessity". It is the behaviour of objects or some state of affairs which is characterised as necessary. As the paradigmatic example one has always posited the causal relation which holds necessarily between x and y if an occurrence of x is a *sufficient* reason for the occurrence of y. After Hume's criticism it seemed impossible to maintain this idea of necessity which was first relegated to the categories of pure reason and then to

the sphere of linguistic phenomena.[292] In this tradition, it is the analyticity of judgments which is supposed to account for all possible necessity – of judgments, of course. If such judgments existed they would be necessary by being void of all real content, by being true for purely linguistic reasons of mere meaning of the involved terms.

We could agree that necessity implies removal of content but not that it is a purely linguistic phenomenon. It is related to our understanding in that necessity of x, in the common-sense, is simply inadmissibility of any contrary of x. Such an inadmissibility is relative to the range of alternatives one is able to consider. (As all our notions, it is relative to the *existence* or, we might also say, it has a strong epistemic component.) The fewer alternatives one is able to consider, the greater chance to encounter unavoidable – necessary – connections. Such a common-sense necessity can be criticized by a higher intelligence for limitation of the perspective. But the necessity of the most advanced science is of the same kind. It only considered the possible alternatives in such a detail and precision, that even it can not see any possibility of the contrary. This detailed precision can be applied to most *actual objects*, provided that these are reduced to the ideal *immediacy*, eventually, to the contentless *pure distinctions*.

The efforts to arrive at necessary judgments are accompanied by the attempts to remove all content. Tautologies and contradictions were suggested but then one should, perhaps, include also meaningless statements having no content. Besides, even the non-contradiction principle is not necessary unless one assumes appropriate reduction of the domain of discourse, §167. This reduction goes in the direction of *immediacy* and ends with mathematics. The alternative (to the analytical necessity of empty statements) is to remove all content from the considered objects, leaving only the ultimately *precise* alternatives: 'yes' or 'no', a *pure distinction*. Necessity amounts to removing possibilities and the limit of this process is when only one possibility remains. But to be able to exclude possibilities with full obviousness and *precision*, these must be first *precisely* given. Necessity of mathematical results is only another side of their ultimate *precision* and is based exclusively on the character of the fundamental objects – the most *immediate*, entirely contentless *pure distinctions*, devoid of any interfering context, in the pure isolation of 'all other things being equal'. Mathematical propositions are not empty tautologies. They tell the story of the objects they describe. Their necessity follows not from their emptiness but from the emptiness of these object. Its source is the pure bivalence, the ultimate *tertium non datur*, the absolute character of negation which, within pure *immediacy*, allows two and only two alternatives, 'being' or 'not-being', 'yes' or 'no'. 214.

Bivalent logic with non-contradiction principle was associated with the level of *immediacy* in §167. Now we encounter necessity as yet another *aspect* of this level. It carries the same character of abstract ideality as its other *aspects*, springing from the absolute and exclusive 'either or' residing in the point of ideal 'now', where there is only what there is, *dissociated* from the surroundings and hence appearing as unavoidable and necessary as arbitrary and spontaneous. An appearance viewed within the limit of *immediacy* has no *immediate* reason but also no *immediate* alternative. Necessity reflects the latter, just like the apparently absolute freedom of complete indeterminacy reflects the former.[293] Both 215.

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[292]This whole development, reflecting the atomistic ontology and leading to nominalism, is present already in Ockham. Following the assumption of exclusive reality of dissociated particulars, he argues for purely mental character of causality (as of any other universal relation), W. Ockham, *Quodlibeta*II:9,IV:1,VI:12, and arrives at the impossibility of demonstrating any causal relations, W. Ockham, *Sentences*II:4-5.i [after E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy....* p.497, footnote 27].

[293]The two are accomplices, psychologically opposite but culturally correlated, for instance, as metaphys-

are as ideal as the ideal *immediacy* and extending either beyond its narrow horizon can not but fail. Consequently, both appear equally 'unnatural', almost inhuman, not only for the common-sense but for any reflection which, unwilling to aim exclusively at the ultimate *precision* and necessity, stays *concrete* above the limits of *immediacy*.

216. There are degrees of approximation to pure *immediacy*, that is, degrees of abstraction from the *concrete* content, and hence degrees of necessity. The increase of the *concrete* content in passing from mathematics to physics, then to biology, from natural sceinces to the social ones, then from history and sociology to literature, etc., is accompanied by the decreasing degree of necessary determinations or, if one allows, by the increase of freedom. And if one wanted to complain that the later areas in this chain are only becoming less *precise*, one should observe that this is a simple consequence of the less determinate character of their objects. The search for the infallible laws leads sciences to construe their objects in a more and more simple and elementary fashion (increasing, by this very token, the complexity of descriptions) which alone makes formulation of sufficient reasons possible. But this sufficiency – necessity – requires *precision*, that is, approximation to *immediacy*, reduction of the *concrete* content.

In the limit, we encounter Hugo Steinhaus' statement that "mathematics is the science of objects which do not exist".[294] Indeed, in the limit of *immediacy* objects cease to be objects and become mere points whose existence seems highly questionable. Applying mathematics to anything demands that we look at the thing as a mere pure difference, a mere point of distinctness. In spite of attempts to reduce various sciences to a mathematical dimension, we do not really think that it is entirely meaningful to transfer the necessity and certitude of mathematics to other domains of *experience* and knowledge. Attempting such a reduction, we immediately realise that it is just that: a reduction.

Although only in rare cases, like Bacon or doctor Faustus, control is the explicit motive of the search for knowledge, it is always its accompanying theme. For knowledge involves an element of necessity – in form of sufficient reasons, efficient causes, binding explanations, inviolable laws. . . Knowledge as justified belief involves necessity since justification amounts exactly to the exclusion of alternatives. And so, knowledge, whether taken as the conqueror of nature or as the search for truth, chases the ideal of ultimate *precision*. Not only natural sciences but also economy, sociology, even psychology display the symptoms of the mathematical disease. The mathematical point, the vanishing (or rather the barely appearing) indication of something-being-there, the shadow of the perfect atom is the regulative ideal of the knights of necessity.

217. Mathematics captures and elaborates the fundamental aspect of *experience*, the fact of *distinguishing*. This may find many applications whenever the addressed objects happen to be reducible to the mathematical dimension. But even with respect to this deepest event of the *original distinction*, mathematics does not elaborate it in its *concreteness* but only in its own language of the univocity of *pure distinctions*. The 'emptiness' of mathematical objects will always remain on the border of mysticism and resonate deeply underneath the possible suspicions about tautological emptiness of mathematical results. The emptiness

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ical determinism confronted with the sense of freedom; as the necessity of common laws confronted with the freedom of privacy; as the indifference of scientific work confronted with the ethical demands; as the scientism of a culture accompanied by the mysticism and spirituality of various, often disappointed flavours; as the objectivity of the public sphere confronted with the subjectivity of one's religious convictions.

[294]Bovelles described creature as "beings which are not." [C. de Bovelles, *De nihilo*. p.75,97 [after J. Miernowski, *God-Nothingness*. p.91]] Misusing the analogy of expression, mathematics applies then to all creature; to the most fundamental, albeit very limited aspect of it.

of objective content, the *purity* of *distinctions*, lifts it *above* all *experience* and makes it almost as empty as its closest neighbour, *nothingness* itself. But the origin does not contain the end, the *original virtuality* does not determine *actuality*. It is not so that "[b]y number, a way is had, to the searching out and understanding of every thyng, hable to be knowen."[295] Trying to 'Pythagorise and philosophise by mathematics' alone ends, if not in the labyrinths of numerology, then at a philosophical desert, as great as it is empty. With respect to the *concreteness* of *experience* and, in particular, its deepest *aspects*, the mathematical images, built atop contentless *objects*, can provide only, and only at best, useful analogies and powerful similes.

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[295]G. P. della Mirandola, *Conclusions or 900 Theses.* Mathematical Conclusions:11 (*Conclusiones de mathematicis secundum opinionem propriam, numero LXXXV*), as quoted in J. Dee, *The Mathematicall Praeface to the Elements....*

Book III   (of relevance)

Visible and Invisible

We live among things which we control and use for our purposes, among things and in- 1. stitutions built to perform definite functions. But we live surrounded by things which are 'greater than us', things which are not *totalities* and cannot be caught in a network of *precise concepts*. These 'things', slipping out of our grasp and control are not, however, outside our reach, they are not inaccessible infinities 'in themselves'. They too are *distinctions* which have been made after we were *born* and are part of our *experience*. They are announced by various *signs* and by all the *traces* which permeate every *actuality*. They are *present*, albeit never as entirely *actual, precise* and fully exhausted *objects* of *reflection*.

"Know that the knowable things are of two kinds. Some can be described by means of definitions, while others can not be defined." In the most mundane sense, the *invisibles* are what "can not be defined", what can not be encircled within the *horizon of actuality*. Speaking of love as the paramount example of such an undefinable experience, Ibn'Arabi continues "It is known by him in whom it lives and whose object it becomes, while the person is unable to understand its nature nor negate its reality."[2] Inability to grasp 'what' does not exclude perfect awareness of *that*. In the eventual limit, *invisibles* dissolve in the mere *that* of the *origin*, leaving all 'what's to the finitude of understanding. Even if consciousness notices some *invisibles*, it has completely different character from the thematic consciousness of a *visible* content. *Invisibles* present themselves always as essentially *transcending* the *actual consciousness*, as inexhaustible by it. They are *experienced*, so to speak, at the limit of *visibility*, at the edge of eternity.

Man is a borderline between the *visible* and *invisible*. His *soul* has "two eyes. The one 2. is the power of seeing into eternity, the other of seeing into time and the creatures, of perceiving how they differ from each other [...], of giving life and needful things to the body, and ordering and governing it for the best."[3] Being such a borderline between the

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[1] *German Sermons*, Ac. XII:11 [J. Quint and J. Koch, eds., *Meister Eckhart...* I, pp.48-57; B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart...* 3, pp.244-246]

[2] M. Ibn'Arabi, *The Treatise on Love*. III:§25

[3] *Theologia Germanica*. VII. There are multiple examples of apparently similar duality, as e.g.: "I am a member of two orders: the one purely spiritual, in which I rule by my will alone; the other sensuous, in which I operate by my deed." [J. G. Fichte, *The Vocation of Man*. III;p.140] In our terms, these two orders are both within the sphere of *visibility*. Similarly, Hugh of St. Victor distinguished the 'eye of the flesh', by which we perceive external world and the 'eye of the reason', by which we attain knowledge of ourselves. But with him both were, in turn, distinct from the 'eye of contemplation', which allows us to achieve knowledge of things *above* us.

visible and *invisible* is the existential situation. It is irrevocable and does not depend on anything particular, on the level of one's understanding, on the scope of one's knowledge, on one's character or life experience. Yet it is not, for this reason, formal, it is not related to the concrete qualities of different lives as form is (supposed to relate) to matter. It is, in fact, *experienced* through and through, encircling the horizon within which life unfolds. The *invisibles present* in every *actuality* are what give it its full, lived *concreteness*. All concrete *experiences* are woven into the interplay of the *visible* and *invisible*. No matter to which level one directs *reflection*, no matter what are the predominant feelings and inspirations of one's life, this life's fundamental character is determined by the experience and attitude toward the sphere of *invisible* and *visible*, by the way in which one experiences and moulds the borderline between them.

This is the *existential* situation. The *invisible* is not something which is merely "not known". Knowledge, especially in the philosophical tradition, might have functioned as an image of this situation, where reason was placed between the 'known' and 'unknown'. But it is a poor analogy. The distinction 'known'-'unknown' places us at the level of *actuality*, it carries the character of contradiction, of an absolute opposition and, moreover, of *objectivistic attitude* – the 'unknown' is either irrelevant emptiness or a determinate 'knowable'. For a knowledge oriented person, it seems important what he knows and, possibly, what he does not know but would like to know. Such concern veils completely (though not necessarily) the crucial fact: that no matter how much and what one knows, it is always limited by the immovable horizon of the 'unknown'. This fact, trivial as it is, has a fundamental existential import. Noticing one's attitude toward things one knows and reactions to things one does not know can give us some insight into one's psychological constitution. But the *existential* dimension is lifted *above* all such particular 'what's and concerns at most one's attitude to the fact, trivial as it is, *that* one does not know.

Being a borderline is a *concrete* expression of *existential confrontation*. It is not merely formal but thoroughly *concrete* because man, transcending himself, lives only his own limits. The *confrontation* itself is never *actually experienced*, is never 'given' as an *object* of adequate understanding. It manifests itself as the constant *presence* of something *above*, witnessed to by occasional *signs* and constant *traces* connecting what is *actually visible* to its *invisible* origins. Being a borderline is a *concrete* expression of *existence* as *participation* – perhaps not yet a *concrete participation*, which consists in *actually being* on the *trace*, but at first only a simple *participation* of *mere intimation* of the *trace, mere intimation* of being surrounded by *invisibles* which remain *dissociated* from their *signs*, remote and not *present concretely*. This remoteness, this *distance* is reflected as *thirst* – and when pushed to the extreme *dissociation*, even as despair – of the *soul*. Man knows always more than he knows and is more than he is. "Man infinitely transcends man"[4], not because his possibilities seem to have no *visible* limit but because no matter how far he has reached, he remains *thirsting*, because "the desire for the bliss, which [he] had lost, remained with [him] even after the Fall."[5]

1   Thirst

3.   Young people look hopefully into the future which is like a huge promise of the whole world – and thirst for its coming. Adults keep putting the last brick on the construction they

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[4]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. VII:434

[5]J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. IV:777C-D

have been rising all the time, the last detail needed to complete the perfect totality – and having put it, find another one which needs to be put, but only one, the last one... Or else, they throw dim looks far away, to the places at the other end of the earth, to the remote, half real places they can hardly imagine, like the magical atmosphere of the childhood. Old people thirst only for the thirst of their youth; or, perhaps, for the tranquility of withdrawal from the actuality. The poor thirst for the easiness of affluence and the rich for the resistance of the world without which, so it seems, the reality dissolves in decadence. As Goethe says, "man thirsts constantly for what he is not." We are never entirely satisfied with our achievements, and we are never entirely satisfied with whatever we obtain from gratuitous generosity. And if one rests satisfied, when one stops thirsting, it is said that he has lost the taste for life.

"We are as if we were not."[6] There is something which enters our *experience* only as *thirst*; it is not longing for anything specific, even if in most situations one will fill the objectless character of this *thirst* with something graspable, will give it a name, and hence a goal. But it is not longing for..., not a thirst for...– it is simply *thirst*, without any object, without any goal. True goals remain hidden until they are reached.

4. *Thirst* does not show anything *visible*; if we were to talk about its correlate, its noematic intention, it could only be *nothingness*; *nothing* appearing through the entirely negative noesis, the experience of lack, perhaps even a loss. Yet, this seemingly negative noesis, this apparent *nothingness*, has a thoroughly positive character. For *thirst* announces something which – by the very fact of being *thirsted* for – represents some good, and – by being *thirsted* for indefinitely and undefinably, incessantly and indelibly – perhaps something *absolutely* good. It might seem that what is so announced remains 'absent' and that the whole announcement amounts to nothing but announcing its 'absence'. "The proverb bears witness to them: «Present yet absent.»"[7] For all that appears negative and inadequate only when we expect things, *objects*, 'substances', *visible* images, in short, *actualities*. For only then we consider *non-actuality* to be an 'absence', a lack. This 'absence', however, is a thoroughly positive *presence*, and *thirst*, this sense of incompleteness, is the genuine bridge over the borderline separating *this* and *another world*. "And the soul's innate love makes clear that the Good is there, and this is why Eros is coupled with Psyches in pictures and stories. For since the soul is other than God but comes from him it is necessarily in love with him."[8] And thus 'remembering', one keeps looking. "Sometimes I feel as if I were approaching happiness and I stand before a flower that blossoms through an old stone wall and I am unable to draw nearer. I am left with the feeling of always waiting for happiness, and everything is suddenly diminished by the melancholy of having once being able to achieve that joy."[9] This remembrance of apparent loss, this *thirst*, 'natural love' and desire of 'Something', is the first form of *invisible presence* in *actual experience*. Before elaborating this point, a few *impressions*.

The moods of silence

"Silence is a fence around wisdom"[10] says Maimonides. Nowhere, nowhere and never happens more than in a moment of silence – for silence is the voice of God. "I am the taste

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[6]Heraclitus DK 22B49a

[7]Heraclitus DK 22B34

[8]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.9

[9]L. Salomé, *You Alone are Real to Me*. Rilke's letter from 16.03.1914, p.66

[10]M. Maimonides, *Laws Concerning Character Traits*.

of living waters and the light of the sun and the moon [...], sound in silence [...]/ I am the silence of hidden mysteries; and I am the knowledge of those who know."[11] But used to the voices, one cannot hear silence, and thus searching for *visible signs* one keeps *thirsting* for what *transcends* them.

> *Then Theotormon broke his silence, and he answered:*
>
> *"Tell me what is the night or day to one o'erflowd with woe?*
> *Tell me what is a thought? & of what substance is it made?*
> *Tell me what is a joy? & in what gardens do joys grow?*
> *And in what rivers swim the sorrows? and upon what mountains*
> *Wave shadows of discontent? and in what houses dwell the wretched*
> *Drunken with woe, forgotten, and shut up from cold despair?*
>
> *Tell me where dwell the thoughts, forgotten till thou call them forth?*
> *Tell me where dwell the joys of old! & where the ancient loves?*
> *And when will they renew again & the night of oblivion past?*
> *That I might traverse times & spaces far remote and bring*
> *Comforts into a present sorrow and a night of pain.*
> *Where goest thou, O thought? to what remote land is thy flight?*
> *If thou returnest to the present moment of affliction*
> *Wilt thou bring comforts on thy wings and dews and honey and balm,*
> *Or poison from the desert wilds, from the eyes of the envier?"[12]*

5.   Have you ever felt the constancy of a pain, vague and indefinite or, perhaps, clean-cut and if not with a known source, then at least with a clearly recognisable target, pain which did not leave any space for hope, whose intensity was spread over the soul or rooted in the body so that no point was adequate to begin recovery in which you could trust? Have you? Pain which might have lasted for years so that, eventually, it became a companion, almost a friend, on whom you could rely, who you could be sure will visit you again, but whom you never wished to meet directly, whom you always tried to avoid, pretending that you are not at home, whenever the doorbell rang.

6.   Have you ever met a dark moment of dark thoughts, in the middle of a restless night of despair? The emptiness of crowded streets, unreal cities, wastelands? Have you ever been at the outermost cliffs, far from Dover, not peaceful coast of sunny Californian Pacific, but remote and desolate, stony beaches of Faroe Islands, empty, like mathematical line curved in the frozen magma of an Icelandic mountain, in the steepness of a Norwegian fiord, stone under ice, blown with the wind, and waves, not singing, chanting perhaps, but not enchanting, dividing the waves, those which stay, and those which return... unceasingly, without purpose...

7.   Have you ever felt the emptiness of infinite longing, the emptiness which filled the whole world, the whole life, eventually, the whole universe with the unbearable beauty of its silence. Have you? The emptiness which does not negate the things of this world but which presses its presence between them, which surrounds them with full respect and recognition, and yet... makes them all appear insignificant, that is, disappear. The emptiness which is not void, which is not absence but, on the contrary, the fact, the feeling, the presence which

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[11]*The Bhagavad-Gita.* VII:8/X:38

[12]W. Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion.* In Blake's poetry, Theotormon represents thirst, desire which, when suppressed and restrained, turns into envy or greed.

meets the longing at the horizon where the ineffable dawns, and thus, where it languishes in calm. The emptiness which is all and only correlate of this longing, because you know that you are not having a yen for this or that, for a better house, nor for a nicer company, for more success, nor for more happiness. Such things, real and satisfying as they might be, would not suffice. You are not longing for anything, and yet you are longing. . . This is not a longing for the impossible, rather, an impossible longing, often, aroused by a minor thing, an inspiringly resigned tune of Celtic quietude, Irish flute, by a stormy breeze on an empty beach boulevard among the faded tables and withered benches, by the light of the moon diminishing in the dark waters of an evening lake, by a passing woman reminding you of the impossibility of Love. But these are only signs, impressions, psychological reminders.

And all the good dreams, understood or not, dreams of foreign lands, of remote islands, of shiny future, believed and unbelievable. Day-dreams of the ultimate fulfillments, hardly admitted and only vaguely felt, with unrecognisable contents though recurring moods, arising in a morning from the ashes left by the nightmares of their failures. All the good, beautiful dreams, the more precise the less possible, never matched by reality and yet constant and unshaken, impossible to retain, impossible to forget.

Dreamer, dreamer, what do you dream of?

8. Have you ever felt the restlessness of soul which, although apparently should be happy and has no reasons for dissatisfaction, does not find calm and rest in any of its achievements, in any of the joys and pleasanties it has encountered? Have you? Have you ever felt that everything is in perfect order, so that it hardly could be better or neater, that you have everything you wanted and yet, something is missing, that you have nothing to complain about and yet . . .

And if you felt it, haven't you then tried either to find something which *actually* was missing to fill the gap, or else decided to do something which could occupy your mind and your hands, which could at least serve some useful, even if tiny, purpose?

9. Under all the attempts to think that the meaning is more specific, that there was a goal, that all is about something more definite, there hides unquenchable *thirst*. Awaiting new things, important events, the most significant solutions, we flirt with time, yearning for eternity. And the deeper we yearn, the more intensely we flirt. It seems that a "mere trifle consoles us, for a mere trifle distresses us."[13] But any moment devoid of the hope of eternity becomes a desperate expectation of the next moment. The *thirst* is not for this or that, and so it can not be quenched by anything, least of all, by *more* of anything. It may turn into incessant and restless search, into constant attempts to acquire *more* or experience something new, but "avarice is serving the idols". The *more* ends up in a stupefying perplexity, like the oversensitivity of an autist leads to a shutdown. The *more*, the less. . . Any attempt to quiet *thirst* with this or that will only make its *presence* more intense. The multitude of distractions may help to survive a day, a week, a year, but it only breeds more *thirst*. In fact, *thirst* becomes the stronger, the weaker any feeling of its presence, the less *visible signs* announcing it. All its *signs* tend to get hidden under *more* and *more* goals, activities, experiences. But hidding the *signs* does not help against *thirst* which now starts emanating from that which intended, and initially even managed, to obscure it. "More! More! is the cry of a mistaken soul, less than All cannot satisfy Man."[14]

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[13]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. II:136
[14]W. Blake, *There is no natural religion*. II

1.1   The hermeneutics of thirst

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"To despair is to lose the eternal"
S. Kierkegaard[15]

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1.1.1. Search

The soul "never rests until it comes to the first image..." says Eckhart[16], and this lack of rest may easily become a search – not any longer a search for this or that, but a search for ...God? Yet "there is truly no searching for God, for there is *nothing* where one could find him."[17] The search is but the recognition of the lack, only the indefinite and *clear thirst*. Young, adult or old, succesful or damned, nobody lives without this *thirst* and nobody can live without it. But real is exactly that without which one can not live.

10.   *Thirst* is already a search, but it does not know for what. Of course, we "all desire happiness with one will,"[18] we are looking for *vita beata*, for the 'highest good', for 'paradise'...But what does all that mean? – specifically, concretely, precisely? Indeed, *nothing* in particular. "You play and work and meditate.//But still your mind desires//That which is beyond everything,//Where all desires vanish."[19] So yearning for eternity we flirt with time, unable to find *invisibles* we keep looking for this or that, and end up with mere *signs*, for only what is *visible* can be searched for, found and possessed. We replace *thirst* with thirst for Being, then thirst for Being with thirst for truth, thirst for truth with thirst for understanding, thirst for understanding with thirst for recognition; we want to think that some form of paradise on earth is possible, and end up constructing totalitarian monstrosities; we recognise the ever present, 'unavowed theologeme' and end up mixing faith, messianicity with 'democracy to come' and other socio-political fantasies, which criticize such earlier fantasies only by turning in the opposite direction along *the same* line...An *idol* is a finite, relative thing made absolute, a *visible* thing used to suppress the *thirst* – as it often may seem, to quench it. "What idol actually attempts to erase is the remoteness, the distance separating us from divinity...Filling this gap, the idol presses itself on us as divinity, confirms it and eventually degenerates."[20] In search of paradise, we find *idols*; *thirsting* to the woods, we raise cities, and to convince ourselves that this is enough we *idolise* them the more, the less calm they bring and the stronger our suspicion of their insufficiency.

11.   A *vague* sense of some loss, the loss of something we do not know precisely what is, something like ...paradise, some happy state, a natural dwelling place – the sense of such a loss is a form of *thirst*, too. But we are not supposed to lose, and even if we do, we lose only what is ours. So "who can yet believe, though after loss,//That all these puissant legions, whose exile//Hath emptied heaven, shall fail to re-ascend,//Self-raised, and repossess their native seat?"[21] Humans deserve ...well, what? It is not quite clear, but no matter what "their native seat" might be, an indication of any metaphysical 'deserving'

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[15] *The sickness unto death* I:C.B.b.α.1

[16] Also Augustine's opening remark that "our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee" [St. Augustine, *Confessions.* I:1] is a more psychologically appealing variant of the biblical (and rather moralistically sounding) "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" [Mrk. VIII:36; Mt. XVIII:26] "The spiritual sense, the instinct for the real, is not satisfied with anything less than the absolute and the eternal." [S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life.* III:2]

[17] M. Buber, *I and You.* III.

[18] St. Augustine, *On The Holy Trinity.* XIII:4.§7. ["the will to obtain and retain blessedness is one in all"]

[19] *The Ashtavakra-Gita.* XVI:2

[20] J.-L. Marion, *Idol and Distance.* [after M.-A. Ouaknin, *Ouvertures hassidiques*, p.106]

[21] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost.* I:631-634 [spoken by Satan]

or 'entitlement' will not, eventually, stop before the highest unimaginable – 'paradise', 'happiness', 'salvation'...Entitled to repossession of the lost seat, "[l]et us disdain things of earth, hold as little worth even the astral orders and, putting behind us all the things of this world, hasten to that court beyond the world, closest to the most exalted Godhead. There, as the sacred mysteries tell us, the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones occupy the first places; but, unable to yield to them, and impatient of any second place, let us emulate their dignity and glory. And, if we will it, we shall be inferior to them in nothing."[22] Although one might emphasize the calls to transcend the merely human conditions present in *The Oration*, its tone is that of inspired Kabbalah, or in more ordinary terms, of the unrestricted 'humanistic' optimism – entitled self-sufficiency, that is, *pride*. What it veils, or rather what it does not unveil, is that its search for paradise, "impatient of any second place", must evoke numerology or Kabbalistic practices, magic or spiritualistic media, in order to convince itself of the sufficiency of human efforts – precisely because this sufficiency is not given and has to rely on magical devices, precisely because everything originates from the sense of loss which at a deeper level feels irreparable.

Let us emphasize: search for paradise is totally well meant and involves only good intentions; no pride, no offense is intended. The whole world is full of good intentions, and the best of them are to ensure paradise – for oneself, for family, for others...."I would like my love to embrace the whole mankind, to warm it and clean it from the dirt of modern life [...] Often it seems to me that even mother does not love children as warmly as I do."[23] It may seem strange that such feelings might have underlied the activities of "the bloody Feliks" Dzierżyński, one of the main architects of the communistic terror in Russia. But sympathy and compassion for X can easily involve hatred, even cruelty, towards Y, if only the latter is perceived as being guilty of the former's misery. And if this misery is ultimate evil, so the guilt is inexcusable and deserves most cruel punishment. *Idols, idols...*

Any idealised society (where justice, equality and happiness rule over human imperfections and sense of incompleteness) is an *idol*, any deep and genuine dream of it a clear *sign* of *alienation*, and any attempts to construct it are guaranteed to end up the way they always used to end. Hell is paved with good intentions and those who end up there are almost exclusively those who have looked all too intensely for paradise. An infinitely thin line separates all too good intentions from all too ambitious goals. "Those who seek gold dig much earth and find little."[24] Few, if any people ever commit crimes in order to achieve evil. There is always some good which motivates even the worst deeds. But exaggerated intensity in digging for some good witnesses rather to its opposite. The higher and the greater is the good claimed to 'motivate and explain' a particular *act*, the deeper is *idolatry* and, usually, the more terrifying result. Good, like wisdom, can enlight but not explain. Particular *acts* are never *visibly* traceable, not to say necessary, consequences of any higher good. It is only conflation of the highest good with the *visible* form of an *idol* which may seem to dictate with necessity any definite *acts*, as it turns the infinite *love* into activism, religiosity into moralism, *commands* into directives, and *thirst* into lack to be filled with *visible* efforts.

An *idol*, trying to fill the 'absence', marks a break with the *origin*, *alienation*. *Thirst experienced* as mere thirst, mere loss, which grows into unacceptable pain and searches

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[22]G. P. della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*.

[23]J. Smaga, *The Birth and Fall of the Empire, CCCP 1917-1991*. p.31 [after J. Tischner, *The Controversy about Man's Existence*.p.45]

[24]Heraclitus DK 22B22

only for ever new *visible* tranquilizers – is the *sign* of *invisible* rebellion which, making one look for paradise, directs one to hell. The initial voice of this rebellion calls to an active open war which, in more *visible* terms, means only intensified activity; not as yet any evil will but a blind and restless, no matter how apparently purposeful, search capable only of rising *idols*. No pride nor offense is intended, at least none can be seen, but their *invisible* seeds have already started germinating...

1.1.2. The circle of despair

Attachment to *idols* only increases *thirst* – the more we believe that it has disappeared and the less we feel it, the more *present* it becomes. Whether we actually feel it or not, whether we have any actual *signs* of it or not, we all the time know its *presence* – at best, we can only keep it at the threshold of *actuality*, for some time... Psychoanalyst could perhaps say that we suppress it, but it is not a simple game of conscious and unconscious. It is *present* and as such not suppressed. It lends all its power to our *idols* – the more intense and unbearable its *presence*, the more absolute power has to be and is ascribed to the current *idols*.

But less than All cannot satisfy man. We search for and find more things and matters to consider, more goals to achieve, more intensity and engagement, more power in lesser gods – but insatiability is still only serving the *idols*. Behind the circle of *more*, behind the horizon of *visibility*, there lurks already emptiness of despair. As always, it is not critical whether it enters the sphere of *actuality* and consciousness, or not – what matters is its very *presence*. One need not know that one despairs to despair. But knowing that one does may intensify the despair.

13.   *Idolatry* is already a form of despair. But despair intensifies when one loses the faith in one's *idols* which until now have been helping against the *thirst*, and then realises that all the idols are only images, masks, lies offering false promises and hopes. It is a meeting with *nothingness* under the spell of *visibility*, and hence only in its negative character, as emptiness, pure void. *Idols* had seemed to be something or at least to hide somebody. Some face was expected behind their masks, like the unreachable goals used to absolutise the relative, or the ultimate and *visible* goals used to justify the unjustifiable. But now, when all the masks have fallen, no face appears – and bare emptiness stares into one's face. One tries to fill it with this or that, with some old or new *idol*, with work, fascinations or orgies, eventually also to pretend that, since *actually* nothing has happened so nothing has happened really. But void of *nothingness* is not like an empty glass and can not be filled with anything. One is bound to begin to live through, if not also realise, the fact "that there is no truth, that there is no absolute character of things, no 'thing in itself'" and "that all faith, all accepting as truth is by necessity a falsehood: for there is no such thing as the true world."[25] Admitting this ultimate indifference of the world, its aloofness which one still resists to take as enmity, is often misunderstood as an act of intellectual honesty. But it is only an act of existential despair.

14.   One may try some more desperate acts. Ixion, having fallen in love with Hera, dreams of possessing her and makes successful advances (in some versions, Centaurs are the offspring resulting from their intercourse). His boasting of having had slept with a goddess is, however, a result of an illusion: he slept with a cloud which Zeus created in resemblance of Hera. Thus, trying to reach a goddess, he catches the air and, as a punishment, he is

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[25]F. Nietzsche, *Notes about Nihilism*. XII:9.35 and XII:9.41 [after G. Sowiński, ed., *Around Nihilism*.]

bound to a wheel on which he is whirled by winds for all eternity. Heaven is, according to the Greeks, always a *gift* from gods. The vanity of any attempts to reach it by one's own means recurs with figures like Actaeon, Bellerophon, Icarus, Prometheus.

Such attempts, although deserving further punishment from gods, are themselves *signs* of already being in despair. The time spent on unsuccessful attempts to escape begins gradually to suggest: there is no escape! One may try to look for reasons and explanations, that is, for excuses and the guilty ones ("Hell is the others!" cries Sartre behind the *Closed doors*[26]), one may confront one's own sinfulness ("Angst discovers freedom but this is the same as discovery of sin"[27]), but all that does not change anything: from emptiness, where there are no walls, there is no exit either. The impossibility is eternal.

Proper despair is to surrender to despair. As no exit is *visible*, one is doomed for remaining inside forever. "Inside"? But inside of what? There is only emptiness around. Yet the walls of emptiness create the most terrifying 'inside' – they isolate and *alienate* making man dwell "in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps."[28] *Alienation*, the apparent freedom of empty nothingness is exactly the inescapable damnation – in one: accusation, trial and conviction. One remains 'inside' the imaginations and hopes of *visibility*. Their *experienced* and *clearly* known insufficiency to bring any consolation testifies to some 'outside'. But there is only emptiness, so any 'outside' is impossible. It is, it must be because one needs it so much, it must be real because one cannot live without it – and yet it is impossible that it is.

To surrender to despair is to say *No* to the possibility of something being there, 'outside'. Not only there is no *visible* exit, but there is no exit whatsoever because there is nothing toward which one could exit. "Also let a man mark, when he is in this hell, nothing may console him; and he cannot believe that he shall ever be released or comforted."[29] As there is no hope of exit, as all we confront is the eventual void, the "final hope//Is flat despair: we must exasperate//The almighty victor to spend all his rage,//And that must end us, that must be our cure –//To be no more; sad cure;"[30] The circle of despair is self-strengthening as, accepting the impossibility of exit, one begins to despair over one's own despairing. Hell has no end in time, it is 'eternal'. "Let us think this idea in its most terrifying form: existence, as it is, without meaning or aim, but inevitably recurring, with no end in nothingness: eternal return. It is the most extreme form of nihilism: eternal nothingness (nonsense)!"[31]

Surrender to despair is, as the initial despair itself, an *invisible* event. Consciously

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[26] In the USA the title of the play was *No Exit*.

[27] S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*. V [modified]

[28] Job XV:28

[29] *Theologia Germanica*. XI. "He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompense." [Job XV:30-31] In a much more profane language, "there is, alas, the loneliness which is without any hope of compensations, the loneliness due to the individual's failure to reach some common understanding with the world. This is the bitterest loneliness of all, the loneliness which is eating away at the heart of my existence." [F. Nietzsche, *My Sister and I*. IV:31]

[30] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*. II:142-146, [spoken by Belial advising against the open war recommended earlier by Moloch]

[31] F. Nietzsche, *Notes about Nihilism*. p.77. 'Eternity' of hell is always posited as the infinity of objective time (whether eternal return or just eternally lasting suffering). Infinite time, this bad image of *eternity*, witnesses to the continuing *attachment* to *visibility*. "The fear of future turns into the fear of death, and the fear of death into the fear of hell. It is always fear of the fate in time, of the lack of any end in time, that is, fear of the lack of exit from objectivisation, of infinite objectivisation." [N. Berdyayev, *I and the world of objects*. IV:3]

one opposes it and tries to get out of it, one may be terrified and frightened. But as one keeps trying to avoid it, one only sinks deeper into the despair over one's own despairing. The desperate attempts to oppose it are the *actual signs* of the surrender, of the *invisible* defeat, the *No* said silently in the depths.

1.1.3. Saying No

15.   The circle of despair is the circle of damnation from which there is no exit. With one exception...? As Belial suggested, one may attempt the cure of non-being. As a spiritual being, he cannot commit suicide and non-being can only be a gift from God. For man it is a different matter: death "is the only god who must come whenever we only call him."[32] In the circle of despair, in the middle of nothingness which is the ultimate unfreedom, suicide appears as the last possibility of retaining and proving one's freedom. "Man can kill himself because he has such capacity; and this capacity without the right to its use would be a luxury."[33] The argument is rather strange, suggesting that everything which is possible should also be allowed. But we sense the need to justify suicide by ascribing it the element of freedom in addition to, or perhaps even instead of, the reactive character of ultimate despair. (In Mainländer, the universal fact of the death of finite beings is even called the "will of death", though in humans and living beings in general this metaphysical – yeah, even divine – will of death is covered up by the apparent "will of life".)

16.   The negative character of this freedom (if freedom it is) is obvious – it is a door of escape, 'liberation from...'. Over 50% of studied suicide attempts are classified as individuals trying to achieve surcease. The rest are either trying to 'manipulate' the environment (to have revenge on a rejecting lover, to ruin the life of another person, to have the final word in an argument as in the so called "altruistic suicide") or are combinations of both. In every case, self-inflicted death seems to be the last thing one is capable of achieving, is the last possibility of self-chosen act.[34]

   In either form, the voluntary choice of death is saying *No*; it is accepting that only emptiness surrounds the horizon of *visibility*; and since *nothingness* is nothing, the only hope of transcending the unbearable situation is to pass into non-being. One might, perhaps, discern an element of heroism in attempting such a free *act* in the depth of spiritual enslavement, in sacrificing one's life when confronted with a higher truth. But it is

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[32]F. Hebbel, *Werke*. vol.IV/V:4311 [after G. Sowiński, ed., *Around Nihilism.*]

[33]Ibid. vol.IV/V:2292. Perhaps one of the most extreme expressions of this direction of thought is metaphysics of annihilation in P. Mainländer, *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, according to which the "thrill of annihilation" and "will of death" is the ultimate truth of the thirst for peace, in fact, of any spiritual thirst. In our days, Zapfe's "Uninhabited planet is no tragedy" seems to repeat this aestheticism of annihilation, whose usual and only attempt at self-justification is appeal to nature – "what difference would it make to her were the race of men entirely to be extinguished upon earth, annihilated! she laughs at our pride when we persuade ourselves all would be over and done with were this misfortune to occur! Why, she would simply fail to notice it." This last quotation, perhaps a bit unfortunately, is from D. A. F. de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. Yet another effort, Frenchmen...

[34]Research indicates that most suicide attempts are not preceded by a clear and definite decision but that such people for the most are undecided about living or dying and as if gamble with death leaving it to others to save them. Such cases would nevertheless fall under our description of "self-chosen act" or "voluntary choice made by *myself*", which mean of course more than *reflectively conscious* choices of goals and definite course of actions. Psychological differences between a person merely gambling with death and one determined for and efficiently carrying out a suicide do not concern us – each has chosen suicide and each has chosen it *himself*.

lamentable when this higher truth turns out to be nothing and the apparent freedom is only escape.[35]

But there is also another way of saying *No*. Having surrendered to despair, one now accepts it. I am in prison, and there is no way out. "Nay, cursed be thou; since against his thy will//Chose freely what it now so justly rues.//Me miserable! Which way shall I fly//Infinite wrath and infinite despair?//Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;"[36] Since I am imprisoned, so I will stay imprisoned – there is nothing I can do about *that*. Eventually, staying spiritually imprisoned amounts to willing this imprisonment. "If it should now happen that God in heaven and all the angels were to offer to help him to be rid of this torment – no, he does not want that, now it is too late."[37] There is an element of sick will in staying imprisoned, even if this will seems to be not *mine*, but somewhat imposed on *me* from above. This willing is no longer despairing over one's despair, nor is it any longer aesthetising this despair. It is now "despairing of forgiveness, when someone because of the extent of his sins completely gives up hope in God's goodness."[38] It is now accepting one's despair, trying to turn it into something good. Just like voluntary passing into nothingness, suicide, so also this acceptance seems to be self-chosen, even if not self-willed. It is the despair of defiance, as Kierkegaard says, "the despair of wanting in despair to be oneself,"[39] of insisting on *myself* when *I* should completely give up *myself*, of not realising that *I* am only getting the more imprisoned the more *I* resist to surrender.

This active choice of despair agrees on the impossibility of salvation – it is the final acceptance that there is no exit. And so, "if heaven I can not bend, then hell I will arouse."[40] The only thing one can do now is to turn this evil of damnation, "the torment of perpetual penalty,"[41] into good, pretend that evil is good. "Evil, be thou my good: by thee at least//Divided empire with heaven's king I hold."[42] "I hold" because *I* still act on *my* own initiative, from *my* own choice. Yet, *I* never forget that exit was all *I* wanted, and so this 'free' choice of *mine* is only a renouncement, ultimate resignation. It knows, like Milton's Satan and all his associates know, that it wished and still wishes something good, which here means exit. But this knowledge has hardly any *visible signs* and remains hidden underneath the *actual* goals and attempts. The active choice of *No* amounts to a definitive denial of this fact.

Having lost paradise, having "lost the eternal", and now also the hope of regaining it, one still seems to retain the whole *visible world*. Mammon advises now to do only what

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[35] Admissibility of suicide is always an expression of absolutisation of the *visibility* beyond which nothing can be ... seen. The dignified suicide of a samurai or a Roman official, as the last way of preserving one's honor, perhaps even of expressing one's respect for the one commanding the suicide, is probably the best example of reducing human *existence* to a tool of the social system. Suicide is also often defended by reference to the need of preserving one's dignity and self-respect in the face of unbearable suffering. The complexity of the issue eludes any simple judgments but we would, nevertheless, point out that taking one's life amounts to ingratitude for this ultimate *gift*. ("It's *my life* and I can do with it what *I* want!" *I* certainly can. But if you hear a drug addict pronouncing such an opinion you do not think he is right.) Retaining *visible signs* of (self-)respect by neglecting *spiritual thankfulness* is no less dubious just because it is common.

[36] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*. IV:71-73

[37] S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:C.B.b.β;p.103

[38] P. Abelard, *Ethics*. §177

[39] S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:C.B.b.β

[40] Virgil, *The Aeneid*. VII:312 [modified translation]

[41] P. Abelard, *Ethics*. §168

[42] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*. IV:110-111

can be done by one's own powers. Indeed "great things of small,//Useful of hurtful, prosperous of adverse,//We can create, and in what place so e'er//Thrive under evil, and work ease out of pain//Through labour and endurance."[43] In another context, this might sound almost convincing, but here Satan draws the eventual consequence of this whole *invisible* development. He turns in revenge against the *visible* world, against God's last creation, "some new race called Man, about this time//To be created like to us [...] Thither let us bend all our thoughts, to learn [...] what their power//And where their weakness; how attempted best//By force or subtlety; though heaven be shut,//And heaven's high arbitrator sit secure//In his own strength, this place may lie exposed,//The utmost border of his kingdom, left//To their defense who hold it;"[44] The *invisible* defeat, the active *No*, although affecting apparently only the *invisible nothingness*, brings about *visible* consequences which permeate the whole *existence*. Although the resulting activity may, and typically does, appear perfectly purposeful and rational, it is driven only by the fear of emptiness which it tries to cover up. For *No*, removing the *invisible rest* surrounding the *visible world*, leaves all *visibility* entirely to itself.

It belongs to the nature of damnation that it universalises itself. Just like one can not be happy in the evil world, one can not be damned in the middle of saints and saved. "To the unhappy, it is a comfort to have had companions in misfortune."[45] And when companions are hard to find, one starts producing them by demonstrating the universality of misfortune. "[T]he more I see//Pleasures about me, so much more I feel//Torment within me,"[46] says Satan who can nothing else but try "all pleasure to destroy,//Save what is in destroying; other joy To me is lost."[47] "Rebelling against all existence, it thinks it has acquired evidence against existence, against its goodness. The despairer thinks that he himself is this evidence."[48] The damned, the active *No*, comes thus out of its closed room without, however, ever leaving it; it comes out as the *visible* activity trying to embrace everything but driven by the substantialised lack, its emptiness. Damnation finds its expression in every single thing and situation, it permeates all *actuality*, even when it itself remains non-*actualised*. It is, after all, the very impossibility of *actualisation* for it has removed everything which possibly might be *actualised*; equating the ultimate *invisibility* with emptiness, it has cut away the source of *actualising* meanings and, eventually, turns even *actuality* into nothingness. Only absolute emptiness can be absolutely insatiable. Insatiability, the impossibility of satisfaction, is a substantialisation of *thirst*: like Thyestes devouring his own body, like Tantalus ever hungry and never able to reach the water and fruit brushing his lips. Insatiability of damnation is to spread its despair over all and everything, in search for a community beyond its *alienation*. "Man communicates by means of despair, when he no longer has any other community."[49]

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[43] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*. II:258-262

[44] Ibid. II: 348-362. (Blake's scheme of thirst which, when suppressed, turns into greed and envy owes much to Milton.)

[45] C. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*. V:42. (The Latin version – *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris* – was quoted by many authors, but its origin remains unknown.)

[46] J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*. IX:119-121

[47] Ibid. IX:477-479

[48] S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:C.B.b.β

[49] E. Durkheim, *The Suicide*. III:6. Durkheim speaks here only about the tendency to, what he calls, "egoistic suicide", arising from the dissolution of social structures and increased individualisation or, as we might perhaps say, alienation. "The individual's appetite for life diminishes because the connections relating it to the society are weakened." We would not identify our *alienation* with Durkheim's 'individualisation', just like we would never identify *absolute* with 'society'. But putting absolutisation of the social aspect aside, we can easily recognise the accuracy and relevance of Durkheim's observations.

It is also eternal, for one can not possibly get out from the place where there is no *visible* exit. The lack of exit means that "no end is limited to damned souls"[50], means the eternity of damnation. ('Bad eternity', of course, infinite temporal duration, for the damned remains thoroughly within time.) The only relief one can then find consists in the confirmation that "damnation is the truth", that "so is the world", that "hope is an illusion". Extreme pain soothes lesser pain; common degeneration in the world around seems to attenuate my own degeneration; nothing seems to allay more the meaninglessness of the private suffering and despair, than the realisation that this is actually the universal truth of life. It would be futile to ask what comes first – suffering or the perception of its common (if not universal) nature. Suffering is indistinguishable from its *experience*, while "universal", "common", etc. are here only *actualised expressions* of the 'objective' character of evil, of the fact that it overcomes *me*, is 'greater than me'. At this last circle of despair, the suppressed *thirst* solidifies, one could say, substantialises the ultimate emptiness as a universal truth. But since this *actual* truth is not any truth, one is bound to keep searching for its confirmations.

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What we have called "despair" Kierkegaard would classify as only its higher stages, per- 19.
haps, as "the despair which is conscious of being despair". Already our *thirst* would be classified by him as lower levels of despair. Indeed, the stages of the gradual intensification of *thirst* to despair referred to above correspond closely to the intensification of despair described by Kierkegaard in *The sickness unto death*, I:C.B.*Despair viewed under the aspect of consciousness.* So, what's the difference? Is there any?

We do not see the need to be so dramatic. There may be humility in *thirst* which would be hard to find in despair. But we also sense a more significant difference. What we said in §3 about the commonality of *thirst*, might have been expressed by Kierkegaard, for instance, as follows: "An older woman who has supposedly left all illusion behind is often found to be fantastically illuded, as much as a young girl, of how happy she was then, how beautiful, etc. This *fuimus* [we have been], which we so often hear from older people, is just as great an illusion as the younger people's illusions of the future; they lie or invent, both of them."[51] All that is probably true, in a sense, but it is not right. If people "invent or lie" and they do so throughout the whole history of mankind, then the problem lies rather in the diagnosis than in the diagnosed. *Thirst*, as we shall see, is not something which, like Kierkegaard's despair, one just has to dissolve in active consciousness. It certainly is not, as is despair, a sin which cannot avoid deepening *alienation*. And this is the crucial difference – Kierkegaard insists on a kind of consciousness: "what characterises despair is just this – that it is ignorant of being despair"[52]. Yet, "the more consciousness, the more intense despair"[53], and this seems to present a problem with the relation between consciousness and spirituality. The two seem often identified, "inwards, at an even higher level of consciousness"[54], as if inwards required *actual* consciousness.

Perhaps, it is only a minor technicality in need of a proper interpretation, but it seems to harbour the fundamental conflict of Kierkegaard's, of which the tension between the

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[50] C. Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*. XIX:171. ("limited" meaning appointed, fixed definitely.)

[51] S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:C.B.b.α.1

[52] Ibid. I:C.B.a

[53] Ibid. I:C.B.a

[54] Ibid. II:B

intensity of actual consciousness and the passivity of the spiritless (bourgeois) is only an epitome. "But despair is exactly man's unconsciousness of being characterised as spirit.[...] Most people live without being properly conscious of being characterised as spirit – and to this one can trace all the so-called security, contentment with life, etc., which is exactly despair."[55] We are unable to share the gnostic oppositions of such classifications. Spirit is most *present* where it least appears. Being 'properly conscious' of anything is no goal of life, neither is seeing desperate involvement in every world involvement, especially in the secure and content one. Sure, one can attempt a bit sharper interpretation, giving more plausibility to this opposition. But we think it is unnecessary because what counts in Kierkegaard's, as in any other philosophy, is the fundamental mood, the fundamental truth which it elaborates in all possible forms. The mood of Kierkegaard is that of a dramatic tension, yeah, of a prophecy arising from the opposition to the neglect and disrespect shown by the world, by "the small market town", to the higher, spiritual things. There may certainly be a tension between the two elements, but spiritualising consciousness makes it into an unbearable contradiction. The result seems quite a bit unhealthy, especially, if we take into account that "[h]ealth is in general to be able to resolve contradictions."[56] Kierkegaard is the unresolved contradiction between the two poles: an individual, free spiritual existence and the world, sunk into impersonal spiritlessness. If you like, it is the contradiction between the self, founded in the relation to God, and God himself, whom the self can not reach through mere consciousness. Whichever form, we do not want to end in the same point. If the world is an enjoyable place of comfort and (why not? aesthetic) content, then the goal is not to leave it. And if the world is impersonal, inauthentic, despairing, then the goal is not to leave it, either. One lives in *this world*, and the fact that its platitudes and spiritlessness can sometimes feel discouraging does not mean that spirit lives somewhere else. If it lives anywhere, it is only in the midst of *this world*, not perhaps *in* its *dissociated* things and spiritless activities, but between them. Such a depersonalised world, such deindividualised people as existentialists, following Kierkegaard, used to describe are "inventions or lies", for people appear so only when viewed through the requirements of plain *visibility* and transparency. The opposition of a reflected personality to the stupefying noise of mass-media or narrow-mindedness of a market-town does not extend to the contradiction between spirit and spiritlessness, nor that between faith and sin. One's world is one's soul, and accusations against it turn out to be self-accusations.

Consciousness of despair can certainly intensify the despair, but despair can also reach quite deep levels without active consciousness. We have emphasized that deepening of despair is, at the bottom, an *invisible* process, and realising it consciously is only an additional possibility – certainly complicating but not necessary. It is unnecessary because one always somewhat, in the depth of *irreflective self-awareness*, knows one's *spiritual* condition. One knows it because despair makes a tremendous difference. One knows it because one lives it. This is not knowledge of *reflective* consciousness, fully realising what's going on, whence it comes and whereto it leads. This inability of *actually* seeing (what it is, whence it comes, perhaps even that it occurs and, in every case, how to cure it) deepens the despair as long as one remains attached to *visiblity*. But it contains also the germ of revival, suggesting that the possibility of healing does not lie in the autonomy of *reflective* consciousness. We will return to this point in 3.1 but first we generalise the observations on despair to all attempts which, trying to quench the *thirst*, only deepen *alienation*.

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[55]Ibid. I:B

[56]Ibid. I:C.A.b.β

2 Spiritual No

Despair is a form of *alienation*, of turning *nothingness* into nothing or, what amounts 20.
to the same, being cut off from the *origin*. It is the 'ontological' *separation* carried to
the 'epistemic' extreme of *dissociation*. But this 'epistemic' mistake affects the whole
'ontology' for in the sphere of *spirit* there is no distinction between being and knowing. The
form of *confrontation* is the *confrontation* itself, and what and how it is lived determines
the 'ontological' character of what it encounters. The ultimate emptiness, apparently so
abstract and irrelevant for *here-and-now*, once it finds the site in the depth of one's being
will only spread further and further down, putting gradually more and more regions under
its spell. Whether it experiences itself as evil, or only finds evil in its experience, it is a
seed from which more evil arises. For even if evil is at the bottom lack and negativity, it
is lack which propagates and grows, it is negativity which universalises itself.

Alienation is the substantialisation of *thirst* which, unable to maintain the positive –
even if impossible, *object*less and hence unimaginable – character of its intention, abso-
lutises the negative character of the experience as absence, as a mere lack. Despair may
for quite a long time remain in a suspension as to its character – as suffering, and hence
an evil experience which, however, need not be an experience *of* evil. As long as it re-
mains so suspended, it is suffering but it does not become evil. Renouncing the impossible
possibility of exit, it ceases to suffer. But it ceases to suffer only because it ceases to feel
and know, only because it has now turned its suffering into impossibility of liberation, into
the ultimate *alienation*, that is, evil. Despair need not be evil though, in the moment it
begins to re-cognise evil behind its suffering, it is on the way to become it itself. Every evil
expresses this *alienation* which, unable to stand the suffering, begins to *experience* it as
a substantial entity and objectifies it as 'evil' (cause, person, accident, life, world). Thus,
distancing itself from it, it becomes also distanced from an *aspect* of its life and, at the
bottom of it, from its source. Evil, we might say, is suffering which became substantialised
in an attempt to escape it.

Unquenched *thirst* brings pain and pain, just like suffering, is a great danger; it can infect 21.
the *soul*.[57] "A hit with a hammer into the head can damage the soul." The one who is
suffering asks all the questions of Job's and, eventually and inevitably, asks "Why?". Left
without answer, one grants *oneself* the right to accuse the surroundings, other people, the
world – for undeserved suffering, for neglect, then for injustice, for immorality and, finally,
for evil. "I did not deserve this! It is evil!" And who are you to know what you deserve
and what you do not? Whatever the accusations, at their basis lies *No* which having all
the reasons (bad rather than good, but seemingly sufficient) to blame and accuse, becomes
hate. Hatred is not an irrational, unjustified feeling without reasons. As anger, according
Seneca, it hardly ever occurs without reasons and, typically, it has plenty of reasons for
its own justification, it "does necessarily presuppose an injury, either done, or conceived,
or feared." It only "proceeds to the resolution of a revenge, the mind assenting to it."[58]
But hatred, again like anger, "passes the bounds of reason, and carries it away with it"
or, as we would say, it is an expression (one of the strongest ones) of *alienation*, of the

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[57]"Pain" can be here taken to refer generally to all kinds of what is often called "natural evil" – physical
pain, sickness, natural catastrophes, etc. Hardly any of the following formulations would require change
if we interpreted it this way. We do not draw rigid distinctions here, but "suffering" is meant in the more
fundamental sense, as the personal – whether physical, emotional, moral or spiritual, whether only felt or
also lived and deeply experienced – pain, without any consideration of its causes.

[58]SenecaAbs [after A. O. Rorty, ed., *The Many Faces of Evil*.]

negative separation from the hated *object*, person, the other, the alien, which caused my pain. Then, when the "why?" does not find any satisfying answer, and one is unable to stop dwelling on one's pain, the granted hatred may embrace the whole world.[59]

Suffering which does not disappear grows. Time heals only wounds which have ceased to cause pain. But even a negligible pain, if it lasts, becomes a constant element of one's life which can affect deeper and deeper levels of one's *soul*. Initially it may affect only the *actual* situation which one is able to face with all the vitality and *actual* strength. One may gather one's strength and say "It hurts but I can stand it". And sometimes it works. But if it does not... One can not distinguish clearly one's *soul* from one's *world*, nor one's *world* from *this world*. A suffering *soul* sees only suffering which, if unchecked, spreads over the whole world.

22.   We do not have to list examples of how pain experienced by children may deform their personality. But we should keep in mind that such a pain is not necessarily a child abuse, a sadistic attitude of the father, or any other plain form of violence. A molestation, minor annoyances, tokens of indifference or undeserved blame, when confronting a sensitive *soul* may be experienced as deeply hurting and painful. A mere negligence, or else, high demands and expectations, when not compensated by the overall atmosphere of love, underlying care and understanding may constitute painful experiences. A mere presence of a child at a scene of a humiliation, revile, deception, ravishing, even of a simple quarrel between adults may cause enough pain.[60]

23.   Evil is primarily a reaction – a reaction which seems justified but which is neither controlled nor even realised. The first form of love – because it is also the form of *thirst* – is the need to be loved. Evil is born between men from the lack of love but also, and primarily, from pain caused often without any intention, as if by accident. Yet pain, even suffering, need not be evil. It becomes so when one rises a wall of defense against the 'evil world', against all the forces which bring suffering, when suffering begins to *alienate*.[61]

There are innumerable ways of causing pain and of suffering, and it would be futile to attempt their classification. It would be futile first of all because, obvious as some of such ways might be, we do not know them all and we can not know them – it is not a matter of any general classification, but of the *concrete* attention paid to all the *aspects* of the *actual* situations. There are no *objective*, *visible* criteria not only for what, in more subtle cases, may constitute a painful experience, but, above all, not even for what consequences inflicted pain may have. An unsatisfied need of a crying baby may turn out just an insignificant accident, but also a first suggestion of a lack, on which later disappointments will grow; an aggressive sentence stated carelessly to the spouse, may happen to be ignored by a child accidentally present in the same room, or else it may hit the most sensitive core of its

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[59]Self-pity is, in fact, also an expression of *alienation*. Pitying itself, it dwells in *attachment* which is underlied by the image of 'the evil world', the 'evil' which is out there, against which it is impotent.

[60]The director Robert Wilson, in cooperation with an anthropologist, conducted a film analysis of a situation mother-child: the child is crying, the mother lifts it. Split into 300 frames sequence displayed unexpectedly that, in the first phase, the mother reacts aggressively and that the child responds with a complex of movements and sounds expressing fear; only then the actions of the mother become caring and protective. The woman did not want to believe that. Wilson's conclusion: there are subconscious «frequencies of contact» below the globalising level of words, exchange of signals so minute that they can be brought to the surface only by an analysis in slow motion. [after K. Wolicki, *Convictions of the theatre of counterculture (2)*.]

[61]Although it is common to consider suffering an evil, we will not identify them without further ado. Suffering is *experienced*, one would be tempted to say, an essential aspect of human life, while evil is only a conclusion drawn from suffering, posited behind it, as possible as unnecessary.

understanding; a misunderstood joke may become a mortal offense.

There may be far from such events to evil but, like all *actual experiences*, they too penetrate gradually the soul's *virtual* depths. Evil emerges at first as a mere consent to evil, perhaps only ignorance of it, and it emerges from such 'misunderstandings' – it is born between men, but it is born *into* them.

2.1 Privative evil

Emptiness of eventual *alienation* is not anything one chooses for its own sake. At first, it is perhaps only an irrelevant annoyance, a slight threat, then it becomes terrifying, and eventually becomes a horror, *horror vacui*. Nothingness is not anything one chooses at all, for it lies far *above* the sphere of possible *actual* choices. To begin with, "Nothing is a thirst for Something,"[62] as Böhme says. Not knowing what this 'Something' might be, it is at first only a search, a search for 'Something'. The *soul*, even the infected *soul*, does not want anything evil. It only searches for something it has lost. But missing 'Something', missing 'Something' to believe in and to rest on, turns gradually *thirst* into despair and suggests that, perhaps, there is not much to search for. This early stage of nihilism – not knowing what to believe[63] – may still have all the signs of innocence and undeserved suffering. But it may also, and more typically it does, appear in a variety of forms determined by the still functioning *idol* (all *idols* are also forms of *alienation*): as egocentrism, as a self-satisfied activity (which negates all that does not serve its goal), as amiable aesthetism of Dorian Grey (whose soul rots in the closed room), as an American-dream hero (who only occasionally must visit his psychoanalyst), as an obedient functioning of a scrupulous clerk (accidentally, working in a concentration camp).

Anonymous and impersonal evil grows on the passivity of such a nihilism. XX-th century has taught us the lesson of the most impersonal workings of evil; as Hannah Arendt described, it is the mere failure to reflect which accounts for the impersonal banality of evil. Satan does not any longer visit individuals the way Mephistopheles visited Faust; he remains invisible and unheard, appears only now and then as a hardly identifiable, even if remarkable, person. He acts, as Woland in Bulhakow's *Master and Margarita*, kind of *incognito*, impersonally, through other executioners, and only the final results show to the public that devil must have been involved. He is no longer a psychologist but a sociologist, perhaps, a politician.[64]

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[62] J. Böhme, *Mysterium Pansophicum*. I

[63] And barely suspecting that nothing can be believed. It was called "passive nihilism" in L. Landgrebe, *Zur Überwindung des europäischen Nihilismus*, and in W. Kraus, *Nihilismus heute oder Die Geduld der Weltgeschichte*.

[64] Another powerful image in modern literature was drawn in reference to the society suffering equally and from the analogous disease as the communist Moscow afflicted by Woland. Visiting Leverkühn in T. Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, XXV, devil enters as a petty individual of a very dubious appearance and social status, but even this personal, or rather impersonal trait changes several times during the conversation, suggesting the presence, as effectual as imperceptible, throughout all the layers of the society and culture. In 1995 French theologian summarises: "Satan's greatest success in modern times is replacement of the direct activity – arising the fear of the devil – by an organic, imperceptible, and hence tranquilising activity, which penetrates the social texture without noise, devoid of the signature of the prince of this world, run by his agents occupying appropriate, strategic positions." [R. Laurentina, *Satan, a myth or reality?*. p.118] In spite of the catholic insistence on the personal and concrete being of the devil, his workings appear quite impersonal: "We know well that this dark, destructive and disquieting being really exists and acts, preparing against us sophisticated traps meant to destroy the moral balance of humans." [Paul VI, 1972, in *Report on the State of Faith*] But this depersonalisation of devil, his dissolution in impersonal forces,

Evil of this lowest, most impersonal, but for this reason also the most global kind, is not anything one chooses but something one participates in, it is 'greater than me'. It is unintentional, unwilled, perhaps even well meant – a "force which would do good ever yet forever works evil". This fact, that it happens as if in spite of *me*, through *me* but not by *me*, illustrates the aspect of *alienation* almost at the psychological level. Persons affected by Woland become like machines: not because they suffer from some depersonalisation disorder, not because they merely *feel* detached, not because they cease to think and lose the ability to choose, but because the world, taking away their possibilities to act and influence it, has become foreign, evil. They get involved into situations created completely behind their back, which they can only continue acting without a slightest possibility of exercising any influence on further development.

25.   Evil of many socio-political systems of the XX-th century left the astonishment: "How can it be possible?" Humans seem to do all that, but it is inhuman; nobody wants that, and yet it happens: "all I know is that there is suffering and that there is none guilty."[65] The impersonality of this evil seems to leave all human beings innocent. Only the defective social organisation carries responsibility for it. From there there is only one step for the intellectualism of a sociological provenience to conclude that 'subject must be dead'. Human 'subject' could not possibly effect cruelty, murder and torture on such a broad scale. "It was not me! I did not want it, and hence I did not do it! Nobody wanted it, hence nobody did it!" Unfortunately, all that happened, and so this petty human 'subject' is apparently so insignificant that it must be declared non-existent.

Even if *subject* has never been more than a dead abstraction, so human person is as alive as it always has been and one is as responsible for one's acts as one always have been. The removal of human subject amounts only, willy nilly, to postulating an analogous center of subjectivity at the level of society, stimulating the search for the hidden mechanisms and structures of power, control and degradation. But no matter how much agency one manages to ascribe to the impersonal forces of cultural formations and socio-political systems, transferring one's responsibility to them only deepens *alienation*.

26.   Involvement into impersonal evil takes the form of participation which happens beyond, and even in spite of, any 'subjective' choices and intentions. But it still needs some necessary conditions which here happen to be the participating individuals. *I* participate in evil which is 'greater than me'; *I* do not have control over its full strength and effects, *I* contribute only *my* small part to the totality which happens to be beyond every single among the involved individuals. Nobody controls it and yet it happens! Perhaps, we should revive the notion of collective responsibility (as it was done after both World Wars).

In its passive, privative form, evil can appear everywhere, but it will grow only in certain conditions of axiological passivity. Although it never lives fully in any individual, it is always among us, if not *actually* then only *virtually*, germinating. But *virtuality* is already

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is at least as old as the modern nihilism. Devil appearing to Ivan Karamazov is a completely average person, an anonymous member of middle or lower class. In the 1830-ties, Aloysius Bertrand can see devil penetrating every corner of the social system: "He argues in the Parliament, leads a defense in the Court, plays on the Stock Market."[after G. Minois, *The Devil*.VI:2] Depersonalisation was then but another side of the romantic acknowledgment and justification of devil (Clavinhac, Byron, George Sand), followed by the apparent rendering him harmless in the truly naive (even if powerful) socio-positivistic spirit of Hugo's *La fin de Satan* or Balzac's *Melmoth réconcilié*. His powerful return in the beginning of the XX-th century tells something about the price of such optimism.

[65]F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*.   Ivan to Alosha in II:V.Pro et contra:4.Rebellion [The Grand Inquisitor]

fully real, and when it starts blooming, it may bring forth fruits which are surprisingly and incomparably more sour than the seeds from which they have grown. The shock of the XX-th century is not madmen like Stalin, Mao or Pol Pot, but the legions of common people who carry out the most inhuman operations – the more inhuman, the higher are the *idols* who bless their actions. The terrifying inhumanity of the genocide on the native Americans is not embodied by the people like Ltn. Colonel George Custer, U.S. Cavalry soldiers from Wounded Knee Creek, from Bloody Island or other places of Indian massacres. On the contrary, it emerges through the apparently positive developments (exchange of goods, expansion of the missions) and, eventually, even underneath the genuine and honest attempts to repair the damages, best wishes of people like John Collier (Roosevelt's chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs implementing "New Deal" for Indians) – the inhumanity of the genocide whose mere scale excludes any personal guilt, but which continues *in spite of* the increasingly good intentions or bad conscience of the guilty ones.

Even if we subtract, in all such cases, the expected amounts of private gain, of personal will to power and money, of resentment and revenge, we are still left with legions of . . . 'normal people' participating in global evil. (Unfortunately, we are dealing with 'normal people' even if we do not subtract anything.) They are legions because to participate in this evil is so easy, almost natural: just obey the orders, or do your job, or sometimes, do not pay too much attention.

It seems that we thus encounter . . . the original sin, or at least its possible variant. We 27. could certainly refer to the above paragraphs to counter the unreserved claims of Pelagian flavour that human can freely choose goodness which is in his power and that sin (as a cause or result – or both – of evil) is the matter of every individual. It is in one's power to *actually* decide, or rather only admit, that one wants something which is good, that one "thirsts for Something", but one's power ends about there. "They want good but effect evil, for they know not what they do." As desire for good, and even genuinely good character, is fully compatible with it, this original sin is not an "innate sinful depravity of the heart", it is not a moral category appealing to personal consciousness and making it *visible* "that the soul of man, as it is by nature, is in a corrupt, fallen and ruined state,"[66] that his "whole nature is a seed of sin; hence it can be only hateful and abhorrent to God."[67] We certainly do not want to get all too puritan or revivalist. In a strange way, it is the sin which anchors individual in the community, the sin which is as if committed only by the community, and therefore one in which everybody participates.[68] It is impersonal evil

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[66] J. Edwards, *Original Sin.* I:1.1; I:1.3

[67] J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion.* [after A. O. Rorty, ed., *The Many Faces of Evil.* p.121]

[68] As this sin apparently gathers (while evil divides) and as it is not something intended nor actually willed (while "[t]here can be no sin that is not voluntary" [St. Augustine, *On True Religion.* XIV:27]), the followers of St. Thomas would call it a sin only in an analogous sense, only a shadow of sin properly so-called. Participation in sin implies responsibility for it, and this is the whole and only sense of its 'voluntary character' in the present context – for one is responsible for everything one participates in, even though no *actual* willing is involved and no *actual* responsibility can be imputed.

In the older and more traditional societies, the same idea seems to have been present as the fear of pollution with correlative craving for ritual purification. Pollution results from 'unclean' actions but can also become infectious or hereditary. (Thus, for instance, there seems to be no signs of such infectious or hereditary transmission of *miasma* in Homer, but in the Archaic Age it became both and was accepted as such to the Classical Age. Plato would still debar from religious or civic activities those who had voluntary contact with even slightly polluted person, until they have been purified (*Laws*, 881DE).) Such involuntary, uncontrollable and almost mechanic workings of pollution suggest equally mechanic purification which develops from simple forms performed by laymen in Homer to advanced rituals of *catharsis* in the Archaic Age.

which spreads among individuals merely *thirsting* for 'Something'. It grows and effects results which might not have been intended by anybody, for which no particular person *actually* carries full responsibility. Yet, everybody is responsible for it, so we might say that the original sin is one which no individual commits, but for which every individual is responsible.

Just like the lowest level of despair is characterised by the lack of any knowledge thereof, so the one (that is, everybody) affected by the original sin hardly ever realises it, never meets its efficacy in the *actuality* of one's consciousness, and consequently hardly ever confronts any *actual* choice related to it. One may still live the ethos of one's parents, family, nation, one may still be active in valuable ways, yet one is already exposed to the *unclarity* of values and *concrete* decisions. One is not evil – on the contrary! Many of Hitler's willing (and unwilling) executioners were decent citizens. Good family fathers were tools of the most inhuman evil.

28.   Lack of any evil intentions, however, is not sufficient to disclaim responsibility. For the inhumanity of all socio-political evil is nourished by the *idols* who enter the stage as the promises of quenching the *thirst*. Dostoevsky notes in his Notebook: "In fact, we were the nihilists, we in the constant search for a superior idea." *Privative evil* spreads by not being recognised or not being opposed actively enough. But this passivity in the face of it is only another side of the active support given to the *idols* who, promising *visible* goals one may even be able to accept, take on the character of the ultimate good. It amounts always to trading the *invisible* 'Something', the ultimate object of *thirst*, for some actual goods and values. And even if the latter are recognised as not being the highest and ultimate ones, so having replaced the latter, they become *idols*.

Studying mere psychology and analysing mere individuals will hardly ever give the full concept of this form of evil except, perhaps, as a demonic force overcoming individuals with irresistible power and taking possession of their *souls*. For it is anonymous, it only sneaks between humans through their 'misunderstandings' – on the local, personal, or else on the social scale. These two, apparently opposite poles (of personal and social interactions), share the same element of unintentional, non-voluntary, we could almost say, natural emergence of evil. Its germs may appear without anybody noticing. We do not know all the conditions under which *thirst* becomes lack. In the traditional language, the natural predisposition to the emergence of evil, the appearance of evil between humans in spite of their natural *thirst* for God, was called "original sin". But although its sources may lie outside the individual control, its growth is possible only when individuals attempt to quench the *thirst* substituting *visible idols* for its *transcendent* object.

2.2   Negative evil

29.   Just like the transition from despair to the despair over despairing may be hard to observe, so the transition from not knowing what to believe to not believing anything may be imperceptible. This most negative stage of nihilism marks also a more personal level, for the experience of the all-embracing emptiness, erasure of all *idols*, acts also as a painful individuation principle. Detachment from *this world*, independent and splendid isolation, is the figure of its dubious hero.

It should not be necessary to repeat all the stories and analyse various forms of meaninglessness and boredom, nausea, insensitive irritability, strangeness, remoteness, foreignness which have been thoroughly described by writers from Hölderlin and Hebbel, through the

Russians like Turgieniev, Gogol, Dostoevsky, to Sartre, Camus, Beckett...Personal disintegration of the heroes of this tradition is the evil of *alienation* reflecting the metaphysical emptiness surrounding them and the world in which they live. As there is hardly any *distinction* between *me* and *my world*, the emptiness of the latter results in the dissolution of the former. And this is no paradox that emptiness causes dissolution, nor that the indissoluble person disintegrates. For dissolution is exactly the *alienation* of *actuality* from the *self* and it is effected by the emptiness which sneaks in between the two, which, anouncing the emptiness of heaven, *dissociates* it from earth. In *actual* situations one can observe alienation from the world, from the surroundings and other people, but these are only consequences, only *visible signs*.

The common theme underlying this process is the sense of unreality. First, the *invisible* becomes unreal (for only what is *visible* is real), then the world around *me*, losing all sense and meaning becomes unreal, too, and finally, even *I myself*, *my* whole life become unreal.[69] This sickness to unreality is but another face of the despair over one's own despairing. It, too, is self-strengthening, for once started it can only spread until it embraces the whole world. And once completed it, too, offers no exit, for having embraced everything, having turned everything into unreality, it has left nothing 'real outside'.

The emptiness of heaven, nothingness of *invisibles*, marks a deep *alienation*. In terms of evil, it is its loneliness reflected by the internalisation. Evil walks alone, in spite of its possible activity it is introvert, self-directed; it acquires the character of privacy which is only another expression of the progressing *alienation*. 30.

But it may be unclear what is being called "evil" here. Evil seems to happen to the affected person who is suffering all these calamities rather than contributing to them. Is such a person evil? Hardly. He seems even less evil than the ones passively accepting it – he only suffers it and can appear as a tragic hero. Yet this suffering has a malicious element of acceptance, just like the second stage of despair was only despairing over one's own situation. He is in a grasp of evil which is much stronger, deeper and more penetrating than the passive, *privative evil. Reflectively*, he may oppose it, yet the *alienation* has progressed further, has reached a higher, that is, deeper level.

But he himself does not cause any *alienation*, he does not spread evil! Or so, at least, one would like to see it, believing that one is responsible only for one's voluntary choices. Does he really not spread evil by going around (or, for that matter, closing himself 'inside') and being so deeply affected by it? Evil brought against oneself is in no way better than evil brought against somebody else.[70] Yet, *he* did not bring it over himself, it happened *to*

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[69]H. Rauschning, *Masken und Metamorphosen des Nihilismus* describes 3 stages of post-Nietzschean nihilism with the last stage being characterised by the whole reality becoming unreal (albeit, in his case, as a consequence of the fall of the *idol* of collectivism which defines the second stage). Rilke: "I really did build my own house and everything that was in it. But it was an external reality and I did not live and expand with it. [...] it does not give me the feeling of reality, that sense of equal worth, that I so sorely need: to be a real person among real things." [L. Salomé, *You Alone are Real to Me*. Letter from Rome, 1904, p.45] In this close association, if not *equipollence*, of the sense of unreality and *alienation* – from oneself as much as from the world and others – "when others feel themselves understood and totally accepted, I feel prematurely torn from some sort of hidden place." [Ibid. Letter from Oberneuland, 1905, p.60] Gombrowicz's works, starting in the 30-ies, far from being nihilistic, give nevertheless an excellent description of this aspect of unreality, where nothing is itself any more, where even "the Fear itself is but a Fear caused by the lack of Fear", and where the only "wish of my soul is: that something would Happen." [W. Gombrowicz, *Trans-Atlantic*. p.88/114]

[70]Killing oneself is in no way 'better' than killing another. Not because it is worse, but because there is no sense in such a comparison. Whatever effects *alienation* is evil, and whatever is evil is so irrespectively

him! He needs help, not accusations! But – everybody may need help and nobody needs accusations. We are not accusing anybody. And we admit that it may be a tantalising thought that one serves evil in the midst of opposing it; that one is responsible for it only because *it* happened to find a site in one's soul; that one is guilty by a strange accident, which accuses one of evil in the middle of the fight one leads against it. Unfortunately, every fight witnesses to the *presence* of an adversary. And when the adversary is in *me...*?

Deep suffering, hopelessness, and despair over hopelessness, are ways of being affected by evil and, at the same time, of answering to being so affected. The one suffering is not, of course, evil but he is exposed to a trial in which evil can enter his soul. Prolonged suffering can lead either to *externalisation* of evil as some devilish power responsible for exposing one to it, or to recognition of one's responsibility – not, perhaps, for any voluntary acts and evils but for one's imperfections. Either choice deepens *alienation* and hence increases evil. "When a man truly Perceiveth and considereth himself, who and what he is, and findeth himself utterly vile and wicked, and unworthy of all the comfort and kindness that he hath received from God, or from the creatures, he falleth into such a deep abasement and despising of himself, that he thinketh himself unworthy that the earth should bear him, and it seemeth to him reasonable that all creatures in heaven and earth should rise up against him and avenge their Creator on him, and should punish and torment him; and that he were unworthy even of that. And it seemeth to him that he shall be eternally lost and damned, and a footstool to all the devils in hell, and that this is right and just and all too little compared to his sins which he so often and in so many ways hath committed against God his Creator."[71] The legalistic or pietistic bias of such self-depreciation, according to which suffering witnesses to guilt, is indeed evil consuming one's *soul*.

31.   Although hardly chosen (not to mention voluntary choice), this form of *existence* partakes of evil. And to participate in evil is to be affected, even consumed, by it (even if we won't say that it is to *be* evil). This is a deeper level of being a victim, perhaps, a victim of plain violence. Exposure to violence does not, by itself, make one evil. But it poses before one choices which strengthen the possibility of saying *No*: the arising will to settle the accounts, perhaps the conviction of right to exercise unmitigated revenge, perhaps to nourish hatred. The *alienating* power of the sickness to unreality, not to mention exposure to suffering, lies in strengthening the tendency to pollute with the appearance of evil not only particular situations but the world. The whole world, the *quality* of human life as such can appear as evil or as originating in evil. Looking for the the reasons responsible for one's suffering, unreality and *alienation*, stops typically by finding ones – and they are evil! The next step, from seeing evil around oneself to choosing it, is even smaller than that from pitying the miserable fate of X to hating Y who caused it.

2.3   Active evil

32.   As we have learnt from Nietzsche, there is a difference between not believing anything and believing nothing. One struck by the *negative evil* lives the fact that there is nothing, no

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of whom it affects. Degree of evil may be, *vaguely*, associated with the degree to which it *alienates*, but then again, irrespectively of the affected person.

[71] *Theologia Germanica*. XI. The exclusive emphasis of this aspect would be a bit one-sided (it is probably one of the most 'Lutheran' passages in this work discovered by Luther), but the description applies well to other forms of this stage. Stavrogin, for instance, says in his final letter: "I know that I should kill myself, erase myself from the surface of the earth as a harmful insect." [F. Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*. III:8.Epilogue]

God, no sense, that questions about meaning are not only unanswerable but ultimately empty... But not finding anything, one can still resist the decision that there is nothing. It is, indeed, possible to balance on the edge of this apparent contradiction, but it is very difficult. The more intensity in the attempts to retain the balance, the stronger the force dragging one towards the conclusion which only confirms the actual situation – there is nothing 'outside', only emptiness, void.

As Dostoevsky observed, if there is no God, then everything is allowed.[72] The lived emptiness breeds nihilism all the way down – nihilism, that is, the lack of any criteria, the total 'freedom', 'freedom from...' or, what amounts here to the same, meaninglessness (for since every meaning carries with it a 'threat' of external authority, total 'freedom from' can appear only as arbitrariness.) And the more devastating consequences it has in the lower, *visible* sphere, the greater the chance for the conclusion that there is nothing and that one should draw some consequences of this 'fact'. It is impossible to exit for there is only emptiness 'outside'. So *I* must obviously stay here, in the middle of this emptiness, but *I* can, for that matter, *act* – true, towards things and situations which became immersed in emptiness, which lost all their significance and importance, but which still offer all the *visible* material for *action*.

"Naught" means both 'nothing' and 'evil' (as in "naughty"). Tradition associating evil with 33. negativity utilised also the distinction between mere lack, privation, and negation. The former, privation could be read as negation of something particular, of an individual thing, and then *negativity* would correspond to a total emptiness, negation of Being as such. Our *privative* evil has little in common with the former, but we retain *negativity* more or less in this form. In either case, it was difficult to see any positive activity in evil, since it was merely an ontological lack, a pure non-being. It was a non-substantial negation, incapable of any action emptiness. "For evil is the absence of the good [...] But only good can be a cause [...]"[73]

Eventually, we will perhaps follow this tradition but we should not, for this reason, forget the active character of evil. Emptiness is not necessarily physical annihilation and destruction, but *alienation*, the spiritual emptiness of heavens, *nothingness* which became void. The *No* which declares this ultimate emptiness expects some *visible* cash in exchange (as one used to say, selling one's soul.) Evil has a tendency and power to grow and spread. It does not help calling it "negation", "lack" or "emptiness", because these may seem empty and inactive only when taken abstractly. But evil acts *in* human soul, consumes and corrodes it. This corrosion may be viewed as a gradual negation, but it does not make it unreal – it is a deterioration and increasing *alienation*. The fact that the final result is negative emptiness does not mean that the process which led to it was equally empty and non-existent. Evil becomes *active* when it reaches the *spiritual choice* of *No*, when it declares that there is nothing 'outside', and when having thus annihilated the sphere of *invisible*, it turns to what is left – *acting* in the *visible world* to compensate for, or else to revenge, the *invisible* loss *above*. This evil is not only capable of action, but could be almost defined by it, as opposed to the two kinds we have considered before. "Evil, be thou my good: by thee at least//Divided empire with heaven's king I hold" – these are words

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[72]"[I]f you have no God what is the meaning of crime?" [F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov.* , II:Bk.VI:Ch.3 [Father Zossima]] "[S]ince there is anyway no God and no immortality, the new man may well become the man-god, even if he is the only one in the whole world, and promoted to his new position, he may lightheartedly overstep all the barriers of the old morality of the old slaveman, if necessary." [F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov.* , IV:Bk.XI:Ch.9 [Ivan's Nightmare]]

[73]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica.* I:q49.a1

of a resolute (even if defeated) being determined for action. This is resoluteness of the ultimate resignation. Accepting the defeat and impossibility of reconquering paradise, it turns away from the emptiness and directs its activity to all, and only, *visible world*. *Satan sum et nihil humanum a me alienum puto.*[74] *Active evil*, the evil of active *No*, apparently leaves the passivity of negation (to which it was merely exposed) and decides to *act*, to take its damned fate into its own hands, and turn it into whatever it chooses, that is, into whatever it is able to. For "to be weak is miserable" while "To reign is worth ambition, though in hell://Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."[75]

34.   This decision is not, at least not primarily, any *actual* decision. It is an *invisible* event which starts plaguing the *soul*. *Actual* decisions, like all the psychology of evil, are only *reflections* of the *invisible No* which, in turn, is *thirst* for 'Something' culminated in the resigned conclusion that this 'Something' is nothing.

Now, there is no question about the *psychological* possibility of being motivated and attracted by some evil. Such a possibility may be inexplicable for the psychology identifying the good with the desired, but it certainly obtains. *I* can be attracted to some evil not only because "there is a certain show of beauty in sin", but also because *I* desire it for its evil's own sake. Augustine recollects: "The malice of the act was base and I loved it – that is to say I loved my own undoing, I loved the evil in me – not the thing for which I did the evil, simply the evil."[76] But does it mean that our *activities*, the whole life, does not, after all, go on *sub specie boni*? Discussing detailed goods and exemplifying attractive force of detailed 'evils' may merit descriptive correctness. But behind every *actually* willed evil there hides a *non-actual motivation*, as one used to say, a disposition of the *soul*. And just like *soul* may consent to something it does not want,[77] so man may live *sub specie boni* and yet choose evil, even for its own sake. "For he certainly desires to be blessed even by not living so that he may be blessed. And what is a lie if this desire be not? Wherefore it is not without meaning said that all sin is a lie. For no sin is committed save by that desire or will by which we desire that it be well with us, and shrink from it being ill with us. That, therefore, is a lie which we do in order that it may be well with us, but which makes us more miserable than we were."[78] Preferring and choosing evil for evil's sake is possible at the level of *actual* will, but it is a result, a *reflection* of both the *original thirst* and its misunderstanding, of the *invisible No*.

35.   History knows many examples, people like Nero, Gilles de Rais[79], Billy the Kid, Marquis de Sade, whom we would like to classify as pathological cases, assign them appropriate labels and shut in a cabinet with horrible curiosities. But they provide examples of spiritual deterioration which, irrespectively of their actual causes and context, reveal an inherent possibility of human *existence*. And every single example of a human being illustrates the potential of being human, the potential which can find its expression also in other humans, of which, at least in principle, every human being is capable. Intelligence of de Sade makes

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[74]"I am Satan, and deem nothing human alien to me." [F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov.* IV:Bk.XI:Ch.9 [Ivan's Nightmare]]

[75]J. Milton, *Paradise Lost.* I:157; 262-3

[76]St. Augustine, *Confessions.* II:4 [More recently, similar point is made for instance in M. Stocker, *Desiring the Bad....*]

[77]"There are also people who entirely regret being drawn into consenting to lust or into an evil will, and are compelled by the flesh's weakness to want what they don't *want* to want. Therefore, I really do not see how this consent that we don't want is going to be called "voluntary" [...]" [P. Abelard, *Ethics.* 33-34]

[78]St. Augustine, *The City of God.* XIV:4

[79]G. Bataille, *The Trial of Gilles de Rais*

his texts express with particular clarity most points we want to make. In particular, he declares his choice of *No* with exceptionally self-conscious determination. We will follow him for a moment, but only in order to arrive again to the point that *actual* wanting of evil is only a *reflection* of the inability to want anything else.

"[I]t is not the object of libertine intentions which fire us, but the idea of evil, and [...] the greatest pleasure is derived from the most infamous source."[80] Or, the same fascination with transgression, expressed in a slightly different way: "beauty belongs to the sphere of the simple, the ordinary, whilst ugliness is something extraordinary, and there is no question that every ardent imagination prefers in lubricity the extraordinary to the commonplace."[81] Such an 'ardent imagination' finds its inspiration in the low and the ugly, in their variation and manifold which, negating everything *above* and 'outside' the horizon of their plain *visibility*, can only attempt to intensify its narrow contents. "It is the filthy act that causes the greatest pleasure: and the filthier it be, the more voluptously fuck is shed. [...] the more pleasure you seek in the depths of crime, the more frightful the crime must be."[82]

As sadism became a label for something one might even be willing to call a particular "sickness", one might also be less willing to consider it evil. Such labels serve the general tendency of reliving the conscience and ensuring everybody that it was not his fault. But if evil happens to be nobody's fault, it only means that *everybody* is guilty. In case of "sick" people, like de Sade, there should be little doubt. Sickness is not necessarily evil nor is it necessarily making one evil – but as every pain and suffering it can do both. (Pain, sickness, deformity, as natural associates of evil are consistently symbolised by all hunchbacks, deformed sorcerers and ugly witches in fairy tales.) However, if one acts evil, it does not matter much whether it is because of some experienced pain, sickness or unhappy childhood. As there are no sufficient reasons, no amount of negative experience ever justifies evil. Usually, it functions only as a better or worse excuse. Actual evil is evil, whether the person causing it had happy or unhappy childhood, whether he is healthy or sick, whether he suffered much or not. Evil is the impossibility of justification, therefore it always looks for excuses.

One can attempt a justification by the 'truth' of the impressions arosen by inflicting pain 36. and, in the last resort, by referring our propensity to evil simply to our 'nature'. "Certain souls seem hard because they are capable of strong feelings, and they sometimes go to rather extreme lengths; their apparent unconcern and cruelty are but ways, known only to themselves, of feeling more strongly than others."[83] Strength and intensity of feelings work as a sufficient excuse for de Sade, in fact, as the highest good itself. Following such impulses is only to follow the nature. "We are no guiltier in following the primitive impulses that govern us than is the Nile for her floods or the sea for her waves."[84]

The felt intensity may be very true. But its untruth lies in the narrowing of the whole reality to its momentaneous *immediacy*. One searches for moments, moments of sensation which could fill one with the stimulating experience. These, at least, offer undeniable 'truth' of their intensity, which seems to fill the emptiness. Stavrogin still complains "Here I liked to live least. But even here I was unable to hate anything. [...] I may desire to make a good act and it causes me pleasure. But just in a moment I desire an evil

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[80] D. A. F. de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom*. The eight day
[81] Ibid. Introduction
[82] Ibid. The seventh day-The eight day
[83] D. A. F. de Sade, *Fragments*. Last Will and Testament
[84] D. A. F. de Sade, *Fragments*. Aline and Valcour

one and feel equal pleasure. Both this and that feeling is as always too flat, and I never desire strongly."[85] De Sade has his answer: "True felicity lies only in the senses, and virtue gratifies none of them."[86] It is the intensity of a momentaneous sensation which appears as the most gratifying, the most true element of experience. And the highest intensity can be found in pain. "[W]e are much more keenly affected by pain than by pleasure: reverberations which result in us when the sensation of pain is produced in others will essentially be of a more vigorous character, more incisive, will more energetically resound in us [...] hence pain must be prefered, for pain's telling effects cannot deceive, and its vibrations are more powerful."[87] "Pain, be thou my good" is but another version of the motto we have extracted from Milton's Satan.

37.   "My manner of thinking, so you say, cannot be approved. Do you suppose I care? A poor fool indeed is he who adopts a manner of thinking for others! My manner of thinking stems straight from my considered reflections; it holds with my existence, with the way I am made. It is not in my power to alter it; and were it, I'd not do so."[88] Strangely enough, this might almost sound plausible ... but not when spoken by *this* person! It should be easy to discern behind these words the deep loneliness of *alienated* individual. "All creatures are born isolated and have no need of one another."[89]

    Alienation is a break in continuity – first, continuity between *actuality* and its *origin*, then continuity with others and the world and, finally, continutity of time, of this moment with other moments. Having turned away from the *invisible*, there is only one possibility: to embrace and conquer the *visible*. "What is remote is no longer important, only yesterday; and tomorrow is more than eternity."[90] Without the continuity with the *origin*, *this world* shrinks and begins to disappear, becomes first mere *actuality*, *more actuality*, even *more*, until it reaches the limits of *immediacy*, and threatens with disappearance in emptiness of a single moment from which it is rescued only by the intensity of the momentaneous feeling. And as it withdraws, one can only look forward to the next one. A moment devoid of the element of eternity becomes a desperate expectation of the next moment. Intensity is, we could say, a noetic counterpart of such a noematum 'moment'. Intensity tries to dissolve in this noematic correlate, and failing – tries again. The intensity searched for is also the impulsivity emanated, and as the moments become more and more intense, they also fall apart, each becomes its own universe of intensity collapsing inward, and giving rise to an impulse arising from nowhere. Acting from an impulse has often been associated not only with unreasonable lack of control but with evil – evil which surprises, is unpredictable, emerges suddenly. The word "impulse" carries the meaning of application of sudden force but also, even if only secondarily, of a suggestion coming from an evil spirit. For "evil is

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[85] F. Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*. III:8.Epilogue

[86] D. A. F. de Sade, *Fragments*. Aline and Valcour

[87] D. A. F. de Sade, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. Dialogue the Third. (Masochism might be here considered only a variation on the same theme as sadism. 'Morally', perhaps, more acceptable than the latter, it expresses the same desperate yearning for irrefutable *immediacy* of 'truth', pain or pleasure, the same deterioration of the *soul*. Masochism and sadism affect often the same person and vary depending on the 'balance of power' with the actual partner.)

[88] D. A. F. de Sade, *Fragments*. A letter to his wife.

[89] D. A. F. de Sade, *Fragments*. Aline and Valcour.

[90] L. Salomé, *You Alone are Real to Me*. Rilke's letter from Oberneuland-bei-Bremen, July 25, 1903, p.44. We are, of course, not equating Rilke's poetical resignation and de Sade's vital intensity. The difference between the two can be seen as the difference between the *negative* emptiness embracing the soul of the one and the *active* evil chosen by the other. But the latter's choice responds to the processes described also by the former.

unstable"[91] or, as Kierkegaard says, "the demoniac is the sudden". Demons wake up not when reason is asleep but when it has nothing higher to strive for, when it loses itself in the insatiability of *more* and *more* – *precise*, definite, intense, ecstatic. . .

Active evil is the most personal – in the sense, 'individualised' – form of evil. This 'indi- 38.
viduation', however, has nothing to do with the uniqueness of individual *existence*, only with the transgressive and *alienating actuality* of its *acts* and *activities*. It 'individuates' by losing all individuality, it grants *actual* moments, *visible* sand corns in exchange for the *invisible* reality and *origin* of its sense. It 'individuates' by erasing the person of its carrier – a sinner becomes eventually nothing but a substantialisation of evil, the place where its negativity unfolds its active *presence*. This 'individuation' through *actual* choices, distractions and intensity, apparently filling and overfilling every moment, is only an *inverted* form of the underlying emptiness.

Consciousness, as before, has little to do with any significant aspects. One hardly ever says *reflectively* and explicitly "Evil, be thou my good". At most, one may *actually* repeat this after it has been said in the depth of one's soul; after long time, when most of the consequences became *visible* and one finds it impossible not to accept them. Here, as elsewhere, the *actual subject*, the *reflective* consciousness becomes affected by the *invisible*. It loses all meaning of its contents, and then also all the contents, except, perhaps, for the most *visible* elements of natural necessities. Eventually, consciousness, too, dissolves in the emptiness which has eroded the whole being. *Active evil* does not any longer try to escape this unfortunate, undeserved, unjust fate – living this inability it only seeks to avenge itself and through revenge *alienates* itself only more and more.

2.4   Human, impersonal

Let us gather some common elements of these levels of gradual growth of evil.

We said "believing in something", "believing in nothing". Such formulations did not concern, 39.
at least not necessarily, any *actual*, reflectively pronounced beliefs. As usual, *reflective* consciousness does not matter much – it only registers by *dissociating*, *reflects* something which is there already. Evil is never willed for its own sake; even if extreme suffering perverts one's soul to the point of *actively* choosing evil, it is still only a helpless reaction or, as the case may be, hope that at least *this* will be some good.

It arrives unwilled, from unregistered and unrecognised meanings of one's acts and words, from 'misunderstandings' which prove hurtful, from depersonalised rigidity of humans turned clerks, from impersonal heights of socio-political system It is born between men but it is born into them. An individual may attempt, and often even succeed, to check his evil predispositions, but he is hardly ever guaranteed that evil emptiness won't ever affect him. On a larger, social scale, emergence of evil is simply unavoidable, and the only thing we can try to do is to moderate its strength and scope. The unintentionality of evil, underlying these unpleasant observations, was termed the "original sin".[92]

The unintentional and impersonal (as one might also say, generational and collective 40.

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[91]Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*. IV:23. One can also say "that vice is a weakness of the soul – pointing out that the bad soul is easily affected and easily stirred, carried about from one evil to another, easily stirred to lust, easily roused to anger, hasty in its assents, giving way freely to confused imaginations." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. I:8.14]

[92]'Original sin' is not meant to *explain* the appearance of unintended evil (we do not explain anything) – it is only a term of description.

rather than individual) character of the original sin does not in any way abolish human participation in it. 'Killing the subject', dispensing with it (in the name of impersonal forces of power, capital, social mechanisms), does not make any amends. It may give valuable analyses of some condemnable phenomena of social, political or economic life but it does not improve understanding of evil. It only apparently relieves the participants from the sense of responsibility.

Evil is an event of human life and without humans there would be no evil. We have ignored all kinds of natural evils which one distinguishes from moral evil. We are certainly not justified in ignoring such an important aspect. But we do not classify objective appearances, only *experiences*. Many things happen due to natural processes, and some of them have more or less devastating consequences for some humans. Yet, we would not only refrain from distinguishing them as natural evils, but even from calling them "evils". For evil calls for a justification (which is impossible), while a storm or an earthquake do not – "catastrophes are innocent."[93] It is either the infantile idea of some omnipotent Being with good will and *actual* intentions, or else of an ultimate objectified meaning, eventual *telos*, which might suggest looking for any 'justification' of this platitude. Natural disasters, like diseases, call for strength to put up with them when nothing can be done, and for inventiveness in preventing them. Calling them "evil" is like getting offended on the world for not pleasing us.

41.   Evil is maintained only in humans, it requires a human, though this might appear as a mere consequence of its understanding as *alienation* from the *origin*. We could probably suggest that it constitutes the *differentia specifica* of the human species: to be capable of evil. There is a strong tendency to see only innocence in all the cruelty of the living nature; a predator, an animal killer is not evil – how could it be?! – it is a survivor. It is impossible, or in any case naive, to transfer such observations to the world of humans.

Although we do not place evil in nature but only in humans, it does not mean that it becomes human. Affecting human being, it remains thoroughly impersonal. It is almost instinctive to view an 'evil man' as invaded by some foreign force, some elemental power which, however, only oppresses and corrupts his soul. As *privative* evil, this foreignness amounts to literal *externality* of the evil forces acting in spite of one's good intentions and will. As *negative* evil, it is a force which overcomes individual, often without much warning and without giving any account. As *active* evil, it is but a defeat of an individual confronted with the force which, being 'greater than him', drives him to empty heavens and seek refuge exclusively among the *visible* achievements. In all cases, the effect of this force, which is adversary and foreign, is experienced as various degree of *alienation*.

Whether an evil socio-political system, whether Woland who never argues but only commands, or else Mephistopheles who appears in person to discuss with Faust, the force which is brought forth is not *mine*, does not belong to *me* nor, for that matter, to *my self*. It is impersonal, because its strength does not flow from the *original* site of personality. On the contrary, its constitutive feature is exactly that it prevents *me* from regaining this site. It 'individuates' by breaking continuity, by *dissociating* heaven from earth and thus *alienating* and isolating. Loneliness, like foreignness, is an *actual* image of *alienation* which follows evil even in the midst of the thickest crowd. This loneliness is *alienation* from the *origin*, the loss of the personal center, and thus the opposite of the unique individuality of *existence*. Participation in evil, submission to this impersonal force, amounts to veiling the *self* under the cover of some *idol*, 'selling one's *soul*' for *visible* cash.

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[93]Z. Herbert, *King of the Ants*. Cleomedes

If we were to personify such events, we would ascribe evil the *intention* of becoming *visible* (its surrogate for *concreteness*), which it achieves by invading a human soul and, through it, overcoming its own impersonal abstractness. A person of active *No*, but also a sinner who approaches the deeper layers of emptiness, is a substantialisation of evil; a substantialisation which proceeds gradually, as the emptiness embraces the soul and finds its *visible* expressions, but which never becomes complete, which never reaches the goal. For the goal would be, as it always is, to reach the very center of Being, to achieve the ultimate justification by meeting the *origin* – this, however, is the exact opposite of evil. The ultimate, *invisible* site of evil is not in the center of Being, in the *origin*. For it is exactly *alienation* from the *origin*, *alienation* of *myself* from *self*, which is evil. Thus, "evil always lessens good, yet it never wholly consumes it; and thus, while good ever remains, nothing can be wholly and perfectly bad. Therefore, the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 5) that "if the wholly evil could be, it would destroy itself"; because all good being destroyed (which it need be for something to be wholly evil), evil itself would be taken away since its subject is good."[94]

The impossibility of reaching the *absolute*, the lack of *concrete founding* in the *origin* is alienation.[95] Allow us to call such a continuity of Being, the *concrete founding* in the *origin*, "*justification*". Then evil as *alienation* is exactly the lack and impossibility of *justification*; it is what can not be *justified*.[96]

42.

This impossibility finds its expression in the exclusive directedness towards the *visible world*, which becomes the sole source of motivation and explanation – the substitutes of *justification*. Soul infected by evil keeps trying to fill the expanding emptiness; it keeps *thirsting* for *justification*, for "the desire for the bliss, which she had lost, remained with her even after the Fall."[97] *Justification*, however, can only come from *above*, while evil – seeing *nothing above* and declaring it to be void – must produce it itself. All it is capable of producing are arguments supposedly explaining the attitudes it develops and actions it performs; explaining, that is, demonstrating that this is actually right, natural, or even necessary, thing to do. Being the lack of *justification*, evil always tries to explain, that is, excuse itself.

We have mention an attempt of self-justification by reference to the 'human nature'. "We are no guiltier in following the privative impulses that govern us than is the Nile for her floods or the sea for her waves." Most generally, such attempts amount always to pointing to the actual existence of evils in the world. They may display rare ingenuity in the search for evil, so that eventually nothing remains which would not appear affected by it. A "good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."[98] Using some evil as a justification of anything is dubious, if not directly dangerous, for a step from there to justification of more evil is invisibly small. A rigid moralist defends the world against all evil which lurks behind people's back, without them noticing it. As a matter of fact, he only tries to defend himself against his progressing *alienation*. But finding evil in all corners of the universe and human

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[94]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. I:q49.a3

[95]We are not, of course, speaking about any *actual* grasp on the *absolute* which is missing. (An *aspect* of evil is to both deny the *absolute* and grasp to as something *visible*.) "Reaching the *absolute*" refers to the continuity of being, *existential openness* to the *other world founding* steadiness in *this one*. It has nothing to do with epistemic, nor other *actual*, pretensions. We will return to this aspect.

[96]J. Nabert, *Essay on the Evil*.

[97]J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*. IV 777C-D

[98]Mt. XII:35; Lk.VI:45

soul, this defense only strengthens the adversary. It multiplies evil instead of diminishing it – multiplies it at least in the soul which sees it everywhere and forgets "that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him."[99] A profound moralist, whether of a revolutionary or pietistic flavour, will often turn out faultlessly cynical in his *actions*, which no longer aim at the person but only at the evil hiding behind. And thus, "[i]n morality, man treats himself not as an «individuum» but as «dividuum»."[100]

Evil used as a justification only increases the need for more evil and when it does not find it, it produces it. "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."[101] Eventually, "people who are completely debased find pleasure exclusively in other people's unhappiness." The ways in which evil spreads are innumerable, so we only notice its general tendency to expansion, if not to self-strengthening, which begins with 'seeing evil around' and which serves as the means of supposed self-justification.

43.   This ability to expand and pollute all *visible world* around, to universalise itself in the impossible search for *justification*, characterises the activity of evil. Now, the long tradition used to deny being and, consequently, also any activity to evil. St. Thomas' argument should be both sufficiently representative and detailed: "A thing is said to act in a threefold sense. In one way, formally, as when we say that whiteness makes white; and in that sense evil considered even as a privation is said to corrupt good, forasmuch as it is itself a corruption or privation of good. In another sense a thing is said to act effectively, as when a painter makes a wall white. Thirdly, it is said in the sense of the final cause, as the end is said to effect by moving the efficient cause. But in these two ways evil does not effect anything of itself, that is, as a privation, but by virtue of the good annexed to it. For every action comes from some form; and everything which is desired as an end, is a perfection. And therefore, as Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv): "Evil does not act, nor is it desired, except by virtue of some good joined to it: while of itself it is nothing definite, and beside the scope of our will and intention.""[102]

We have agreed to the last point, namely, that evil is willed only as a good, as a misunderstood good. The second point seems to be left rather uncommented, but it refers probably to the fact that efficient cause must be a being, and as such it is good (we will return to this point shortly). Formal causality, mentioned first, does not seem to worry St. Thomas as any real activity. Probably rightly, for there is not much 'real causality' in it. These Aristotelean causal schemata do not appeal to us any more and, today, we would not consider a subsumption of an instance under a general concept as any form of causality. But this is all St. Thomas is willing to grant evil: it acts (causes) some evil in the way whiteness makes white. Yet what hides (or at least, can be found) in the sterility of a formal cause, seems often to be the most real process of *actualisation* of the *virtuality*.[103] Evil in which I participate, which *alienates me*, is capable of *actually* expanding this *alienation* – both within *my soul* and, through *my* evil *acts*, in the world. Once *present*, it tends to grow. "Whatever we nourish within ourselves, that grows: this is the eternal law of nature.

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[99] Mk. VII:18

[100] F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*. II:57

[101] Mk. VII:21-23

[102] Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I:q48.a1.r-o.4

[103] We have commented it in Book I, beginning of subsection 6.1, §115-§115. Otherwise, 'whiteness of a white thing' was dealt with under the discussion of *concepts* and supposed 'essences' in II: 1.2.2.

There is within us an organ of dislike, of dissatisfaction, just like an organ of enmity, of suspicion. The more we nourish and exercise it, the greater it becomes, until it eventually turns into a terribly overgrown tumor which devours everything around, swallowing and annihilating all life-giving juices."[104]

This is the main meaning of the claim that evil acts – left for itself it may, perhaps, eventually, effect its own self-destruction, but in the meantime it will try to infect everything in its vicinity. *Thirsting* for *justification*, it explains itself by finding its like around. True, it always requires *me* to be around, as a tool; all its activity must pass through *my actuality*; everything it possibly can do, it can do only with *my* hands. Yet, it acts, that is, *actualises* itself, for after all, *I am not the master*. It unfolds like a hermeneutical spiral of self-elaboration: from the *virtual*, impersonal and *invisible* seeds, which mature and ripen unnoticed, to the eventual consequences, deterioration, *visible* dissolution and emptiness. The uprising of Satan, his fight against the good, finds place in heaven – the earth only observes the consequences.

This emphasis on the active element of evil may be a mere subtlety which does not reflect   44.
any significant disagreement – we follow closely the tradition which sees evil primarily (though not merely) as negativity. Indeed, we do. There is, however, another aspect of this tradition which is harder to accept.

"[N]o Thing is contrary to God; no creature nor creature's work, nor anything that we can name or think is contrary to God or displeasing to Him, but only disobedience and the disobedient man."[105] "Disobedient" or, as we would say, *alienated*. St. Thomas does not stay behind that in optimism. "Every being, as being, is good. For all being, as being, has actuality and is in some way perfect; since every act implies some sort of perfection; and perfection implies desirability and goodness, as is clear from a1. Hence it follows that every being as such is good."[106] According to Pseudo-Dionysius, "evil hath no being, nor any inherence in things that have being. Evil is nowhere *qua* evil; and it arises not through any power but through weakness. Even the devils derive their existence from the Good, and their mere existence is good."[107]

Common to all these variations on this Neoplatonic theme is the Aristotelian opposition between act and potency which coincides with that between perfection and imperfection and, eventually, between good and evil. Thus, everything which *actually* is must, so it appears, be good. Devils, perhaps, in so far as they *exist* are good, too. But what about a torture dungeon? It might have arisen "not through any power but through weakness", though St. Thomas would probably still argue that there is some perfection, actual power, in the mere fact of its actualisation. But even in the tradition which sanctified Aquinas, one can state that "evil is not only a lack of good, but a living and spiritual being, though one who is deprived and depriving."[108] Any thing, say a house, may be bad as this particular thing, it may be a bad house, but still, in so far as it *is*, its very existence, is good. But it does not seem possible to argue such a case! A concentration camp is evil and it is not an evil which merely deprives some substantial good – the very *fact* of its existence is evil,

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[104]Goethe

[105]*Theologia Germanica*. XVI ["God is the supreme existence, that is to say, supremely is [...] Consequently, to that nature which supremely is, and which created all else that exists, no nature is contrary save that which does not exist. For nonentity is contrary of that which is. And thus there is no being contrary to God, the Supreme Being [...]" [St. Augustine, *The City of God*. XII:2]]

[106]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. I:q5:a3.

[107]Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*. IV:34

[108]Paul VI, in *The Ratzinger Report*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Vittorio Messori, 1985

its very existence is evil. Evil not only "inheres in this thing which has being", in fact, it constitutes its 'being and essence', for except for being evil, this thing is nothing, without being evil, this thing would no longer be itself. It won't help to claim that its buildings might have been used for other purposes; it won't help to blame the formal, nor even the material causes for the evil which accidentally inhabited this essentially good being – it is evil through and through, including all the involved engineering perfections. It is the more evil, the more such perfections it involves! The fact that it got *actualised* won't help anybody to claim that somewhere, at the bottom, it must be good – it can only indicate that not only there is no equivalence between, but not even any implication from *act* to perfection, from *actuality* to goodness. The mere actuality, the mere fact of the existence of Birkenau must be very "contrary to God and displeasing to Him."

45.   That "every being, as such, is good", that "[t]hings solely good [...] can in some circumstances exist; things solely evil, never, for even those natures which are vitiated by an evil will, so far as they are vitiated, are evil, but in so far as they are natures are good,"[109] that every *actualisation* as opposed to a mere possibility is good – this other side of the face which sees evil as a mere negation, which "by the name of evil [signifies] the absence of good" – can not, possibly, stay unmodified. [110]

Speaking abstractly, evil is a negation, but negation of what? For certainly, negation is not evil, that is, it is not always evil. In our setting it is negation of the *origin*, negation which turns *nothingness* into emptiness, which thus berefts the *existence* of its fundamental character of *confrontation*, negation which *alienates myself* from the *self*, and then, from others and all the world. In the derivative sense, everything which leads to and strengthens *alienation* is evil, too.

As the *confrontation* with the *origin* is *existence*, we may consider it as such, as *existence simpliciter*, to be good. But this does not entail that its negation, non-*existence*, is evil. Not because it must be wrong but only because we do not know what that possibly could

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[109]St. Augustine, *The City of God*. XII:3

[110] And this not because something particular happened with Auschwitz, Stalin's collectivisation or Khmer Rouge regime which would require re-evaluation of anything. The only special thing about them is that they happened recently. If any comparisons were allowed, one would have to admit that the fate of native Americans witnesses to evil much more powerful, long lasting and, eventually, more successful and hence more terrifying than the relatively brief, even if horrifying, excesses of Nazism. (The fact that it has been perpetuated by the countries which, at present, possess enough power even to adjust the official definitions of the terms like "genocide" in order to exclude their own case, is at most of only political relevance. [W. Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*]) Many peoples disappeared not due to some processes which we might find excusable and understandable in historical terms, but as a consequence of intentional policies applying the most advanced technologies of the time for systematic extermination of other peoples. Describing his expedition against Damascus, the Assyrian king Shalmaneser II records: "I desolated and destroyed, I burnt it: 1200 chariots, 1200 horsemen, 20.000 men of Biridri of Damascus; 700 chariots, 700 horsemen, 10.000 men of Irhulini of Hamath; 2.000 chariots, 10.000 men of Ahab of Israel [...]" The expedition found place in 854BC., and similar boastings can be found on clay tablets and in chronicles ever since. That numbers are probably exaggerated does not change the fact that the mood and intentions are not. Extermination in battles does not change the fact of extermination, but people were more systematic than that. Assyrians of the Second Empire (after Tiglath-pileser III, 745-727BC.) are the recorded inventors of mass deportations of peoples with the object of breaking down their national spirit, unity and independence. Thus ended the existence of Hittites, whose wealth and trade passed into the hands of the Assyrian colonists after the fall of the capitol Carchemish in 717BC. Romans were certainly not exterminators yet, was it merely their systematic warfare which left only residual rests after Celts who once populated most of Europe? Systematic neighbours left no traces after 'christianisation' of Jatwingians, Prussians (the original Baltic people, not the Teutonic Knights and German settlers who claimed their place and name), Slavic tribes like Polabians, Abotrites, Liutizians, etc., etc., etc.

mean. What is "non-existence"? Is it the total lack of any *existence* whatsoever, the total lack of life? We certainly feel that things are better with life than without and agree that extermination of life would be evil. But if life had never appeared? It is hard to judge contrafactuals, especially ones with conditions excluding the very possibility of judgment. But it is also hard to imagine what inherent evil would be in the total *indistinctness*. So, would non-existence be the non-existence of Pegasus? Of a person we could imagine to exist? Unless one identifies the distinction evil-good with potentiality-actuality, there is no ground for claiming that things would be better if all our fancies had material existence. So, perhaps, existence of a person who has died would be good as opposed to the fact of his death? Death of a close person is a painful experience. But considering the suffering it involves to be evil is, besides getting again offended on the nature for not pleasing us, to protest against the very character of *existence*, that is, to restrain *existing* itself.

Evil is *alienation* – it is that which inhibits *existence* in *existing*, which breaks the continuity between *actuality* and its *origin* and thus prevents their *confrontation*. But this inhibition is not the same as the flat and abstract negation. *Alienation* amounts, so to speak, to closing off *existence* within some horizon, putting an artificial – typically, though not necessarily, *ivisible* – limit to its otherwise *open* unfolding towards its *origin*. It is a special kind of negation, a special form of it, and this specificity suggests to the language the word "evil", in addition to the mere "negation". *Alienation* makes (parts of) the world and life foreign, puts them 'outside' the border which becomes the absolute division line between *mine* and *not-mine*. In the psychological terms, it amounts to absolutisation of *mineness*, if not to a straightforwards, self-occupied egotism. It reflects the inability to find anything but emptiness *above* the *visible* goals. In the more objectivistic terms, it amounts to closing the very possibility of access to some fields of life, making such an access *principally* impossible. It is often enforced by external prohibitions raised around particular, *visible* areas. *Alienation* is the resulting incarceration which, specific differences notwithstanding, breaks the continuity with the surroundings, the *open* and free flow of the contents arising only from the eventual *origin*.

The specificity of this negation is that it does not negate flatly *existence* but, rather, the *open existing*. It is primarily concerned with *existing* and not merely (that is, generally) with all being. "Indeed, our vices or sins, which are what are properly to be called evils, are unable to exist except in souls – that is, in good creatures."[111] One can hardly be evil towards dead things. One's destructive tendencies towards them may, at most, indicate some *alienating* processes going on in one's *soul*, but these are only *signs*. One can be evil towards living organisms (which fall under our generous definition of *existence*), though here, too, the judgment will often see the *signs* of potentially greater evil. What seems most appalling in the image of a person molesting an animal is not only the pain he causes but the question "What must be going on in him? What a rotten person he must be!" Eventually, evil affects only human being, "yet it never consumes it." Things solely evil cannot exist in so far as evil is the accident of human *existences*. These – *and only these* – are, in so far as they *exist confronting* the *origin*, good.

In the derivative (and this does not mean metaphorical nor weaker) sense, things can be evil to the extent they serve evil. But unlike *existence*, things (and also *acts*) can be wholly and totally evil. That "evil always lessens good, yet it never wholly consumes it" applies to the *existence* which is affected by evil but is never totally underlied it. For evil is but the limitation of *existing*, the *alienation* from the *origin*, which indeed is never complete.

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[111]P. Abelard, *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian.* II:§401

Things, on the other hand, or generally anything *actualised*, when *dissociated* and locked within the *horizon of actuality*, can become dead *signs*, epitomes of mere evil and nothing more. The problem with 'things' like concentration camps is that even a slightest attempt to look for anything good in them is inappropriate, if not directly detestable. They not only served evil purposes (while, perhaps, they could have served others) – their mere being is purely evil, as they epitomise nothing but the strength and depth of evil which corrupted the humans who invented and utilised them. They are thoroughly evil because they have no *rest above* the pure evil of their purpose, and of the *precision* in its execution – they are *actualisation* of nothing but evil. "[A] corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."[112] But while a corrupt tree can, sometimes, recover, its evil fruit, once it has fallen on the ground, can not.

46.   The short history of mankind, according to Anatol France, is: "They were born, they were suffering, they were dying." But the fact that all kinds of 'evils' are a constant element of human history, and every individual human life, that "ye have the poor always with you,"[113] does not entail the conclusion that "it is good for any evil to exist, although nevertheless no evil is good."[114] Such a conclusion is motivated by a series of postulates, the most important among which are that, for the first, "everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created,"[115] then that all such causes converge in one common cause and, finally, that such a cause is itself good or for some other reason creates only good things. But we have replaced 'cause' with *virtuality* and 'causation' with *actualisation* through *existence* – the connections between the last effects and their first origins are neither so plain nor so *visible* and they may get corrupted at every stage. We can, nevertheless, discern the powerful *existential* call in the claim that existence of everything, even of evils, is good. It translates into a call to *openness*, *humble* acceptance of every particular as something, at its bottom, if not at its surface, good. In so far as this aspect is concerned, we are in full agreement. Also, such a *concretely founded* acceptance does in fact lend all the things the element of goodness, of *participation* in the *origin*. But such a goodness does not apply universally and unreservedly; it is not any fact of mere ontology which one can discern in the matter of the objective world if only one analyses things thoroughly enough. It, just as its opposite, is an *existential* possibility.

2.5   Attachment

47.   Despair and evil are basic forms of *alienation*, of broken continuity of *traces* which no longer lead to the *origin* but stop short of it. *Alienation* results from denying the originarity of the *origin*, from the fundamental *spiritual choice* of *No* in which Psyche, following the doubts sown by the oracle and her wealthy sisters, not only prepares to kill but actually succeeds in killing her heavenly husband, Eros, whom she has never seen.

   The *choice* is *spiritual* because, for the first, it is not made by *me* – it is made *above me*, but also *for me*, so that *I* carry all the consequences, as well as full responsibility, for it. There is, indeed, nobody to blame, and looking for excuses leads nowhere – psychology

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[112]Mt. VII:17-18
[113]Matt. XXVI:11
[114]P. Abelard, *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*. II:§412
[115]Plato, *Timaeus*. 28a

may know about suffering or sickness of the soul, but it knows nothing about damnation. For the second, the *spiritual* character amounts to the *absolute* objectlessness of the *choice*. It is not directed towards anything whatsoever, whether *visible* or *invisible* – it is lifted *above* all *distinctions* and directed towards *nothing*. *No* turns this *nothingness* into mere emptiness, total void, lack. It says: "there is no exit, because 'outside' there is only void", "there is nothing in *nothingness*", or perhaps, "*nihil ex nihilo*". This refusal, the denial of the *foundation* in the *invisible origin* of *nothingness* is a *nexus* of several denials.

Denying the *invisibility* of the *origin* amounts to the claim of self-sufficiency. Things 48. are *visible* and there is nothing which, at least in principle, could not be appropriated, embraced by the *actual* look, grasped by the *actual* power of our faculties. It is *I* who decide and control, *my life* is entirely the matter of my choices. The exclusive directedness towards *this world* denying *that I am not the master* and attempting to reduce everything to the *visible* and controllable can be called "*pride*".

Freedom, in its negative form, is an aspect of *pride* in that *No* turns *nothingness* into emptiness and thus does not recognise anything which might be *above*. It is freedom to arrange the *visible world* entirely as *I* find it appropriate since, at the bottom, it is just the freedom from any higher *commands* which might be understood as limitations of *my* free will. The absolute autonomy, the absolute self-government of the *I*, the absolute freedom from ... is possible only as a reflection of ultimate emptiness.

If *I* am something, *I* am in particular the source of *my* actions and achievements. And 49. certainly, *I* am, but here there is more to it – *I* am the *only* source of all that. So *I* am the master and there is no reason for any indefinite *thankfulness* which, as a matter of fact, would actually offend my dignity. Since the *visible world* of *mine* is all that is, there is nobody to be *thankful* to, and nothing to be *thankful* for. On the contrary, there is a lot to be blamed, as whenever some evil makes itself effective. It is always *unclear* what actually is to be blamed, whenever one pronounces a *general idea* of the inherent evil, or at least, malice of the world. As with most *general ideas*, it ends as a mere statement of 'the fact' which only reflects a *quality* of one's life. This statement is, too, an *aspect* of *No* – let us call it "*ingratitude*".

Nothingness surrounding everything is a mere void, while *this world* is here, that is, out 50. there, in a very definite, objective sense. What it is is not easy to say, and the most natural intuition is that it is all that is *visible*, the *totality* of all things, facts, people. These facts and things, having at most some causes but no *origin*, are *experienced* as given; the variety of *visible distinctions* is found with the unmistakable stamp of being there, being ready-made.[116] This certainly offers an inexhaustible field of possible inventiveness but, in the *spiritual* sense, it is a *closed* – because dead – world. It does not invite to unconditional acceptance of whatever one might meet but, on the contrary, to separating and *dissociating* – things from things, people from people – to searching for and selecting only what is agreeable. Although such a world is open, in the sense of indefinite flexibility, the givenness of its building blocks, the Sartrean 'in-itself' of its 'hard facts' and, primarily, the abyss of emptiness surrounding it, mark it by a kind of rigidity and stiffness – let us call this *aspect* of *No* "*closedness*".

Pride, ingratitude, closedness are but *aspects*, only a few *aspects* of the *spiritual No*. 51.

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[116]Heidegger would say 'ready-at-hand', though he would all too definitely identify that with technical manipulation. Sartre might say that they are 'in themselves' – things turned into dead *objects*, even others enslaved by the restless freedom of 'for-itself'. It is this extreme possibility we are intending here.

As the fundamental reduction of the ultimate *invisibility* to emptiness, it amounts to self-centeredness or – what is here a synonym – world-centeredness. *Attachment* is *No* to the ultimate *origin* said through the *exclusive* directedness towards *this visible world*.

No does not necessarily signify hatred, nor evil, nor despair, though it eventually manifests through such forms. *Attachment*, with all its *aspects*, is a *spiritual* attitude, that is, addresses *nothing* (even if it is not directed towards it) and does not imply any unique ways of *actual* being and thinking. It is not necessarily evil nor despair, it is not necessarily egoism nor egotism, it is not even necessarily selfishness. It may involve unselfish *acts* and attitudes, but the very fact of their being unselfish reflects the underlying *attachment* to the categories of *mineness*. One may truly attempt to reach beyond *oneself*, to establish and live according to some unselfish principles. One may – and, indeed, one often does – make absolute claims. But this absoluteness inevitably degenerates into a mere universality, a crude subsumption of all thinkable instances. *Visible world* is what is *below me* and *I* am *my life*, *my life* is *my world* and *my world* is *myself*, II:§66. The two can not be dissociated: attention to *myself* happens already within the horizon of *visibility*, and preoccupation with the *visible world*, in whatever form, involves *myself*. Narrowing the attention exclusively to *this world*, *I* narrow it to *myself*. Whether *I* do it in a selfish or unselfish mode may make a difference to adolescent psychology or sterile ethics, but *spiritually* both – and, first of all, the very opposition itself – amount to *attachment*.

The names of manifestations of *attachment* are "plenty" and easy to imagine. We therefore only sum them up in saying that *attachment* is the pattern of all *idolatry*, *absolutisation* of the *visible world* or some of its elements.

3   Spiritual Yes

52.   In a Sumerian myth (written down at around 1750 BC.) Inanna, the queen of Heaven and Earth (or else, the goddess of love, fertility of nature and war), "from the Great Above opened her ear to the Great Below", to the moaning call from her sister Ereshkigal, the goddess of the Underworld. Descending to the Underworld, Inanna is on the way stripped naked of all her clothes by the servant of Ereshkigal. After 3 days in the Underworld, she returns helped by her dedicated servant and a cunning plan of the god of Wisdom and Water, Enki, which seems to fool moaning Ereshkigal. (In some versions, to leave the Underworld, "she must provide someone in her place", and the one is Dumuzi, her husband, the Shepherd or the Lord of the Sheepfolds, ensuring fertility and fecundity, who now has to leave the world for the half of every year.)

The theme of the descent and the challenge of facing nakedness, isolation, helplessness, recurs frequently in later Indo-European mythology. Looking for his way back to Ithaca, Ulysses descends to Hades, Orpheus visits the house of shadows to regain his love Eurydice (who however dies again on the way back, because of Orpheus' turning around against the prohibition of Hades), Heracles was granted immortality on the completion of the 12-th labour – capturing Cerberus, the guard dog of Hades (whom, on the god's command, he had to defeat with bare hands).[117] Paradigmatic (though written down only in the second century AD. by Lucius Apuleius) is the story in which Aphrodite, in her attempts

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[117]For our purposes, the Underworld can be considered synonymous with hell, though more detailed distinctions and comparisons are easily possible. In order to keep analogy, we won't count Elysium, the Isles of the Blest, as part of the Underworld, while Tartarus, the place of ultimate punishment, should certainly be included.

to annihilate Psyche, orders her to fetch some water from Styx and then even to enter the Underworld and obtain a piece of beauty from Persephone. Only successful completion of these tasks (with some help from Eros) leads to the final recognition of Psyche's right to her divine husband and the grant of immortality.

Among other variations, involving additional aspects but still centering around the same theme of temporary isolation before renewal or rebirth, we could mention the common motif of the child who, threatened by the envious ruler, is led by the mother to a seclusion or remote country.[118] Sometimes, the future hero is abandoned in the mountains,[119] or else placed in a boat or chest which, put adrift, reaches safely some shore far away from the civilised dwellings and where the hero is helped and reared by modest people or even animals.[120] Likewise in the myth known already to the Sumerians and Hittites, the deluge, sent by God as a punishment and for the purification, is survived in the isolation on the ark only by a few God-chosen ones.[121] A less dramatic variant is that of being hanged – as if suspended, in a thin air, in a state of isolation and helpless awaiting for relief or enlightenment, as in purgatory. Jesus' death on the cross was but the first stage before descent. In Tarot, the Hanged Man is the card signaling a state of solitude and submission to divine will, suspension between the forces of heaven and earth and sacrifice bringing mystical knowledge and redemption. Odin had hanged head down from the World Tree, Yggdrasil, for nine days, pierced by his own spear, thereby acquiring sacred wisdom, learning nine magical songs and eighteen magical runes. Scholars not willing to see in this Norse myth merely a garbled version of Christ's crucifixion, point out other related motifs: in shamanism, climbing of a World Tree by the shaman in search of mystic knowledge is a common religious pattern; sacrifices, human or otherwise, to the gods were commonly hung in or from trees, often transfixed by spears.

We certainly do not intend any review of mythology nor any elaborate interpretations. 53. Hanging in the air may have vast structural differences from surviving a deluge, while we only want to see in both the aspect of isolation and complete imerssion in the elemental power. We do not want to see the descend and rebirth as identical with, nor even as related to the cycles of nature, the eternal return of the seasons. We see it purely *existentially* – rebirth is not a cyclic event of nature, but a unique possibility of *existence*.

We want to see all the above as examples of the same pattern: the *necessity* of a lonely descent to the Underworld, of surviving the flood (locked in a chest or ark), of temporary isolation in the air – in order to revive, to obtain the ultimate reward, enlightenment, salvation. "Christ's soul must needs descend into hell, before it ascended into heaven. So must also the soul of man."[122] This often postulated necessity, the assumption that the way to paradise must lead through hell, causes us some trouble. Although suffering plays a fundamental role in the development of a person, it does not follow that also hell is necessary. This necessity seems to arise only when the ultimate reward has the character of enlightenment, is somewhat associated with knowledge. The knowledge-thirsty Odin hangs himself from Yggdrasil exclusively for the sake of sacred wisdom; gnostics, equating salvation with insight, have to go through the evil world only to renounce it. Al-Ghazali

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[118]E.g., Abraham according to the midräsh *Ma'ase Avraham*, in *Bet Ha-midräsh* I:25ff.; Jesus.

[119]Paris; Oedipus; Cyrus the Great (who, according to the legend in Herodotus, *The Histories* I:108-113, was not so abandoned only thanks to the disobedience of king's executioners.)

[120]Moses; Romulus and Remus; in some versions Oedipus.

[121]Utnapishtim from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the first man Manu from the Vedas, biblical Noah, Greek Deucalion.

[122]*Theologia Germanica*. XI

makes this relation to knowledge very clear: "For were it not for night, the value of day //would be *unknown*. Were it not for illness, the //healthy would not enjoy health. Were it not for //hell, the blessed in paradise would not *know* the //extent of their blessedness."[123]

3.1   Being and knowing

54.   It is not necessary to *actually* know in order to be; it is not necessary to know that one is in hell to be there. Past visit in hell may intensify the *actual* realisation that one is not there any more; the realisation which, perhaps in itself, can mean that one is in heaven. But it is not a necessary precondition for being in paradise, for it is equally unnecessary to *actually* know that one is in heaven in order to be there. Active search for heaven is the more suspicious, the more *visible* it is, and the doubts about its genuine character coincide with the doubts about the value of knowledge as such – or, more generally, of the *actual signs* – of heaven.

The insistence on the necessity of a passage through the heart of darkness, in order to reach the light, need perhaps not, in itself, be a sign of a gnostic dualism. But it has similar origins in an intellectual bias towards the *visibility* of *actual* manifestations and demonstrations. It is not necessary to know in order to be, but knowing one pole of a contradiction requires and implies knowing the other. It is the earlier experience of hell which, when contrasted with the experience of heaven, clarifies the latter and makes the fact of its presence *visible*. The myths of descent, or Underworld in general, often have this aspect, too, though it is less dramatic and less visible. Entering the Underworld involves helplessness, nakedness, or else oblivion and forgetfulness, one could say, immersion in the elmental power. Persephone takes away the memories and understanding from the souls entering there – Teiresias was an exception who retained "his understanding even in death, but the other ghosts flit about aimlessly."[124] Only those who manage to return from there retain their mental powers or, as we might say, the strengthened consciousness of their present state as opposed to the dark oblivion of the Underworld. Similarly, the flood does not serve the purpose of purifying the survivors. They survive it because they have already been pure, or as the myths have it, selected by god – the flood only clarifies the scores, makes the predestined results visible.[125]

Thus, we distinguish clearly the two aspects: on the one hand, the *invisible* event of being selected, the God's decree which makes the *actual* understanding helpless and appears for it as an arbitrary predestination and, on the other hand, the *actual* knowledge, the *visible signs* of this fact.

55.   Knowledge and being are closely related but neither is any simple function of another. Some forms of knowledge are impossible without some forms of being and knowing something

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[123] A. H. al Ghazali, *There Is No evil in Allah's Perfect World*. 56-60 [after A. O. Rorty, ed., *The Many Faces of Evil*. p.54; my emph.]

[124] Homer, *The Odyssey*. X:495

[125] An element of arbitrariness in the selection of the survivor by the god appears in most flood myths: Utnapishtim is chosen by the goddess Ishtar (the Babylonian counterpart of the Sumerian Inanna), or sometimes Ea/Enki (Tablet XI) for no apparent, in any case no mentioned reason; when JHVH decides to destroy the world with the flood, Noah simply "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" [Gen. VI:8]; Deucalion was a Greek, so reasons and explanations get longer, though the bottom line remains unchanged – he was warned about the flood by his father, Prometheus who, although not a god but only a Titan of second generation, was as such immortal. In the Hindu version it is the first man, Manu, who is warned by a fish about the coming flood (in *Mahabharata* the fish is identified with the god Brahma, while in *Puranas* with incarnated Vishnu).

may promote particular way of being. As always, we will stay satisfied with few necessary conditions without looking for the sufficient ones.

Most abstractly, knowledge is a relation while being *participation*. One might immediately object that *participation*, too, is a relation but it is not. (At least, we now want to make a distinction which earlier might have been blurred, even by using the word "relation" for *participation* as, for instance, when speaking about being as an asymmetric 'relation'.) A relation, a *reflective* relation[126] presupposes *distinct* entities which it binds together. Relation to Y requires Y to be something else, something alien, remote, opposite, not-mine – it requires a distance, and if there is no distance, the relation will create it. This distance appears as the distance separating *me* from Y, but at the bottom it is the distance separating the poles of the relation from their being (established by their *dissociation* from the prior *nexus* involving both). In short, relation, a *reflective* relation, presupposes prior being of its poles.

Participation is that which *constitutes* this being. Although it involves the *separation* of the *participating* being, it is not a relation, for it makes the poles not merely related, but intimately involved into each other. To the extent various relations appear as *traces* of prior *nexuses* from which their *aspects* have been *dissociated*, we might even say that *participation* is the limiting case, or rather the initial stage, when the *distinctions* have not as yet resulted in *dissociation*. *Participation* in Y requires Y to be 'greater than me': I do not participate in my acts – I perform them; I do not participate in my life – I live it. Yet, this 'greater than me', although *above me*, is not an opposite and distanced pole of a relation but, on the contrary, something which embraces and is embraced, something very intimately mine, eventually so much mine, as my own definition, as the ground of my very being. We could say that *participation* is the relation which is not 'added' to the given entities but which constitutes their very being. But this mode of speaking tends to conflate the *horizontal* and *vertical* dimension and, like the assumed spatial analogies of spirituality, confuses rather than clarifies the latter.

Knowledge is concerned with appropriation of the alien element, it stretches always beyond itself trying to reach what is out there, remote, in fact inaccessible because, by its very nature, separated by a distance. It extends along the *horizontal* dimension of *transcendence*. Having fixated the subjective pole, it now tries to extend its scope along the categories and distinctions pertaining to its level: as a *subject* it reaches towards the *object* and the objective; as an *ego* it thirsts for *more*; as *me* it searches for what is not-mine, whether psychological insight, subordination or understanding of others, personal love, alternative worlds... Being, on the other hand, is concerned with dissemination and radiation, it does not search, it gives. It does not have to search because it already is, it does not have to climb the *vertical* steps of transcendence, for these steps reflect only the perpetual anchoring of *actuality* in its *founding origin*. Being is the *presence* of the *vertically* transcendent element, eventually, the *presence* of the *origin*.[127]

Knowledge, as a relation, is always *founded* in being – not of its object, but of itself. Relation binds the *distinct* poles and knowledge asks only about 'being' of its opposite pole. But it is the being of the whole relation which *founds* it and its poles. The *object* of my understanding and the *concept* by which I understand it are opposite poles of a relation, they are in no way the same. But they both originate from a higher unity, from the

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[126]That is, not a reflexive relation, but a relation as perceived by *reflection*.

[127]In I:§15, p. 8 and then in 6.1.2, we said that to be is to be distinguished. And this remains the most generic notion. But being we are talking about now is a more specific being in a more specific context, namely, the being of *existence* in relation to knowing.

distinctions made in the texture of *experience*, of *chaos*, eventually, of the *indistinct*. It is only *actuality* which definitely *dissociates* the *subject* and the *external object*. Knowledge, as a *reflective* enterprise, fixates the *actuality* of a *subject dissociated* from the *object* and keeps asking about their relation. In this way, it is indeed determined by the character of its object, or rather, of that which it makes into its *object*. As contents are fetched from different levels, knowledge must adjust its character to the *distinctions* pertaining to the respective contents. Thus, what we call "knowledge" is much more than what is usually so called. We will now relate this abstract discussion to various levels and will recover the more common meaning as the *objective* and *actual* form of the general notion. The points **1.** **-4.** below summarise the respective subsections 1.1-1.4 from Book II.

1. At the lowest level, *actual* contact with an *object* is a form of knowing. Whether the *object* is given physically – sensed, perceived or felt – or else only 'ideally' – thought, remembered or imagined, in a complete *externality* – is not so significant here: it does not change the fundamental importance of its proximity and *immediacy*, inscription within the *horizon of actuality*. The constitutive feature of this, say *immediate* knowledge, is on the one hand its total *dissociation* from its *object*: the *object* is known (felt, seen, sensed, imagined) but remains *external*, that is, not affected by the relation; and on the other hand, it is the emptiness of the *actual concept* which here reduces to the pure *immediacy* of *distinguishing* 'this', the mere consciousness *that it is*. It is the knowledge of 'this' not being 'that' without, perhaps, being able to specify the difference; it is the knowledge with which I know my body, without knowing anything *about* it, it is the knowledge of any *distinctions* and their limits *dissociated* to the limit of *immediacy*.

Subject, i.e., the subject of this form of knowledge, apparently exhausts its being in the relation to such an *external object*. But this is only apparent, immanent description of the relation. *Subject is* not by *acting* or re*acting* (cognising, perceiving, feeling, etc.) within this horizon of *immediacy*, but only because it is immersed in the *vertically transcendent* element, because it emerges from a higher level as an *actual* appearance of *ego*.

2. Essentially the same, though more developed kind of knowledge pertains to this higher level of *actuality*, where *concepts* of elaborate *reflection* yield understanding of *complexes* – internalised through this understanding, but appearing all the time as the residual *externalities*. This *dissociated* form of knowing, *episteme* (whether of *actual* or purely *immediate* kind) allows one to ruminate on the general characteristics of knowledge and its acquisition, on the methodology of science, on the most universal laws of reason, etc., etc., etc. To ask any epistemological questions, one has to assume that the crucial aspects of knowledge can be treated independently from its object. Such a possibility obtains because one has already decided the scope of investigation limiting it to the *objective* knowledge. Whether it happened only with Galileo, Descartes or already with Aristotle does not concern us – we stop here with the *objective* (i.e., *actual* or *immediate*) knowledge, constituted by the *dissociation* of the *conceptual* modeling from the modeled, *external* realities.

Again, although the subject of such a knowledge, *ego* (which often tries to hide under the depersonalised entities like 'mind', 'intelligence'), spends its time on associating and dissociating, matching and modeling, its *being* is never exhausted by such relations. *More* work and thinking may generate only yet *more* work and thinking but it never reaches any being. To get a sense of it, it has to notice the real person, *oneself*.

3. As we move higher up in the hierarchy of being, the *dissociation* of the 'objective' and 'subjective', or – let it be allowed to say – of being and thinking (knowing), becomes less and less *precise*. Being an immoral bastard is not at all affected by the fact that the

person knows it. Depending on what one knows and how, it may make the immorality more cynical and repulsive, or else more amiable in its understanding of fallibility; in some cases, it may even indicate a direction of a possible change. But by "knowing that I am immoral bastard", we refer here to the *objective* knowledge of the fact 'that...' This knowledge actually includes knowing various 'whys', 'hows', 'whats' but all these only signal a level of increased *reflection*, that is, *dissociation*. (The more systematic analysis we attempt, the more confusion seems to result and, eventually, the more all our self-knowledge seems to reduce to the mere 'that' from which we started.) It is no particular art to know 'that' one is a bastard, the big art is to cease *being* one. Even stupidity usually knows itself to be stupid – it only can't help it. This gulf between knowledge and being is a gulf between the *objective* knowledge and the horizon of *mineness*, the distance between the *actual* and the *non-actual*.

However, as we have moved higher up in the hierarchy of being, the *dissociation* became less and less *precise*, eventually, losing completely its justification, if not entire sense (II:§§72.ff). *I* am *my life*, *my life* is *my world*, *general thoughts* are as 'subjective' as 'objective'. Looking for any *objective* knowledge at this level amounts to reducing it to the level of *actuality*. It may be quite true that I am, indeed, an immoral bastard; it may be a fact, an *objective* fact. But no such *objective* truth, nor any combination and sum thereof, ever capture the truth of *my* being – at best, they may express an aspect of it, approximate it. The merging of the 'objective' and 'subjective' aspect is reflected in a more intimate interleaving of being and knowing. Not only because here knowing is essentially knowing *oneself* (possibly, another person), but because this knowing, if knowing it still is, loses the *objective* character and does not any longer know so *precisely* what it knows.

The *general thoughts* expressed in literature or poetry, the thoughts of Vedas or Bible, the wise advice of old men or good friends – all these teach us something, we can learn from them and thus, perhaps, increase our ...knowledge. Living through new situations, confronting new (or old) challenges, wining or losing, we learn something, but what is it that we so learn? We learn how to live but this does not say much. We learn but we do not quite know what we learn, we know more than a year ago, but we do not quite know what we know. We gather 'life experience' – we learn something about the world as much as about ourselves, for all that amounts to refining and clarifying the *relations* we have with the world and other people, and the ways we handle them. There is no need for making it explicit, it is knowledge which lives in *my* body, in *my* instinctive reactions and habits, in *my* way of responding to and initiating things, in *my* way of creating and handling situations. Only a tiny part of it becomes, occasionally, an *object* of explicit *reflection* or verbal expression, and even that happens only *post factum*. It is knowledge of life, of *my* life, and *my* life is only living this knowledge – the equality (not a *nexus*) which, once *dissociated*, will never return to itself even through the most dense and intense hermeneutical circles. To distinguish it from the *objective* knowledge, let us call it the "life knowledge".

It is nevertheless knowledge, for it spans the relation between *me* and what is *mine* and, on the other end, *not-mine*. From this constant relation there emerges also the residual point, the noumenal *self* as the center of *my* being.

4. Somewhere at the bottom, past the bottom of one's soul, and somehow, definitely though *imprecisely*, *clearly* though *vaguely*, one always knows *oneself*, one knows the basic mood and *quality* of *one's life*. It may be merely recognition of the same, recurring doubts, recognition of something various moods of silence seem to intimate without unveiling. But beyond that, *above* all *visible signs*, one knows even more, one knows also if life is a generous

gift or something else: a strange accident, a suffering of a constant trial without any goal or reason, only rarely interlaced with brief pleasures; or, perhaps even an unbearable damnation, a doom of eternal incarceration. This is no longer any *episteme* nor *sophia*, any knowledge of things or life which one could utilise and apply. It is a mere tacit self-awareness, not any *actual* constatation of the state, but the mere being in the state. It is *spiritual* knowledge which, at the risk of creating completely wrong associations, let us call *gnosis* or *spiritual* knowledge.[128] This knowledge is simply living itself, is the simple fact of being this, and such, *confrontation* which it is.

56. ***Knowing Yes***

At the *spiritual* level there are not only no *objects*, but no *distinctions* which could be opposed to their external meanings. There are only primordial *distinctions*, mutually distinct but not opposed to each other. At this level – raised not only *above* the earth but also *above* heavens, like a wind which "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth,"[129] "invisible [...] to mortal eyes, beyond thought and beyond change"[130] – at this level being is indeed knowing. This knowledge, however, must not be confused with *actual* knowing of *reflective* consciousness. Being and knowing are the same not because the *dissociated subject* and *object* mysteriously coincided, but because the knowing and being of the one who knows are here indistinguishable. *Nothingness* of the *self* is *confronted* exclusively with *nothingness* of the *origin* and exhausted by the fact of this *confrontation*. Living this *confrontation* is the same as knowing to be thus *confronted*.

It is knowledge because it is relation (*separation* which *founds confrontation*), but it is being because this relation is *absolute* leaving nothing outside which might complete it. The *horizontal* and *vertical* dimensions of *transcendence* coincide making this *spiritual* knowledge the same as the being of *spirit*. In the *actual* terms, it is simply knowing *that*: *that I exist, that I* am *confronted, that I am not the master*. Although such platitudes can not satisfy intellectual curiosity, they constitute the only indisputable certainties, reflecting the ultimate *that founded* by the *separation* by *birth*, I:§129. It is not by any necessity manifested in any particular, *actual* form for any such form, being its expression, is also its veil. Never being given as any *actual* 'what', as any particular object or image, in *actual* terms such a *that* is ignorance rather than knowledge. "You will so ask: what does God effect without 'image' in the foundation and essence of the soul. I am not able to say that, because soul's faculties can perceive only through 'images'. And because the images enter into her from outside, it remains hidden from her. And this is most salutary for her, because this ignorance tempts her with the mystery of something wonderful and makes her chase it. For she feels very well *that* it is, but does not know 'what' it is."[131] *That* is beyond any 'what' and needs no 'what' – and this is all to be known about *that*.

Negativity of this constant element of mystical reports, of this unknowing knowing of Eckhart's or *docta ignorantia* of his dedicated reader Cusanus, is only apparent as it concerns only the absence of any particular images. One can honour by silence "the hidden

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[128]We are not intending here any *actual* knowledge, and hence any associations with any form of the traditional *gnosis* are out of place. In one respect, namely, in its complete lack of any dualism, it might be compared to the 'optimist gnosis' of Neoplatonic Renaissance which is opposed to the dualism of traditional 'pessimist gnosis' in F. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*.

[129]John III:8

[130]*The Bhagavad-Gita*. II:25

[131]Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West*. A:II.4.b my emph.]

Mysteries which lie beyond our view,"[132] still expecting that something (differentiated) must be hidding behind the veil. Only such expectations give *deus absconditus* character of negativity. *Yes*, however, recognises fully positive *presence* of *that* which lies *above* all *distinctions*, it acknowledges the *absolute* border between the differentiated and the *indistinct*.[133] The adjective "hidden" is therefore useful only in a metaphorical sense. The *origin* is hidden because no *visible* categories of understanding are applicable to the *indistinct one*. It is hidden but it is not hiding for this absence of *distinctions* does not veil anything from the view but only presents the *indistinctness* of the *origin*. For *reflection* this difference is crucial because it thus merely limits the understanding of the *origin* against all differentiation, without endowing it with any contents.

Being an *actual* ignorance, involving no particular image, it does not give certainty about anything specific. But it gives the *absolute* certainty. It is the fundamental state of *existence* which sometimes can *actualise* in the revealing *signs* but which, primarily, is known only in the sense of permeating the whole *actuality* with its *traces*, of putting on it the *invisible* stamp of indubitable *presence*. If you try to point at it, to capture 'what' of this knowledge, it evaporates dissolving in an empty concept. But if you let it be, it remains with the most *clear presence* and *absolute* certainty. "It is only when you hunt for it that you lose it//You cannot take hold of it, but equally you cannot get rid of it//And while you can do neither, it goes on its own way.//You remain silent and it speaks; you speak, and it is dumb."[134] For the *actual* claims to verifiable certainty, it is only an indefinite premonition, a sense of 'Something', and often even its conscious negation. At best, it is a *vague* and *clear* sense of gratitude and thankfulness which does not present, let alone fill, the soul with any thing nor image. But it fills it with the *absolute* certainty. "In what concerns divine things, belief is not fitting. Only certainty will do. Anything less than certainty is unworthy of God."[135]

Knowing No
57.

The *existential confrontation* is nothing else but *participation* in the *one*, and even the most active *No* is only turning away from it, and thus is still *confronting* it facing, at the bottom of its being, its *absolute* certainty. It might thus seem that *No* is a possibility of the same order as *Yes*, that it is but another alternative. It is, however, an event of a different order, it only veils the deeper *Yes*. It does not acknowledge the *absolute*, it only denies: refusing *thankfulness* for the *gift* of the *origin*, it seems to remove this *transcendent* pole but, as a matter of fact, it only pushes it away at an inaccessible distance, reduces it to a mere relation, exchanges certainty of being for the falsity of its knowledge.

"To despair is to lose the eternal"[136] says Kierkegaard. Seemingly, one might know that

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[132]Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy*. XV

[133]In the XX-th century, Karl Rahner advanced forcefully the thesis of the positive content of "incomprehensibility" as the primary name for God.

[134]Yung-chia Ta-shih [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. I]

[135]S. Weil, *Waiting for God*. Forms of the Implicit Love of God:Implicit and explicit love;p.139. Such a *spiritual* knowledge amounts to (a variant of) what has been called "ontologism", for instance, of St. Bonaventura and his followers. Indeed, (1) the *absolute* is the first not only in the order of Being but also in the order of knowing (*gnosis* is the constant knowledge of Godhead, if not of God.) (2) This knowledge is intuitive, not abstractive – it really coincides with the fact of *existing*. The last point, (3) that in the light of the idea of *absolute* we acquire all other ideas, can be taken or rejected, depending on the meaning of "idea". If it is an intellectual construction, proceeding from the *reflective dissociations*, then only its strife after unity reminds about this first knowledge. But if idea is taken as anything whatsoever which can be distinguished, perhaps even conceptualised, then it arises only from the *indistinct*.

[136]S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:C.B.b.α.1

one lost the eternal, but what *knowing* is that? What do *I know* then, what is it that I so *know*? Nothing, except my *actual* state, feelings of despair, irrecoverable loss, sense of damnation – I know the *distance*, impassable, from here to eternity. My knowledge may be quite correct, I may know how it feels and even what I feel but is it . . . knowledge? In fact, I have hardly any idea of what is going on, for it is impossible to lose the eternal, simply and plainly impossible. We live in it, whether we feel it or not, and the despair of the loss is the despair over one's own *actuality* – not over the loss of the eternal but over the loss of the contact with it. Knowledge of the loss, of having lost the eternal, eventually, knowledge of being in hell, will seldom call things with such words. But it knows them because it lives them. It lives its *No* and, no matter how rosy all *actual* things really are, at the bottom it is scared by the gnawing suspicion of their insufficiency, of a great mistake. The lost eternal is the lost *spirit* or, as one used to say, the sold soul. But it is lost in spite of the fact that it can not be lost. It is only the feeling of loss one despairs over. The despair is real because it is deeply felt, but the loss which it pretends to reveal is completely untrue. The true despair is indeed to say something like "I have lost the eternal" and think that it may count for knowing, that it may mean anything more than a mere status report of one's moods and feelings.

As with the *spiritual* knowledge of *Yes*, we are by no means implying that one always has full consciousness of *No*. For the most, we *actually* do not know it and when we do, the *actual* knowledge is often an *inversion* of the factual state. Yet, *actually* knowing *No* may be also something like a prevailing sense of *ingratitude*, disappointment, meaninglessness or unreality which in the *reflective* form turn into negation of some of the earlier mentioned *that*'s: *I* control my *existence*, *I* am the master, *I* know. In the extreme cases, it may be also *actual* realisation that I am damned, which opens the doors to deeper hell. As hell, with its *alienated attachment* to mere *visibility*, is much closer to earth than the *invisible* paradise, it is easier to imagine a kind of certainty – coming close to the *actual* knowledge – of being in the former than in the latter. Any prolonged suffering gives an intimation and an image of it. One has observed that traditional representations of paradise – whether in painting, sculpture or literature – are unbearably dull and monotonous as compared to the fascinatingly eventful representations of hell. This could be classified merely as a result of the simple psychology of mass-media and news reports (according to which devastating tragedy sells better than peaceful happiness). We would, however, see here a deeper difference: heaven generates few, if any, *visible signs*, it does not inspire our imagination with so definite images as hell does. And there is a good reason for it: the former is the point of ultimate *invisibility* embracing *everything* visible, and then the bare reflection of *nothingness*, while the latter is exactly its negation, not only directedness towards *visibility*, but *exclusive* directedness towards *visibility* and *only visibility*.[137] Knowing this situation involves much more than the simple knowledge of living *Yes*. This *more*, however, is only *more visible* facts and reasons, *more attachment*. *Spiritually* it is, in fact, less, lacking the *open*, unwavering determination of one who "with life and mind and reason in harmony, and with desire and fear and wrath gone, keeps silent his soul before his freedom."[138]

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[137] The distinction between directedness and exclusive directedness (toward *this* world) is hard to determine and impossible to define. Consequently, the gnostic tendency to identify *this visible world* with the source of all and only evils (if not with the hell itself) is the constant theme in the history of spirituality. Such a gnostic denial of *this world* reflects, however, not the *spiritual inspiration* but its misunderstanding which, having said *No* to the *invisibility* of the *absolute*, can not stop clothing it in *visible, conceptual* images and despairing over the inadequacy of the *actual* things of *this world* for this purpose. It no longer simply lives in *this world* but, being enclosed within it, seeks liberation through denial.

[138] *The Bhagavad-Gita.* V:28

Covering up the underlying knowledge of *Yes*, it becomes more occupied with the variety of beguilements distracting the *thirst*. But it knows its situation, it knows that distractions are only distractions, even if it does not any longer know from what.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

It should be clear that we are not aiming at any particular experiences of *unio mystica*, 58. even if we do not have to deny their possibility. *Nothingness* of the *self* is an *imago* of *nothingness* of the *origin* and in this respect might be almost said to be one with it. But *self* is not *existence*, only its deepest *aspect*. The *unity* of *existence* is not in any way confused with the *unity* of the *one*. The former arises only in *confrontation* with the latter.

In particular, *spiritual Yes* is not the matter of any specific *actuality*, of any *actual* knowledge. It is the knowledge, *gnosis*, of living *Yes*, of recognition of all *visible* things as relative and irrelevant for imaging the *absolute*. In so far as *actual* knowledge is concerned, it is at most recognition of all *visible* things as *manifestations* of the *absolute*. But it is not *actual* knowledge which appropriates the *external* element bringing it under one's control. It is *lived* knowledge, being in the face of ineradicable *transcendence*.

The most *concrete* way to such an accepting *awareness* goes through suffering. Suffering is one of the fundamental forms of meeting *transcendence*, of being sentenced to something one can not control and, by the same token, being called to *transcend* oneself. Yet, suffering can liberate or break one. Return from the Underworld is the extreme image of the most extreme form of purification and liberation. One who has returned from suffering *knows* what it is and 'what' of suffering involves unmistakably the ultimate *that*. But suffering, depriving one of all *visible* hope, can also break the *soul* which henceforth becomes capable only of clinching desperately to the reminders of its *visible* world as they turn gradually into insignificant emptiness. Thus, we distinguish between those who, suffering, end up in hell and those suffer but do not. Hell is the extreme form of suffering, the place where the initially human suffering becomes, by being answered with the active *No*, almost inhuman, impersonal. *Yes* does not require a descent to such depths. (It expresses, after all, the ontological *foundation* which precedes all 'epistemic' mistakes.) Yet, besides the fact that suffering is a common lot and that some can find themselves there, the opposition to hell provides the a clear illustration of the dynamics and the meaning of the *spiritual choice* of *Yes*. For just like *No* ends up substantialising its suffering as 'objective evil', so *Yes* learns that salvation is the liberation from evil but not from suffering and that the latter need not involve the former. We will therefore, for the sake of presentation, follow this opposition.

3.2   Yes

Our vocation is to listen – not to talk; to listen to the silent *presence* which fills our life with 59. all its contents. At the deepest level of our being, at the point where *one* becomes many, the *invisibles* become *present* in the ways which we can hardly feel, and never produce or control. Without any *reflective attention*, the *invisibles* are *present* as the most constant *aspects* – not moods, not feelings, not thoughts – which do not have any *objective* content and which do not pertain to any *object*; which therefore can be predicated of anything, though we will tend to ascribe them to the most general ideas, to life, world, existence.

The experience *that I am not the master* is what makes true listening possible. Since my control over all *visible* things does not exhaust my life, there are, perhaps, other voices worth listening to. In the *reflective experience*, the *invisibles* can be *present* as unreal

dreams, impossible ideals, something we long for without any hope to obtain it – not because we are unable to hope, but because we are unable to imagine 'what' we are hoping for. Such dreams turn out to be much more 'real' than all the 'reality' of *actual* objects and situations, persisting with the calm and yet intense and irrefutable force. They do not go away as long as what they announce does not find a *concrete* expression in our life. They are only images, always false ones, but these images remind us of something which, apparently forgotten, remains *present above* all our *acts* and *activities*, *above* all *visible* and *invisible distinctions*.

Imagine a man whose whole life was, by any reasonable standards, a series of failures and disasters, an unhappy, unrealised, misfortune life. Then, when his last moment came, on his death bed he says: "I had a good, gratifying life." And it is not misunderstanding of the words, it is not any self-deception. Do you think it can possibly make any genuine sense? – like a moment of revelation, when the *invisible* sense of his life becomes *manifest*, when he realises that this life was worth living, that the very fact of living is gratifying and deserves thankfulness. A moment when one hears "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be [...] in paradise."[139] In spite of the wretched life, in spite of constant misfortune, "to day shalt thou be in paradise". A 'moment of truth'? But the same might have been true all the time, all his life, even if the man never *recognised* any *visible sign*.

60.   Nihilism, despair, the deepest circles of hell are all consequences of *attachment*, eventual consequences of the declared and exclusive dependence on *visibility*. And thus, there can be no cure against them, for the only medicine one could possibly accept would have to be *visible*. Insisting on objectivity or truth, externality or proofs, one wants only one thing: to be convinced *in advance*, that is, to avoid the discomfort of trust, to keep one's life unchanged. But he "that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."[140] The cure is only the change of fact into value, of the merely ontological *foundation* into the *concrete* form of it: *nothingness* is not emptiness but *origin* – "who shone//where nobody appeared to come"[141] – equally dark, silent and *invisible* as emptiness and yet, its complete opposite... This, however, is a *spiritual choice*, which can not be enforced by logic, arguments, sufficient reasons, efficient causes, anything *visible*. He who would like to be convinced, to *see* why and how he should choose so and what it is, will never see anything. What could one see in total darkness? There is no *visible* way out of *No*; hell is the place surrounded by void and hence with no exit, for one can not exit into void, "[o]ne cannot will into void."[142] What could one hear in total silence? *Nothing*, indeed – the beat of one's heart, the whisper of one's breath. This, however, is no longer void. Nowhere happens more than in such a moment of silence, when nothing is heard because only *nothingness* whispers and *opens* one's heart. "[A]nd I saw nothing then,//no other light to mark//the way but fire pounding my heart."[143]

61.   ***It has been there already.***

In 1.1 and 2 we described the gradual sinking into hell, as well as development of evil, as the results of misunderstood *thirst* for paradise. The culminating "Evil, be thou my good" conforms fully to the old claim that each being seeks the highest good and, as Scheler taught, that such a highest good is, objectively and *a priori*, a value above any other, even

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[139]Lk. XXIII:43
[140]Jh. XII:25; Mt.X:39; Mk.VIII:35; Lk.IX:24, XVII:33
[141]St. John of the Cross, *The Poems*. Dark Night
[142]W. James, *What the Will Effects?*. [after G. Cotkin, *William James: Public Philosopher*.]
[143]St. John of the Cross, *The Poems*. Dark Night

if nobody *actually* knows what *precisely* it might be.

It has been common to see in such a highest good a return to some original state. Descent to the Underworld happens in search of lost happiness, retribution for one's guilt being only a special case (Orpheus seeks Eurydice, Ulysses is only on the way back to his home, Innana wants to help her sister Ereshkigal). The survivors of the flood are from the beginning marked by God and the survival can be taken to correspond to the return among the righteous. "This excellence whose necessity is scarcely or not at all manifest to search, exists, if we could but find it out, before all searching and reasoning."[144] Then the theme is repeated again and again: "in human soul there is engrafted desire of true good"[145] and the search for, and then *recognition* of it, is possible because the soul "did not forget itself completely"[146]. And so, what she finds, has already been there. "Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not found Me."[147] In II:§99 we have observed that Plato's *anamnesis* is more a simile of the *recognition* of *invisibles* rather than of theory of knowledge. Now we can recall it again and give it the place it deserves as yet another record of the insight into the true *spiritual choice* as an event of repetition and return.

The *choice* of *Yes* means to recognise *nothingness* as the *one*, the ultimate *invisibility* as the *origin*. It thus returns to its source, and every return is a repetition. Here, it is the *spiritual* repetition of the only ontological event – *second birth*. As such, it will also lead to another repetition, the *concrete* counterpart of the ontological *founding*, but this will be addressed in 3.3. For the moment we are concerned only with the event itself.[148]

As one sinks into the hell of despair, one gradually accepts despair for its own sake, as the inescapable lot and damnation. And one is advised to continue, for "whilst a man is thus in hell, none may console him, neither God nor the creature, as it is written, 'In hell there is no redemption.'"[149] When one starts despairing, the only thing one can do is to despair more. But this despair is not any emotional complain, ruefulness, nor any sense of undeserved loss, which all reflect only the conviction of entitlement. Only heroes wander in the Underworld, for it takes courage and determination to say: "Let me perish, let me die! I live without hope; from within and from without I am condemned, let no one pray that I may be released."[150] "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived."[151]

As long as it stops short of pronouncing the ultimate *No*, such a resignation is in fact an expression of deepest *trust* and *hope*. For underneath all despair and resignation, one

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[144]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:8.6 [MacKenna's translation]

[145]Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. III:2.4

[146]Boethius, *Commentary to Isagoge*. V:3.22 [after R. Heinzmann, ed., *The Medieval Philosophy*.]

[147]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. VII:553

[148]This double aspect – of re- and -birth, of repetition and new *foundation* – is captured marvelously by the Greek expression *gennethe anothen*. *Anothen* is sometimes translated as 'anew', 'again' (e.g., "Except a man be born *again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God" or "Ye must be born *again*" [John III:3/7]) But more often it means 'from above' ("He that cometh *from above* is above all", "Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given thee *from above*." [John III:31/XIX:11] In Acts XXVI:25, it is rendered as: "Which knew me *from the beginning*".) Likewise, *anagennao*, appearing in 1 Peter I:23, "Being born *again*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible," and meaning literally 'to produce again', is also used in metaphorical sense for having one's mind and attitude changed. As is often the case, attempting to disambiguate such apparent ambiguities, is to confuse the issue rather than to clarify it. Both aspects are present and *second birth* is as much second as it is birth, as much a birth again, resurrection from the dead, as birth from the new *foundation above*.

[149]*Theologia Germanica*. XI, [Probably, reference to Ps. ILIX:8]

[150]Ibid. XI

[151]Job III:3

has always an *invisible rest* unable to accept the situation to which one has already given one's consent, a reserve which underneath all "Let me perish, let me die!" says, in a silent, unheard voice: "I am damned, I can't expect anything, so I have to perish. *But I do not want to!!!*" This apparently childish and irrational act – not even of will, for it is a mere exclamation, and hardly any *actual* one but made at the bottom of one's soul – comprises the essence of the survival. Intensifying despair has the meaning, for only then one can reach the *invisible* seed of *hope*, expressed in such an event. This is the admission that *I am not the master*, that I would like to leave the place, but I can not do it on my own. It is a desperate scream for help and, as such, already an expression of *trust*. It is not any faith, it does not believe *in anything*, it does not hope *for anything*, it only turns towards *nothing* and admits, without saying: "This is unbearable". This apparent surrender, this deepest resignation in the face of *nothingness* is a *sign* of *trust*. As long as it does not say it explicitly, when it is no longer able to say it, then it really says: "Please, release me...," for "to *believe* in one's own undoing is impossible."[152]

63.　　One can reach such a surrender at various degrees of despair and humiliation which everybody can imagine for himself. What matters to us here is the fact, rather than the intensity, of the apparent paradox: the impossibility of any *visible* release and, on the other hand, the impossibility of accepting this lack, "that in human terms the undoing is certain and that still there is possibility."[153] *Trust* does not appear between these two – *trust is just the tension* of this, as one would like to call it, paradox, is just the ability to live (with) it. It has a dual aspect of faith and hope, both understood in the *spiritual* sense, that is, without relation to anything *visible*. It is only admitting the unbearable character of the present state, is a mere reaction which, however, is directed *against* it, without recognition of any chance to overcome it. (Again, the *reflective* consciousness presents one only with the desperate and unbearable life, and knows little about the *trust* which underlies it.) This 'against' carries the character of faith, hides the impossible possibility of overcoming that which according to all *visible* signs can not be overcome. As such, it has also the seed of *hope* – not any definite hope as to how this impossibility could, perhaps, occur, but *hope* contained already in the very exclamation, disrespecting all the *visible* proofs to the contrary and asking for help where no possible source thereof can be seen.[154] In such a time, "[t]he soul knows for certain only that it is hungry. The important thing is that it announces its hunger by crying. A child does not stop crying if we suggest to it that perhaps there is no bread. It goes on crying just the same." "Release me..." – not pronounced loudly, not pronounced at all, but lived underneath the despair – that is all. Release me whence? How? Whereto? Who? The danger is not lest one does not find any answers but lest one forgets that one has ever asked. "The danger is not lest the soul should doubt whether there is any bread, but lest, by a lie, it should persuade itself that it is not hungry."[155]

64.　　***Necessary, but insufficient.***

　　Yes says only that *nothingness* is fullness, that emptiness is untrue, that beyond it

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[152]S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:C.The forms of this sickness (despair)A.b.β

[153]Ibid.

[154]The Greek *pistis*, translated usually as "faith" or "belief", can be, and often should be, rendered as "fidelity", "assurance" or "loyalty". (This is even clearer in the primary verb, *peitho*, from which *pistis* is derived, and which means to persuade or be persuaded (e.g., Matt.XXVII:20,XXVIII:14, Acts XXI:14), to trust (Matt.XXVII:43, Lk.XI:22), to obey (Acts V:36-37).) Besides obedience and reliance, this humble faithfulness is the primary *aspect* of *trust*.

[155]S. Weil, *Waiting for God*. Forms of the Implicit Love of God:Friendship;p.138

there is ... 'Something', and hence that there is an exit, even if *invisible*. The silent cry "Release me!" is the witness of that, for the most real is that which you can not live without. At the same time, the cry is also an admission that *I* do not have the power to exit on my own. After all, *I* do not see any exit. The *spiritual choice* says *Yes* at first only in the form of accepting damnation and despair and yet, in spite of that, not accepting it, nourishing somewhere in the depth the inadmissible *trust* that, after all, *I* won't stay here forever. This paradox reveals only the insufficiency of any *actual* choice (or, for that matter, of anything *I* can do) to effect the transition. All *I* can do is to say *Yes*, first in the deep silence of *invisibility*, then perhaps in a louder and more conscious voice. But saying so *Yes* is only saying that *I* am willing to accept the possibility of release, that *I* indeed ask, seek and knock and hope that "every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."[156] The cry, knocking or, as we can also say, the mere consent *opening* one to the possibility, is all one can do. It is *equipollent* with the infinite patience because, as one can not do anything, all one can do is to wait, and as one is not waiting for anything *visible*, so one waits eternally, *above* time. "[I]t is necessary that one has the patience to begin so, that one in truth admits, that it is a feat of patience"[157] through which one gradually regains one's soul. This patient waiting, with or without clear consciousness thereof, calms down the storms preparing the *opening*. But it is not yet the *opening* itself.

Gift. 65.

The *choice* of *Yes* is only a necessary but not the sufficient condition of exit. As usual, we do not know the sufficient conditions, but here they have been given a name – "grace".[158] Since we do not deal with the sufficient conditions, "*grace*" will mean for us simply the possibility of the apparently and humanly impossible, the fact that, although there is no *visible* exit, some people do return from hell. *Trust* is thus *openness* to the possibility of *grace* and both together can become effective only when *I* have said *Yes*, admitted *that I am not the master*, that "I live yet do not live in me."[159]

I am not the master and so *grace* is a *gift*, a true – that is, undeserved (or, as a philosopher might prefer to say, unaccounted for) – *gift*. But it is not a gift from anybody, for *I* have not found any new master. Just like *hope* and *thrust* are directed towards and ask into *absolute nothingness*, so *grace* comes only from there, it is a *gift* of *nothingness*. It did not come from any *visible* place; it is only all surrounding *nothingness* which is the *origin* of this *gift*. One can receive gifts coming from no one, from *nothingness*, and one can likewise be thankful without being thankful to anybody. *Spiritual thankfulness* does not concern anything in particular – it concerns *nothing*, that is, everything. It is not even thankfulness *for grace*, for *thankfulness* is but an *aspect* in the *nexus* of *grace*.

Ex nihilo? 66.

The *spiritual choice* of *Yes* finds *invisible* richness of the *origin* in the *indistinct nothingness* which for *No* remains an irrelevant void. *Yes* creates something which was not there before: from the deepest *thirst* for 'Something', from the thoroughly logical *actuality* of solipsism, perhaps, from the deepest despair of emptiness, it emerges into the full *presence*,

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[156]Matt. VII:8

[157]S. Kierkegaard, *Eighteen Edifying Discourses*. IX.To gain one's soul in patience;p.155

[158]It would be probably closer to the actual grace, which is withdrawn after the performance of the *act* for which it was granted, than to the sanctifying grace, which has the constant, habitual effect and makes one permanently holy, but we will leave such distinctions to the theologians.

[159]St. John of the Cross, *The Poems*.

from the knowledge *that*, it emerges into *participation*, into Being. It thus seems to create *ex nihilo*, from the total emptiness. It looks like an arbitrary decision, perhaps, a mere projection or a hypostasis, and those who like will always see it in such terms. But it is only the assumption of emptiness, the assumption that *nothingness* is indeed void, which makes everything that follows *Yes* into a mere projection. Such an assumption wants, first of all, to *see* some definite reasons which would oppose it, which would invalidate the sense of emptiness. But no such reasons can be given and then everything that follows turns into a void equal to that which is there from the start – in human, *visible* terms, indeed, *nihil ex nihilo*, "nothing can come out of what does not exist."[160] In short, this is a way of saying *No*, and we are not concerned with it any more.

The *choice* of *Yes* does not create *ex nihilo* (which form of creation pertains to God alone). It turns *alienation* into *concrete participation*, creates good from evil. It creates *participation* by *finding* the *origin*, *finding* fullness where it sees only emptiness. To see here only a projection is the same as to see nothing, as denying the meaning of the whole event, as "drag[ging] the revelation of the greater down to the level of one's littleness."[161] For any interpretation in terms of the *actual* knowledge, this finding is impossible and untrue. In such terms a relation which requires being of one of its poles never counts as sufficient for being of the other. In such terms nothing has been found because nothing 'objective' appeared, only something has been thought, 'subjectively' posited. Thinking which knows nothing but its *concepts* is a sad affair and it indeed can not get further than such a denial. It can not recognise that this 'thought' of fullness beyond emptiness is not an *objective* thought of an *actual* state of affairs or of some *actual* agent; that thinking it as a merely possible hypothesis is to deny it and think its opposite; that this thought would not be itself without being already a *trustful* admittance, *pistis*; that it is impossible to approximate it, for in its simplicity, it can only be thought as bare *Yes* or not thought at all; that it is knowledge which, recognising *presence*, becomes *participation*, or simply, *participation* which recognises itself as such. But this knowledge, this *gnosis*, is not of the *actual* kind, it does not provide any *visible* justifications or forcing reasons. If it did, the *choice* would not be a free event. Only in the fact that it can be denied, in the complete lack of any reactive character, consists the absolute freedom of the *spiritual choice*.

67.   *Good from evil*

The silent scream "Release me!" fills the emptiness with ... *nothing*. Yet, *nothingness* ceases to threaten with hollow darkness and void and, instead, becomes the source, the (new) *origin*. *Spiritual aspects* – *humility, openness, thankfulness* – turn the *indistinct nothingness* into a warm and living friend, both remote and close. Of course, it is still *nothingness*, there is nobody out there, but the *indistinctness* started to live, and its life is fully consummated in the *spirit*, the *absolute* relation. It is like creating by mere willing, but willing at this level means close to nothing – in *actual* terms, perhaps, only surrender without resignation, *trust* without hope, *hope* without expectations... The *spiritual choice* of *Yes*, aiming at *nothing* and presenting *nothing*, may indeed suggest inventing something more definite, something more communicable which could be *posited* as the active agent responsible for everything – Nature, Fate, Zeus, God, JHVH... *Reflection* is bound to do that, and the 'objective images' nourish its natural sense of *participation* as the sense of dependency. But the only active agent is the *spirit*, the tension between *nothingness* of the *one* and *nothingness* of *self*, between God and God-image, between God and *existence*.

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[160] Aristotle, *Physics*. 187a.33-34
[161] C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. III:217

The rest is a more or less adequate manner of speaking, perhaps, *conceptual positing*, perhaps even objectification. . .

We think that emptiness is when nobody speaks, so we wait for some *signs*, for the sound of some words. But "silence is a fence around wisdom"[10] and it is God's voice. Emptiness is not when nobody speaks but when nobody listens, when we speak, scream into void. Strangely, here being listened to is simply to dare to speak, to admit that *I* can't will into void, that *I* can't live in the middle of emptiness. This admission amounts to *Yes*, to willing 'Something' to be, but 'Something' which is neither this nor that but everything. . ."What you desire strongly, with all your will, you already have and this can not be taken away from you neither by God nor by any creature, if only your will is complete, wants it because of God and stands in front of Him. Let there be no "I would like". This would only be a future. But "I want – now – and hence it is". Truly, with my will I can everything."[162]

The *choice* of *Yes*, raised *above* all *visible* reasons, is a free creation – it is needed to create the situation of *participation* from *alienation*. The *choice* of *No* does not have this *aspect* because it is motivated by the *visible* misery and *alienation* – it only accepts and surrenders to it. The alternative of these two possibilities represents the *absolute* freedom of *choice* between creation and resignation, between *participation* and *alienation*: "if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."[163] The *choice* is what it creates: "He who knows the *Brahman* as non-existing becomes himself non-existing. He who knows the *Brahman* as existing him we know himself as existing."[164] *No* creates *alienation* by giving up the possibility of finding anything and eventual *alienation* is nothing else but this *No*. This is only a resignation, it creates only *nihil ex nihilo*, so we won't call it "creation". It is *Yes* that creates by transcending the emptiness. It creates *concrete participation* which, in turn, is nothing but accepting the *gift* of the *origin*. In short, both *Yes* and *No* are *nexuses* – of choosing, receiving, being, knowing – *founding* the opposite *concrete* modifications of all the *aspects*.

Without you God would not be God
68.

As we have emphasized, *Yes* is a free creation but not creation *ex nihilo*, only of good from evil, of *participation* from *alienation* – or else of *concrete* God from abstract Godhead. "Without me God would not be God. I am the cause of God being God."[165] Meister does not say "I am the cause of God", only that the *existence* is the cause of *nothingness* being God. Indeed, without the *confronting existence*, the *indistinct* would remain *indistinguished indistinct*.

> *Was wirst du tun, Gott, wenn ich sterbe?*
> *Ich bin dein Krug (wenn ich zerscherbe?)*
> *Ich bin dein Trank (wenn ich verderbe?)*
> *Bin dein Gewand und dein Gewerbe,*
> *mit mir verlierst du deinen Sinn.*
>
> *Nach mir hast du kein Haus, darin*

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[162]Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West.* B:A.I.1] This might be misconstrued as a sheer voluntarism but will which is complete, which is *concretely founded*, is not exhausted by its *actual* intention. We will return to it below in 3.2.2.

[163]Chr. I:28.9

[164]Śaṁkara [after S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, eds., *Indian Philosophy.* For our purposes, we don't distinguish *Brahman* from *one*.]

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

dich Worte, nah und warm, begrüssen.
Es fällt von deinen müden Füssen
die Samtsandale, die ich bin.

Dein grosser Mantel lässt dich los.
Dein Blick, den ich mit meiner Wange
warm, wie mit einem Pfühl, empfange,
wird kommen, wird mich suchen, lange –
und legt beim Sonnenuntergange
sich fremden Steinen in den Schooss.

Was wirst du tun, Gott? Ich bin bange.[166]

Just like the alternative *Yes-No* offers no third possibility ("He that is not with me is against me;"[167]), so God is either living or dead, and he lives *only* in the human *soul.* "The soul is a heavenly housing of eternal Godhead. So that He completes His divine work only in it."[168] "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord."[169] The *concrete participation*, this living *presence* of God's in the *soul* is not a fact, an *objective* truth – it is only the possibility of *Yes.* Without Godhead's *nothingness*, there would be no *me* and no world. But without *me*, without the place where Godhead can become *concrete* and where God can *incarnate*, there would be no God, or else, Godhead would have to remain *one*, a mere principle, perhaps, a *reflective* abstraction, 'the first mover' or 'the ultimate cause'. It is said about God "I love them that love me"[170], but, in fact, God's life is *nothing else* but this *love.* The "intellectual love of the mind toward God is the love with which God loves Himself."[171] If *I* deny this *love*, if *I* do not live it, then what can God do? Man's eventual freedom is God's helplessness. His *command* leaves *me* free, it always leaves the place for saying *No*, and if *I* say *No*, if *I* die – "What will you do, God? I am worried."

69.   Abstractly, the *choice* is between nothing and everything. *Yes* recognises the *indistinct* as the *origin*, it *distinguishes* it *above* all *visibility*, and so it *is.* The *existence* saying *Yes* acquires being which is no longer merely *ontologically founded* in the *one*, but which is *concretely founded* in it, which is *participation.* As such a transition from *nothing* to 'Something', *Yes* is a new creation of the world, or what amounts to the same, a *second birth. No* sees only emptiness, does not *distinguish* it, and so it *is not.* It is *ontologically*

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[166]R. M. Rilke, *Das Stunden-Buch.* Vom mönchischen Leben

[167]Matt. XII:30; Lk. XI:23

[168]Eckhart. According to a Mesopotamian myth from VI-th century BC., Marduk, "in order to prepare a habitation for gods in the thirst of their hearts//Created humankind."[after R. Graves, R. Patai, *Hebrew Myths*.I:2] The theme dominates Neoplatonic anthropology with a clear expression in Eriugena, developing the quote from Maximus Confessor "For they say that man and God are paradigms of each other." A recent return of the theme – perhaps, in its academic fashion, somehow disguised and politicised: "God is supposed to be absolutely powerful in our tradition. [...] I'm trying to think of some unconditionality that would not be sovereign, that is, to deconstruct the theological heritage of the concept, the political concept, of sovereignty, without abandoning the unconditionality of gifts, of hospitality, and so on. That means that some unconditionality might be associated not with power but with weakness, with powerlessness. [...] I'm trying to think of some divinity dissociated from power, if it is possible." [J. Derrida, *Roundtable at the conference* Religion and Postmodernism III. [after J. Caputo, *Without sovereignty, without being....*]]

[169]Prov. XX:27

[170]Prov. VIII:17

[171]B. Spinoza, *Ethics.* V:Prop.XXXVI. (We must distance ourselves from Spinoza's partition of God and summation of parts back into His totality again. The actual formulation says "...is part of the infinite love with which God...")

founded in the same *origin*, but this *founding* remains as abstract and irrelevant as a simple fact, unavoidable truth; it does not find a *concrete* counterpart in one's life.

There is only one God, and everything is his *sign*. But although the *presence* is obvious, it is not obvious that it is His *presence*, and so he has two faces: *nothingness* can be all or nothing, He can be life or death, generous giver or sower of despair, peaceful love or fearful vengeance. It is not entirely up to *me* to choose which face he will show – the *spiritual choice* is not *my act*. Often, one can only search for this face which others told about. Before saying more about things one can do, let us recover some of these descriptions of the *spiritual Yes* in a context where one would hardly expect them.

3.2.1. Anselm's argument

Aliquid, quo maius cogitari non potest, being greater than which nothing can be thought... 70. The shocking content of Anselm's argument from *Proslogion* consists in the fact that existence is demonstrated from a mere concept, that being follows from knowing. The unjustified – and unjustifiable? – transition from *esse in intellectu* to *esse in re*, raised as one of the earliest objections already by Anselm's contemporary Gaunilon, has the same content as the creation, the *second birth* we were just speaking about.

The list of other objections of various kinds could be rather long: that 'being'/'existing' is not a predicate which could be added to the concept of anything, that 'being greater than' remains unspecified and cannot be given meaning making the argument work, that 'being greater than which nothing can be thought' is not a legitimate concept and one should at least show that it is not contradictory, that what is demonstrated is only necessity of a being provided that it exists and not its existence, that...[172]

All the objections, with all the pretensions to formality, may be interesting and nice, but they are necessarily involved into *actual* distinctions which do not apply at the level addressed by the argument. We leave the pedantic analyses of the logical forms, merits and mistakes of this beautiful argument to those who deem such exercises worthwhile.

The argument intends not so much to *prove* God's existence as to confirm it, make it 71. more transparent. Anselm repeats Augustine's *credo, ut intelligam* – "For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand."[173] Such a search is underlied by the sense of looking for something already present, §§61.ff. If we were to accept the name "ontological", given by Kant to the argument, it would not be because it somewhat deduces being from a concept but, on the contrary, because it finds

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[172] After the well-known criticisms by Gaunilon, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, the discussions still continue. E.g., E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* p.118, footnote 35.; J. N. Findlay, *Can God's existence be disproved?*; a review can be found in N. Malcolm, *Anselm's ontological arguments*. (Some of these actually do not oppose Anselm, but only his argument, and some not even that, though they discuss possible objections.)

On the other hand, one should remember the tradition using the same 'definition' of God but with 'better' instead of 'greater', as for instance, "nothing can be thought of better than God, and surely He, than whom there is nothing better, must without doubt be good." [Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. III:10]. God "is thought of as something than which nothing is better or higher." [St. Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*. I:15], "What is God? That than which nothing better can be thought" [St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Consideration*. V:7.15] 'Greatness' itself appears already in Seneca: "What is God? The totality that you see and the totality that you do not see. His greatness belongs to him in such a way that nothing greater can be conceived" [L. A. Seneca, *Natural questions*. I:Preface 13]. Also, though with respect to the perfection of the universe, M. T. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* II:7-8.

[173] St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*. 1. The subtitle given by Anselm to *Proslogion* was *Fides quaerens intellectum* – Faith in quest of understanding.

something which already is there, which is presumed on a different, and stronger, basis than the conceptual context of the proof itself.[174] The argument *reflects* the *presence* of the *origin*. It does not tell, in the manner of *a posteriori* 'proofs', how finite understanding could reach the infinite – Anselm's dissatisfaction with his earlier proofs from *Monologion*, his search for an *a priori* argument can be seen as an expression of the fact that only such a structure reflects the underlying postulate that this has already happened, that understanding already is involved in the infinite.

72.   If nothing else, then at least the constant presence of the argument since the XII-th century, shows that 'being greater than which nothing can be thought', or perhaps only an idea(l) thereof, is highly troublesome for the partial *ratio* with its pretensions to universality. The troublesome aspect is that knowing which coincides with being is *gnosis* and not plain *episteme*. *Episteme* can go no further than the *actual dissociations*: the "real object is one thing, and the understanding itself, by which the object is grasped, is another,"[175] hence: the argument would be a valid proof *if* the idea of God in human mind *and* God's being were identical. This identity, however, is impossible for *actual* thinking – for it "being" means only 'real object', *external objectivity*, completely *dissociated* from the 'human mind', and as such the opposite of a 'mere idea in the mind'. This form of objection does not really consider the form of the argument at all but merely points out the impossibility of proving that anything is: a proof is a thought, while thing is a being – the two, once *dissociated*, can not be the same by their very nature, 'by definition'.

The argument has nothing to do with any thing which can be thought in the mode of such a *dissociation*. It does not apply to any *actual* things, and "if anyone should discover for me something existing either in reality or in the mind alone – *except* 'that than which a greater cannot be thought' – to which the logic of my argument would apply, then I shall find that Lost Island and give it, never more to be lost, to that person."[176] But God who, without me, would only be impersonal Godhead, God about whom I should worry, in case I die, God who does not live somewhere else, in a deistic *dissociation* from this world and human life but, on the contrary, in its midst, who is hardly anything else than the *spiritual* tension of this life, the *absolute* pole of the *existential confrontation* – well, with such a God there is no difference between his being and being *present*, between his being alive and being alive in me (or in you), or – if one insists on the inadequate mode of expression – between his 'being in and for and by himself' and the 'idea of him in my mind'.

Thinking it is not yet knowing it, for knowing it is not the matter of *episteme* but of *gnosis*. It is nothing else but to recognise this knowledge as one's being, to recognise *confrontation* as *participation*, to say *Yes*. Anselm's argument appears as a recurring shibboleth of the ever recurring suspicion: that all *actuality* strives only for what it already is, that knowledge becomes being which it already has been, that understanding of the *visible* follows in the *invisible traces* of its *origin*. These, in turn, are only conceptual figures of the deepest possible transformation of human being, in so far as man can contribute to such a transformation, of the creation of good from evil.

73.   The disputes over the validity of the argument will hardly ever stop, because the possible

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[174]In terms of mere conceptual inferences, we have perhaps only "presupposed an existence as belonging to the realm of the possible, and have then, on that pretext, inferred its existence from its internal possibility – which is nothing but a miserable tautology." [I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason.* I:2nd Division.3.4, A597/B625.] Perhaps, in terms of mere inferences. But every valid inference is only a tautology, and all tautologies are equally miserable.

[175]Gaunilon of Marmoutiers, *On behalf of the fool.* 3

[176]St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Reply to Gaunilo.* 3

interpretations will always not only reflect the available repository of concepts, but also mimic the assumptions, or rather the deep *motivations*, one had in advance. It is of little value to argue "[h]ow far the idea of a most perfect being, which a man may frame in his mind, does or does not prove the existence of a God [...] For in the different make of men's tempers and application of their thoughts, some arguments prevail more on one, and some on another, for the confirmation of the same truth."[177] Men may, of course, disagree not only with respect to the validity of proofs and arguments concerning 'the same truth' but also with respect to this truth itself. In the most abstract and extreme form, the poles of this disagreement *reflect* either *Yes* or *No*, and there are no *visible*, *objective* reasons allowing one to choose between them. "The ontological argument is a report of experience"[178] and reduces really to what one wants to understand by "*aliquid, quo maius cogitari non potest*". If one takes it to be what is intended, to be God, then one has already drawn the conclusion. For merely thinking God, without thinking him as being, is to think something else. Either an empty concept, a mere word, or a non-empty concept which, by the very fact of its non-emptiness, can not be the concept of God. Without any *existential* import, the mere thinking will never be able to think God. "For in one sense a thing is thought when the word signifying it is thought; in another sense when the very object which the thing is is understood. In the first sense, then, God can be thought not to exist, but not at all in the second sense. No one, indeed, understanding what God is can think that God does not exist [...]"[179] The argument provokes one to realise that merely thinking God is not thinking him at all, that thinking God properly is not an operation of mere *episteme*, a play of *concepts*, but requires *existential* relevance, *gnostic* anchoring in Being *above* the *actual dissociations* and arguments.

3.2.2. Reflective Yes

As announced at the end of §69, we now want to say a few words about things which are 74. in our power and which may have some influence on the *spiritual choice*. Let us, however, start by emphasizing that the *actual* attempts should not be confused with the *spiritual choice*. *Yes* is not an *act*, it is an event *above* the horizon of *mineness*.[180] It affects not only *me* but *my* whole being and does not require even slightest *reflective* consciousness. It is exactly something which *transcends visibility* of *actual* contents and objective facts.

Now, "it may be asked, is *Brahman* known or not known (previously to the enquiry into its nature)? If it is known we need not enter on an enquiry concerning it; if it is not known we can not enter on such an enquiry."[181] If it amounts only to finding 'Something' which already has been found, to becoming one's *self* which one always has been, then one might ask what is the value of such a tautological confirmation. This value is simply the continuity of all levels of *existence*, replacement of *alienation* by *participation* in which *actuality* becomes not only ontological but also *concrete reflection* of the *origin* – what we called *justification* in §42. Although its reality, *grace*, happens in the *invisible* depths, in the very *origin* of Being, we may attempt a *reflective* description of some of its *aspects*.

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[177] J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* IV:10.7

[178] S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life.* V:11

[179] St. Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion.* 4

[180] *Invisible* event like this one is not, of course, a momentaneous event in time. Like everything else, it can be placed in objective time, but only as a gradual transformation forming the *nexus* of *Yes*. It only *opens actuality*, immersed in the objective time, on the *eternity* of the *origin*.

[181] Śaṁkara [after S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore, eds., *Indian Philosophy*.]

Such *actual* expressions will constitute elements of the *reflective acts* of the choice of *Yes* which it is in our power to perform and which can contribute to the *invisible* event. This *choice* means to recognise *nothingness* as the *one*, the ultimate *invisibility* as the *origin*. In such a recognition, one admits several things.

75.   **Humility.**

Firstly, *reflection* that *I am not the master* admits the insufficiency of one's *actual acts* and choices. One understands *oneself* when one understands one's limits. Yet any particular limit, any specific obstacle or prohibition can be, if only in pricniple, overstepped. The very first issue is to recognise impassability of limits which surround *visibility* as such. *I* end where *this world* ends, while beyond there is something which, from the perspective of *this world* is but *nothingness*. *That I am not the master* is to say that there is something more than *I* and *this world*, that the *nothingness* beyond it is not emptiness, is not lack of reality but, on the contrary, is the most real source of whatever is encountered in *this world*. One does not The impassable limits are not any *visible* lines stretched around by some authoritarian ruler. They are limits of *visibility* as such, the *invisible* limits which are impossible to overstep anyway, and *humility* is simply an accepting recognition of this fact. Eckhart asks "When does one stay humble? I answer: When you apprehend One separated from others. And when does one step beyond humility? I answer: When one apprehends everything in everything, then one steps beyond humility."[182]

Humility does not mean that one recognises any particular master governing *this world*. *Humility* in this *spiritual* form is not a submission to any particular power. Even more, it excludes such a power or, to the extent it experiences it, it transcends it, aknowledging its possible reality and efficacy but not its *absoluteness*. Encounter with any awe inspiring, ineffably powerful *tremendum sacrum* may easily lead to humiliation rather than to *humility*. Humility which is a reaction to anything specific, which is caused by no matter how *vague*, but still a particular cause or power, is perhaps an emotion, "the sorrow produced by contemplating our impotence or helplessness,"[183] but it is not a true, *spiritual humility*. This latter is *humility* in the face of *nothingness*. One does not submit to anything, yet one *submits* – unreservedly. Only *that*, recognition of the *absoluteness* of the *origin*, makes it a truly *spiritual* submission. "Let me be humble, that is, one who *thirsts* for the origin."[184]

76.   **Thankfulness.**

Humility faces the ultimate *gift* and amounts simply to its acceptance. Only "the miser always fears presents."[185] In this acceptance, one admits that *the world* in which one lives is given to us, is the result of a process which might have involved one's *self* but certainly not one's *ego*. The world, just like *grace*, is a generous – because unmerited – *gift*. This does not mean that no single thing in *this world* is a result of one's *activity*, only that, eventually, all such things are grounded in the *transcendent* sphere of *invisibility*. *The world* is a *gift*, one's life is a *gift* and everything ever encountered is a *gift*. *I am* while there is no sufficient reason for *me* being here. *I am* while *I* might not be. Recognition of *the world* and one's life as a *gift* of *transcendence* amounts to *thankfulness*.

It is essential for *spiritual thankfulness* that we recognise the *gift* as arbitrary, as having no sufficient reason – *creation* is a mystery. The recognition of the *one* as the generous source admits only that it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. Any search for

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[182]Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West.* A:IV.II.4.1.b)]

[183]B. Spinoza, *Ethics*. III.On the origin and nature of the emotions:Definitions of the emotions:26

[184]Z. Herbert, *The prayer of the traveling Mr. Cogito*.

[185]S. Sturluson, *Hávamál*. 48

sufficient reasons, any attempt to explain the necessity of this *gift* amounts to explaining it away and to renouncing the attitude of *thankfulness*. The arbitrariness of the *gift* is what *founds* the *spiritual thankfulness*. Its *spiritual* character means just that it is not thankfulness for anything specific; it is *thankfulness* for *nothing*, that is, for everything. If only one starts looking for reasons for being thankful, for any positive things worth gratitude, one renounces the *spiritual* dimension of *thankfulness*. This does not necessarily mean that one opposes it. But the insistence on finding some *visible* reasons, not to mention treating them as indispensable conditions for one's attitude, encloses one within the sphere of *visible* explanations and thus removes one from the reality of the unconditional *gift*. *Spiritual thankfulness* accepts that one owes everything, that one is in debt which it is impossible to pay back. As long as this acceptance tries to find any reasons, it retains an element of guilt, for in *this world* the one who does not pay his debts back remains indebted, remains guilty. *Spiritual thankfulness* turns this sense of guilt into gratitude.

Openness. 77.

The arbitrariness of this *gift* means that it might have not taken place or else that it might have been entirely different. Instead of 'this' one might have gotten 'that', instead of being 'this' one might have been 'that'. No matter what, in *visible* terms, one has obtained, does not change the nature of *that*, of the ultimate *gift* which deserves the same *thankfulness*. Anything that one is or encounters is but a particular instance of the fundamental generosity. Especially misery and suffering, which one can *actively* oppose, do not imply any metaphysical evil but an *existential* trial, a call to *transcend* one's *actuality* towards the recognition of the generosity of the *one* which *simply* gives. 'What' it gives depends already on the names with which we call it and calling it "evil" contradicts the *spiritual thankfulness*. This unreserved acceptance of the *gift* amounts thus to *openness* in which a man, "whether in a pigsty or in a palace," "[w]hatever befalls him,//He lives in happiness."[186] It is not *openness* to this or that, to anything specific but an unrestricted *thankfulness*, *spiritual openness* to *nothing*, that is, to everything.

Love 78.

These *aspects* – *humility*, *thankfulness*, *openness* – *reflecting* the respective *aspects* of the *nexus* of *Yes*, §§61.-68, we call jointly "*love*" or, to avoid confusion, the "*spiritual love*".[187] *Love* does not consist of *humility*, *thankfulness* and *openness*; it is the unified and *indistinct* attitude and these are but *aspects* of the same *nexus* of *Yes*. Other *aspects* might be listed, but it should not be necessary to exaggerate elaborations. For instance, *openness* amounts to *trust* as much as to *hope*, while *humble thankfulness* to fidelity. *Love* is the *aspect* of *grace*, the first element *founded concretely* in the *spiritual Yes*.

3.2.2.i. Works

The difference between the *spiritual* and *reflective Yes* concerns not so much the contents, 79. as the place they occupy in the field of *existence*. If a *nexus founds* particular forms of understanding or *acts*, then achieving such a form of understanding or performing such *acts* will contribute to formation or strengthening of this very *nexus*. *Loving grace* is the relation of Being in the heart of *existence*, it embraces its whole being, without leaving anything outside. At the same time, it may remain almost indifferent with respect to

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[186] *The Ashtavakra-Gita.* XVII:7

[187] "Charity" or, since we rely mostly on the Christian tradition, "*agape*", or even "obedience", in the sense used by the Church Fathers and mystics, may be here equally good – in fact, synonymous – words.

actual situations and moods – indifferent, that is, unnoticed if one tries to capture it by the *actual* look. The contents of the *reflective Yes*, on the other hand, occupy *actuality* without, necessarily, witnessing to the *presence* of their *spiritual* counterparts. *I* can think as long as *I* wish about humility and thankfulness, without ever becoming *humble* and *thankful*. *I* can even perform a lot of humble *acts* which, however, do not make me *humble* (especially, if humility is my intention.)

A closer relation between the two levels obtains when the *reflective* choice is made genuinely, that is, *actually* tries to *reflect* the *aspects* like those listed above in its own attitude, when it does not deliberate thankfulness, but tries to find it, does not ask about humility, but tries to live it. The *actual* choice is not even a necessary condition for the *spiritual* event of Yes, but it is certainly helpful, especially for *reflection* which has already been involved into the game of *invisibles* and which is in a sore need of *clarifying* it. Eventually, the *spiritual choice* says only *Yes* to *nothingness*, and so does the *reflective* one. But "[i]t requires an eminent reflection, or rather a great faith, to sustain a reflection on nothing, which is to say infinite reflection."[188]

Works and particular *acts* – the elements of *reflective* attitude – do contribute to the *invisible* sphere and, when performed in a right attitude, to *Yes*. The mechanism of such a contribution was described in II:2.3. Although the *actual experiences*, feelings, thoughts, *acts* do not influence directly the sphere of *invisibles*, they accumulate and pass gradually into the *virtual* depths of the soul. It is not so that "in every good work the just man sins", that "every work they attempt is accursed,"[189] for good works accumulate and strengthen the goodness of the soul. But there are no obvious, causal or otherwise, connections, no guarantees nor any *precise* rules determining the *virtual* effects of the *actual* works. Also, all *actual* elements are surrounded by the uncontrollable *rest* which, too, adds up to the result. The descriptions remain forever partial. Fortunately, "the gods have a care of anyone whose desire is to become just and to be like God, as far as man can attain to the divine likeness by the pursuit of virtue."[190] "As far as man can" because actually attaining to this likeness, the *spiritual Yes* and *grace*, are *invisible* events. Their dependency on the *visible* sphere may be claimed but never observed, may be concluded but never proved. A *spiritual* event, when it comes, comes only and unmistakably as a *gift*.

80.   "The faith of man follows his nature. Man is made of faith: as his faith is so he is."[191] As above, so below, and we have followed this direction almost all the time. And yet, "[n]ot by refraining from action does man attain freedom from action. Not by mere renunciation does he attain supreme perfection. For not even for a moment can a man be without action. [...] For there is no man on earth who can fully renounce living work, but he who renounces the reward of his work is in truth a man of renunciation."[192] The work done with *thankful* acceptance of any, possibly even none reward, with *humble* renunciation of one's pretensions to ownership and authorship, with exclusive attention to its own standards – such work marks the path on which "[n]o step is lost."[193] Complete dedication means that the work, needed for one's life as it may be, is actually a sacrifice, an expression of self-surrender. "Offer all thy works to God, throw off selfish bonds, and do thy work. [...] This man of harmony surrenders the reward of his work and thus attains final peace: the man

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[188]S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*. I:B [56]
[189]J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. III:19.2.4
[190]Plato, *Republic*. 613a:7.b.1
[191]*The Bhagavad-Gita*. XVII:3
[192]*The Bhagavad-Gita*. III:4-5/XVIII:11
[193]Ibid. II:40

of disharmony, urged by desire, is attached to his reward and remains in bondage."[194] This bondage of *attachment* may, too, have the appearance of intense and dedicated work. But such an *inverted* form announces not a peaceful self-renunciation but self-annihilating and all-consuming insatiability. On the other hand, "[t]he man who in his work finds silence, and who sees that silence is work, this man in truth sees the Light and in all his works finds peace. [...] In whatever work he does such a man in truth has peace: he expects nothing, he relies on nothing, and ever has fullness of joy. [...] He is glad with whatever God gives him, and he has risen beyond the two contraries here below; he is without jealousy, and in success or in failure he is one: his works bind him not."[195] Silence, after all, is the voice of God. But although it speaks from the beginning so to hear it, *above actual* noises, is man's true end.

Pure work is *both* an expression of *Yes and* the means of approaching it. "Seekers of union, 81. ever striving, see him dwelling in their own hearts; but those who are not pure and have not wisdom, though they strive, never see him."[196] Like many apparently vicious circles, so this mutual dependence, underlying all the disputes about the primacy of faith over works or works over faith, is but a *trace* of a *nexus* – here, the *nexus* of *Yes*. Nothing is first; the fact that we can decide and attempt only what is *actually* in our power, does not make the works either superior nor inferior to the faith. "Faith without works is empty, works without faith are blind."[197] Both follow the same course and neither is possible without the other. Works contribute to faith and faith can not fail to manifest itself in works.

If only we do not try to reduce goodness to any utility, usefulness or other *visible* categories, we can say: the works of a good man are good and only such works are good.[198] We would certainly not speak about the necessity or indispensability of works; indeed, "Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down."[199] Yet, we would object to denying works any helpful function.[200] Thus:

1. Works are not indispensable but are helpful.

2. They are the only things which one can intend and, to some extent, control, with respect to one's *spiritual* destiny.

3. They are thus the only *visible* means – and hence the *only* means – of striving for the *unity*, of keeping heaven and earth together.

Their *spiritual* relevance is determined not only by their content but primarily by their *rest*. Those bringing one closer to *Yes*:

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[194]Ibid. V:10/12

[195]Ibid. IV:18/20/22

[196]Ibid. XV:11

[197]I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. I:2.Introduction.1, A51/B75

[198]"The ground upon which good character rests is the very same ground from which man's work derives its value, namely a mind wholly turned to God. Verily, if you were so minded, you might tread on a stone and it would be a more pious work than if you, simply for your own profit, where to receive the Body of the Lord and were wanting in spiritual detachment." Eckhart [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*.XI]

[199]Amos IX:2

[200]The objections against such a possibility of 'influencing God's will' do not concern us, because what we possibly might find behind the expression "God's will" is simply the ever present possibility of saying *Yes*. It remains unchangeable and unaffected by anything happening within the world, among the *distinctions*. *Actuality* remains *ontologically founded* in the *one* and anybody willing to return is invited to and promised the possibility. But God's appearance changes and it changes exactly according to whether one lives *Yes* or *No*. Works are *the only* way in which one can help *oneself* to do the one rather than the other. But they are also *only* help: the eventual result is not in man's power.

4. are dedicated to God, are only *visible* expressions of the *spiritual* self-renunciation,

5. are not *mine*, are not performed for any reward but as *thankful* sacrifice.

In section 3.3 below we will consider *concrete founding* effected by *Yes*. In this connection, we will see several specific examples of attitudes *founded* by *Yes* which provide thus also examples of attitudes strengthening the *invisible* currents leading to it.

3.2.2.ii. Projections?

82.   One could perhaps ask the natural question which appeared briefly in §66. Does not *spiritual choice* amount to a projection? Do we not say that the *indistinct* and unknowable *one* has to be endowed with the qualities of the source, goodness, power and what not? The answer is no, and if you see this, you may safely skip this section.

   Indeed, there "can be no greater incongruity than [for a disciple of Spencer] to proclaim with one breath that the substance of things is unknowable, and with the next that the thought of it should inspire us with awe, reverence, and a willingness to add our co-operative push in the direction toward which its manifestations seem to be drifting."[201] There might be an incongruity in suggesting that the 'unknowable' should inspire one to anything. But we have neither anything 'unknowable' nor any inspiration in any particular direction. The *indistinct* is unknowable only if knowledge means the *actual episteme*, knowledge of 'whats'. But we do have full knowledge of it, we know all that is to know about it, if not in this narrow sense, then in the sense of *gnosis* – it is *indistinct, one above distinctions*. As to the *inspiration* then, indeed, it is only to silence. But silence can be a calm voice of eternity or a mute emptiness. It may *inspire* but it does not tell 'what' to do: it leaves you completely free to make your choice. This choice, the *spiritual choice* is a thoroughly real choice between the only two alternatives offered – not by the 'unknowable' but by the *absolute* which, in its *indistinctness*, remains indeed indifferent. Only we are affected, and we are affected by *confronting* the face of *one* which corresponds to our *choice*. What we have done with, or rather *out of* the concept of *indistinct* in Book I, can be taken as a description of the grounds which might incline one towards seeing it as the *origin*, that is, towards saying *Yes*. There is, however, no necessity, no sufficient reasons which might force one to make this, rather than the opposite choice.

83.   We should carefully distinguish the *choice* from mere psychological effects. According to James, "to find religion is only one out of many ways of reaching unity [...] In judging of the religious types of regeneration [...] it is important to recognise that they are only one species of a genus that contains other types as well. For example, the new birth may be away from religion into incredulity; or it may be from moral scrupulosity into freedom and license; or it may be produced by the irruption into the individual's life of some new stimulus or passion, such as love, ambition, cupidity, revenge, or patriotic devotion. In all these instances we have precisely *the same psychological form* of event, – a firmness, stability, and equilibrium succeeding a period of storm and stress and inconsistency."[202]

   One can form hierarchies of genera and species as one finds appropriate but if these have 'the same psychological form' (which here probably means something like psychologically indistinguishable, even if contentually different), then thank you very much for the psychological contribution – *spirit* is *above psyche* and here our ways part definitely with

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[201] W. James, *Essays in Pragmatism.* I;p.19
[202] W. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience.* VIII

psychology. Indeed, having only *actual experiences* of a 'subjective' psyche as the basis of distinctions, all such states may end up in the same sack. Yet, even James does not include these later instances in his treatment of the religious experience. So, after all, they are distinguishable? The sense of purpose, of direction and goal, of mission, or else of finding a valuable sphere of *experience* may indeed, especially if taken as absolute, give firmness and stability. All *idols* can, and many minor matters can. *Idols* are seldom entirely false – they gain followers exactly because they contain an element of truth. But the *unity founded* by the *spiritual choice* is not derived from any sense of goal, direction or mission – the goal is *nothing*, the direction is 'anywhere', and the mission is "*love*, and do what you wilt."[203]

One can *manifest* itself in innumerable ways which may be, on the one hand, psychologically indisinguishable from the effects of *idolatry* and, on the other hand, mutually as different as trembling and adoration, as fear and attraction. Such differences can often be found behind different *visible* characters of various religions.

An experience of God's presence will have tremendous influence on one's life, and the form of this influence may depend heavily on the character of the experience. But it is not its character, its content which may account for its influence – it is the lack thereof, expressed as the tremendous force, *majestas*. Psychologically distinguishable content plays its part but what is constitutive for such *an experience* is what this content reveals – the ultimate, *absolute* force which groans into one's face without showing its own. It is the *intensity* of such *an experience*, its irresistible power, which is its essential content, not the form under which it appears. And this power is *objectless* and contentless, it has no agent, it is the power of *nothingness*, but it *is*. There is, consequently, nothing to be projected, there is only something to be *recognised* – in the simplest sense, *that I am not the master*.

Spiritual choice is not a matter of *any experience* just like religiosity is never reducible to *any experiences* which, perhaps (though even this 'perhaps' seems too much), may be psychologically indistinguishable from a sudden attack of fear on a neurotic (or even a healthy) person, or from ecstatic joy which recurrently visits an infantile or senile one. Happening in the face of *absolute nothingness*, it is lifted *above* all *distinctions*, is independent from any *actual* contents. 84.

A meeting with *absolute* 'objectivity' does not require any specific context or experience. Specific character of particular *experiences* can play some (psychological) role but it concerns only the expression of the experienced power in *actual* terms. For such experiences are possible *actualisations*, as Otto says, 'schematisations' of the *a priori* ground of all *experience*. To the extent the *presence* of *numinosum* is recognised *above* their content, they themselves are *a priori* – irreducible to any *visible experiences* or categories, concepts or feelings, but grounded in the ultimate *invisibility*. The fact that *absolute* may (in fact, always does) invade only one person and not another is such an argument for its 'subjectivity' as it would be against the objectivity of Japan that some people were there while others were not. That it is unverifiable? What is? It is as unverifiable as the accusation of its being a 'subjective projection' is self-confirming. For as long as one insists on proofs and reasons, on a *visible* characterisation, one is unable to get any meaning whatsoever of its nature and value. But "*a priori* recognitions are not the ones which everybody has but ones which everybody *may* have."[204]

Whatever meets one in any situation, comes from beyond the horizon – not only the *horizon of actuality* but, eventually, the horizon of distinguishability. Certainly, many things are 85.

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[203]St. Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*. VII:8
[204]R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*. XXII ["Recognition" translates here the word "*Erkenntnis*"; my emph.]

expected and predictable but they, too, enter not on one's command but on their own – one can at most help them, never force them. And they, too, eventually emerge from beyond the horizon of the distinguished contents, from the *indistinct*. *Reflective Yes* is hardly much more than the admission *that I am not the master*, that *indistinct* is and remains *indistinct*, albeit, remaining so is also the source of *distinctions*. In particular, it is exactly the attitude of *not projecting anything* beyond the horizon of distinguishability, but merely admitting its constant *presence*. *Yes* admits only that, in the face of *nothingness*, any requirement or expectation of something specific and *visible* is *idolatry* which grows from angst. "The soul or mind reaching towards the formless finds itself incompetent to grasp where nothing bounds it or to take impression where the impinging reality is diffuse; in sheer dread of holding to nothingness, it slips away. The state is painful; often it seeks relief by retreating from all this vagueness to the region of sense, there to rest on solid ground, just as the sight distressed by the minute rests with the pleasure on the bold."[205] Angst, however, is *nothingness* facing the *attachment* to *visibility*, is the *horror vacui* facing one who, attempting to see *nothingness*, sees only void.

To fill this void, *attachment* forms images of the *absolute* based on *visible* patterns. To great "absurdities men were forced by the great license given to the imagination, and by the fact that every existing material thing is necessarily imagined as a certain substance possessing several attributes; for nothing has ever been found that consists of one simple substance without any attribute. Guided by such imaginations, men thought that God was also composed of many different elements, viz., of His essence and of the attributes superadded to His essence. Following up this comparison, some believed that God was corporeal, and that He possessed attributes; others, abandoning this theory, denied the corporeality, but retained the attributes."[206] All this, according to Maimonides, leads to polytheism for one is eventually forced to deify each separate attribute of the divine essence. Pantheism, understood as the deification of the *totality* of *visibles* and also relativism, which differs from pantheism only by denying this *totality* any divine character, are possible further consequences of such attempts to capture God's essence. In all cases, the image of the *absolute*, also when negated, becomes a projection of our forms of understanding. "The divine essence is nothing else but the essence of man; or, better, it is the essence of man when freed from the limitations of the individual, that is to say, actual corporeal man, objectified and venerated as an independent Being distinct from man himself."[207]

It is easy to agree with the criticism of the naive, childish image of God – and here one agrees with Maimonides as much as with Feuerbach.[208] But the two part ways very quickly. For while Maimonides, Xenophanes and most others criticise a *misconception* of God, Feuerbach identifies naiveté of such a misconception with the essence of religion.[209]

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[205]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.3 [MacKenna's translation]

[206]M. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*. I:51

[207]Feuerbach [after F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*. vol.VII:II.15]

[208]Or, for that matter, with many others, one of the first being Xenophanes accusing poets of ascribing to gods all too human features: "They have narrated every possible wicked story of the gods: theft, adultery, and mutual deception." [DK 21B12/11] The observation that "Aethiopians have gods with snub noses and black hair, Thracians have gods with grey eyes and red hair" [DK 21B16] summarises Feuerbach's reductions of theology to anthropology.

[209]It might be very easy to pretend that statements like "God created everything through me, when I was in the ineffable foundation of God [...] If I were not, there would be no God. There is no need to understand it" [Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West*.A:IX]] support such identification, §§68.ff. The difference concerns only the presence of the ultimate *transcendence* behind such statements – Godhead, after all is there, even if He acts only through me. Only this, apparently minimal, *invisible* difference separates two completely incommensurable views.

It is not *Yes* but, on the contrary, any other attitude which amounts to a projection: either of emptiness, as in the case of definite *No*, or of some *visible idol*.

Spiritual choice is not a choice of any particular God. Neither is it a choice *of* love, *of* morality, *of* charity, *of* unselfishness, of anything which might be opposed to something else. It is the pure and bare *Yes*. It does not choose any specific content which it might try (or has wished) to project 'outside' of its 'subjectivity'. *Yes* chooses only silence, the *confrontation* with *nothingness* (and *No* exchanges this *confrontation* into words, concepts and, eventually, emptiness). "If the mind reels before something thus alien to all we know, we must take our stand on the things of this realm and strive thence to see. But, in the looking, beware of throwing outward; this Principle does not lie away somewhere leaving the rest void; to those of power to reach, it is present; to the inapt, absent."[210] It is 'throwing outward' which amounts to projections, to either emptying *nothingness* and reducing it to a void, or else to populating it with finite *idols*. As it happens, the choice of *Yes* has tremendous consequences, but these are consequences, not projections.

Unlike every other choice, based on some particular *experiences*, thoughts or feelings, the   86. spiritual choice is *absolute*, not relative to any particular being or region of Being. Now, every choice suspends the relevance of subsequent feelings and thoughts. As will's *act* it says: "I choose *this*, no matter what might come". However, any such choice related to particular aspects of *experience*, continues being involved in them. Subsequent changes in their configuration may render sticking to the original choice the matter of pure dogmatism, inflexibility, stubbornness. Every choice is a projection of its *actual* decision into the future, every *act* and *action* is a projection – as Heidegger would say, a "project" – saying "I want this thing to be *so*". The *reflective Yes* is an *act*, and thus, in a similar way, it too *externalises* its content. But this *externalisation* does not result in any particular *object*, in any *dissociated* entity, nor in any quality ascribed to something which, subsequently, might turn out not to possess it. It is the *act* recognizing the ultimate *transcendence*, say, the ultimate 'objectivity', which is not dependent on the form or quality of any possible *experiences*. Through this *act reflection* only admits this *presence* and, by the same token, the insufficiency of its own modus. It recovers the constant, underlying all *experiences presence*, which it always knows, if only dimly, through *self-awareness*, that is, *awareness* of the *transcendence*. The *truth* of this *act*, the conformance to the *origin*, is thus lifted *above* and lasting beyond and independently from *this world*. It delivers *reflection* from its *dissociation* and *thirst* back to the *eternity* of its *origin*. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."[211]

Yes does not require any feelings or impressions, does not involve any specific thoughts   87. or contents which might be projected. It is a response to the *command* of *nothingness* to become *self*, *reflection* of the *origin*. It leaves all feelings and thoughts, all *visible signs* and particulars *below*, centering around the the *one* which becomes also the axis the world. It is *absolute* because it chooses the *absolute* – not instead of but *above* everything *visible* and relative. "The person is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of little fish. Among them the wise fisherman discovered a fine large fish. He threw all the little fish back into the sea, and easily chose the large fish."[212]

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[210]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:9.7 [MacKenna's translation]
[211]Matt. VII:24-25/Lk. VI:47-48
[212]*The Gospel of Thomas*. 8

This *choice* is *absolute* also in the sense that it effects the final division, the definite separation of "wheat from chaff" which until now have been mixed together. It takes the spell of *closedness* from *this world* and *opens* it to the *inspiration* from *another*. But this happens only through the *absolute* renunciation of *this world*, that is, of its *idolatry*. Any pretensions on its part to *absolute* validity and importance, to the ultimate and all-determining 'objectivity' are removed.

The *absolute* character of the *choice* amounts, in short, to the lack of any particular contents which possibly could be projected. Responding to the *command* to renounce *oneself*, it is the *choice* of the attitude which transforms the world: not in any of its temporal and *visible* aspects, but in its *absolute foundation* – it transforms the character of the whole *existence*. If somebody wants to call this "projection", it is of course his choice, although such a choice amounts to much more than it believes to be doing. It might even view itself as an act of "intellectual honesty", which does not posit anything where *nothing* can be seen. But such an "intellectual truth" amounts to the deepest *existential* falsehood.

3.3   Concrete founding

88.   In Book I, we had only to do with ontological *founding*: there would be no *experiences* without *experience*, there would be no *experience* without the *chaos* of *distinctions*, and there would be no *distinctions* without something to *distinguish*, or as it may be, to *distinguish* from. In Book II we saw, in a reverse order, its 'epistemological' counterpart: from the *immediacy* of *reflection* to the *actually reflected experiences*, from *experiences* to the *experience* and to the *awareness* of its *invisible* background, from *chaos* to the underlying *non-actuality* of *invisibles* and, eventually, to the *existential confrontation* with the *indistinct one*. The two hierarchies are, in fact, the same and differ only by the emphasis one puts either on the element of *participation* or relation, being or knowing; the difference of emphasis which is possible when viewing the same hierarchy either, so to speak, 'bottom up', from the assumed primacy of the *dissociation* into *subject* and *object*, or else 'top down', in the order of *founding*.

This *founding* is, as abstract ontology or epistemology in general, perhaps curiously interesting but *existentially*, at best only helpful and, at worst, irrelevant. It happens and works as it does, no matter what we do. Even if its understanding may reward our curiosity, it does not really affect us. We have several times observed that events at different levels may happen relatively independently from those at other levels. The ontological *founding* amounts exactly to establishing relatively independent ontological spheres. The lower elements, once dissociated from the higher ones, acquire relative autonomy and become almost completely unrelated to the events of higher levels. They do not miss their anchoring in the *origin*, but this anchoring, if it is discernible at the lower level, then only as some *vague traces* which *reflection* always attempts to reduce to a purely *actual* form. Thus, although the hierarchy does proceed from the *unity* of the *one*, it is not *experienced* as such in *concrete* terms. *Reflection* is only haunted by the *vague* sense of *unity* and its *acts* remain *dissociated* from their *origin* which, *actually*, means from each other. The intimations of *unity*, *clearly* known as they may be at the deeper layers of 'knowing', slip out of *precise reflective* grasp and dissolve in *vagueness*.

If *x founds y* then *y participates* in *x*: both these 'relations' (which are one and the same) may also have, in addition to the universal and ontological form, the *concrete* one. *Concrete foundation* does not *found experience* in general, but a particular way of *experiencing*, a *concrete experience* that the particular things and *distinctions* of the lower levels

originate from those at the higher levels. *Concreteness* is not, as the common confusion and language usage suggest, *immediate precision*. The table in front of me, the more *precisely* it is perceived and identified, becomes only the more abstract, because the more *dissociated*. *Concreteness* is the experiential continuity between the contents of *actual experiences* and their *foundation*, eventually, their *origin*. *Concrete* is only that which carries the *traces* of anchoring in the ultimate personal site, and the lack of such *traces* amounts to abstractness, that is, indifference, I:§138.

Unlike the ontological *founding*, the *concrete* one is not something that simply 'is that way', that simply is granted by the hidden but universal order of things which one can only discover and accept. Without *Yes*, without one's *love*, it actually is not. . . I can find gaiety, joy, fun in small things of *this world*, but unless this fun *participates concretely* in the higher mirth, and the mirth is surrounded by happiness of my whole *soul*, and by tranquility of the *spirit*, the fun can become only an escape towards *more* fun. "Fun I love but too much Fun is of all things the most loathsome. Mirth is better than Fun & Happiness is better than Mirth – I feel that a Man may be happy in This World."[213]

The 'happiness in This World', however, as even the ascending levels in Blake's description might suggest, is only a reflection of being *clearly* anchored in the *other world*. Man is a borderline between what is *below* and what is *above*, and *visible* is just another side of the *invisible*. An attitude towards the one is, at the same time, an attitude towards the other. The *spiritual Yes* to the *invisible nothingness*, accepting everything, *founds* also some *actual* attitude in the *visible world*. Just like "holiness is never the mere *numinosum*, even at its highest level, but is something which is always in a perfect way permeated and saturated with rational, purposeful, personal and ethical elements,"[214] so *actuality* is not merely the site of closed, *dissociated immanence*, but the eventual *sign* of the *origin*, the meeting point of *traces* of the *invisibles*, the eventual place of *incarnation*. When the *actuality* is *reflection* of nothing less but the *origin*, when the *traces* reach all the way to the *origin*, in short, when the *visible* and *invisible* spheres are no longer *dissociated*, the just quoted words of Blake seem only to echo, in the reversed order, those of Plotinus: "The loveliness that is in the sense-realm is an index of the nobleness of the Intellectual sphere, displaying its power and its goodness alike: and all things are for ever linked."[215]

The attitude towards the *visible world* which is an expression of the *spiritual love* is *non-attachment*. This concept, although it is only negation of *attachment* described in 2.5, deserves nevertheless some closer remarks.

3.3.1. Non-attachment
"Put not with God other gods, or thou wilt sit despised and forsaken.
Thy Lord has decreed that ye shall not serve other than Him" [216]

Thirsting for eternity, we flirt with time, but the moods of silence are never satisfied by anything *visible*. The *thirst* is not for anything particular, anything *visible*. This does not mean that to quench it, one has to deny all the *visible world*, that only death is the ultimate peace. This means only that *this world* itself is not enough, that it does not 'fill the soul', that since it contains all and only answers, it never gives *the* answer . . . To quench the *thirst*? "But how is this to be accomplished?

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[213]W. Blake, *Letter to Rev. Dr. Trusler.*
[214]R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy.* XV
[215]Plotinus, *Enneads.* IV:8:6 [MacKenna's translation]
[216]Koran. XVII:22-23

Cut away everything."[217]

3.3.1.i. Renouncement

89.   Mystics and sages have always spoken about self-denial and denial of *this world*. In a sense, *grace*, living and lived *spiritual love*, the union of which mystics speak – lifted *above this world*, seem to be exactly such a denial.

However, the renunciation (not the denial) is only an *aspect* of *Yes* and, as the means, should not be confused with the goal. They at the same time speak always about the need for constant alertness, presence of mind, active attention to the *actual* situation. This constant vigilance may seem to contradict the supposed peace of the union with God based on absolute self-denial. There is, however, no contradiction because *grace* is but the *second birth*, is re-birth not only of soul but of flesh, is resurrection of the body, that is, of *this world* as much as the *other one*. The union with God is also the union with the world. The difference is that before, *this world* was only ontologically grounded in the *other world* and thus there was not a real, *concrete* unity of the two. Resurrection is the *spiritual* event which brings the two worlds together, which makes *visible* not only a mere *actualisation*, but a true *manifestation* of the *invisible*, making everything "on earth, as it is in heaven".

90.   The 'death to this world' means only that *visibility* loses its absolute importance, that it is seen now *sub specie aeternitas*, with, as St. Francois de Sales called it, holy indifference. *I* remain *myself* as *I* have always been, but this *mineness* is no longer the axis of the world. It is now *experienced* only as an accident of the *origin*, as only one of its possible, *actual gifts*. "[A] man should so stand free, being quit of himself, that is, of his I, and Me, and Self, and Mine, and the like, that in all things, he should no more seek or regard himself, than if he did not exist, and should take as little account of himself as if he were not, and another had done all his works. Likewise he should count all the creatures for nothing."[218]

This, indeed, is the *reflective* attitude conditioning *spiritual love*. But all this "counting for nothing" expresses only *non-attachment* to the *visible* things, the acceptance that, in their *actual* existence, they should not make one unconditionally dependent on them. It is not denial of their existence, nor of their possible relevance. It is only denial of their *absolute* power. "Fear not the flesh nor love it. If you fear it, it will gain mastery over you. If you love it, it will swallow and paralyze you."[219] One still lives among and *acts* on things of *this world*, but one's *life* is not exhausted by such *actions*. One tries to attain *visible* goals, but one does not crave them, one enjoys them, but one does not worship them. And if one fails, if one does not attain them, if one does not enjoy them, then … it does not matter. One's *life* is never exhausted by them, it always carries the *rest*, the inexhaustible potential. This *rest* contains *thankfulness* even for one's failures. For all these actions, attainments and enjoyments are themselves only *visible* things of only relative value. One can try again or one can let it go – one need not know what one will do, this will turn out at the proper time and one may be vastly surprised. Everything is a *gift* and one can not have anything which one is not prepared to lose.[220]

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[217]Plotinus, *Enneads*. V:3.17 [MacKenna's translation]

[218]*Theologia Germanica*. XV

[219]*The Gospel of Philip*.   Describing the man who stepped beyond all unnecessary worries and distinctions, *The Ashtavakra-Gita* says: "Because he is freed,//He neither craves nor disdains//The things of this world." XVII:17

[220]A closely related thought of Schopenhauer dismisses the possibility of any complains: justice is equally

3.3.1.ii. Idols

Renouncing *this world*, one does not deny its reality or value. One only denies it *abso-* 91.
lute validity, refuses to rise any *idols*. This refusal is *equipollent* with renouncing *oneself*,
for *mineness* is the pattern of all *idolatry*. Behind every *idol*, there is the *idol* of *mine-*
ness. Even apparent self-denial for the sake of truth, justice, progress, freedom hides often
cherishing *myself* as the one who is able to reach something ultimately important and in-
accessible to others. "Do not strive to seek after the true, only cease to cherish opinions,"[221]
after all, "[h]uman opinions are children's toys."[222] *Idols* are not *visible* things, but *visible*
things considered as all important, which eventually means, raised to the level of absolutes.
Idolatry, 'worshiping images' is exactly that – to take as *absolutely* important something
that is not.[223] 'Cherishing opinions' may be so much, and may be nourished by so many
mechanisms. ('Being entitled', often 'entitled to one's own opinion', and even 'entitled to
be heard' are quite common forms.) At the bottom it is to make an *idol* of *mineness*, is to
think that something *visible* is worth cherishing an opinion about, and that *I* am entitled
to cherishing such an opinion. Cherishing an opinion, *I* cherish *myself*.

Again, all this does not mean that *I* can not mean anything about anything. I not only
can – I am bound to. I will have opinions about things, *I* will participate in arrangements
of things, in research, in work, in all kinds of activities of *this world*. Moreover, I will accept
all these things as *my* part, as relative, yet *absolutely* real, though not as *absolute* reality.
But in the moment *I* start cherishing them, *I* cherish *myself*, *I* become *attached*, that is,
start to worship *idols*. Giving up *idols* is, at bottom, giving up *oneself*, for *attachment* is
the pattern of all *idolatry* and all *idols* are things which, being *below me* and being raised
to the absolute, possess *me*.

Idols are what can 'possess' man, 'being possessed' consisting precisely in making the 92.
relative into the absolute. Even if I have all the good reasons for adhering unreservedly to
a given opinion, my being possessed by it consists in the *unreservedness*, in the perhaps
unintended, but therefore the stronger and more effective, turning it into an absolute.

Rationalism, defined as acceptance of *actual* statement or position with the recognition
of its limited validity (and in the best case, also of its actual limits), is the opposite of being
possessed. In this respect, it coincides with innocence which is just that – being pure, that
is, not being possessed. But every '-ism' indicates being possessed, absolutisation of some
relative sphere or expression. One's intense and deeply convinced materialism or idealism,
atheism or theism, liberalism or dogmatism, Protestantism or Catholicism, intellectualism
or existentialism – all testify against one's innocence. One can become possessed even
by rationalism itself which, *unfounded* and *dissociated* in its *proud* complacency, tends
towards agnosticism, relativism, scepticism or just dry rigidity.

3.3.1.iii. Obedience

Giving up *idols* does not mean merely to replace the 'object' of such a worship, to exchange 93.

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given to all, both happy and unhappy ones.

[221] Anonymous Zen master

[222] Heraclitus DK 22B70. A related advice of Heraclitus is: "Let us not conjecture randomly about the
most important things." DK 22B47

[223] Of course, we will not go as far as the iconoclasts of the IX-th century did in considering any represen-
tations as idolatry. The question, as always, is about the attitude towards things – enjoyment of artistic
expressions, whether religious or not, is very different from *idolatry*.

the relative for the absolute, but still retain one's attitude. *What* is being worshiped determines the *visible* aspects of the attitude. Worship of patriotism *is* different from worship of communism, worship of scientism *is* different from worship of money. Yet, they are the same in so far as *idolatry* is concerned. To cease worshiping *idols* is to recognise their thoroughly relative character, relative not only to each other and to particular circumstances, but also to the *foundation* from which they emerge; eventually, it is simply to recognise the *absolute* character of the *one* which is unconditionally *above* the world of *distinctions*.

"Behold, in such a man must all thought of Self, all self-seeking, self-will, and what cometh thereof, be utterly lost and surrendered and given over to God, except in so far as they are necessary to make up a person."[224] The crucial *aspect* of *non-attachment* lies not in any grandiose opening to the *above* and ascetic self-denial, but in the small reservation "except in so far. . .". I do not deny *visibility*, I only renounce the image of its absoluteness.

94. Another expression for such a renunciation of *idols* is "*obedience*" which, however, does not mean submission to any specific agent, even less to any specific commands. It is *obedience to nothing*, that is, to everything. *Obedience* is just another way of saying *that I am not the master* and, on the other hand, that I am *thankful*. These two – not any servile submission, lack of autonomy, sense of inferiority – exhaust the sense of *spiritual obedience*. It is not any conflict of the wills in which one must yield to the other, for only we, limited human subjects, have any will. If it is a conflict, then only of *my will* with *nothingness*, which "is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not."[225] *Obedience*, or as one often used to say, "obedience to the Divine Will", means only that *I* cease to insist on *my will*, that is, that *I* cease to insist on *myself*. "Do not strive to seek after the true, only cease to cherish opinions." *My ego* is the site of *idols* which disturb more than *I* am ever able to realise, opinions which are *mine* (and true!), images which drive *my will* in all possible, often pleasant, directions. *Obedience* means only (only?) that *I* let them go, I may still use them, but *I* cease worshiping them.

I am not the master and I am *obedient* – eventually, this means that *I* am *nothing*. Not having any master and being *obedient* to *nothing*, *nothing* becomes *my* whole treasure. *Nothing* is *mine*, not only things, but even *acts*, also the *spiritual choice* is not *mine* – it happens *above me*. Even *thirst* is not *mine* – it was only given to *me* as a *gift* of remembrance. *Nothing* is all you have, is *your* only treasure, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."[226]

95. We react against 'obedience' which berefts us of our 'autonomy', just like we think that emptiness is when nobody speaks. But emptiness is when nobody listens, and *the whole obedience* is to listen to the silence, not to any specific orders. It is to accept that *I am not the master*, not finding another one nor even barely looking for one. *Nothing* is the master and *obedience* is but *openness* to its *gifts*, free *thankfulness* lifted *above* all particular gifts, as opposed to the free rejection which loses all its autonomy to the degree it insists on it.

Obedience does not follow any specific commands which concern *visible world*. It follows only one *command*, the *command* to become one *self*, to recognise the *presence* where *nothing* can be seen and say *Yes*. This *command* reaches one only *above* all *visible* contents and specific noises, in a moment of silence, a moment of *eternity* in time – nowhere and never happens more than in such a moment.

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[224] *Theologia Germanica.* XLIII
[225] Eckhart
[226] Matt. VI:21; Lk. XII:34

3.3.1.iv. Spiritual unity

Yes says that the *visible* impossibility does not count. In this sense it renounces *this* 96.
world, renounces its pretensions to *absolute* validity. Renouncing all *visibility* leaves only
nothingness, the place where everything can appear anew. But it is no longer a place
divided into *this world* and *another world*. *Incarnated spirit* is the *unity* of – not only a
borderline between – the *visible* and *invisible*. In what does this *unity* consists, *concretely?*
In *nothing* particular. "Damn the flesh that depends on the soul. Damn the soul that
depends on the flesh."[227] The *spiritual* unity of soul and body, of higher and lower, modifies
but does not change man's existential situation. Man is a borderline between what is *below*
and what is *above* – *visible* is just the other side of *invisible*. The *unity* amounts ot *concrete*
foundation in the *origin*, *openness* to seeing the *aspect* of *gift* in every *actual* situation.

Actually, no intention towards the *origin* is needed, if at all possible. Such an intention is 97.
already an indication of a mistake – the *one* can not be made correlate of our intentions
or *acts*, unless it is reduced to some *objective* from. Intentional *acts* find place only in the
sphere of *visible* contents, *distinctions* which are sharp enough to be turned into *reflective*
objects, *objects* of *action* or of *reflection*. An *act* consciously intending 'goodness' is not
good. It need not be evil, nor wicked, nor malicious, but it is not pure. The intention of
'being good' pollutes every *act* unless it is withdrawn from the sphere of *actuality*, unless
it is *nothing*, an *invisible rest*. But this means exactly that it is not any intention. 'Being
good' emerges, as it were, only as a side-effect of *acts* which themselves are occupied only
with their *actual object* and *visible* relations.

This applies to all higher things which one might try to *posit* as one's intentions, even
goals. An *act* whose main goal is *to be* compassionate, is not compassionate, just like an
act by which *I* try to prove and show my freedom is not free. A person focused on making
always 'right' decisions may, indeed, happen to make them 'right'. But he spends time
in constant worry about doing just that. And since 'right' is entirely *vague* category, one
never rests. A person focused on his salvation may happen to do a lot of good things, but
his focus will always bother him: "Has it already happened or not yet?"

Spirit, as a contentless *openness* to *nothingness* is purity and poorness. Beyond the *actual* 98.
objectives, it does not aim at any higher, *invisble* goals. It does not seek the spiritual, does
not worry about it. This is the only way of its *concrete presence*. "Blessed are the poor in
spirit."[228] Walking the spiritual paths may be an expression of a genuine spiritual *thirst*
– but this only means, the absence of *spirit*. "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my
footsteps slip not."[229] Any strife, any search, whether spiritual or not, is but a lack. The
more spiritual such a search is, the more it circles around the *vague* and indefinable *that*
and the less it is satisfied with any 'what'. But spiritual search is not *spirit*. *Spirit* either
is, either is thoroughly, *concretely* and *absolutely present*, or it is not at all, is only some
unidentifiable and ever missing *rest*.

If we view the ontological *founding* from Book I as the descent of which mystics and
philosophers of the Neoplatonic orientation spoke, while its lived and understood *reflection*
in the levels of Being from Book II as the corresponding ascent, then the *incarnated love*
marks the final and definite return.[230] It does not end in a momentaneous illumination, in

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[227] *The Gospel of Thomas.* 112. "Hate and lust for things of nature have their roots in man's lower nature.
Let him not fall under their power: they are the two enemies in his path." [*The Bhagavad-Gita.* III:34]
[228] Matt. V:3; Lk. VI:20
[229] Ps. XVII:5
[230] This seems to be the natural way to interpret much of the mystical ascent though, of course, there are

an ecstatic contemplation, in any *actual experience* of mystical union with a constant wish for its repetition. It does not live in *another world*, but it does not have to descent into *this world* either – there is only one world, and *actuality* becomes the scene of constant, *concrete presence*. The *origin* is no longer remote and separate – *spiritual love* is nothing else except the attitude towards the *visible world*. *This* world is not *only* a *sign* of the *other world* – it is *the only sign*, the only form of *invisible presence*.

3.3.1.v. Forgetful remembrance

99.   *Spirit* is first of all *humility* towards the spiritual, towards the *invisible origin*. *Openness* towards *nothing* directs it towards *this visible world* which is the only field of possible *activity* and which is no longer *dissociated* from *another world*, of which *I am not the master*. "[T]here is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"[231] Or, we might add, to *see* what is *above* him? *Spirit* is the relation to *nothingness* completed in its *rest* with the mere *that*.[232] As there is nothing more to do about *nothingness* than saying *that* it is, *spirit* is the *restful* return to *this world*. To *rest* is to accept the *invisible rest* – to give up all the attempts at making it *visible* – and in this sense, to *forget* it. *Spirit* is *forgetfulness* of the spiritual.

100. Thus, *spirit* is the renouncement of *this world* and *forgetfulness* of the spiritual. Indeed, *nothing* is left. As soon as something more *precise* gets involved, a distinct thought, a specific feeling, the *spirit* seems to evaporate, to lose *actuality* giving place to the flesh – perhaps, to *myself*, perhaps, to *my ego* and body. But *I* live only in the world of *distinctions* and this withdrawal is *spirit*'s only true *presence* – it *incarnates* only when the attempts to *actualise* it have ceased. Being *invisible*, it can never become *actual*, but it can be *present* around and *above actuality* which means, in the very midst of it. If you look to the left, you won't find it, if you look to the right, you won't find it, if you look forward or backward, in past or in future, you won't find it. Because, when you look for it, you have already found it, you only have to stop looking. "[The kingdom] will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, 'Look, here!' or 'Look, there!' Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it."[233] But 'to stop looking for it' is as difficult as it sounds easy.

There is a great difference, which may appear as a paradox, between *forgetfulness* and forgetfulness, or perhaps, between *forgetfulness* and denial. *Forgetfulness* of the spiritual is the deepest remembrance of *nothingness* – remembrance, however, not in the form of a constant, *actual* remembering, of incessant focus on the desired, even if impossible, *actuality* of the spiritual.[234] It is remembrance which, for the first, remembers only *nothing*,

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other possibilities. Hermes Trismegistus is probably one of the clearest examples emphasizing this element of return – not to some sphere *above* but to *this world*: "as below so above" but also "as above so below".

  [231]Eccl. III:22. Although we will not confuse such remarks with the stoical endurance, which is a matter of resignation and surrender to the world overgoing one's powers, not of *thankfulness* for its *gift*, we may nevertheless notice affinity of expression: "We must make the best use that we can of the things which are in our power, and use the rest according to their nature. What is their nature then? As God may please." [Epictetus, *The Discourses*. I.1]

  [232]The verb "*rest*" here (and the noun "*rest*" as 'tranquility') is, obviously, something different from the noun "*rest*" as 'reminder' which we have been using earlier. The homonymity, however, serves us perfectly because the equivocation is thoroughly intensional. To *rest* is to admit, to allow for, to accept the *rest*.

  [233]*The Gospel of Thomas*. 113

  [234]This is the source of bad conscience, not yet in any moral sense, but in the spiritual sense which tran-

only *that* it is, but does not worry constantly about 'what' it is; and, for the second, remembrance which itself is not *actual* but thoroughly *invisible*, which does not enter the sphere of *actual* considerations and intentions and does not try to bring the *invisible rest* into explicit *actuality* of *here-and-now*. It is forgetfulness as far as the *actual* occupations of the *subject* are concerned, for these deal only with *visible* things. But as far as *my* being is concerned, it is the remembrance which *I* have become, the *self* which is no longer overshadowed by *my self*, not to mention, by *myself*. *Actual forgetfulness* is the eternal remebrance.

By its very nakedness and *nothingness*, *spirit* grants *actuality* all the validity it possesses 101. as the only place of our *acts* and works. But to find this place, one has to lose it first. *I* can not have anything which *I* have not already lost. Ibsen says, "Only the lost is eternally owned,"[235] but one might sense here some literal and resentful meaning of loss. Bitterness, *closing* one's world in the ever narrower circle of disappointment, is a frequent companion of *attachment* unable to live the *actual* loss. But 'having lost' precedes any *actual* loss and amounts rather to suspending its validity without, however, negating it completely. It is more like an intense joy over a minute thing which as if suspends the validity of the whole world. It does not narrow the horizon to the mere *here-and-now*, but rather opens it up – not for all the things in the vicinity, not for all the *visible* things around, but for the *clear* joy, inflow of its rays. "When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the spirit laughs for what it has found."[236] So also on the other hand, if I have not lost *this* whole *world*, if *I* stay *attached* to it, *I* am not able to fully and deeply enjoy any single thing.

To have some particular thing is to have already lost it, to agree that it is not *mine*, that *I* do not control it. Only then can *I* truly have it. Having already lost it is simply to admit its fragility, which only makes the appreciation greater. Expectation of its possible loss may certainly cause some worry. If, and when, one *actually* loses it, this may certainly cause sorrow and pain. *Spirit* does not abolish such negative moods, thoughts, feelings. On the contrary, it actually *opens* one for their thorough and deep experience. This happens because such worries and sorrows are as real as they are relative, and although they may affect *me*, they do not affect the tranquil *unity* of the *spirit*.

We are not saying that *spiritual unity* is a tranquiliser, a placebo against finite failures and 102. *actual* dissatisfactions. *Spirit* is a full directedness towards such finite and *visible* things and events, it does not supersede them. It only makes one worry for the things of *this* *world* without worrying about the ultimate things, without looking for the *absolute* in the *visible*, that is, without establishing *idols*.

It makes one care for all finite things because, having *founded* one's being in the only *absolute* of *nothingness*, it allows one to recognise their fundamental fragility. A thing which one could not *possibly* lose (if such a thing existed) would be, or in any case would turn with time ... worthless. An eternal life, imagined vulgarly as merely temporally infinite, would be, if not unbearable, then eventually boring. And boredom would not come from the fact that there were no new things to encounter. It would come exactly from the fact that there would be nothing else to encounter than mere novelties. Death is the

scends the notion of personal guilt; the bad conscience of Luther or Faust or Mann, so characteristic for the Germanic mind and almost unknown to the English ratio-empiricism or French enlightened aestheticism.

[235]*Brand* IV:last scene. "Whoever abandons things as they are accidental possesses them as they are pure being and eternal" [Eckhart *German Sermons* Si.L:10; Ac.I:4. in B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart...* 16b;29.]

[236]Anonymous Sufi aphorism [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*.p.106]

complete return to *indistinctness*. And it is the knowledge of this ultimate *nothingness*, of the fragility of all *visibility*, which makes life so valuable. However, life occupied *exclusively* with the maintenance of itself, forgetting *that*, i.e., that there is something more worthy than it, perhaps even something for which it could be sacrificed, becomes a mere social, even a mere biological phenomenon – deindividualised, impersonal, eventually, meaningless. Although it is hardly possible to live fully such an idea, it is possible to *actually* believe it.

103. Eventually, only *visible* things of *this world* are given to us, so that we can "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."[237] But reducing Being, and what then follows, our being, to such things only, *dissociating* them from the *nothingness* of their *origin* (as is typically the case in the attempts to see, *re-cognise* and admit the value which they do possess), turns them into dead and empty *objects*. It makes us forget so that we do not remember. *Forgetfulness*, too, directs us towards *visible* things but not as the only and *absolute* form of Being. *Forgetfulness* makes us remember that they are only *signs*, but also that they are *the only signs* of the *invisible*. "Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you."[238]

3.3.1.vi. Losing and winning

104. *Non-attachment* is the consent to having lost *this world*, it is *Yes* which, being directed to *nothingness*, is unconditional. And just like *No*, motivated by the *attachment* to *this world*, turns it eventually into nothingness, so the apparent renunciation of *this world* turns out to be *Yes* to all the *visible* things. *Non-attachment* is a *concrete presence* in the midst of *this world*. But it is not the goal to make one so concerned with *this world* – it is only the effect. To achieve it, one has to renounce it, for "the Supreme for which the soul hungers though unable to tell why such a being should stir its longing-reason, however, urging that This at last is the Authentic Term because the Nature best and most to be loved may be found there only where there is no least touch of Form."[239] Only giving up all the forms, life acquires the ultimate and *concrete foundation* and so, "whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."[240]

We care often for things because we value them to the degree which we do not even realise. We can do good works because our boss, our spouse, other people expect that or because our hidden inhibitions prevent us from doing otherwise. All this has nothing to do with the *spirit*, even if the *externally visible* results may be exactly the same. For *external* results do not give us as deep a satisfaction, as we often would like to believe, and *acts* performed for the sake of reward are not of *spirit* but of *attachment*. But we can also care for things and do good works because there is nothing else to do. We would like to reach the paradise but we know nothing about ways to it except those which, at each

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[237]Gen. I:26

[238]*The Gospel of Thomas*. 5. Bluntly put, *spirit* is the true life of the flesh, but it lives *only* in and through the flesh. As we learn from the long tradition, one can easily construct contradictions between the two, but easiness as seldom lends any credibility as contradictions witness to health. Say, a 'contradiction' between the defense of the lower, sensible world in Plotinus, *Enneads* II:9.*Against the Gnostics* and, on the other hand, passages like V:3.17, footnote 217 and others advocating renouncement of *this world* Such 'contradictions' disappear once we observe that what is wrong with the lower, sensible, material, *visible* world is not its being as such but our *attachment* to it. The calls to renunciation of *this world* do not try to negate its reality and even beauty, but only our *idolatrous* attitude with respect to it.

[239]Plotinus, *Enneads*. VI:7.33 [MacKenna's translation]

[240]Lk. IX:24, XVII:33; Mt. X:39; Jh. XII:25

single step, remind of it. Care for finite things, work carried out with conscientiousness, respect and *humility*, do keep heaven and earth together. Work – hard, tiring, exhaustive work – which has engaged fully body and mind, makes us *forget* which *Forgetfulness* finds the expression as respect for 'the order of things'. At the same time, *forgetting* thus ourselves, we remember 'Something'. Sloth is a cardinal sin because there is no such thing as disembodied, non-incarnated spirit, which "bloweth where it listeth"[241] without touching the earth. There is only living, *concrete spirit*, which unfolds itself in the body, in *this world*. Dedication and thoroughness, hard work and conscientiousness are not, in any case, not necessarily signs of *attachment*. More often than not, they are signs of *spirit*. And as all *acts* which are expressions of *spirit*, they also strengthen it. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established."[242]

To be sure, *concrete presence* of *spirit* is nothing common. Perhaps, it is even very rare, though it seems that it is less rare than we want to admit or are able to realise. But the fact that no statistical investigation may ever give a slightest indication of it means only that it is the most real, that is, the most individual and personal possibility – unrepeatable, not because of varying *visible* conditions but because thoroughly *concrete*; and always the same, because consummated in the same existential situation, in the face of *one nothingness*.

3.3.2. Inversions

Before giving some examples of *concrete founding*, there are a few observations to be made.

Love has unlimited number and forms of *incarnation* which are always purely personal. 105. *Love* is a *virtual nexus* which opens unlimited field of possible *manifestations*. "Temperance is love surrendering itself wholly to Him who is its object; courage is love bearing all things gladly for the sake of Him who is its object; justice is love serving only Him who is its object, and therefore rightly ruling; prudence is love making wise distinctions between what hinders and what helps itself."[243] Furthermore, every *concrete manifestation* of *love*, although it may seem to express only one or few of its *aspects*, is always a full expression of all of them. For *nexus* can not be divided and *present* only partially; only its *aspects* can possibly exclude each other from the *actuality* which they fill, leaving no place for others. Say, modesty may seem a natural example of *humility*, but it involves equally *thankfulness* and *openness*. Modesty is not a servile admission of one's inferiority. It is a humble gratefulness which does not argue about the qualities and conditions of the *gift* – one's own achievements and labor being, too, "nothing more than the finding and collecting of God's gifts."[244] And it is grateful for everything it obtains, for a person who is now modest and now not, is simply not modest but only behaves modestly in some situations.

Now, all the *aspects* of *love* are predicated adequately about the *spiritual* attitude, and 106. only analogically about anything within the *visible world*. Together with the *unity* of all the *aspects* in every expression of *spiritual love*, this may easily give raise to apparent *inversions*. Roughly, *inversion* is a *manifestation* through something which appears as the opposite of the manifested. This happens especially when judged by *No* which does not recognise anything beyond the *visible* categories of merely human, or even only *egotic*,

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[241] John III:8

[242] Prov. XVI:3

[243] St. Augustine [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. V]

[244] M. Luther, *Luther's Works*. 45;p.327 [after P. Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*. II:10.1]

level.

Inversions originate in the most general schema of nothingness being (the origin of) everything, which is also reflected in the fact that the apparent renunciation of myself and this world in non-attachment amounts truly to the genuine return to the world. Thirst is a sign of genuine presence, spirit is forgetfulness of the spiritual. The apparent lack may be the true manifestation, albeit in an inverted form. On the other hand, the total absence of spirit is, too, its total forgetfulness. On the surface the two extremes may be indistinguishable, for what separates forgetfulness from forgetfulness, presence from absence, is an invisibly thin line. With respect to the spirit, such lines are the most crucial boundaries and only attachment to visibility will view their expressions as paradoxes which often permeat the language of spirit.

107.   Modesty is to do everything one can. Although this is all, it may need an explanation, so let us add: and knowing that one can not do more. My own achievements are also gifts, only ones which I can influence. Waiting resigned for a miraculous gift from heaven has nothing to do with modesty; perhaps with laziness or sloth. An achievement is an inverted form of a gift. Modesty works with full dedication, it employs all the abilities and potential for achievement of its goals. It confronts the task and makes one disappear in the process of this confrontation – one is still here but, in a sense, only for the sake of the task. Modesty is this disappearance of myself. Only having done everything, only meeting the limits, one becomes modest. And when one has done everything one could, one also knows it – for knowing that one can not do more is the same as having done everything one could. The addition of 'knowing that...' does not add anything; it only seduces us to think of 'knowing' merely as explicit, actual and fully reflective knowing. (It even seduces us to think that what we said may be self-satisfied and detached "I am done with it ('cos I can't do anything else)." Modesty is never done with anything, for it knows that no matter what it has done, more could be done, only that it can not do that.)

A person trying actively to accomplish some task may spend a lot of time and effort in this direction. He may become a highly skilled expert with very high professional standards. From outside, and seen only in abstract terms, it may easily look like he is only craving for reputation, recognition or just for professional achievements of which he could be proud. Although often this may be the case, it certainly does not have to be. Modesty depends on one's capacities and standards one applies to oneself – if these are exceptionally high, others will rather see ambition and pride. But the person may – though only may – be full of openness and modesty, and what is (typically, in the impersonal sphere of gossip, rumours and newspapers) judged as craving and striving may be but dedication, energy and . . . true humility.

In short, what appears as arrogance may, in fact, be thankfulness; what appears as preoccupation with one's little world may, in fact, be openness; what appears as pride may, in fact, be humility. Likewise with the opposite, we never know "under which tempting and affection-rising forms lie can, in spite of everything, penetrate to the deepest layers of

[] spiritual honesty."[245] One does wisely suspending one's judgment in such matters.[246]

Humility – pride

"But if there were one in hell who should get quit of his self-will and call nothing his own, he would come out of hell into heaven."[247] *Spiritual choice* recognizes *oneself* as *nothingness*, admitting not only that *I am not the master* but that, in fact, *I am nothing*. If *I* think that I *am* anything – no matter what, wise or not-wise, good or bad, rich or poor – I am still *attached* to 'images'. "I am a son of X. These are my relatives. I am happy. I am unhappy, I am an idiot, I am a leader, I am pious, I have a relative, I was born, I died, I am old, I am a criminal."[248] If I use any names, not only for the *invisible*, but also for *myself*, I think that *I* am something.

Saying, on the other hand, that *I am nothing* and, perhaps also, that *nothingness* is the *origin*, can be construed as proud detachment attempting to rise itself above all such things of fundamental value to most people. One can even attempt to construe *love* and *humility* bordering on holiness as simple egoism, exclusive preoccupation with one's own self and one's own salvation – for "that love occupies the highest place in the hierarchy of egoisms does not change the fact that it is egoistic."[249] However, calling holiness of love for "egoism" is to deny it. Holiness does appear as something higher and, perhaps, distant but, at the same time, it is never absolute 'otherness' separated from us by an impassable distance. On the contrary, it always embraces everything around itself as if telling to everybody: that art thou, too. But not hearing this silent voice, one will think the distance to be infinite, and see detachment instead of *presence*. The *humility* of *non-attachment*, indeed, brings one *above this world* – not, however, in any sense of despising *this world*, of contempt for human weaknesses and vanity of all things, but only in the sense of not accepting anything *visible* as *absolute*. *Humility* is *founded* in the face of *nothingness* – it is humble in the face of *visible* things because they are its *gifts* and *nothingness* penetrates their whole *actuality*. Thus, its *actual manifestations* can indeed be felt as a proud challenge. They need not bear the appearance of obvious humility, inferiority and self-depreciation of an ascetic, if not also a Franciscan, flavor.[250] Just like the ambiguous modesty mentioned above, *humility* may appear, in the eyes of the world, as its exact *inversion*: instead of *non-attachment*, one can see detachment, instead of *humility* – pride raising its head above

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[245]M. Proust, *John Ruskin*.

[246]*Inversion* is more than mere confusion. It is common that, for instance, "vices shew themselves off as virtues, so that niggardliness would fain appear as frugality, extravagance as liberality, cruelty as righteous zeal, laxity as loving-kindness." [St. Gregory the Great, *Epistles*. Book I:XXV. To John, Bishop of Constantinople, and the Other Patriarchs [Also, *The Book of Pastoral Rule...* II:9]] *Inversions* can indeed give rise to misunderstandings, but it is their inherent feature that what is *manifested* appears *actually* as its opposite. They are more adequately described by St. Augustine: "A father beats a boy, and a boy-stealer caresses. If thou name the two things, blows and caresses, who would not choose the caresses, and decline the blows? If thou mark the persons, it is charity that beats, iniquity that caresses. See what we are insisting upon; that the deeds of men are only discerned by the root of charity. For many things may be done that have a good appearance, and yet proceed not from the root of charity. For thorns also have flowers: some actions truly seem rough, seem savage; howbeit they are done for discipline at the bidding of charity." [St. Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*. VII:8]

[247]*Theologia Germanica*. LI

[248]Śaṁkara [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West*. B:II.1.2]

[249]M. Proust, *John Ruskin*.

[250]It took St. Bonaventura, *doctor subtilis* John Duns Scotus, *venerabilis inceptor* Ockham and few other Friars Minor to overcome the view, inherited after St. Francis', which contemned knowledge for being a sign of pride.

this world.

109. *Passivity – alertness*

Openness founds concrete presence, in fact, *omnipresence* of God in all situations which, *visible* and limited to the *horizon of actuality* as they are, emerge from the *invisible origin*. Every meeting, with a person, with a situation, with a problem, is a *gift*; sometimes, a challenge, sometimes, but a pleasant confirmation, sometimes a plain disaster. No matter what the specific character of this meeting, *I* should be *thankful* for it because, at the bottom of it, the very fact of being able to meet something deserves deepest *gratitude*, and because every such meeting is also a meeting with the *origin*.

This *thankfulness*, however, does not mean that *I* am to fall flat and thank God for bestowing on me yet another disastrous gift. The *spiritual* passivity is only to stop cherishing opinions, to stop *idolising oneself*. It is not to stop discriminating. Being annoyed, being displeased, being disgusted are impressions and feelings one need not get rid of – they are feelings of human saints as much as of human wretches. To be thankful for particulars is to stop absolutising them, to meet them with all the respect they deserve as *signs* of the *origin*, and then to try to place them on the right shelf in 'the order of things'. And if *I* have no clue where something belongs, then it can stay where it is, at least for the time being. Valuing things we also value our life and express our *gratitude*. The alertness and presence of mind is just the steady preparedness to meet things with such an attitude. It is *founded* in the *transcendent openness*, but it concerns all the *immanent*, particular things. The *spiritual thankfulness* might seem to imply passive acceptance of everything but, as a matter of fact, it is the opposite of slothful passivity or mere aesthetism – it *founds* active and vigilant attitude to all *actual* situations.

110. *Weakness – strength*

Strength isn't much more than such an *open* alertness. It is not strength of will, it is not strength of abilities but just that – strength, preparedness to meet everything with equal tranquility and *openness*, to face things and be ready to handle them or, as the case may be, to be defeated by them. One is strong when one has learnt that it is impossible to lose, no matter what defeat one might suffer.

This secure determination equals its meek *openness*. Strength has nothing to do with hardness, with the defensive, self-protective shell one can, often with ingenious inventiveness, rise as if in an anticipation of all possible dangers. Hardness is but an extreme case of false security which spends years on designing schemes and laws of things making everything fit neatly here and there, on the right or on the wrong side, and which, eventually, realises that the whole scheme was but a construction; security which, in the most unexpected moment, in the moment of uttermost complacency, is suddenly surprised, and that means defeated, to the bottom of its scheme. The fear of unexpected, natural as it might be, and which we might call insecurity, is founded in false security, in *closedness* of *No*, which tries to build walls, houses, cities and yet, all the time, knows *that* there still may be something it did not take into account, although it has no idea *what* it might be. Rising cities, it *thirsts* for the woods and fears fires. . .

Hardness assumes that one has to protect oneself against potentially harmful, dangerous situations. Strength sees the possible dangers, too, but its purpose is not to protect itself. Greatness displays strength. "Great man [. . .] is strong [. . .] but he does not desire power. That which he desires is realisation of his intention: realisation of spirit. For this realisation he needs, of course, power because power – if we clean this notion of the dytyrambic pathos in which Nietzsche enveloped it – means nothing else but simply the ability to realise that

what one desires to realise."[251] Greatness does not seek itself, but involves the ability to realise the 'objective' intention. Strength, too, will attempt to realise the intention, to maintain 'the order of things', but it will not be weakened, as greatness would be, by its failure. Strength *founded* in *humility* may appear strange but is always unmistakable. It may be associated with the abilities to posit and reach particular goals, but its strangeness consists in that it does not depend on such abilities. Failing, it perseveres because what it attempts to achieve is not merely a particular *actuality* but an expression of the *invisible command*, realisation of spirit. Strength is the infinite patience which is possible only because it knows the eternal *presence*. (Patience, able to wait for a particular event, in a constant conflict between the expectation of the future and the current situation, in short, living the tension between the *non-actual* and *actual*, is a *visible* form of strength.) Eventually, it is the strength of not expecting anything particular, of not feeling that one is entitled to this or that, of having given up everything and, therefore, having regained it. It is strength which does not have to search because it has already found, which does not have to fight because it already has everything.

Above the world – in its midst

All the *inversions* may be seen as variations of the apparent opposition *transcendence-immanence*. *One* is fully both: remaining *indistinct above* the world, it is the *rest* ever *present* between any *distinctions*. *Dissociating* these two *aspects* is the common mistake which may be, partly, blamed on the *inverted* form of *manifestations*. *Dissociating* the *transcendent aspect* of the *one* yields an abstract idea of some static and immobile, incomprehensible ground. "This ground is some homogeneous silence which remains immobile in itself. And yet from this immobility all things are set into motion and all things receive life, all which live suprasensually, silently in themselves."[252] The motion belongs apparently to the *visible world*, but the opposition immobile-mobile – like that of *transcendent-immanent*, one-many and most others – is but a construction: it may be required by the *actual* discourse, but it is harmful when its terms get *dissociated*.

The *inversions* are no contradictions but only *reflective* expressions of the *unity* of the respective *aspects*: *thirst* is the *sign* of *presence*, *forgetfulness* is the way of remembering, strength is the *sign* of *humility*, vigilant alertness of *thankfulness*, and rising *above* the world, in the genuine sense, amounts to nothing but a full return into its midst. "In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword."[253]

3.3.3. Examples

The examples of *concrete presence* will confronted with the possible variations of the respective *experiences* which are not *concretely founded*. The main abstract difference between the two is that the former, *originating* in the *nothingness*, span the whole hierarchy of Being, while the latter are limited to the current level at which they unfold. They may have all the amiable appearances of this level but they are unable to reach beyond it, as if cutting the hierarchy at this point, and so remain incomplete, *thirsting* for 'Something'.

3.3.3.i. Love

4. *Love* at the level of *invisible*, the *spiritual love* was described in section 3.2, in particular,

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[251]M. Buber, *The Problem of Man.* p.55
[252]Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West.* B:I.1.5]
[253]Job V:20

§§61.-68 and §§75.-78. It is the *gift* of *grace* helped by a *reflective* attitude of the whole person, which passes from *nothingness* towards the *visible world*, in the unity of *humility*, *thankfulness*, *openness*, as well as other *aspects* which never exhaust its reality. All these *aspects* are not related to any particular region of Being but *found* the unbroken continuity throughout *this* and *another world*. The *concrete founding* of *love* amounts also to *concrete founding* of the *unity* of *the world* which ceases to be split into *this* and *another* one. This *unity*, of the world, and of oneself, in the *open confrontation* with the *origin*, is the genuine sense of any *actual experiences* of *unio mystica*. It is the same as *love* and "[i]t is therefore wrong to reproach the mystics, as has been done sometimes, because they use love's language. It is their by right. Others only borrow it."[254]

113. **3.** At the level of *mineness*, such a *love* will find expressions as a living love with which the *soul* embraces the world or, perhaps, its particular region. The most obvious example is personal love. Love of another person can have many degenerate forms, but in its true form it is never a focusing on this only person with the exclusion of everything and everybody else. A true love of another person is impossible without the *presence* of the underlying *love*. Love between two people is always immersed into something bigger, something which only the lovers share and which, in its *concrete* and *invisible presence*, makes their love offensive to the social law and customs, bringing the lovers out of *this world*, like the magic of the fatal drink, and then the woods of Morois, to which Tristan and Iseult have to flee from the king Mark's court.

Personal love is the highest form of relation with another, because it is the ultimate form of *sharing* – *sharing* the *origin*. It is thus not really a relation but being, as one says, "being together". As the meeting with another person in the face of the common *foundation*, personal love is a true *communion*, the *communion* of *sharing* the *origin*. The two lovers are meeting with something third, something *above* them both, which lends its meaning and depth to their mutual relation, that is, their being. And in all their *sharing* – of life, that is of the world, of time, of works and days, of joys and sorrows – this *founding* element, this indefinable *rest* remains always *present* as an *invisible* guarantor of their *actual* love. Offering thus each other only *visible* uncertainties of daily life, they raise from them a rock solid house.

The *concreteness* of such a personal love may involve fascination with this or that feature, this or that characteristic of another person, but all such features are but attractive accidents – they may be needed for one to fall in love, but they do not constitute the exclusive *foundation* of this love. For love is directed toward the whole person, which means, toward the person as *transcending* all particular features and particular ways of being and behaving – the person as the center and origin of all such particulars. *I* do not divide the loved person into aspects and traits and decide to love her because of *a, b, c* and *d*. If *I* can tell why *I* love a person, then *I* do not love. Sure, *I* can list a long series of agreeable and wonderful features of this person, but if this list exhausts the reasons, then this is a calculation rather than love.[255]

Love of a person is love of the whole person, the person seen as the site of *incarnation* and this person's "features, activities, abilities are included into love's object because they

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[254]S. Weil, *Waiting for God*. Forms of the Implicit Love of God:Love of the order of the world;p.109. In spite of many differences, the following hierarchy conforms closely to that in M. Ibn'Arabi, *The Treatise on Love*, in particular, II:13. Likewise, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, lists similar stages, though with slightly different characteristics: sensous appetite for carnal love, love of God for one's own, egoistic sake, love of God for His own sake, and the final union, *adhaesio*.

[255]Analogous remarks concern friendship in Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VIII:3 [1156b]; IX:1 [1164a].

belong to this *particular* person."[256] In this respect "the loved one is impeccable in his vesture at the very beginning of being, because nothing lowers nor stains him in the first moment of his revelation and being."[257] One can see all the negative sides of the loved person, but to the extent one loves the person, these are only lower aspects, possible failures which, as a matter of fact, can be even charming.

The matter is quite different with a love which is not *founded* in *love*, but which stops at the level of *mineness*. 114.

  The lower we descend into *this world*, the more strength of will may be needed to stay true to the *inspirations* and to nourish the constant intensity of feelings. But the strength of will is needed only to the extent the *original commands* get clouded by the lower aspects. The very attempts at nourishing and keeping the intensity of the beginnings are already expressions of a loss, that is, expressions of *attachment*, *attachment* to the past. Whether *I* insist on *my* feelings, *my* expectations, *my* goals it is all *attachment* to the *visibility* of the past – whether by attempts to preserve it or negate it – which has separated me from the *invisible* source of *love*. Such an *attachment* actually 'divides' the loved person, puts '+' at a, b, c, d and '–' at f, g, h, and when the calculus of '+'s and '–'s yields a negative result, *I* become disappointed . . . with the person. The disappointments reflect only the fact that *my* love was not directed towards the whole person – it was cultivated and maintained not for the sake of the loved person, but for *my* own sake.[258] Only preoccupation with *oneself* – with its common form of the sense of entitlement underlying all expectations – encounters disappointments; only nourishing *my* own image, can *I* imagine that the world owes me anything. Disappointment is not a consequence of such an attitude – it is its inherent *aspect*. And when the *traces* of one's commitments do not reach beyond the level of *mineness*, such disappointments can indeed seem to sum up to the *whole* person who, because of f, g and h, is no longer worthy of one's love.

  There are no disappointments if, instead of expectations, one nourishes *hope*. *Hope* is the lack of expectations, unreserved *openness*, patience which does not await. *Love* is full of *hope* not because it all the time awaits something new and better, but because it does not – it already has everything. It knows that all the particulars need leniency, respectful openness and acceptance. But such a true patience and care for things and people are not ontological gifts of the *origin*. They are *founded* only in the deepest *humility* and *openness*. If they are not, the patience and respect will, sooner or later, reach the end and then only laziness can prevent them from jumping to new conclusions.

 2. Personal love, which at the level of *actuality* and *ego* may also be expressed through infatuation, embraces things and situations lending them the character of enchantment and agreeable vitality. This may be a mere feeling, a series of *impressions* which change and pass as soon as infatuation goes away. As Eckhart says about the emotional and sensible love, it "does not unify. True, it unites in act; but it does not unite in essence."[259] The 'unity in essence' is not any emotion, is not a mere infatuation but a lasting love, which immerses the loved one, and the whole world *shared* with the loved one, in a peaceful 115.

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[256]M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*. B:III

[257]M. Ibn'Arabi, *The Treatise on Love*. V:88

[258]A simple example is a love through which *I* merely seek a compensation of some fundamental lack on *my* part. Not (necessarily) a lack of strength or intelligence or success, but a *fundamental* lack – the emptiness at the bottom of *my soul* which the other person would fill, the uncanny loneliness which the other person would cure, the undefinable dissatisfaction with *my life* which the other person would calm, the *thirst*. . . All romanticizing apotheosis of privacy and tragism of love is built on this scheme.

[259]Eckhart [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. V]

presence. The traces of another's personality, expressed in *actual* situations, transform them into a joy of *participation*. Even situations which otherwise might be inattractive or repulsive, acquire this character through the presence of the loved ones.

The *spiritual love* is a constant *inspiration* for the lower levels, an *inspiration* to embrace, strengthen and invigorate – whether the loved person or the things towards which it turns at a given moment. It is manifested through care and respect for things, as well as for the particular behaviors, feelings and reactions of the loved person.[260] This care and respect need not, of course, mean unconditional acceptance of everything the loved one does. But all particulars which one finds blamable are placed at the level to which they belong, at the level of *actual* failures, and in no way diminish one's love. As we know, the blindness of love may not see, and if it sees will excuse, many things which others find inexcusable. Shall we say that this blindness is what we have called an *inspiration* from *above*? Not necessarily because a mere infatuation may have similar effect. But it does exemplify the general way of *concrete founding*, that is, transformation of the events at the lower levels by the *concrete* events at the higher ones.

116. Love at the level of *actuality* which is not *spiritually founded*, will be directed at things, typically, things which *I* want to possess, which is just an expression of idealisation of *my ego* as the highest value. It is hard to recognise any true love in narcissistic self-idolatry, but even such extreme forms of *egotism* may hide themselves behind the appearances of love. Not recognising anything higher than the *actuality* of *ego* and *visibility* of its *objects*, one can still yearn for *love* and this yearning may easily find occasional expressions of less *egotic* character. But these will only be occasional expressions, constantly confused by the tyranny of *egotic* impulses.

Another person is no longer loved only for *my* sake, honestly though confusedly, but for the sake of some particular thing. "*I* love her smile", "*I* love her meekness", "*I* love her determinacy", no matter what particulars happen to arise the reaction, it is only a reaction, it is only a response to an *actual* fascination which is cherished for the sake of satisfaction it gives *me*.

117. **1.** At the lowest level of *immediacy*, love, like anything else, finds only the most momentaneous expressions. Sex may provide a very good example, since the infinite gap separating the purely carnal sex from the event of making love to a loved person will be equally clear to all who have experienced both extremes and to many who have not. The sensuous pleasure is not necessarily *spiritually founded* in any higher order of things, but it is tremendously modified if such a *founding* has taken place. On the one extreme, it may be a mere moment of escape from the unbearable suffering, a moment of sudden meeting with eternity in the midst of confusion and evil, like is for instance experienced by the war time lovers of Remarque. It may be even more desperate attempt to convince oneself that, after all, there are good things in life, things which, in the brief moments of pleasure let one forget about the otherwise empty and desperate life. All such moments do provide the pleasure they promise, but the pleasure turns out to be insufficient to calm the soul. And

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[260]This is perhaps obvious, but let us emphasize that this care and respect are quite different from Heidegger's care – *Sorge*. *Sorge*, that is, "the Being of Dasein ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world) [...] is used in a purely ontologico-existential manner. From this signification every tendency of Being which one might have in mind ontically, such as worry or carefreeness, is ruled out." [M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*. p.192.] This corresponds more closely to our horizon of *experience*, with its *spatio-temporal actuality* confronted with the *non-actual*, which precedes the constitution of time and separate *experiences*. Care and respect we are talking about here are, to use Heidegger's terminology, precisely 'ontical tendencies' which Dasein may or may not realise.

then there remains only *more* pleasure, *more* intensity, *more* – "the cry of a mistaken soul". On the other extreme, a sensuous pleasure of a moment can be embraced by the context of mutual respect and understanding, and, at the deepest level, of the ineffable *love* which, by a lucky coincidence, found an *incarnation* in the other person, in this very moment, like an inexplicable *gift* which never ceases to surprise and please.

We will not try to reduce such considerations to a mere contextuality of *actual experiences*. 118. The context of *an experience* is *more* of other *experiences*, and a well experienced and well paid whore can create such a context. One can only buy moments, *actualities*, separate, scattered parts. But such parts, and contexts which are their *complexes*, especially if they are merely bought, will never sum up to *an experience* which in a single moment traverses the whole hierarchy of Being and reaches smoothly to the deepest intimacy of *transcendent presence*. One does not reach the *origin* by taking, one after another, the same single step at a time, even though taking one step at a time is all we can do. In all pleasant delusions, which *I* bought or arranged, which *I* find purposeful and satisfying, *I* always also know – if only *I* do not ask too intensely – that they are but momentaneous pleasures, delights of a hedonist, real because *actual* and insufficient, perhaps even empty and unrewarding, because *only actual*.

There is no such thing as *a single experience* which is not permeated by the whole Being, 119. and it would be as useless to focus on this fact as it is impossible to ignore and forget it. There is no such thing as a true moment of love, unless this moment is immersed in the texture (not context) of body, *ego*, *soul* and *spirit*, which all together agree on the *humility of love* – in an agreement which goes beyond the bottom of one's soul and heart, where the *spiritual love incarnates*. Only this whole texture lends the *actual* moment its full meaning, only it makes up its *quiddity*, makes it *this concrete experience* rather than that. No *visible* rules can ever grasp this distinction with the adequacy and *precision* the *actual* reason might desire. And yet, everybody knows it and most people can also *recognise* it.

3.3.3.ii. The communion

Communion is *sharing* and that which is *shared* determines the character of the *commu-* 120. *nion*, in particular, whom the *communion* includes and the way in which the others are *experienced*. Nature and the physical world is not ours, we *share* it with all the physical things and living organisms, and this is a form of *communion*. We *share* more with animals than with dead things, and more with higher animals than with lower ones. We *share* quite a lot with all other people, but there are always special people, friends, family, the loved ones with whom we *share* much more than with the mass of anonymous individuals.

That which is *shared* is not to be confused with that which is merely common. Common – in its full ambiguity of universal and ordinary – is the *objective* version to which *sharing* reduces when seen only from the perspective of *actuality*. What is 'common' can not be *shared*, it can only be multiplied, like a universal instantiated in many particulars, like the sexual drive, common to most animals but never *shared* by any two. Looking for most 'common' features and traits which, as one thinks, would promote the most universal communication or the sense of community, leads only to reducing everything to the least common denominator, to that which being the most universal is also the most ordinary. Such a search for universality is an attempt to capture *more*, to overcome the *horisontal transcendence* – it may be useful, but never *concrete*.

Sharing, on the other hand, refers always to the *vertical transcendence*, what is *shared*

is eventually *above me*. *Sharing* is not a relation between individuals, but being-together, that is, *participating*-together in the *one* and the same.

121.   **4.** The ultimate *communion* is *sharing* the *origin*, which does not get multiplied and distributed between many, but which remains *one*, undivided and *indistinguished*. That *I have* the *origin* does not mean that it is *mine*. It means only that *I* have originated, that *I* was *born* – the *origin* remains *above me*, and thus can never be *mine*, it is *mine* as much as it is *yours*. In the expressions like "having the *origin*", the word "having" does not express the possession but its opposite: *participation*.

Having the *origin* is the same as *sharing* it, for everything has originated from *nothingness*. It thus *founds* the highest form of *communion*, the *communion* of *participation*, that is, of being. The *origin* is *shared* – with whom? With nobody in particular, with *nothing*, that is, with everybody. This *communion* permeates the whole world, includes all the people, all *visible* and *invisible* things, everything which is. It is perhaps a form of mysticism, the exact opposite of the detachment from *this world*, the deepest form of *communion* which announces "That art thou", which encounters everything *sub specie aeternitas*, as a manifestation of the same *origin*.

Metempsychosis is perhaps one of the oldest expressions of the feeling of such a *communion*. But it is only a conceptualisation, is the *experienced unity* brought to the level of *visible signs*, perhaps, to an attempted explanation. "For I was once already boy and girl,//Thicket and bird, and mute fish in the waves."[261] Interpreting such pronunciations as declarations of metempsychosis is a vast over-interpretation. They express genuine feelings, but ones which manifest only something *transcending* any expression, that is, something which may be *present* also without any expression. One could hardly postulate migration of souls without *recognising* that also animals and even things possess souls, that they too *participate* in *one* and the same. Metempsychosis is but an image of this *recognition* and hence, eventually, of the *experienced unity*. And likewise, its images are the feelings of universal life and ensoulment, "knowing that all things have their emanations,"[262] the sense of deep kinship which permeates us and lets things grow into and out of us:

> *Durch alle Wesen reicht der eine Raum:*
> *Weltinnenraum. Die Vögel fliegen still*
> *durch uns hindurch. O, der ich wachsen will,*
> *ich seh hinaus, und in mir wächst der Baum.* [263]

Noticing the presence of such feelings we are not pointing in the direction of any pantheims and, in case of doubt, one may consult again I:6.2.2. But we accept their witness to the *communion*. *Sharing* the *origin* has also a more primordial *aspect*, without any pantheistic connotations, namely, that of *origin sharing* itself. The world is a result of *dissociations*, of *objectivisation* and *externalisation*, but it is also the world *unified* in its nature of a *gift*. This nature means exactly that it is *shared* – not *by me* with others, but *with me* as a *gift* of *transcendence*. As a *gift*, the world is not only distinct from *me* but is not *mine* at all – it is *shared* with *me* by its *origin*. As such a *gift* of the world, the *confrontation* with the *origin* is the primordial *communion*. This *communion* of the *origin sharing* itself, the *existential confrontation* which is not opposition but *openness*, can be called the dialogical character of *existence*. The *concrete* God, the *incarnated* Godhead, is thus the one who

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[261]Empedocles DK 31B117
[262]Empedocles DK 31B89
[263]R. M. Rilke, *Es winkt zu Fühlung...*

shares the *gift*, Thou who communicate, a partner of a dialogue, albeit a dialogue with no words, the silent dialogue which *existence* conducts with its *origin*. "Every concrete hour which, with its world content and destiny, is allotted to a person, is a noteworthy language."[264]

As was observed in II:§105, the higher things are also those which admit of more unconditional *sharing*, which are less diminished by being *shared* among more. Since the *origin* is common to all, it is most intimately *shared* by all, we all *participate* in one and the same source from which our lives and worlds originate. This *spiritual sharing* is not sharing of this or that, but is *sharing* of the *origin*. To the extent we truly *share* any *actual* things or moments, any *visible* entities which by and in themselves can only be multiplied or divided but not *shared*, we do so only in the light of this *invisible communion*.

3. The center of personal being, the emergence from the *confrontation* with the *origin*, 122. has thus the character of a dialogue, of a *confrontation* with another. This other is not, however, any foreign otherness but the most *concrete* Thou, in the face of whom *I* become *myself*. "Man becomes *self* through Thou."[265] This primordial dialogue, when expressed at the level of *mineness*, as a dialogue with another person, amounts not to exchanging opinions, observations and views of life, not even to agreeing on any such issues, but to the *recognition* of *sharing* the *origin*, of *participation* in the same, higher sphere of Being. The genuine *community* is simply *recognition* of the *communion*. *Recognition*, of course, is not necessarily *re-cognition* and has basis in the *rest* of *original signs*, in the sense of unity only *vaguely* discernible in the background of *actual* intentions. "It seems to me that both in the order of (atemporal) *founding* of functions and in the order of genetic development, the feeling of unity «is the fundament» of sympathy [*Nachfühlen*]."[266]

Thankfulness for the *gift* of life and world amounts to trust and fidelity, for acceptance of everything leaves simply nothing to mistrust. In the same way, the *community* of this *gift* is also the *concrete foundation* of the mutual trust. At the bottom, it is only the *recognition* that, eventually, the other is a person like myself, *sharing* the same *origin*, *thirst* and all significant spheres of *experience*. "Acceptance of the sameness of reality conditions the spontaneous emergence of love to a human being, that is, love to a being only because he is «human»."[267] Not only love, but any truly personal relation – of love or deep admiration, of dedication or respectful enmity – is based on such a recognition. In a bit different words, it requires recognition of the *whole* person, that is, recognition that the other reveals to *me* something that is so intimately mine, that it is impossible to draw any border telling where *his* ends and *mine* begins. The deepest truths of my *existence* are reflected in such relations to the others, for the *community* of our differences is *concretely founded* only in the sameness of the *origin*. What is so reflected, what is being *shared*, might seem to be both *mine* and *yours* but, as a matter of fact, it is neither *mine* nor *yours*, for it is *shared* only by being *above* us both.

'Recognition and apprehension of the whole person' is exactly to see this person as *sharing* the *origin*, as having an *invisible* pact with God, just like the one *I* have. "Human life touches the absolute through its 'dialogical character'; [...] man can become whole not through a relation to his own self but only through a relation to another self. This other self

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[264]M. Buber, *Dialog*. I:Verantwortung.

[265]M. Buber, *I and You*. I.

[266]M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*. A:VI.a. Scheler's *Nachfühlen* means, literally and inelegantly, re-feeling (or feeling-after) and is intended as an emotional re-presentation of an object or another's experience. It is, in turn the fundament of empathy, *Mitfühlen*, literally, co-feeling, feeling-with.

[267]Ibid. A:VI.c

may be equally limited and conditioned as he is, but in being together one experiences that which is unlimited and unconditional."[268] Buberian emphasis on the dialogical element is obviously concerned with the *experience* and the form of the *experienced*, which we certainly can accept. But we are more concerned with the *foundation* of such *experiences* which, as also Buber maintains, is the unconditional, the *absolute*. The *experience* of a genuine dialogue is often also *an experience* of the unconditional.[269] But the unconditional *presence* is not the *object* of such *an experience* – it is the *rest experienced* only *along* the *actual* situation, *through* the meeting with the other. It is the *participation* in the *absolute* which *founds ontologically* such *experiences*, and only the genuine *openness* of Yes which *founds* their *concrete* possibility.

This *founding* can be expressed by saying that the *community* is established always via way of something *shared*. "If we both see that that which thou sayest is true, and if we both see that what I say is true, where, I ask, do we see it? Certainly not I in thee, nor thou in me, but both in the unchangeable truth itself which is above our minds."[270] In the deepest respects you understand me only because you already *participate* in what I might want to communicate, because we only exchange *actual signs* of something which we *share*. In the words of Leibniz, this ultimately *shared* is the *presence* of God: "in simple substances this influence of one monad over another is only *ideal*, and it can have its effect only through the intervention of God."[271]

In short, if one monad communicates with another, it is only because the other is not such an ultimate stranger as some preachers of 'otherness' – opposing with certain right the centurqies of sameness, leveling off and evening out – would like to see him. If not at the sociological level (which can rightly nourish much of the 'otherness' talk), then certainly at the human level the other is, in the deepest respects, the same. The other is the same as you – only another. One *birth*, like every *absolute* beginning, is *virtually* the same as any other – only numerically distinct. Sure, he is a different person, with whom you even may be unable to communicate – not to mention, to agree. But communication and agreement have all too often been degenerated to a petty accord of opinions, if not a sheer coincidence

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[268]M. Buber, *The Problem of Man.* II:1.5

[269]Dialogues with other persons do not exhaust such *experiences*. An unexpected *recognition* may often give rise to it, as when we suddenly get swept by the immense beauty of a landscape. An experience in which the fact of encounter comes strongly forth, involves often equally the sense of unity. These two *aspects* together constitute the dialogical character of *experience*. Mystical experiences provide many examples, while here is a bit more mundane case of a similar force: "From a low hill in this broad savanna a magnificent prospect opened out to us. To the very brink of the horizon we saw gigantic herds of animals: gazelle, antelope, gnu, zebra, warthog, and so on. Grazing, heads nodding, the herds moved forward like slow rivers. There was scarcely any sound save the melancholy cry of a bird of prey. This was the stillness of the eternal beginning, the world as it had always been, in the state of non-being; for until then no one had been present to know that it was this world. I walked away from my companions until I had put them out of sight, and savored the feeling of being entirely alone." [A. Jaffé, ed., *Memories, Dreams, Reflections of C. G. Jung.* [after E. F. Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness*, p.14-15]]

[270]St. Augustine, *Confessions.* XII:25

[271]G. W. Leibniz, *The Monadology.* 51. (With all possible reservations against the particular ways in which Leibniz imagined God and this 'intervention'.) Let us also quote the philosopher of the dialogue expressing the same thought: "*Above* and *below* are tied to each other. His word, who attempts to speak to man, without speaking to God, does not fulfill itself. . ." [M. Buber, *Dialog.* I:Oben und unten. The sentence continues: "but his word, who attempts to speak to God, without speaking to man, goes astray." *Concrete founding* of *communion* means that, *existentially*, the *spiritual* Yes and the true *communion* with others are indistinguishable, or better, co-extensional – whenever there is the one, the other is too. But we are a bit more pedantic than Buber – the dialogue with *origin*, the *concrete founding* is still *founding*, and it *founds* a whole *nexus* of *aspects* of which *communion* with others is only one.]

of wordings, to deserve some censuring. One can not understand the other by the sheer act of accepting his otherness. *Accepting* otherness means nothing else but searching deeper into oneself (which is not looking for more discoveries *about oneself* but searching for the harmony *of* and *in* one's *self*). One can understand the other only because, at the bottom both *share* the most fundamental aspects of human *existence*: eventually, they *share* the *origin*, stand before the same God.

Now, of course, *community* has also the inter-personal, cultural or sociological dimension.[272] The above, universally human *community* becomes relativised as *sharing* concerns more specific contents. But it is all the way *founded* on *sharing*. It is not so that, for instance, problems or enemies create *community*; at best, only *common* problems and *common* enemies do. But in order to be common they must threaten some *shared* dimension, that is, they only reveal, make *visible* the *community* which has already existed.[273]

It is essential for a *community* to *share* something which *transcends* mere *actuality*, only such *sharing* can *found* any *community*. A group of mere common interests, an *actual* group which shares only a hobby or a problem, is not a *community*. Any group of only *actual* common goals or interests is as relative and transient as these goals and interests themselves – it may be only a surrogate of a *community*. A *community* transcends any *actual* horizons, as does a cultural tradition, a nation, a tribe, a family. I once heard a native American saying to his children: "White people have been here for 500 years, *we* have been here for 15000 years. They make choices based on what seems cool and advantageous to them but this is not how *we* make our choices. *We* have got this land and we have to care for it for future generations. Our private wishes are not what counts most." Belonging to a tribe is to *share* in its world which is far greater than *mine*. It is to be only a member of a *community* which *transcends* the sphere of *my life*. The respect shown for one's land and its tradition is an expression of *sharing* something which does not belong to anybody, which is greater than *me* and *you*, than our ancestors and successors. Similarly, the respect for the ancestors, or generally for the history (of the nation, tribe, family), is an expression of the constitutive role of the *transcendence* – not only the mythological beginnings, but the whole past of the *community* lies beyond our *actual* grasp, and its great moments express and witness to the unity of the *shared* ethos and origin. Only a *transcendent* element can be *shared*. Ultimately, it is the *origin*, but in the more particular cases as those just addressed, it is still *transcendence* beyond any private or communal *actuality*. For *actual, immanent* contents can not be *shared*, they can be only divided, exchanged, multiplied. And where one can get more only if another gets less, we are no longer speaking about *community founded* in *sharing* but about a

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[272]In terms of the mere *objective* time and the sheer numbers this might seem to be much more of a 'community' than the personal relations which concern us. However, we do not study sociology, nor even the individual reflections of a social domain. Such a reflection is possible only because the individual is already a dialogical being, capable of genuine *sharing* independently from the form of community into which he is born. Moreover, it is the personal relations which open most directly the sphere of *community* in the face of the same *origin*. The tribal, communal, social, traditional organisation will first of all veil and entangle the direct, *original signs* of *sharing* into the *objective* – and hence both lasting but also less readable – forms of *symbols* and other *reflective signs*. To become a member of a *community* means often to decipher the codes of its tradition in a way which allows *me* to live them satisfactorily, that is, with a personal conviction but also with a full respect, though not unreserved openness, to other traditions.

[273]One might be tempted to see in various encounters with UFOs, in much of the science-fiction frenzy and in the search for extraterrestial intelligence, the signs reflecting a relatively high level of global consciousness which sees humankind as a unity but, scared by its apparent emptiness, that is, lacking *foundation*, still needs 'another', a 'common neighbour' if not enemy, as its *external* and *objective* guarantor.

commercial enterprise, a *concretely unfounded community*.

124. At the personal level, the *unfounded community* recognises the other as you but not as Thou. You may be an equal partner, perhaps a guide or a friend, with whom I can establish a community through interaction and sharing values, views, life-style, something more than mere goals and contents dictated only by the *actual* situation. But as long as not *concretely founded*, this remains an incomplete relation. The relation will carry the negative counterparts to those listed in §122: I may recognise you as simply different person, without recognising that we *share* the *origin*, I may reduce the *shared* to something merely common, eventually, some *actual* contents which tend towards *objective* and *egotic* characteristics. Thus our relation, bereft of higher *foundation*, becomes afraid of every conflict at the level of *actual* opinions and decisions, becomes threatened by more and more minute details, like ebbing love often does. As always, whatever is not *concretely founded*, which in particular means, *founded* in something higher, tends toward its lower version.

Unfounded communion* at the level of *mineness* is still sharing. It is not, however, *sharing* something higher but sharing *myself*, whatever *I* happen to understand by this at the moment. *I* can dedicate *my* activities to a common good, to a beneficial work for the society, *I* can become personally engaged – but in all that *I* share only *myself*. Focusing on the categories of *mineness*, *I* will tend to oppose selfishness to unselfishness, the circle of *my* private life and interests to the good and interests of others, and the engagement into the latter will easily assume a character of a sacrifice on *my* part. No matter how possibly useful and socially valuable, such an attitude, called by Kierkegaard "ethical", finds itself in a constant conflict which it is unable to resolve otherwise than by negating it or turning *my attachment* into an *idol* of *my* generosity, *my* benevolence, *my* self-sacrifice.

But as "one cannot will into void,"[142] all *my* dedication must be directed towards some positive contents and values. A common form of this is 'identification' with one's community, various cases of communal or, perhaps, communistic consciousness, when the abstractly universal good and interests of this community become one's highest values. When one's community – tribe, nation, class, religion – becomes *the only* source of truth then, indeed, nationalism or tribal consciousness acquire unhealthy form of ethnocentrism. Such an absolutisation of a relative is possible only because one does not recognise its *foundation* in a deeper, higher sphere – here it ends, there is nothing *above*, and this is the last, highest value, its final form.

125. As a matter of fact, not only dogmatic nationalism or class consciousness but, equally, relativism is an example of such an *idolatry*, of the inability to *recognise* any higher value *above* the multitude of *visible* differences. It differs from *ego-* and ethnocentrism only in that it avoids absolutisation of one particular ethos. But staying at the same level, it is only its complementary and *inverted* side which does not reach any deeper. Its characterization at the personal level, with which we begin, will apply also to cultural relativism.

"Every person coming to the world brings something new, something that has never existed before, something original and unrepeatable. [...] Every man is a new event in the world and is called to fulfill his uniqueness on earth."[274] So far, so good, but here comes a related expression, which apparently only elaborates the same idea. "Everything happens as if the multiplicity of persons – does not the sense of the word "personality" reside exactly therein? – were the condition of the appearance of the full 'absolute truth', as if every man through his unrepeatability guaranteed revelation of one unique aspect of the truth, and

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[274]M. Buber, *Man's way according to the Chassid teaching.* p.22

its other aspects would never be revealed if some persons were missing among the people. It suggests that the totality of truth is a sum of innumerable personal parts [...]"[275] We see the reappearing tension between One and Many, which tries to disappear in the close relationship between the perspectivism of the latter and the pantheistic understanding of the former. This last quote suggests that the *absolute* is somehow the sum of the individual perspectives. But such a sum is only a *posited totality*, not anything *absolute*, it is the *vertical transcendence* of the *one* thought in terms of the *horizontal transcendence*, of a *totality* of multiple *actual* manifestations. The unrepeatability of every man is *founded* in the very *confrontation* with the *absolute*; it does not merely add a bit to its *actualisation*. But taken in the merely *horizontal* dimension, it turns indeed into the ultimate relativism, where the absolute aspect of every separate *existence* does not carry more weight than that of the *actually* different contents, of one *actual* part of the whole. Like all the attempts to reduce the *absolute* to the *actual*, it results in delegating the *absolute* not only to the sphere of *transcendence* (where it indeed resides) but also *out of* the sphere of *immanence*, outside the horizon of anything an individual might ever confront with full *concreteness*.

We follow only the first of the above quotes. The uniqueness and unrepeatability of every *existence* not only does not exclude the *confrontation* with the *absolute* but is *founded* exactly in it. Every *existence* is a reflection of the same *absolute*, not a part of it, but an *absolute* image, *imago Dei*. The images may differ without ceasing to be the images of the same and without implying that only their sum total catches the glimpse of what they reflect. "And just as the same town when seen from different sides will seem quite different, and as it were multiplied *perspectivally*, the same thing happens here: because of the infinite multitude of simple substances it is as if there were as many different universes; but they are all perspectives on the same one, according to the different *point of view* of each monad."[276] The differences of perspectives emerge with the *visible* contents where, indeed, every one may have his own view and understanding. However, ignoring the lowest and most trivial cases, these differences do not result from any *subjective* choices. At the bottom of it, nobody decides which perspective he will entertain – one's perspective is an integral *aspect* of one's *concrete existence* and evolves along with it. Above all, it concerns only *visibles*, for even our understanding of the *invisibles* and *absolute* is only *actuality* of *visibles*. Consequently, all these differences never sum up to give any whole, because the *absolute* is not any *totality* of *visibles*. All the *actual* differences are equally *founded* in *one* and the same, and all *existences* are equally *confronted* with it. To reach this *confrontation* no addition is needed, because the *absolute* is not any *totality* of differentiated contents, but their prior *unity*. If one does not find the full weight, truth and *concreteness* of the

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[275]E. Lévinas, *Beyond the Stanza*. [after M.-A. Ouaknin, *Ouvertures hassidiques*.] (The following is only an elaboration of this expression which, for Levinas' part, we would be willing to take as a bit unfortunate metaphor. Accusing him of pantheism and relativism would certainly be unjust, though shadows of both can be occasionally discerned behind eschatological predilections and Kabbalistic inspirations.)

[276]G. W. Leibniz, *The Monadology*. 57. It is not clear to us if it bothered Leibniz whether this very statement is or is not only one possible perspective – of the monad actually pronouncing it.

absolute in the *existence* of a single individual, one will not obtain it in their society.[277]

126. Looking for the *abolute* in any *totality* is to absolutise the *visible* differences, which we have termed pantheism. Relativism is but a variation on this theme which absolutises not only the differences but also the absence of any higher values which might still be *visible*. It is the inability to recognise anything higher than the *visible* divisions, only combined with the inability to sign the doom which narrow-minded *egocentrism* or ethnocentrism pronounces on all otherness. This inability is simply a sign of lacking self-respect, of the fact that one's own or one's own community's values are not so convincing and deep as *that* one is *thirsting* for. Genuine respect in disagreement, recognition of other values which *I* do not share, can be *founded* only in *sharing* of their source. If such a source is not found while, at the same time, one feels uneasy absolutising the *mine* with all its historical and social contingency, then indeed, the only possibility is to state relativity of all *visible signs*. *This* relativity of relativism is not, however, the relativity of the *actual sign* anchored in the *absolute origin* but, on the contrary, the mere arbitrariness of this *sign* as opposed to that *sign*. Relativism is grounded in the inability to find anything higher than the multiplicity of *actual signs*. The problem with relativism (a bit like with negative theology) is not that it is too extreme but, on the contrary, that it does not go far enough. Relativism is *idolatry* which seems and claims to have escaped all *idols*. It does not put this value/nation/group/...in front of that, it does not *idolise* this by putting it above that. It does not. But it *idolises* some level of, usually, *visible distinctions* as the absolute one, *above* which no more *sharingo* can possibly obtain.

Now, one can be proud of belonging to one's nation, one can be even willing to sacrifice one's life for it, but if this nation is the deepest value which one is capable to recognise then it will easily end in nationalism of a dubious shade. However, one may be proud of that and, at the same time, recognise the possibility of others being proud of belonging to their nations and even of some not bothering about such a thing at all. The conflict between one ethos and another may be of fundamental character but for the most it is a conflict resting on the absolutisation of *visible expressions*, of the *signs* which merely announce, always only in one particular form, the *invisible presence* which is truly *shared*. One can live thoroughly the values of one's cultural or religious formation and, at the same time, recognise equally thorough validity of other values. But for this recognition to be genuine and honest, one must first find the true *inspiration* in the values one is living, that is, to recognise their *spiritual foundation*. To respect other ethos or religion is to recognise its genuine *foundation*. But to do this, one has to, in the first place, be able to recognise it at all. "[W]e must have [first] given all our attention, all our faith, all our love to a particular religion in order to [be able to] think of any other religion with the high degree of attention, faith, and love that is proper to it."[278] Such a recognition of, at once, relativity and *absolute foundation*, is not perhaps common, but is far from impossible.

Just like all *visibility* is *founded* in the *invisible*, so all *presence* of the *absolute* is interwoven into the matter of *this world*. There is no other way of *participation* than through

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[277]Thus, while the usual perspectivism, claiming that there are only different perspectives, must end in relativism, our 'perspectivism' admits not only different views, but also different levels of views, which all are only reflections of the *one*. "Surely the diversity isn't in the thing gazed on, but in the *way* of gazing on it [...] While the same thing is understood, nevertheless it's not understood equally." [P. Abelard, *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*. II:(325)] Dissolution of particular 'substances' and 'essences' notwithstanding, we still (or rather exactly for this reason) have *one* and only *one* to *share* and understand. This *unity* is raised *above* all perspectivism.

[278]S. Weil, *Waiting for God*. Forms of the Implicit Love of God:The love of religious practicies;p.119

some form of tradition, historical consciousness and involvement into the *actual world*. Only through *visibility* is the *invisible present*. The task is to recognise the *manifestations* of this *presence* in the world in which one is living. The multiplicity of religions expresses only the unavoidable *incarnation* of the *invisible* in the *visible*. And to the extent these are true religions (that is, to the extent they, recognizing the *invisible origin above this world*, gather individuals and not masses) they all provide ways to rebirth and salvation. The fact that somebody born in Tibet does it on the way of Buddhism, while somebody born in Europe on the way of Christianity, does not in any way diminish the ultimate *sharing*. This *sharing*, however, does not mean uniform agreement. It is possible only by living one's own, *concretely founded* ethos, for the differences between cultural and religious formations, relative as they are, are thoroughly real. Originating in the same, they reach the level of *actuality* where all our *acts* take place. To the extent one lives an ethos of a *community*, one can live only one such at a time, and whoever tries to live more than one, ends up living neither. But there is no need to live more than one, because each true ethos is a full expression of all levels of Being. If one does not find it here, one won't find it there. It takes an analphabet to believe that the Truth is written somewhere else. The inability to recognise the deepest values embodied in one's culture underlies the escape towards 'otherness' and its 'truth'. It is only a stage of relativism which, despairing over insufficiency of its *visible* means, absolutises some others. And having gone that far, the convert turns against his old ethos with the determination and dogmatism characteristic only for the converts. Because what he found is only a new context for unfolding his un-quenched *thirst*, not a true, *concrete foundation*. If he found the latter, he would see that it has been here all the time. True religion is a form of ultimate *sharing*, and finding it one place, one recognises it everywhere. But if one does not find it, one keeps looking and, in the course of deeper and deeper disappointments, one can eventually start believing that it is nowhere to be found, and that one should get rid of the ladder, having climbed on it to the roof of this 'insight' in the relativity and mere auxiliary role of all ladders.

2. The *actual* expressions of *founded communion* amount to *sharing* the *actual experiences*, 127. situations, problems, joys and sorrows, pains and satisfactions. A multitude of *acts* can express *sharing* – *acts* of cooperation and exchange, of compassion and helpfulness, of criticism and appraisal...Such *acts* address the *actual* situation involving, perhaps, the other's problem or achievement. This problem or achievement is not something which belongs to the other and is privately his, just like your problem is not merely yours – they are just that: problems, achievements, sorrows, joys. When you meet them, they are simply there and become yours by arising your reaction. They are *shared* to the extent you recognise their *objective* character and do not focus on the fact of their belonging only to the other. The strongest form of such *sharing* is actually living the same *experience*, for instance, the loss of a beloved child by parents or more trivial examples of a team *sharing*, along with the same goals, the successes and defeats in their realisation. The same structure underlies genuine *sharing experiences* which, phenomenologically, belong initially to other person. Meeting a smile, a joyful spark in the other's eyes, a happy moment in his life, you do not *share* it by observing it, concluding that it belongs to another, and then deciding to participate in it. Neither do you *participate* in it by trying to evoke the feelings and impressions the other might have. To the extent you *participate* in it, to the extent you *share* it, the fact that it is another's and not yours is thoroughly real, yet of negligible importance: a part of the world, the *actual* situation is *shared* and it is neither his nor yours. And although *reflection* will tell you that there is a sharp *distinction*, you know

that it is not telling the whole truth.

Sharing other's joys and happiness expresses genuine *communion* no less than *sharing* other's problems for, as we know, envy of other's happiness divides often more strongly than the mere laziness in stretching a helping hand. Let us, however, use as an example compassion. It is not any feeling which has to be aroused in order to reproduce another's pain. *Actual* communion is not a mere empathy, a mere emotional identification with that which is other's. Reducing *actual* communion to empathy, misconstrued as entering into another's feelings, is a *subjectivistic* reduction, which not only misses completely the nature of the phenomenon but also precludes the *subject* from leaving its solipsistic universe. In fact, compassion need not be (though it often is) accompanied by any specific feelings. Feelings, *moods* and *impressions* are only *signs* – as all *signs* – of something *transcendent*, that is, not reduced to their *subjective immediacy*. They reveal an aspect of the world and point to something which can also be revealed in other ways. People with apparently cool and unemotional personality are capable of perfectly compassionate attitudes and *acts*, no less so than others. *Sharing* expressed in an *act* of compassion need not be accompanied by any specific feelings – but it must be *concrete*! It must spring from the depth of the person, from the *recognition* of the need of it, of the call from the *actual* situation. The fact that one can genuinely feel *with* another, pain or joy, is secondary to the fact that one relates to the same sphere of the world from which his pain or joy arises. One does not feel *his* pain, and one does not even try to *imagine* it. One feels *one's* pain which participates in the same – *shared* – painful experience as does his pain. Whether this experience is given also through other forms (for instance, knowing why he is in pain, or why he should be even if he does not seem to be) or only through his painful expression, is only of secondary and minimal importance. Compassion addresses *the same experience* to which his reaction was pain.

As it happens, *shared* pain diminishes. "Pain is alleviated when friends share the sorrow."[279] Of course, one might say, the pain of the one who suffered first, but not of the one who joins in. But no, the pain of both or, let it be allowed to say, the total amount of pain. Pain and suffering is not any *invisible* truth which only increases by being *shared*. On the contrary, particular pain – just like money – diminishes when it is *shared* with another, it becomes divided between all who *share* it. For the other, who comes with compassionate support, it diminishes to the same extent as it diminishes for the one who was suffering. For what *motivated* compassion was pain which he experienced, perhaps in a very different way from the one *actually* suffering, but still entirely and really. Moreover, genuine compassion comes with the voluntary acceptance of the pain. This acceptance does not intend any compassion. It is a mere *act*, a mere answer to the call which is *founded* in – we may say, dedicated exclusively to – the ultimate *communion*, that is, Yes for which pain is not evil but trial.[280]

128. In a given situation, compassion is directed exclusively and completely towards the person and yet, in a sense, it is completely 'impersonal'. This 'impersonality', however, is an expression of deepest respect for the person. The situation where, for instance, one acts

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[279] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. IX:11 [1171a]

[280] Avoiding pain is natural and it could be used to motivate avoiding compassion which amounts to *sharing* it. The above says that, on the contrary, *sharing* does not amount to seeking pain but to its diminishing. True compassion results always in help. Moreover, there is a difference between avoiding and escaping, between not looking for pain and turning away in the face of it. In the latter case it is already too late and this is the case were compassion is called for. Escaping from *actually* encountered pain is like escaping from suffering which, as said in §20, is a source of *alienation*.

compassionately towards the suffering person but only because and in so far as he is a member of ...one's family or group is not an example of a genuine compassion. The suffering person is the *absolute* center of the situation and compassion is an expression of the ultimate *communion* – with *this* person. "It is not so that «compassion – as such – is shameless», as Nietzsche says, but compassion without love towards the one whom we compassionate. [...] Therefore we notice also that every expression of compassion *without* love to the person is felt as a brutality."[281] 'Love to the person' is the *concrete foundation* of *actual* compassion. Its ultimacy, or as we said "impersonality", means only that if the suffering person happened to be somebody else, the compassion would still be the same. This apparently paradoxical combination of the full concentration on the *actual* situation and person and, at the same time, *openness* to the universality of the call, the 'impersonal' *non-attachment* which, in a sense, disregards who this person actually is, expresses the *concret foundation* of compassion in *love transcending* and thoroughly permeating *actuality*.

This expresses only the *concrete foundation*, not any universality of compassion, of which the present person would be only 'an instance'. Compassion is a property of *acts*, not of life. It is not like *love* which, underneath every *act* and *activity*, extends to the whole world. Suggesting such a universality of compassion, as done for instance in M. de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, amounts also to suggesting that the whole world is in a soar need for it, that the whole world is a scene of all embracing misery and that life has only tragic sense. Such an exaggerated compassion, a category of *actuality* applied to the whole world, is but an exaggerated feeling which comes closer to patronising in its lack of the basic *thankfulness*. Compassion does not pity anybody nor anything, for pity hides some lack of respect, we could say, pity is compassion without respect. Compassion does not pity the tragic sense of life, the unbearable and unavoidable involvement into the evil of the world, the corruption of one's soul. It arises only in *actual* situations which call for it and, otherwise, knows that everything is a *gift*, though some of these *gifts* may be harder to carry than others.

As described in 3.3.2, *concrete founding* of *acts* can often be expressed by an apparent inversion. Recognising and accepting the whole person, *concrete communion* may (sometimes even should) lack the unconditional acceptance of everything the other person does. Critique and disagreement is possible – in full friendship or love – only when the *community* is not reduced to the level of the *actual* situation, to one's feelings and acts. Only because it is *founded* in the recognition of the personal value, in the deeper *community* of values and, eventually, of the *origin*, it can judge the *act* without judging the person. The *unfounded* community of mere *actuality* will often do the opposite and acclaim everything the other does, like confused parent or teacher following guidelines of all too liberal pedagogy. One feels forced to accept every *actual* wish and expression of the other because, without any deeper *foundation*, everything one is able to relate to are *actual* expressions, whether of genuine needs or of mere whims. Thus, although one still strives for a deeper community, one remains confused by the *traces* which do not reach to their true origin but stop at the level of *actual impressions* of the *ego dissociated* from the person.

Without such a deeper *foundation*, ego remains a *dissociated* atom, a pure *subjectivity*, reduced to the privacy of its *actual* feelings and thoughts which – not only etymologically – amounts to privation.[282] *Ego* without *concrete foundation* is the archetype of *alienation*,

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[281]M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*. A:XI

[282]"*Privare*" means 'to deprive' and its passive participle, "*privatus*", serves also as adjective and noun.

whose frequent *actual* form is loneliness. Loneliness is another side of privacy, a result of the other having been pressed outside the sphere of *my* privacy and reduced to a mere aspect of *my* situation, perhaps, still an active subject but not one to whom *I* have any personal relation – the other becomes a mere 'he'. It can be an anonymous adversary in a situation where, although himself present, he functions only as a 'third person', a mere factor in the *actual* game. This is the way we often relate to clerks or salespersons, when the whole contact is reduced to an impersonal relation dictated by the actual context. The communication is a mere matter of routine exchange or else of gaining control over the external factors which, accidentally, can also be embodied in another person. Exactly the same superficiality characterises cocktail-parties which have the more jolly and merry surface, the more despair and hardship is trying to hide under it. One often seeks a merry company as a medicine against bad *mood*. In such a company, however, one does not so much *share* the good mood as is infected by it. Such a contagious, often heavy, atmosphere characterises all forms of *actuality* in which the participants, wishing for a community, almost force themselves to *actually* share something, overcoming the felt *alienation* in the depersonalising power of a trance: a discotheque, a politically agitating meeting, an orgy, a gambling hall, a sermon of televangelist.[283]

Sartre's novels and plays provide extreme examples of such a community which is a mere multiplicity of *alienated*, mutually *external egos*. *Being and Nothingness* gives a systematic description of the absolutised subjectivity failing to establish any meaningful form of *community*, of the constant attempts of the for-itself to turn another into an objectified and devitalised in-itself. Even love reduced for the poor man to a mere master-slave dialectic between *dissociated subjectivities* trying to subdue each other. This, of course, leads nowhere as benefiting from another's submissive acts establishes perhaps dependence, but not any *communion*. And even if the other's acts are voluntary and made of good will, they do not necessarily open for *me* the door to *participation* in any *communion*. For the strongest bonds knit us not with people who did us good but with those to whom we did some good – and the bonds are the tighter, the more good we do to them. Receiving gifts or services, made of good will alone, is a much more difficult art than one commonly imagines. Genuine freedom is required to receive gifts without becoming inferior (for shamelessness can protect only against the mere *sense* of inferiority).[284] When such a freedom is missing, obtaining more from others is weighted only against giving more from oneself, with the resulting attempts to either subdue others or to protect oneself against them – in either case, the *alienation* of increasing loneliness.

130.   At the social scale, the lack of *concrete foundation* results in the total anonymity which invades the threatened and *alienated ego*. As *alienation* is the loss of *concreteness*, so community gets now reduced to a mass of statistically anonymous individuals. The fear of anonymity is but a *reflection* of the missing sense of *community*.[285] The apparent medicine against it is . . . success, public recognition and attention which puts a photograph in place of the lost face. This has also a deeper aspect. Dreams of excep-

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[283]The classic of G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, provides excellent descriptions of the involved mechanisms.

[284]The custom of potlatch (M. Mauss, *The Gift*), amounting to almost destructive competition in surpassing the generosity of the received gift by the returned one, can be viewed as a social expression of the psychological dependence of the recipient. On the other extreme, there are societies where the fear of owing anything makes it almost unthinkable to receive any, especially minor, service from a stranger without immediately paying one's debt.

[285]We are speaking about *both* the anonymity of a crowd of faceless units *and* the anonymity of *my* being lost in such a crowd. The two are *aspects* of the same anonymity.

tional achievements, of leaving one's mark for the future development, of becoming socially/politically/scientifically/... respectable, as one's own monument in one's home town – all such *egotic* thrills, which often indeed form the ground for outstanding achievements, are but expressions of the *thirst* for *community* which got reduced to the purely *egotic* hope of establishing an exceptional, even if only ephemeral case against the background of statistical mediocrity, that is, anonymity. As if the most common sign of mediocrity were not exactly the dream of being exceptional. To be exceptional is *ego*'s only dream, its degenerate expression of the *thirst* for becoming *self*. Although such dreams express the need to confirm *ego's* uniqueness, their second bottom is *thirst* for *community*. As the common universality is mistaken for the lacking *community* and public respectability for the lacking self-respect, *alienated ego* searches only for becoming a public *persona*, even though public is only the anonymous crowd.

The anonymous crowd, which an individual confronts instead of a meaningful *community*, is not a simple result of the increased numbers, of the mass pseudo-culture which flattens and deindividualises the social sphere. It is rather the other way around – the anonymous mass confronts individual who dwells exclusively at the level of his *ego* and, consequently, loses the *concrete* sense of belonging to a *community*.[286] The *unfounded community* at the level of *actuality* is an anonymous crowd.

Communication.   131.

Sharing the *signs* and *actualities* amounts to communication. We say "*sharing*" because although all *signs* are *actual* and situations are common to more people, it does not mean that every *actual* situation involves and every *sign* is a genuine communication. The *unfounded* communication would be a mere transfer or exchange, and not *sharing*, of the *signs*. The *immediacy* of *signs* makes them perfectly amenable to direct exchange. But communication is not an event of exchanging *signs*, not even of exchanging them according to some specified rules and protocols. It is not an event of exchanging any *signs* but of comprehending them, of recognising the *shared* reality *above* the *actual signs*.

Communication is a possible *visible manifestation* of *sharing*; the more we *share* with others, the easier and more complete is the possible communication. We do not communicate that well with bacteria or butterflies. They have quite different structure of *experience*; their world has few common points with ours. We communicate a bit better with cats or dogs; we and they perceive some of the same things as obstacles. We also find in them more advanced expressions of 'feelings' than can be found in ants or butterflies. Their *experiences* cut the background along the lines sufficiently similar to ours and provide them with a lot of things which we too *distinguish* and *recognise.* So, perhaps after all, "if a lion could speak, we might understand him,"[287] though it certainly would not be the same degree of communication as we can achieve with any human being. And, of course, we communicate very differently with different people. "Each word means something slightly different to each person, even among those who share the same cultural background."[288]

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[286]We do not negate the statistical prevalence of negative and alienating effects of various social diseases, like inhuman working forms, depersonalised public sphere or its spiritual emptiness. We would perhaps suggest that, to begin with, such forms are rather expressions of the *egotic* mentality raised to the social norm. But most importantly, alien and anonymous crowd may confront individual under any circumstances, if only the individual reduces his life project to the level of *ego*. Also under unfavorable social conditions (like those just mentioned), it is eventually the individual himself who has to consent to the reduction of person to *ego*.

[287]L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations.* (modified)

[288]C. G. Jung and M.-L. von Franz, eds., *Man and His Symbols*. p.28

This, however, in no way makes communication impossible, in fact, it is what makes it different from an exchange of information bits. We can understand words which for another mean something different because we *share* the reality to which they refer. Eventually, communication is like pointing and eventual answer to the question "What do you mean?", after a series of clarifications and explanations, is simply "*This* is what I mean, just look *here*." It is an event of narrowing down the *shared* horizon (of humanity, language, culture, personal experience) to the *actual* content and, by the same token, of endowing this *actuality* with meaning – the meaning of belonging to the *concrete* and *shared* horizon.

Perfect unambiguity of expressions and ultimate *precision* of the language is the domain of computer programming but whenever something is communicated, it can also, at least in principle, be misunderstood. The possibility of misunderstanding is a necessary condition of a successful communication, that is, of conveying some meaning which goes beyond the *immediacy* of the *sign*. It is only the lack of *shared* background which makes *precision* of all *signs* ultimate necessity – for where nothing is *shared* one can only exchange *signs*. As Wittgenstein observed, even an ostentive definition would be impossible without sharing enough to understand *what* the other is actually pointing at. "Whoever has seen, knows what I am saying" was a phrase used by a mystery-initiate when addressing others: perhaps, to avoid divulging secretes but more probably because details would not help those who have not seen. We "need not be surprised if only those ideas which least belong to us can be adequately expressed in words."[289] And by "adequately" one likes to mean unambiguously, *precisely*, excluding any possibility of misunderstanding. According to Kierkegaard, there is no direct communication, and although he too would limit this statement to the deeper truths of the genuine faith, we would extend it to all communication. For communication is conditioned by *sharing*: in its *presence*, many different *signs* or words may be used, while in its absence no words will result in communication.

This remains valid through all the levels. The most intimate communication is *founded* on the most intimate *communion*. It is only at the personal level, and only with an individual person, that full *communion* is possible and it leads to very specific ways of communicating, intensionally as well as not, most intricate aspects. But they are communicated not due to any univocal *precision*, not due to universal adequacy of the used *signs* – *signs* are here always inadequate. Just like a *symbol* may seem an almost arbitrary and accidental representation of the symbolised reality, so here too, an apparently most insignificant word, a mere look, a sheer grimace or gesture, a casual phrase, can *actually* carry the deepest meaning. It does not, however, happen because the *signs* somehow carry this meaning in them, but only because the possibility of this meaning is *shared* before it has been pointed to. The art of communication does not consist in the ability to interpret the unclear *signs* by narrowing their meaning to the most *precise* content, but rather on the contrary, in the ability to use the *actually precise signs* to grasp the *imprecise* (and often *clear*) meaning which *transcends* their *immediacy*.

132. Wittgenstein used to ask questions like: How can I be sure that saying "green", I and you understand what is being said, in particular, understand the same thing? The problem is of course with 'the same'. But this problem arises only when one is committed to some form of psychologism, to some private impressions and ideas which somehow live within one's *subjectivity*, and which get, rather mysteriously, transfered between the monads by words like "green". But every event of a successful communication is *founded* on *recognition* – the *actual* and mutual *re-cognition* follows only the *recognition* of *shared* background.

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[289]H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will*. II

If by the meaning (of "green") we understand some intrinsic properties, some impression or idea of greenness perceived or imagined *inside* one's head, then indeed, it may be impossible to be sure. But 'green' is only a limit of *distinctions* made in *one*, made by you *and* me in *the same one*. The limits may vary from person to person (just like Prague may end at different points for different people, just like stripes of the rainbow interpenetrate) but these variations retain a major overlap. We agree on the use of the words because we *share* the common reality and structure our *experiences* in similar ways. (As we said earlier, I:§25, learning a language itself contributes significantly to, but does not determine, this structuring.) In the same way, though to a much lesser degree, we agree on the use of various *signs* with dogs. Communication, "this influence of one monad over another is only *ideal*, and it can have its effect only through the intervention of God"[271]. This 'intervention of God' is not any mystical interference of some magical power, but the fact of, at first, only ontological *foundation* in the *one*, of having the same *origin*, and then also of *concretely sharing* the same reality.[290]

One might still wonder: we agree on the use of the words, but do we agree on their meaning? "With most names, we've come to know which things they go together with from their use in speech, although we are unable to determine what the correct meaning or understanding of them is."[291] A variant of empiricism, say "linguistic empiricism", would attempt to reduce the latter to the former, even to replace 'meaning' by 'use'. The more the mood of such a project seems different from that of behaviourism, the more surprising is the similarity of the goals and procedures. "Why is it not possible for me to doubt that I have never been on the moon? [...] But if anyone were to doubt it, how would his doubt come out in practice? And couldn't we peacefully leave him to doubt it, since it makes no difference at all?"[292] We certainly could but, the absence of any observable difference in social praxis notwithstanding, could one reasonably claim that there would be no difference for the person having such doubts? The 'difference for the person' need not have anything to do with what the person *actually*, practically does. One can deny any such difference for the involved person only by denying the reality of the doubt, or in a more extreme case, by claiming its impossibility, perhaps, on the basis of the impossibility of the private doubt and, eventually, meanings. The linguistic empiricism tries to dissolve the phantom of the extra-linguistic meaning in the inter-subjectivity of the language usage or social praxis. But *sharing* is much more than merely obeying similar rules of social or linguistic praxis. If we did not *share* anything, how could we even agree on the consistent use of any rules? Just like *communion* requires a distance, so *sharing* some reality requires this reality to be *present*, as if independently, with all who are *sharing* it. It is only because we all *share* most of the world (practically or impractically, *actually* or not), that *actual* communication – transfer of and agreement on some meaning – is possible and may even result in new forms of *experience*.[293]

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[290]Plotinus thus describes the souls in their intellectual dimension: "as they do everything they do in order and according to nature they would not give orders or advice and would know by intuition what passes from one to another [... and] before one speaks to another that other has seen and understood." [Plotinus, *Enneads*. IV:3.18]

[291]P. Abelard, *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*. II:§399. Let's only remind that in the medievel grammatical theory 'names' included not only nouns but also adjectives (the identification reflecting the corresponding phenomenon of the Latin language). It would be hard to imagine why, in the quoted sentence, one could not allow also all other words.

[292]L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. 117/120

[293]This is particularly plain in communication with children before they acquire mastery of language. They often understand what one means without knowing exactly what one is saying. The shared context,

"If you are not certain of any fact, you cannot be certain of the meaning of your words either."[294] Allow us to reformulate it as follows: If you do not *recognise* any *distinctions*, the mere words and their exchange will not teach you that either. Every expression draws some boundary, either a boundary which, to some degree, already was there (as in descriptions or clarifications) or one which appears only with this expression (as in speech acts). The *meaning* arises between the *actual* utterance/reading of the expression and the background which acquires a determination. The meaning of a statement, or any word, is not *subjective* because to be meaning it must *transcend* the mere *immediacy* of the *sign*. It is not private either because, at least in principle, *I* am never the only person able to recognise it. And this is the case because all boundaries are drawn in the *shared* reality, eventually, in the *indistinct* background of the *one*.

But *I* may have doubts which have no consequences for others (nor, in practical matters, even for me), *I* may go around meaning something which *I* never manage to communicate to others, *I* may spend my life intending something which *I* never manage to express. If this were impossible, communication would be impossible also, or else, communication would not be a *reflection* of genuine *sharing*, would not be a conveyance of meanings but a mere exchange of labels, a mere transfer of *signs*.

133.   Just like *concretely founded* communication rests on *sharing* conveyed underneath everything *actually* communicated, the *unfounded* communication is determined by its lack, that is, the constant fear of failure. As *sharing* reduces to universality and meaning to its

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involving also the tone of one's voice and facial expression, leave often only one possibility of understanding one's words, even when the words themselves are not yet understood. A crying baby understands the consoling words of the mother only through the loving embrace accompanying them. Only because they *share* the situation, is it possible for the baby to learn the language from its parents.

A vulgar analogy can be found in computer communication. The transfered bits have no significance unless they are sent and received by programs obeying some protocols which in advance determine the scope of possible communications, as if, the shared space – of use and interpretation. But even following agreed rules is not sufficient for communication beyond mere transfer of messages. It is impossible to establishing so called "common knowledge" without the assumption of a prior sharing of some information. The idea is: you and I want to reach an agreement on the issue 'x or y?' but so that each of us knows that we both know that we have reached it. We do not, however, share anything except some communication channels through which we can send messages (say, by post which, to simplify everything, is 100% reliable, though it does not guarantee any time of delivery – I do not know *when* you will receive nor that you have received my message, unless I obtain a confirmation from you). Suppose I prefer initially x and send you the message $1 : x$. Suppose you agree. I do not know that, so you should respond, confirming $2 : x$. Now I know that you agree with me on x, but you do not know that I know that. So, I have to confirm the reception of the confirmation, sending $3 : x$. Now, you know that I know, but I do not know that you know that I know. And so on. (The scenario corresponds to theorem 6.1.1 – in R. Fagin *et al.*, *Reasoning about Knowledge* – which precludes the possibility of achieving common knowledge of anything having been delivered. Stronger versions, e.g., theorem 4.5.4, apply to slightly modified situations where *no* common knowledge may arise, as a consequence of complete asynchrony of the components.) Misusing such arguments for our purposes, we could say that in the absence of initial sharing, it is not possible to establish it either, even in the presence of most reliable communication, understood as mere transfer of messages (whether mere bits, pictures, 'mental' meanings or deepest ideas). Technically, one reaches the fix-point of the appropriate functional (where everybody knows that everybody knows that everybody knows that...) only as the infinite limit which, misinterpreted in practical terms, means that it is unreachable. In short, if we do not initially share knowledge, the mere exchange of messages will never lead to achieving common knowledge. But common knowledge arises trivially if we, for instance, share the same location and both point at the x (observing each other's action) or when we speak directly to each other. In the above example, if we initially shared the knowledge that each message is in fact delivered after, say, 1 minute, then 1 minute after I sent $1 : x$ we would achieve common knowledge of x.

[294] L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. 114

visible expression, one searches for some *actual*, common basis which, as we learn from many attempts, it is impossible to circumscribe *concretely*, let alone *precisely* specify.

The *idol* of 'rational argumentation' can serve as an example. Trying to convince oneself and others that we are all rational beings (whatever that means), one postulates some ideal goal of rational morality consisting in the unreserved acceptance of rational arguments. One may even insist that it recognises the dignity of humans paying all due respect to their value – which happens to be the same as the value of their rationality.

Let us ignore the fact that there is hardly anything, hardly any action or attitude, which could not be supported by plausible arguments. In some contexts (of which the academia may be the paramount example), openness to other's arguments is certainly a matter of professional ethics. In life, one can also occasionally learn something from listening to other's arguments. But when raised to the level of the fundamental principle it becomes a caricature of genuine communication. Have you ever been convinced by an argument? That is, convinced not in some petty matter of this or that, not in the common attempts to come up with a solution to some problem, but in a matter of significance, in a matter having existential relevance. If one believes in God, is it because of an argument? If one does not, is it because of an argument? Doubtful, very doubtful. In this last case, it may rather be because one does not find any argument, and rests satisfied with one's 'rationality'. But there are no forcing arguments, or rather, no sufficient reasons. At best, there are only clarifications of meanings, accounts of experience.

At the level of *immediacy*, physical force or other forms of physical influence (shouting, crying, bad eye) are the only possible 'arguments'. At the level of *actuality*, although physical coercion (like lasting torture) is still possible, one has also more complex means of enforcing one's will and argumentation is one such. But it is still the means of enforcement. For there is very far from listening to another's arguments to listening to what he is saying and, then, from listening to what he is saying to listening to what he is. This gradual increase of the listening attitude reflects only the decreased level of imposition. One can argue about various *general thoughts* and even about *invisible* truths, but such arguing is bound to leave the issues unsettled. For arguments, understood as forcing reasons, have their only legitimate application at the level of *actual* issues allowing *precise* enough analysis and arrangment. When applied beyond the sphere of *precisely* defined, *actual* problems, they either become an intellectual game or, when taken seriously, boil down to one thing: "Either you are stupid since you do not see that this is right, or else you are respectably rational and accept it." Argumentation and persuasion, when taken to the extreme, that is, when absolutised are much closer to brute force than they are willing to admit. Appeals to some 'ideals', like 'communicative reason and rationality', 'undisturbed rational communication', 'tolerance', 'solidarity', etc., are unable to cover up the underlying disrespect for the human being – for the *whole* human being. The calls to assuming a respectful attitude towards the opponents become necessary, because it has to be *added on the top* of all arguments, like a meek tablecloth covering a dirty table.

A different example can be that of groups establishing and requiring the use of secret codes. Establishing private codes of communication – words, gestures, expressions which carry the full meaning only to those initiated in the community – is characteristic for lovers and close friends. But their privacy is different from secrecy. In the extreme cases of secret organisations such codes are established for the purpose of hiding the secrets as well as for the confirmation of the identity of the community and its members. Secret initiation rites, secret rituals follow the clandestine operations and hidden purposes. In

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many situations, secrecy may be understandable and even justified (as, for instance, in the cases of organisations opposing aggression, political oppression and the like) or less so (as in the case of criminal organisations or mere fear of openness). But in either case, the secrecy of the codes signals the broken *community*, the impossibility or unwillingness to *openly found* the communication across the social, political or even personal division lines.

Secret codes, being codes, insist on the strictness of the rules – the unambiguity of the greeting sign, the rigidity of the ceremony, the impossibility of deviation from the predetermined sequence of acts or formulae. The less or the shallower is the meaning to communicate, the greater the need for rigid rules, for their *precision* is the last thing which may give an impression of inter-subjectivity, of sharing anything with the others – provided they follow the same rules! Sick cases are extreme examples of such a reduction to the level of *actuality* where the ability to follow sequences of sterile and *precise signs* seems the last residual of communication. Clang associations ("real, seal, deal, heel") or irrelevant, though possible, associations (a person sending a new year's greetings and wishing another a fruitful year, ends with the wishes of good apple-year and pear-year, and then sauerkraut, and cabbage year...); difficulties with abstract reasoning and the resulting literal/specific interpretations (e.g., the proverb "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." gets commented: "If you are able to catch a bird you might be able to sell him for money.") – all such symptoms of schizophrenia are also expressions of the communication which gets disturbed by the rigidity of following only plain rules. The disturbance is not the lack of a rule but the lack of anything but the rule. It is not the lack of any meaning but the fact that the whole meaning is only the mere conformance to some rule, that the actually followed rule is the only discernible content of the message. Even more extreme example is a correct but impersonally stiff language which is spoken too perfectly and too grammatically, as if by a person using a foreign language he learned in a classroom; the lack of colloquiality and subtleties of emotional tone; the adequate knowledge and application of the formal rules of the language along with the complete lack of the idea of communication. These defects, extending also to nonverbal communication, characterise some forms of autism.

135. One thing is the study of languages, of their properties and structures; quite another is the obsession with Language. Proliferation of the disciplines and intense investigations in linguistics, semiotics, logic, grammar, parsing, machine translation, etc., etc., can certainly produce valuable results. But they gain paramount relevance *for a philosopher* primarily when he has lost – or sees the loss of – the sense of any *community*. Language can be interesting in most circumstances. But it becomes imperatively important when it ceases to function properly, that is, when its *foundation*, the *community* which makes communication possible, deteriorates, when the *distance* to the *shared* reality becomes impassable because that which is *shared* gets reduced to that which is common and the *clear* meanings which might be communicated to the *precise* means of communication. All that one is still able to hope for is *actual* agreement, adequacy of the *signs*, consensus concerning the rules. Fiddling with the language one hopes to improve the *actual* communication and thus, perhaps, to reestablish the *community*. But the *more* intense and *precise* are the determinations of all the *visible signs*, the more all the sense of *community* disappears in the empty cracks between them.[295]

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[295]We would not claim any causal relations, but observing some rough simultaneities is too tempting, even if also too daring. (1) Some parallels to such a coupling of linguisticism and the lack of *community* might be discerned in Europe in the VII-th and VIII-th century: on the one hand, the final stages of the disappearance of the Roman culture, the gradual dissolution of the Merovingian empire, conflicts between the majordomos for the succession after once powerful dynasty; and on the other hand, the conviction

1. At the lowest level of *immediate experiences, communion* amounts to *sharing* the ac- 136.
tual moments. With whom? It may be the loved person, or else people who happen to
be present. But it need not be anybody in particular, nobody may be *actually* present.
Thankfulness is *sharing* through *participation*, and every moment, even if lived in loneli-
ness, is but a *gift* of the *transcendence*. Recognition of this *gift* in a single moment is the
same as *sharing* it with others – whether *actually* present or not. It is *sharing* with others
because the *gift*, although given to me, is not *mine*, is not given *only* to me.

Although *immediacy* does not seem to leave the space for any *distance*, the *concrete*
communion of a moment respects both the *distance* to the *origin* of the *gift* and to the
other with whom it is *shared*. Other, in particular, requires a *distance*. This platitude
seems to be forgotten quite often, so let us repeat – only *distance* makes otherness possible.
The ultimate otherness is constituted by the ultimate *confrontation* (which is a form of
distance). But so is another person – he emerges as another only through and from the *dis-
tance* which separates us. Only distance makes relation possible, and only distance makes
being-together possible. The true *communion* can find an expression in the *immediacy* of
a pure 'now' only if the *distance* is maintained. The sense and perhaps even the feeling
of unity in and of a moment is possible only when the *aspect* of the distance is retained,
when one remembers that it is unity of distinct poles, when we join each other from the
distance of distinct individualities. In fact, keeping the *trace* of this *distance* in an *actual*
moment is itself enough to experience the unity – at once, of *sharing* this very moment *and*
of *sharing* its *origin*. This *distance* and otherness, *present* in the *immediacy* of a moment
which apparently makes it impossible, is the *trace* of the *concretely founded communion*.

Expressions of this are as varied as moments one may encounter. It can be, for instance,
respect for things in the *immediate* vicinity, within the horizon of our *acts*. The care we
take for things is not grounded in our infinite love for their *absolute* value, but in our love
for them as particular *gifts* of the *origin*. It is love in *analogical* sense, love which is but
an expression of *communion*. As always, telling one from another, telling such a love from
idolatry, is not a matter of any rules and laws, but of *concrete*, personal presence. What is

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that the nature of things are recognisable in the etymology of their names underlying the whole of Isidore
of Seville, *Etymologies*; linguistic arguments for the existence of nothingness in Fridugisus of Tours, *On
the Being of Nothing and Shadows*; Alkuin's minuscule and struggle against barbarian, germanized Latin;
dealing at the same time with the nature of things and the properties of their names in the encyclopedia
of Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*. (Even if the two last ones belong to the Carolinian renaissance, they
can be seen as continuators of the linguistic line.) (2) Around the beginning of the XII-th century, the
new money economy and the Gregorian reforms began to yield the divisive and destabilising consequences.
The reforms attacking the simony among the clerics opened up, as was claimed, for the emergence and
proliferation of the heretical movements, almost absent since the V-th century. At the same time, the
increasing interest in language and the study of its foundations develop into the Scholastic grammar with
its theory of supposition and, eventually, into Ockham's nominalism vindicating language and logic to
the level of ultimate truth-bearers, along with the atomistic ontology. (3) The social disintegration of
the XX-th century hardly needs any comments. It is paralleled by the fascination with the philosophy of
language, also emergence of formal languages and logic, and the thread leading through logical positivism
to analytical philosophy which ends...where it ends. Perhaps, the ecstatic opening to 'otherness', just
like the personal spiritualism of the New Age (both with roots reaching at least to the end of the XIX-
th century), could be seen as a reaction against the stiffened linguisticism and predilections for rigid
formalities. The associated cacophony of language looks like a culmination of a century long analytical
attempts to heal its metaphysical sickness by...capturing and formalising its essence. Dare we to consider
it as yet another analogy? – namely, to the post XII-th century heresies (especially Wyclif's but also most
contestations of the time, continued into Reformation, all with an element of gnostic dualism) aiming at
replacement of the visible, stiff and degenerate ecclesiastical tradition by the invisible and living church,
the true community founded exclusively on the revelation of the absolute 'otherness' – Bible?

the ultimate good of this or that thing? Fortunately, there is no general answer, because if there were, our lives would be pretty boring. Petting a cat or watering a plant can hardly be anything evil, but it may be an expression of a quiet pleasure or respectful care or, on the other hand, of a nagging doubt about one's likability or usefulness. In the former case the moment is *shared* and in the latter stolen.

137. Exclusive restriction to the level of *immediacy* is hardly possible. Lack of *concrete foundation* leaves then hardly any possibility of *sharing* anything. Things and *objects* viewed from this level appear as arbitrary events of pure *immediacy*. Consequently, all kinds of relations between them, as well as between them and the *subject*, are as if purely nominal, unreal, abstract, indifferent. Appropriation and minute enjoyment can be attempts to establish some *immediate* community. 'Use-and-throw' attitudes, 'things are for *me* and *I* do what *I* want with them', all forms of disrespectful arrogance *acting* from the impulse of the moment are *immediate* expressions of the *unfounded community*, that is, of the lack of *community*.

In terms of relations between people, this lack of *foundation* amounts to extreme atomicity, to positing every individual as a totally independent 'it', *dissociated* from any context and influences from 'outside'. The other who has thus become a mere 'it' can be encounter just like other things. Everybody may have his private goals and life, but these are not in any way shared which means, other's life in no way affects mine. "All creatures are born isolated and have no need of one another."[89]

3.3.3.iii. Freedom

138. **4.** We have said in §48 that freedom, in its negative form, is an *aspect* of *pride*. This qualification may need some refinement. We are dependent on various things, we have to eat and sleep, etc. We are involved into causal relations of *this world* but ... it in no way contradicts our freedom. For freedom is not freedom 'from' every possible form of dependence but only from enslavement. Freedom which tries to establish itself as a total independence 'from' everything, ends up in the blind street of other self-referential paradoxes by realising that it is sentenced to freedom – having proved (to itself) its independence, it cannot escape 'from' this very fact, it becomes doomed to this fact.[296] The attempt to rise above, to liberate *oneself* 'from' every possible dependence is exactly an *aspect* of *pride* for which every dependence seems a form of slavery. But finding only emptiness *above* the interplay of *visible* dependencies, the only project that remains is to keep liberating 'from' this, 'from' that, 'from'... It is this negative freedom 'from', the insatiable freedom of emptiness which is an *aspect* of *pride*.

Liberating oneself 'from' this and 'from' that has also the aspect of paying back one's debts. Having borrowed or obtained something makes one feel unfree and settling the accounts one liberates oneself 'from' that. Man who owes nothing to anybody stays cool and free, above the pettiness of daily debts, he remains remote, unaffected and ... *proud*. But freedom is not to pay back all the debts – this is simply impossible, and *thankfulness* amounts also to the recognition of one's infinite debt. The freer one is the more one owes, and *nothingness* of *self*, owning *nothing*, owes everything.

On the other hand, some like to remember the unhappy events and days of childhood, complaining about the family and relatives who did not do their due... About the society

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[296]The destructive character of such an observation relies on the combination of both the negative freedom 'from' and the attempts to *prove* it as an unavoidable truth. But the two easily go together.

which did not and does not function to promote personal happiness... About others, met then and now, who take away one's spare time, money, possibilities of enjoyment, one's life. So one offers one's time and energy and imagines that others owe him something. All such complains can seem justified but their only work is: enslavement. Nobody, and least of all the past, owes anything to a free man.

There is the abyss of freedom, the abyss of *nothingness* which attracts a slave with the indeterminacy of its emptiness, like a false promise. The dread of this terrifying attraction is the price of the freedom which, equated with emptiness, proves illusory. The true, *absolute* freedom is not only to possess nothing but also to owe everything. It is equivalent to a surrender, to renouncing *oneself*, that is, renouncing all claims one might believe to have, all debts others might possibly owe. It is the freedom to accept the undeserved *gift*, to recognise the *absolute* character of the *command*, which in particular means, the possibility one has to deny it. Having accepted it, the complete lack of *actual* contents leaves one entirely free to realise it, to give it an adequate *actual* form. (What form is adequate, however, is too *concrete* a question to be addressed in such abstract categories.) "God forces no one, for love cannot compel, and God's service, therefore, is a thing of perfect freedom."[297] **139.**

This freedom to express the *invisible*, this *presence* of *transcendence* in the midst of *immanence*, is thus not *my* freedom. As all dimensions of the *absolute* it simply is, or is not at all, and *I* can at most *participate* in it. To be free is to *forget* one's freedom. (Let us only remind that *forgetfulness* is not the same as denial, a mere slipping out of memory or simple blindness, §98.) The *Yes*, suspending the presumed *absoluteness* of *this world* and anchoring *my* being *above* it, makes me completely free in relation to it. This freedom is precisely the content of *non-attachment*, of erasing the dependence on the *idols*, the *visible* pretenders to *absoluteness*. It *founds* the *experience* of freedom which permeates *my* whole being, and which is not contradicted by any problems, obstacles, restrictions at the lower levels. In a sense, it liberates one from the dependence on the *visible world* simply by abolishing the need to look for the final proofs and ultimate confirmations of freedom there.

This is yet another example of *inversion*: just like the *Yes* to Godhead turns out to be the deepest *Yes* to *this world*, so the *humility* and submission to the highest *command* is the fullest form of freedom. Freedom is not any 'faculty', any separate, empty power which could be filled with arbitrary contents, and which, by some universal law of human nature, every soul either possesses or not. It is an *aspect* of the universal possibility, which everyone may desire or detest, attempt to achieve or neglect, pray for or forget.

3. *I* cherish *my* dreams, *my* images – of happiness, fulfillment, completeness – and stay **140.** *attached* to these *idols* in constant attempts to find an *actual* medicine against the *thirst*. One will say, OK, but these are *my* images and dreams, and as such they make *me* free from the external constrains. There may be some psychological truth in that, but of little value. For it only posits this image in order to liberate itself 'from' that, it tries to perform the impossible leap and get rid of the *externality* which is only an *aspect* of its very *subjectivity*. This may be a common image of freedom at the level of *mineness*, of *unfounded* freedom which sticking to some *visible idols* is at the same time trying to escape 'from' any such dependency.

My freedom, the *unfounded* freedom of this level, focusing on *mineness* insists on making one's own choices, on following one's own course of actions, on being an authentic

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[297]Hans Denk [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. p.93]

Dasein, or else an independent *Übermensch*. But *mineness*, which has divided the world into *mine* and *not-mine*, is exactly the site of the negative freedom 'from', independence 'from...'[298] Insisting on the independence 'from' whatever is not *mine*, what has not been freely chosen by *me*, it can only encounter deeper and deeper 'certitude of abyss'. As it often happens in the face of ultimate emptiness, this negative freedom turns around to seek solace in the things of *this world* and one can indeed "ask the question if man, following the need of psychological and metaphysical bonds, does not prefer dread over freedom."[299] For dread remains only as long as one is staying at a distance and does not plunge into the abyss. Thus dread, real as it is, is only a new *idol* worshiped for its being so deeply *mine* and allowing *me* to remain what I was. Balancing on this edge between freedom 'from' this world and dread in its face is the epitome of loneliness and *alienation*. "You are and ... nobody cares" is the eventual truth of this 'freedom', so throughly described in existentialist literature that it hardly needs more words.

141.   *I* cherish the dreams and images – of happiness, fulfillment, completeness – but all these dreams are like a mist, vague and unclear, in fact, entirely contentless, sheer ghosts. What do you dream of when you dream of happiness? Do you ever dream *of* happiness? A dream seems to require an image, so perhaps you manage to substitute this or that, but then you also immediately start to suspect that it does not exhaust the meaning of your dream.

The deepest dreams *manifest thirst*, they aim at the *nexus of Yes*, and so can be falsified by any attempt to make them too *visible*. Every image threatens with a reduction of meaning and if it is not kept at the appropriate *distance*, required by its origin, it becomes a pretension or entitlement. For we are all entitled to happiness, and since *this* is happiness (for *me*!), *I* should be entitled to *this*. Then *I* get this and so *I* should be happy, but *I* am still not. Or, perhaps, *I* am eventually happy but then *I* am not ... free. And what is happiness good for, if one is not free? But everybody is entitled to freedom, right? (human right!) so now, what does it mean to be free?

Wrong questions breed wrong *distinctions*. The mist of happiness, the ghost of fulfillment for which we thirst, is not different from freedom. They are but *aspects* of the same *nexus*. Speaking more specifically, we can say that freedom at the level of *mineness* is *non-attachment*, is freedom from the slavery to *idols*, be they images, things or ideas, or else empty words which despair endows with ever more *precise* meanings – they are all gathered under the *idol of mineness*. Its ultimate and typical expression is confusion of freedom with *my* sense of being free, of freedom with *my* feeling of freedom. Thus *attachment* trying to realise its freedom only engrosses itself into unfreedom. Freedom, *non-attachment*, is the total non-entitlement, which is the same as the lack of fear, that is, *openness* for every *gift*. And thus freedom is unbreakably bound with meaningfulness which is exactly the *concrete presence*, *openness* to *vertical transcendence* and *thankfulness* for its gifts. The lack of meaning is also the lack of freedom, just like is the lack of respect.

142.   **2.** Freedom as a total independence 'from' causal relations of *this world* is an invention of *attachment*, of *attachment* to *this world* which tries to detach itself from it, which tries to liberate itself by rising above it and ... still stays in *this world*, because above it, it finds only emptiness. Causality, this much overemphasized notion, and more significantly the

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[298]We are, of course, simplifying tremendously all the references here. For instance, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is supposed to act from the pure positivity of his own, vital energy. But it is still *his own* and the main emphasis lies on independence, on 'not being concerned with others' which, somehow, remains bothered by others being there. Every call to liberation and independence witnesses to enslavement.

[299]T. Mann, *My Times*.

physical existence, the body, the physiology, in short, the whole sphere of most *actualised* contents, does not in the slightest oppose the freedom because they belong to different levels of *existence*. But *attachment*, reducing all that is to what is *visible*, can not but oppose the two; for it, if there is any freedom, it must be found exclusively within the sphere of *visibility*.

This involves *reflection* over freedom into the opposition to determinism. The *objective* world of *complexes* is rational and understandable, which eventually means, underlied necessary laws. The celebrated problems of free will emerge as a result of reducing human *existence* to the same level and considering it only in terms of the *objective complex* and natural laws. By the same token, the will gets degraded to the *egotic* ability of freely selecting goals among the *objects*, *complexes* and constellations of the world. In this tradition even predestination acquires a form of determination and one has to take recurse to various distinctions like, for instance, between necessity of all events when seen from the point of divine knowledge vs. their occurrence through free will when seen in their own nature by human understanding (Boethius),[300] a related distinction of Leibniz' between the absolute necessity (whose opposite would involve a contradiction) and the hypothetical one (which rests on God's foreknowledge and free decision and corresponds, as a matter of fact, to the contingent events of our world), the distinction borrowed from Stoics by Spinoza between free acceptance of the laws vs. unfree because unproductive opposition to them.[301] Necessity and determinism form the ultimately objectified image of our limitations, of the fact that nobody possesses unlimited power enabling him to 'do as he wishes', pushed to the ideal limit. And like every ideal limit, it loses contact with the *concreteness* of *existence* and becomes only the more troubling and apparently more important, the less relevance it retains. In fact, necessary and inviolable laws would need no observance – this is the essence of their necessity. So confronted with them, the only remnants of free choice would be between 1) rejection and denial, in a childish opposition to the unavoidable, or 2) resolute acceptance and obedience. As rejection of the unavoidable is irrational, true freedom must then amount to expedient use of the laws, to the ability to manipulate and apply them. It is freedom which liberates 'from' the necessities of *this world* only when these can be utilised for one's own purposes. However, the more necessity, the less content and, eventually, such laws which might be believed to apply unreservedly, get applicable only to more and more *precise* and objectified contents, II:§§212.ff. In a practical context, this is the way in which money and power give freedom of choice and action, freedom which, mixed with and constantly opposed to the limitations imposed by

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[300] This makes, in fact, deterministic necessity into a mere phantom since it becomes merely a property of divine knowledge without any influence on and relevance to human life. Everything happens as if there were no necessity, for God foreknows simply the results of free choices which, in temporal terms, remain undetermined until they are actually made: "if Providence sees an event in its present, that thing must be, though it has no necessity of its own nature. And God looks in His present upon those future things which come to pass through free will. Therefore if these things be looked at from the point of view of God's insight, they come to pass of necessity under the condition of divine knowledge; if, on the other hand, they are viewed by themselves, they do not lose the perfect freedom of their nature. Without doubt, then, all things that God foreknows do come to pass, but some of them proceed from free will; [...] if they are viewed by themselves, they are perfectly free from all ties of necessity." [Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. V]

[301] Here, one makes any indeterminacy and freedom a mere illusion. Stoics used the following illustration: "If a dog which wanted to follow the cart were bound to it, then it would both go and be dragged after the cart, doing voluntarily what it must do of necessity; but if it did not want to follow the cart, it would still be forced to do it anyway. The same happens to the humans." [after W. Szczerba, *The Concept of Eternal Return*....p.76, footnote 185; Hipolit [my retranslation]]

the surroundings, keeps fighting for its own sake and, at the same time, doubts its ultimate *foundation*. For overcoming various *actual* limitations, it suspects some fundamental one, but not finding any *visible* necessity, it can avoid the ultimate emptiness only by pushing the idea of necessity further and further away from itself.

143.   The problem of freedom and free will is usually posed in the manner of an *objective* question about some 'matter at hand': "*Are* we or *are* we *not* free?" "*Is* our will free or *is* it *not*?" Also such questions lead naturally to what one would consider the 'real': the physical world, causality, the natural laws – these give at least a context for speaking about that which 'is', and 'from' which one might be free. But such questions have only wrong answers. If one says no, all common-sense objects forcefully, if not scholarly. But if one answers yes, gives reasons and arguments showing that, indeed, we *are* free, then one gets immediately captured into the necessity of this answer which makes one unfree with respect to the (now necessary) law of freedom. However, freedom is not any fact but an *existential* possibility, it is not given, it is not something everybody has or, as the case may be, does not have.

We have, perhaps, liberated ourselves from this mode of speaking, but still, do we not hear, occasionally, talk about the 'problem of free will'? It can, indeed, be made into a tremendous problem. Here *I* am, in *this world*, determined by the laws of nature, and yet *I* can choose to do this or that, *I* do have a definite feeling that *I* have free will. But do *I*? How is it possible in the world, of which *I* am a part, which is just a clockwork. OK, we do not believe in this clockwork any more. A stone which hypothetically thinks that it is endeavoring to further its motion as much as it can, a compass needle which desires to move north and opines that it turns itself independently of another cause, or that dog of Stoics which, desiring to follow the cart, was also bound to it so that it followed it both voluntarily and under compulsion – these images do not exercise such a strong influence on our sense of relevance, because the underlying idea of an inescapable mechanism is not so convincing any more. We do not believe in this clockwork any more but we haven't got anything else to believe in instead. Although we, everybody with *his* will, are no longer confronted by (an image of) a deterministic clockwork, the doubts concerning freedom seem to persist. The world, perhaps, is a bit more indeterminate than a clockwork, but the question still remains: *am I* free?

Reduced to the level of *actuality*, freedom becomes only freedom to choose one course of *action* rather than another – one asks if the choice is made freely, if the will is free. Will is *mine*, it is something *I* have, not something *I* am; that is, it is an *aspect* of *ego*, in fact, the fundamental *aspect* emphasized always by every *egotic* being or culture. As *ego*, so also will is involved into the interplay of all *visible distinctions*, and all possible relations between them. Trying to liberate itself 'from' the *visible* laws of the *visible world*, it has only emptiness of indeterminacy and arbitrary choice left. But replacing natural, perhaps even necessary laws by some stochastic processes, by indeterminate laws of social interactions, by Heisenberg's principle, does not change the least thing, no matter how much one would like to believe that indeterminacy of the world is more pleasing to one's freedom than its necessity would be. Meaninglessness is an aspect of unfreedom and increasing the indeterminacy of things does rather the opposite than what one would like to believe. It is doubtful if anybody reading Camus, Beckett or Sartre is able to discern any sense of freedom, of genuine freedom. Their free will chooses perhaps freely, that is arbitrarily, but it also seems strangely unfree, captured somewhere between *nausea* and Sisyphean heaviness. Identifying freedom with the freedom of choices amounts to a

tremendous reduction of the idea to the momentaneous quality of a single *act*. The shadow of arbitrariness, which always appears in the background of such discussion, is only to be expected. Do we really want to reduce freedom to such *actual* choices? Any *actual* decision concerns only more or less petty matters, and the more we insist on deciding *ourselves*, the pettier we become. Is *our* freedom the freedom to decide whether we will have an ice-cream or a chocolate? Is this freedom we want to speak about? Is this freedom? In any particular matter, the issue is not to decide oneself but to decide rightly, and freedom of choice has close to nothing to do with that.

Free choice of free will might seem to ensure that *my ego* manages to detach itself from *this world*. Perhaps. But detachment is only a form (*inversion*) of *attachment*, a despair capable of nothing more than negation.[302] In fact, one would probably feel much more unfree in a completely chaotic world, facing the 'certitude of the abyss', than in the world of Newton, or even Laplace. Such a world, fully determined by causality (or other law), is only an image and freedom does not amount to overcoming causality or other possible determinations of our *acts*. Various *acts* in various situations may be performed under various coercing factors. In fact, "[n]o one wills what he can will because he can, without some other cause [...]"[303] But this does not change the fact that most important human *acts* have no discernible, *visible* causes – for causality, as Kant teaches, is a category of mere *actuality*. (This does not mean that *acts* are indeterminate and arbitrary – they may not be caused, but they are almost always *motivated*.) *Experience* of a free (that is, *motivated*, and not arbitrary) choice is irrefutable, and so determinism must ignore *experience* and appeal to some 'deeper' aspects, possible theories, splashy images, hidden mechanisms, future investigations... Consequently, possible perhaps as it in principle might be, it remains since millennia a mere postulate – the postulate to figure out all the sufficient and determining causes.

Non-attachment is freedom from *attachment* but it is not freedom 'from' *this world*. On the 144. contrary, it is only freedom to live and act *in this world*. *Actual* freedom is not liberation 'from' things and their order but respect for them, that is *thankful* acceptance.

Because one no longer values any of the *visible* things as *absolutes*, that is, one does not expect them to quench the *thirst*, one can accept them, whether they are one way or another. Accepting things is very different from surrendering to them. Acceptance means here the same as respect. One does not require explanations and one does not require reasons or arguments which is precisely to say: one respects them. They run their course, they may have their logic and it may be highly rewarding to study their ways and to inquire into (not require) their reasons. Freedom is the freedom to do this. Arranging them according to one's wishes and likings are but petty consequences which may be useful but which have nothing to do with one's freedom. Freedom, true freedom, is freedom to respect 'the order of things', for "no Thing is contrary to God; no creature nor creature's work, nor anything that we can name or think of is contrary to God or displeasing to Him, but only disobedience and the disobedient man."[105]

Disobedience is but another word for *attachment*; *attachment* which worships instead of respecting, and thus remains enslaved in the midst of its search for liberation. Just like

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[302]This is the constant association of the theme of freedom and liberation from this world with the variants of detachment and abnegation, whether in the original Orphic and Platonic, then Manichean, Gnostic and Cathar type, or more modern kinds, of which Heidegger and later existentialists are the prime example. Shestov's aggresive opposition of Jerusalem's faith to the reason of Athens' would also fall into this category.

[303]St. Anselm of Canterbury, *On the Fall of the Devil*. 27

one *actuality* excludes another, so one *idol* opposes and tries to avoid or defeat another. Any attempt to escape from this or that, and the eventual form of the attempt to liberate *oneself* 'from' the whole order of things and *this world*, is an expression of *attachment*, of an involvement which makes *this world* the only reference frame, of the underlying feeling of enslavement which sees its only alternative in negation, in *detachment*. 'Use-and-throw' attitudes, 'things are for *me* and *I* do what *I* want with them', all forms of disrespectful arrogance are expressions of un-freedom (just as they were expressions of the lacking *communion* in §137). Also, an *inverted* attitude, the stoically resigned 'acceptance of the world', the realisation that *I* can not oppose 'the whole world' and that therefore it is wiser not to fight against it but humbly accept whatever it brings *me*, is an expression not of freedom and wisdom but of defeat and surrender. It may look like respect but, typically, it will be a mere servility, a mere observance of all rules, regulations, customs. Although there is nothing wrong with all that in itself, it often carries at its bottom the feeling of unfreedom when it is a mere *act* within *this world*, a mere defeat in the face of *visibility*, that is, when it is not *concretely founded* in the *openness* to *gift* of *this world*.

145.   **1.** Freedom viewed from the level of *unfounded immediacy* is hardly anything more than arbitrariness of appearances. This seems to be the character freedom acquires in some forms of idealism, for instance in Fichte's Ego, and it is quite explicit in Sartrean for-itself. The ideal *immediacy* of an equally ideal *subject* leaves no room for anything except spontaneous production, positing, apperception, appearance of arbitrary contents. The only alternative, in which thinking such *immediacy* inevitably gets itself involved, is between the contents being posited by the *subject* or else being completely independent from it. Even the laboriously reworked by the categories of understanding contents of Kantian sensations are, eventually, arbitrary elements confronting the subject occupied with its transcendental – and atemporal only because momentaneous – activities. The sense of freedom, whether on the side of the *subject* or *object*, is just the spontaneous emergence of contents. It is but a reflection of the *reflective act* which, *dissociating* its *object* from itself and from all the *rest*, *posits* it in the 'freedom' of arbitrariness.[304]

Some *original* feelings which might be related to such an idealised perspective would present me with the *actual* situation as absolutely indeterminate. The world seen as a chaotic collection of isolated entities, as a pure play not even of chance but of arbitrariness, the alien and alienated world to which one nevertheless still feels some form of belonging and which one would like to see in an attractive, positive manner, in short, a deep existential crisis, may lead to such a perception of freedom. One day man will go mad to prove that he is free – as Dostoevsky prophesied.[305] Mad minuteness is only a step from minute madness which collapses the whole world to *immediate* proximity. Arbitrary spontaneity of such an isolated moment is the last resort of apparent freedom left to a slave who had to escape that far.

The arbitrariness of all the events and complete lack of control over them provide the grounds for denying that they have any value, that bad is as good – since equally arbitrary – as good, that my only role is to confront and accept whatever is encountered. Let this description not mislead us – it might almost apply to the attitude of *thankful*

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[304]We would probably not impute Fichte, and certainly not Kant, such a concept of freedom. We only identify the presence – and significance – of such an element in their frameworks.

[305]"If you say that all this, too, can be calculated and tabulated – chaos and darkness and curses, so that the mere possibility of calculating it all beforehand would stop it all, and reason would reassert itself, then man would purposely go mad in order to be rid of reason and gain his point!" [F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*. I:8]

acceptance. The difference is that arbitrariness levels and equates all things because they have lost all meaning and become equally empty, while *thankfulness* accepts all things still differentiating and even choosing between them. As most thinkers, not only of the rational school, always maintained, freedom requires a rational element – it is not an arbitrary choice (which is only the other side of meaninglessness) but one *concretely founded* in a higher sphere of deeper *motivations*.

Freedom, *founded* freedom of any *act* is *rest*, is its anchoring in *all* the higher levels of being. An *act* of will is still only an *act*, and the sense of its freedom amounts to the degree of its *dissociation* 'from' the causal dependencies which, eventually, means simply the degree of its *dissociation*. But the constitutive quality of an *act* is its very limitation to the *horizon of actuality*, its *dissociation*. Thus every *act* carries with it this sense of freedom. This sense, however, has no direct implications for the freedom of the *act* which is almost its exact *inversion*: the *concrete* anchoring in the *transcendence* as opposed to a *dissociation* from it. There is no such thing as a 'free *act* in itself', for a free *act* is simply an *act* of a free person, an *act founded concretely* in the freedom of *existence*. 146.

In one of the most cruel situations of enslavement, when ten prisoners are selected to be tortured to death for the absence of one person at the roll call, a lucky, unchosen man steps forth and asks to change the places with one of the selected men. Thus Maksymilian Kolbe died in Auschwitz, while the man whose life he saved survived the war. No situation deprives man completely of the possibility to choose, that is, to *act*. The situation in which one, say, has to lie or be killed may not have been chosen voluntarily, yet the choice of the alternatives remains. "Therefore although he either lies or is killed unwillingly, it does not follow that he lies unwillingly or is killed unwillingly."[306] All too elaborate comments on the choice of Kolbe's would be inappropriate but a few words should be allowed. It may serve as an example of an *act* of ultimate freedom and, by allowing also others to retain the faith in its possibility, of liberation. If we were to call it an "act of being-towards-death", we would have to emphasize that it is not any 'directedness' towards death and nothingness, cherished for their liberating ultimacy, but only preparedness for death, a true sacrifice choosing something one does not want, and choosing it in the name of something which transcends infinitely any *actual* aspect of the situation.[307] Freedom of such an *act* is anchored in the knowledge of its extreme consequences and their full acceptance, i.e., the continued ability to put up with them. Choosing thus what one does not want to choose, consenting to what one does not want, effects an *inversion*, for by choosing death Kolbe really chose freedom. There may be situations where the only free choice is Hobbson's choice, the choice of (or the consent to) the only alternative of death. In such situations, the inability to sacrifice one's life may make this life not worth living. In fact, man seems the less willing to sacrifice his life, the less worthiness his life contains.[308]

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[306]St. Anselm of Canterbury, *On Free Will*. V. The argument recurs also, e.g., in St. Anselm of Canterbury, *De Concordia*VI.

[307]Schopenhauer's definition of a saint as one who does nothing he would like and everything he does not like, is certainly exaggerated, but need not be dismissed completely.

[308]An example of an attitude opposite to the one just mentioned is well documented by Tadeusz Borowski in the stories and novels from his time as a kapo in concentration camp. Few years after the war, he committed suicide. The concentration camp syndrome (corresponding to PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, in more recent psychiatric classifications) originates with the exposure to exceptional cruelty and is not related to victim's premorbid personality (e.g., L. Eitinger, *Concentration Camp Survivors in Norway and Israel*). The very high prevalence of PTSD in the concentration camp survivors, about 85%, still leaves 15% which were not so severely affected. Perhaps, the difference could be referred to the difference between giving up any resistance or else attempting survival for *any* price, on the one hand

A less tragic (because leading eventually to the survival) but more dramatic (extending over several years) example of the choice of preparedness to die is illustrated by the following. "We carried soil in wheelbarrows, bringing it from some fifty meters all the time running at the very edge of the stone pit. The wall was some tens of meters high and was here quite perpendicular. Running we carried the soil and kapo was running along with us, beating us with the stick in the shoulders, hands, heads, faces. [...] After some minutes I realised that I won't manage a whole hour. He will kill me – I thought. Good, but you too, bastard, will get killed and I will have greater pleasure going to heaven in such a company. Kapo was short. I decided to catch him when he gets behind me and fall back. If everything goes fine, we both flutter down to the bottom of the pit, and there it stops, the end."[309]

The examples are intentionally so extreme because they clearly illustrate that freedom is not at all a matter of the *external* situation. Although some situations, contexts, political systems will make free *acts* more difficult, and the feeling of freedom almost impossible, it is nevertheless possible even in the most extreme cases which one might want to classify as the worst examples of unfreedom. Freedom is not liberation 'from' the *actual* dependencies but the way of handling such dependencies. Most importantly, *actual* freedom of *acts* and *actions* is not any intrinsic property of them, but the fact of being *concretely founded* in the freedom of the person. Thus *founded* freedom is indistinguishable from the meaningfulness of being, for which *traces* of every *actuality* and *act* reach through the deeper *motivations* all the way to their ultimate *origin*.

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147.   The question is not if one, by a universal decree of human nature, by an undeniable, natural or unnatural law, is free or not, if one's will chooses the ice-cream because of one's upbringing, peer pressure, gluttony or else just because it chooses so, in a complete indeterminacy of emptiness. The question is if one, by the power of one's spirit, is able to live the apparent paradox of submission to the contentless *command*, and thus become worthy of receiving freedom from *above*. True freedom is only an *aspect* of the *nexus* of *Yes*, is being where it is best to be. For "one who is as he ought to be, and as it is expedient for him to be, such that he is unable to lose this state, is freer than one who is such that he can lose it and be led into what is indecent and inexpedient for him."[310] Freedom is only a side-effect of submission to the *command* and the resulting *non-attachment*.

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(yes! both these are on the same side), versus being prepared to die, as many did, preserving some dignity. "Survival in the camps [...] depended foremost on luck: to be able to survive, one had to escape being killed by SS. [...] If he was not murdered, how well a person was able to survive depended on how well he managed to maintain if not some of his autonomy, at least some of his self-respect and meaning his relations to others had for him." [B. Bettelheim, *Owners of Their Faces*. p.108] Grzesiuk, who survived 5 years in various extermination camps, notes that he "who wanted to survive must not have been afraid of death, for everyone who wanted to live and was afraid of death – was afraid of being exposed to beating and executed dutifully all the commandments, awaiting a miracle and the end of war or that they will release him and that he will get through. When he realised that he was getting close to the end, it was too late and for such a one there remained only crematorium." [S. Grzesiuk, *Five years of KZ*. Preface] From the *egotic* perspective of a free choice, the ones like Borowski chose as freely (or unfreely) as those like Kolbe or Grzesiuk. But we would insist that while the latter remained free, the former did not, and the distinction has nothing to do with the way they made the choice but only with *what* they chose.

[309]S. Grzesiuk, *Five years of KZ*. III. Mauthausen;p.95-96

[310]St. Anselm of Canterbury, *On Free Will*. I

3.3.3.iv. Responsibility

Let us close this list of examples with a seemingly lesser and more modest issue: responsibility. We touched upon this in connection with the original sin in 2.1.§27, footnote 68. Genuine responsibility is the *actual* attitude of response to the higher voice. When this *trace* is followed all the way to the *absolute origin*, responsibility coincides with what the theological tradition called "obedience to God's will" and what we have recognised as an *aspect* of *humility*.

4. We have said, §27 and §§39.ff, that the original sin is neither willed nor deliberately 148. committed and thus, technically, it is not a personal sin. Yet, as we share in the penalty for the original sin without personally sharing in the sin itself, many maintained that one may have to endure punishments which one has not merited. We might exaggerately say that one is responsible even for sinking into the mud of despair – not because one can do something specific and avoid this sinking once it started, but because one is still responsible for taking up the challenge of not accepting the *visible* impossibility of relief, that is, of accepting its *invisible* possibility.

We can exaggerate even more than that. As a form of sickness of *existence* which loses its *concrete foundation* in the *absolute*, the original sin (in our sense) is evil and for it, like for any other evil, we are responsible. Responsibility, as a response to the *absolute*, is simple non-acceptance of any evil, of *alienation*. In this sense, everyone is genuinely responsible for *all evil and all sins* which are committed, not only for those which one has committed oneself. "Every man who sins, sins against all people and every man is to some degree guilty of another's sin."[311] It is unacceptable to all manner of thinking involved into any form of subjectivistic reduction – of sin and guilt to feeling of sin and guilt, of freedom to unconstrained voluntary choice, and eventually also of responsibility to such a choice. But we are responsible not only for what we choose but also for what we are; not only for the *subjective acts* of choice, but also for choices which we live, even though they were made before and *above* us; not only for what we could somewhat, voluntarily and actively repair but also, even primarily, for all that we can not. One resists such a responsibility, firstly, because it seems to restrain one's sense of freedom and, secondly, because it cannot possibly be put into any specific action. With regard to freedom we have just seen that it amounts to *openness* to the *communion* and not to fortifying oneself behind the walls of private choices. And this apparently empty and unproductive sense of responsibility 'for everything' (which is just another side of the deeper sense of guilt, not intended nor actively caused and yet committed), could be equally well characterised as sympathy and fellow feeling for everything, as a mere compassion with all the victims, a mere recognition of the evil which met them, and as repentance for evil as such – as *love* of universal *communion*. Regarding 'unproductivity', let us quote Scheler's response to the same accusation against repentance: "The jovial gentlemen say: Do not repent, but design good projects and do better in the future! But the jovial gentlemen do not say whence the strength for designing good projects and even more for their execution should be fetched, if no prior liberation and self-empowerment of the person, through repentance, against the determining power of the past has taken place."[312] Strangely enough, strength to carry out *actual* tasks is only an *inversion* of *humility*. It increases proportionally to the latter, §110.

The universal scope of this responsibility, surpassing any particular *actuality*, is a *sign*

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[311] F. Dostoevsky, *The Possessed*. At Tichon's II
[312] M. Scheler, *Repentance and Rebirth*. p.36.

of continuity between the *actuality* and its *invisible origin*. This form of responsibility may be different from what is commonly, let alone legally, understood under this name, but responsibility it is nevertheless (if not in other way, then simply by *founding* any *active, visible manifestations* of responsibility.) Refusing it, one breaks the continuity of Being, reduces *onself* to mere *subjectivity* and the *communion* to mere association. And every *spiritual* reduction is a form of *alienation*.

149. **3.** In a more specific sense, *I* am responsible for *my* whole life and, as strangely as above, also for all the evil which affected me. For even if it is not accepted voluntarily, it affects me only if I consent to it – consent, perhaps, by not seeing anything, perhaps, by seeing in it no evil, perhaps by giving up the resistance to it – in either case, even if not accepting voluntarily so still accepting. More precisely, I am responsible not for the evil which affects me as such, but for the fact *that it affects me*, that it affects me *as evil*.

Herein lies an important difference between various people not only reacting differently but also developing differently under apparently quite the same circumstances. Eventually, *I* – and only *I* – am fully responsible for what *I* have become – blaming the society, school situation, family conflicts, and what not, may have some merit *only in so far* as the *objective* improvements of the respective social contexts are concerned. Being exposed to evil influences is not a sin but one sins very easily by an irresponsible response to such an exposure, a response by which one damages oneself or, what amounts to the same, finds inexcusable evil in the world which one makes responsible for the evil which infects one's *soul*. Irresponsibility, whether inability to *recognise* one's responsibility or escape from it, is thus not only escape from suffering but even from things which are seen as its source. It is a *sign* of broken *communion*, an *aspect* of enslavement by evil – the *posited* evil – of the world. In the ultimate form of such an *ingratitude* men accuse God for having created or allowed all these evils and "lay blame upon [...] gods for what is after all nothing but their own folly."[313] Yet, through such a distancing oneself from the evil and responsibility for it, one only deepens *alienation* from oneself. For one thus forgets that God acts *only* through one's soul, that "[a]ll works are performed by warmth, [and] if the fiery love of God grows cold in the soul, the soul will die."[314]

150. **2.-1.** Responsibility from §148 can be likened to an impulse to help and repair all the suffering which, although impossible to follow for trivially practical reasons, *founds* all particular *acts* of genuine help. It is responsibility of a response to the call of conscience, a response to the *command* reminding one about the suffering – one's own or others' – hearing which and remaining indifferent would amount to a consent. Of course, we do not suggest that the *communion* expressed in the sense of responsible compassion with all suffering should be brought to the level of *actuality* in the same universal form.[315] In every *actual* situation challenging one's compassion, and hence also responsibility, one has to weight the possibilities of *actually* following the call against multitude of other factors. Even if all such factors prevent one from *actually* doing anything specific, the mere compassion with the needy ones is also an expression of responsibility. (When Solon "was asked how

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[313]Homer, *The Odyssey*. I:32

[314]Eckhart *German Sermons*, Lk.VIII:54. [O. Davis, ed., *Selected Writings* 26, J. Quint and J. Koch, eds., *Meister Eckhart...* 85]

[315]Such constancy of the sense of guilt and repentance without any accompanying shrinkage of personality or decrease of energy is probably as seldom as holiness. "[It belongs] to the increase of humbleness and holiness in man that – as life testifies to the most holy – the sense of guilt gets functionally *refined* accordingly to its [guilt's] objective decrease and that thence even lesser misconduct is heavily experienced." [M. Scheler, *Repentance and Rebirth*. p.48]

men could be most effectually deterred from committing injustice, he said, «If those who are not injured feel as much indignation as those who are.»"[316])

Irrespectively of situation and other factors, one carries full *actual* responsibility for everything one does and leaves undone. The question may only concern the degree of this responsibility and its consequences. This *actual* responsibility for one's *acts* and deeds is not something one may assume or not assume, but something that follows from their very *foundation* in one's being and its *communion*. Ultimately, responsibility is simply the fact of, on the one hand, ontological *foundation* and, on the other hand, of the influence of the lower levels on the higher ones. The first *aspect* concerns the *actual* responsibility for everything one has done and is doing, also for avoiding or removing the consequences of the evil which affected one. Doing something blameworthy can be blamed on being temporarily unconscious, affected by drugs or childhood trauma, but no such excuses provide a complete justification. Eventually, one is responsible for what one is, and *everything* one does is a reflection of that. In the most trivial situations, saying "I am sorry", one is not sorry for one's bad will and intended act but exactly for something one has done *without* intending it, for something which merely happened *through* one. "I am sorry" not for intending to collide with another person but for the very fact that I did not notice him *and* run into him. This is the *actual* responsibility for my past.[317] The other *aspect* is directed towards the future, is responsibility for what one becomes. It amounts to the fact that everything one does, every *actual* project and *act* may with time seem to disappear from the *actual* memories, but it nevertheless contributes to the *virtual* seeds of one's *soul*. Although the exact measure of this contribution and its eventual consequences are only seldom possible to discern, its very fact is hardly disputable, II:2.3. In this sense, every evil done, increasing the *alienation* of the *soul*, breeds its own punishment.

Actual responsibility not *founded concretely* in the higher *community*, gets involved into interminable search for the criteria separating things for which one should be (held) responsible from those for which one should not. Such criteria are certainly of forensic importance but do not concern us here. Lack of *foundation* demands often explicit assumption of responsibility. It is like marking a new area as being *mine*, belonging to *me*, falling under *my* responsibility. Such *acts* are often required in various contexts of cooperation and subordination. But if this is their only foundation, it witnesses to an *ego* which is sufficiently *alienated* to believe that there are things – sufficiently remote, sufficiently *not-mine* – for which one might not be responsible. Reducing responsibility to such very specific contexts and situations goes hand in hand with other forms of reduction. For responsibility is interwoven into a whole *nexus* of ontic presuppositions which have to be reduced when one attempts to reduce its scope.[318] For instance, a temporal loss of consciousness can be used to exempt one from responsibility for the act performed in such a state. This, of course, presupposes a specific reduction of person according to which, for instance, sleeping man is not a person. Well...No! Of course, he is but...Well. Likewise, one will often use past his- | 151.

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[316]Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions....* I:2.x

[317]Agamemnon admits: "it was not I that did it: Jove, and Fate, and Erinys that walks in darkness struck me mad when we were assembled on the day that I took from Achilles the meed that had been awarded to him. What could I do? All things are in the hand of heaven, and Folly, eldest of Jove's daughters, shuts men's eyes to their destruction." [Homer, *The Iliad.* XIX:86ff] But this workings of Folly (or as others translate it, infatuation, momentaneous loss of control) is not cited by Agamemnon as any excuse; higher forces have been at work, but they worked through him: "I was blind, and Jove robbed me of my reason; I will now make atonement, and will add much treasure by way of amends." [Ibid. XIX:137]

[318]R. Ingarden, *About Responsibility...* conducts a systematic analysis.

tory of a person to excuse his acts implying, as it were, that they are merely consequences of bad influences of the environment. It is then really hard to get out of the impasse because now, so it seems, responsible person is only somebody not exposed to any negative influences, as if the crucial *aspect* of moral responsibility did not concern exactly the ways in which one is affected by and reacts to such influences. Reduction of responsibility to only conscious and voluntarily intended acts is just another form of reducing person to a *subject*.

Let us only remark one final detail. Everything we have said about responsibility concerns only *my* responsibility, only what *I* am responsible for. No consequences follow for imputing responsibility to others. The problem with such attribution, like with any demands of moral behaviour, is that nobody can be forced to recognise its validity. You can not make somebody responsible for something – you can only force him to take responsibility. This is an issue for law enforcement units and not for us. In contacts with people one will, of course, assess the level to which they feel responsible for various things and act accordingly, perhaps, by suggesting more responsibility than they are prepared to admit. Rising children one will teach them taking responsibility – directly, by requiring them to *actually* take responsibility for various things, and indirectly, just by being responsible the way one is. Our 'universal responsibility', like everything else, is only for personal use. It is the way of avoiding *alienation*, of avoiding *positing objective* evil by imputing responsibility for encountered suffering. *Objectivisation* of evil and resulting tense responsibility is the domain of a rigid moralist who is ready to censure every single act, of others' or oneself, for its moral shortcomings. Strict and solemn seriousness of such an attitude finds the more offenders and becomes the more self-justifying and irritably sensitive, the more doubts about its ultimate justification germinate at its bottom, that is, the less *concretely founded* is its perspective on human *existence* which terminates at its moral dimension, if not at the level of single *acts*.

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152. The above examples might suggest an ideal which seems as fantastic as unrealistic. But ideals which do not and can not live are *posited* phantoms, regulative ideas or ideological goals, *egotic* projections, in short, *idols*. Well, for the first, "[a]ll things excellent are as difficult as they are rare."[319] More significantly, all *invisible aspects* of *concrete foundation* appear ridiculous when reduced to the *actual* categories; the appearance which is only strengthened by possible *inversions*. All embracing, *spiritual* responsibility, when attempted at the level of *actual* feelings and expressions, will result not in any factual responsibility and acts but rather in the hysteric lamentations of elderly (and good) women over the evils and cruelty of the world. *Actual* responsibility for everything, *actual* freedom of every single choice and action, *actual* communion with every man one meets, *actual* love towards every person, animal and thing – all such reductions reflect only the reduction of *self* to *ego*, the fundamental misunderstanding which attempts to interpret the *spiritual* in *visible* terms, to turn the quality and *rest* of *acts* into facts, the wind into stones. But "[t]he wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."[129] *Forgetfulness* of the spiritual, involved in *concrete foundation*, dispenses with any such reductions which is just another side of dispensing with any attempts to re-produce *invisible* as some *visible* image, to reach the infinite making only finitely many finite steps. But leaving any 'whats' aside, it keeps the

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[319]B. Spinoza, *Ethics*. [the last sentence]

clear sight of the fact *that* its *actuality* is indeed *founded* in the higher sphere, and that it carries responsibility for the *concreteness* of this *foundation*, even if it is not entirely its work.

Unlike unreachable ideals which can only be approximated, we are dealing here with the most *concrete presence* – it need not be approximated because it can not be made *actual* and palpable. Indeed, one can not defend it, nor fight for it, nor try to reach it – one can at most live it. Some impossibilities are difficult only because they are too simple. But, as Confucius says, life is simple and only man insists on making it complicated. *Any experience* of love which is not fully *incarnated love* is distorted and is *aware* of its imperfection. Most *experiences* are of this kind but *love* is not, for this reason, an unattainable ideal, a regulative idea, an inaccessible goal. If only one person in the whole human history reached its *experience*, this would be enough to maintain its universal possibility. There are all reasons to suspect that there were more than only one and, in case of doubt, one should look carefully around oneself, expecting the unexpected. The imagined absence is often only the inability to *recognise* the *presence*. *Concrete love* is not a mere state of mind, a mere feeling, an image, *vague* and *unclear*, of something ideal and in its mere desirability completely 'unreal' because not *actual*. It is a thoroughly *concrete manifestation* flowing from the center of personal being and embracing the whole life, from *above* all general thoughts and *qualities*, through all *actions* and goals, to the most *immediate acts*.

But one might still ask: where is the necessity? Where is the necessity of *concrete founda-* 153. *tion* of all these lower elements in the higher ones and, eventually, in the *spiritual love*? We can easily imagine a man who is strong but not patient, who is strong and patient but not humble, who finds great sense in life without having confronted *nothingness*, who is alert and vigilant but not *open*, who acts morally and responsibly not only without any higher *command* but exactly because he does not recognise any higher authority, etc., etc., etc. Indeed, we can as easily imagine such a man as we can imagine Pegasus. For imagination enables us exactly to put together, almost arbitrarily, various features earlier *dissociated* from each other. The games which *reflection* can play with its *dissociated signs* are almost unlimited. And they affect the world, just like other *distinctions* do. The question is, however, whether such abstractly drawn *distinctions* and arranged *complexes* correspond to others, whether they can be woven into the *unity* of *existence* and its *experience* of the world – and that *concretely*, not as mere imaginations.

Necessity of *concrete foundation* does not concern any specific aspect. Each aspect can indeed be found at a lower level without *concrete foundation* in the higher ones. The old question, whether virtues can be possessed separately or only all together, posits wrong alternative – in practice, in nature, both cases occur, albeit the former much more frequently than the latter. Focusing on one such feature, the difference between the two cases might, for an outside observer, seem slight to the degree of insignificance. But the lack of *actually* observable differences does not, by itself, witness to anything of significance. In fact, the difference is infinite and, like every infinity, *actually* unobservable. So, after all, the alternative is real but it concerns something much deeper than the mere occurrence of this or that virtue. It concerns the whole person.

The *unfounded* virtues can be *dissociated* and appear in very different constellations. One will then, perhaps, strive for strengthening some of the virtues one does not possess and such exercises can easily take big part of life. Such virtues can be acquired piecewise. The process may even turn out very valuable and lead to a deeper development. However,

there is also always the chance that aiming particularly at, say, perseverance, one will keep biting one's teeth and grow only more stubborn, or else more bitter as the posited perseverance keeps sneaking out of one's *actual* look never matching the intended image. Developing (right) habits is a lengthy and complicated process which even in the case of children escapes clear-cut rules and all too precise guidelines. It is particularly difficult, if not outright impossible, when one aims at only one specific aspect. The *unity* of a person has also this trivial consequence that, for instance, quitting smoking may result in increased consumption of candies, while developing perseverance may result in a loss of, say, the sense of spontaneity. Every change of no matter how small aspect affects the whole person or, as one also puts it, must be integrated into this whole. Such psycho-*egotic* manipulations have always side-effects which are as understandable, having once emerged, as they were unpredictable in advance.

According to St. Thomas, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are infused directly by God, and only by Him. But also moral and intellectual virtues which, under natural circumstances, can be acquired separately by human efforts, can be infused by God, so that they are "caused in us by God without any action on our part, but not without our consent."[320] The acquired virtues function, so to speak, each for itself and without reaching the personal center. Their infused versions, on the other hand, are *concretely founded* in the *unity*: first, the lower *unity* of the *invisible* sphere where, as we saw in II:1.4.2.i, various *aspects* cannot be meaningfully *dissociated* from each other and, eventually, in the *unity* of the *existential* center, where *grace* becomes "charity, which through an image in the mind exhibits what is absent as present to ourselves, through love unites what is divided, settles what is confused, associates things that are unequal, completes things that are imperfect! Rightly does the excellent preacher call it the bond of perfectness; since, though the other virtues indeed produce perfectness, yet still charity binds them together so that they can no longer be loosened from the heart of one who loves."[321] Thus, even if for an outside observer, two kinds of virtues can seem indistinguishable (since patience *is* patience, temperance *is* temperance), the ones are as if added to the person while the others flow from the person. The *concretely founded* ones are only expressions of the *unity* of the person, the *visible signs* of *Yes* which do not veil nor confuse this *unity* but *manifest* it. Only this *transcendent foundation* gives them all their force and adds the *invisible rest* – continuity and *unity* – making all the difference.

4   The analogues of God

"Why dost thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue."

Eckhart

154.   Book I described the bareness of the *one* as the ontological *origin*. *Concreteness* of *spirituality* is still *founded* in this bare *nothingness*. But while in Book I we were concerned with the merely ontological meaning of the *one*, now we want to emphasize that also with respect to the *spiritual presence* and *concrete foundation*, equipping Godhead with all kinds of attributes, whether in essence, in fact or only in name is inappropriate whenever it may obscure the fact of his complete *invisibility*.

One has often emphasized the human need to speak about God. There may be such a need, and it may be very human, but this is exactly the question and not the answer. The need reflects the fundamental meaning of the divine in our life, the meaning which awaits

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[320]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. II:I.q55.a4.r6
[321]St. Gregory the Great, *Epistles*. Book V:LIII. To Virgilius, Bishop.

if not an explanation nor even an account, so at least an expression. But "[b]e not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."[322] Speaking about God becomes harmful when it implies too specific attributes and dwells on His inaccessible essence. "We cannot approve of what those foolish persons do who are extravagant in praise, fluent and prolix in the prayers they compose, and in the hymns they make in the desire to approach the Creator."[323] For where is the border between praise and appraisal, and then between praise and self-complacency over praising the right God in the right way? The border may be marked by the extravagant exaggeration. Speaking about *nothing* we use distinctions and distinct words which means that we can only speak about ourselves, about our *confrontation*. "Everything which falls under a name is originated, whether [we] will or not."[324] And so, only "silence is praise to Thee."[325]

4.1   Proper names

No name is adequate for God, just like no name is adequate for a person. This is why 155.
language has proper names, for proper name is the only adequate name for a person. No other name, not to mention any predicate or more or less definite description, will even approach this adequacy. So is it with God – "God" is His only adequate name. Perhaps, it should be JHVH, for "God" may be used about lesser gods and idols, too. The fact that saying "God" one ca mean various things does not make the name – when applied properly – less adequate, just like knowing two persons with the same name "Thomas" does not make any of its applications wrong or inadequate. They are both persons and each has *a unique* name (instead of two persons with the same *name* "Thomas", one could rather speak of persons with the same *names* "Thomas"). It is only of secondary importance that their unique names have the same linguistic appearance. (The use of patronymics, of family names, middle names, etc. can be seen as an attempt to keep the linguistic appearances in accordance with the uniqueness of the named persons.)

The uniqueness of a proper name follows from the fact that the word used as a name is inseparable from the *acts* of naming. There is hardly any syntactically identifiable class of words which are names. Sure, "Thomas", "Martha" and hundreds of other words are standard names. But they name exclusively by being so used, by being used for *naming*. Name is inseparable from the fact and *act* of naming, it is the sedimented epitome of the latter, while naming itself is a trans-linguistic, in fact, trans-phenomenal event of recognising uniqueness of this *concrete existence*. Unrepeatability and uniqueness of *existence* is the *conceptual* content of every proper name. The actual name, as well as the *act* of naming, is only an expression of the deep event of naming in which one recognises the unrepeatable character of a being, usually, of some *existence*. Getting a child, the parents have already named it, already long in advance, even if they still do not know what actual name it will get. The linguistic expression of this event, the *actual* naming, endows it with the immediately recognisable aspect of *non-actuality*, solidifies it into a lasting, also social, fact. One could say, proper name *reflects* the eternity of the named

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[322]Eccl. V:2
[323]M. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*. I:59
[324]St. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*. V:13
[325]Ps. LXV:2. Maimonides' interpretation is the same as St. Jerome's, cf. II:footnote 242. In KJV, however, the whole verse reads: "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come".

existence in the perpetual consistency of all different *acts* of naming.

156. Corresponding to the absolute uniqueness, a name does not capture any essence, it is, as often observed, conceptually empty. This conceptual emptiness makes proper names the most *concrete* among the linguistic *signs* – they are understood *uniquely*, or not at all. And this unique understanding involves only *that*, identification of the person named, identification which happens within the *horizon of actuality*, but which only reflects the *unity* beyond any concepts. This trans-conceptuality of names expresses the highest respect and recognition of the named – in general, we name humans. In a similar way, we express some amount of recognition and respect naming other living beings, pets, etc.. But if one started naming one's pencils or pieces of furniture, we would react with uneasines to endowing such disposable things with the metaphysical quality of trans-conceptual being. (But as usual – where is the border...?) Names like "Sitting Bull" or "Crazy Horse", or usual nicknames, do intend to express some essential aspects, one might perhaps say, some *concept*. But they are proper names only in virtue of the *uniqueness* of their reference. Proper name does not capture any essence but only indicates the site of its possibility, the unique individuality. It indicates the ultimate limit of *distinctions*, beyond which not only no more *distinctions* are made but were no *distinctions* could possibly be made.

4.2   Names

The decisive issue is, just as with "Sitting Bull" and the like, *what* one intends when using a name. One can endow "Sitting Bull" with derogatory content by simply reducing it to the mere description, that is, ignoring the fact that it is a proper name. Likewise, forgetting that "God" is a proper name, one tends to reduce its meaning. The traditional discussion is concerned with the admissible, if any, ways of such a reduction; not with the proper names but with the names understood as possible predicates about God.

157. "All creatures have existed eternally in the divine essence, as in their exemplar. So far as they conform to the divine idea, all beings were, before their creation, one thing with the essence of God."[326] "«That which is perfect» is a Being, who hath comprehended and included all things in Himself and His own Substance, and without whom, and beside whom, there is no true Substance, and in whom all things have their Substance. For He is the Substance of all things, and is in Himself unchangeable and immovable, and changeth and moveth all things else."[327] Much interpretation (and even misinterpretation) would be needed to make such fragments acceptable.[328] The language of Platonic exemplars, combined with the need to emphasise God's goodness and other positive qualities, have made it almost impossible to think of Godhead otherwise than as a collection of some definite, yet always mysterious, attributes which in an equally mysterious way are meshed into one essence. On the other hand, it was precisely the image of the highest somewhat 'containing' everything lower, as a box contains sand or as genus contains species, that forced one to double things with exemplary ideas and, eventually, to make Godhead responsible for all the details of the *visible world*. But *virtuality* does not 'contain' all the *distinctions* which flow from it, except as their *indistinct origin*. Substantiality of self-identical, independent

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[326]Henry of Suso

[327]*Theologia Germanica*. I

[328]E.g., to "comprehend and include all things in Himself" must not be taken in the Platonic sense of the pre-existing, ready-made archetypes; one should carefully distinguish "His own Substance" from all the other "Substances" ('Substance' is actually understood by the author "not as a work fulfilled, but as well-spring" [*Theologia Germanica*. XXXII] which we could interpret in terms of *virtuality*) etc., etc..

entities has been discussed earlier in, hopefully, sufficient detail. Application of this category to the *invisibles* leads unavoidably to antinomies. But such an application is by no means necessary, even though similar examples of modeling *invisibility* of the *origin* on the Platonic ideas superimposed on the Christian intuitions, could be multiplied *ad nauseam*.

4.3   Two faces of the one

"*God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this;*" Ps. LXII:11

Any doctrine starting with *deus absconditus* who, somehow, influences or at least remains 158. *present* in the world, needs the distinction between the hidden and inaccessible on the one side and its action and manifest influence on the other.[329] When viewed as *indistinct*, the fact that "the Godhead is nameless, and all naming is alien to Him"[330] becomes an analytical statement. It is ultimately *invisible* and *nothing* can be said about it. What, then, is it one is actually speaking about, and what is it one is actually saying?

"God [*deus*] and Godhead [*deitas*] are as different as heaven and earth. But heaven is still thousand miles higher. And so is Godhead above God. God becomes and passes by."[331] "The Godhead gave all things up to God. The Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not. It is God who has the treasure and the bride in him, the Godhead is as void as though it were not." In our terms, God, the *incarnated* Godhead, is the *spirit* already involved in the *existential confrontation*. The attributes and names are not predicated about the *indistinct* but about the first levels of differentiation, the highest stages of *existential confrontation*. As Maimonides puts it: "Every attribute that is found in the books of the deity [...is...] an attribute of His action and not an attribute of His essence" and "these attributes too are not to be considered in reference to His essence, but in reference to the things that are created."[332] The divine nature operates only through human soul, first, in the process of ontological *founding* and, eventually, through the *existential confrontation* saying *Yes*. We would thus identify the actions of God with the deepest *aspects* of *experience*. All names (or else, all names suggesting more than *nothing*) refer only to the character of the *existential confrontation*: the names apply to God's actions only. Considered *in abstracto*, these actions amount to the deepest layers of the ontological and epistemic *foundation*, as described in Books I and II. But *concretely*, it is the sphere of the constant tension between *Yes* and *No*, of the constant *foundation* of *actuality* on the one side of this *invisible distinction*.

As Godhead *incarnates* only in the human *soul*, God's *concrete presence* is determined by the *spiritual* dimension of man's being, by the *Yes* or *No* of the *spiritual choice*. The *one* as the ontological *origin* is but the *indistinct nothingness*, remote, ineffable and indifferent. The *spiritual choice* affects this *nothingness* in the most fundamental way. *Love experiences* it as the *origin* and generous fullness, while *attached* self-centeredness as a mere void, at best, an indifferent principle of ultimate transcendence. These are *experienced aspects* of life, world, various situations, but *aspects* which cannot be ascribed to any particulars.

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[329]This distinction is present not only in all mystical and many religious traditions. Plato refused to discuss certain things, yet the Demiurge from *Timaeus* seems to be an active symbol of the One, "the father and maker of all this universe [who] is past finding out" and who "committed to the younger gods the fashioning of [...] mortal bodies". In the sixth letter Plato asks a friend to swear "in the name of the God who is captain of all things present and to come, and of the Father of that captain and cause." [Plato, *Letters*. VI:323.D] Neoplatonism could be almost defined as an elaboration of this very distinction.

[330]Eckhart [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*.VII]

[331]Eckhart [B. McGinn, ed., *Meister Eckhart...*A:I.3.e]

[332]M. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*. I:53.

Being *founded* in the *spiritual choice*, they emerge as *aspects* of . . . *nothingness*. But *nothingness* has no aspects! Here – between the *nothingness* of the *origin* and the *nothingness* of *self*, between the naked *self* of Godhead and its *imago*, the naked *self* of an *existence*, in the tension of the *spiritual choice* which gives the flavor to one's whole *existence* – here the Godhead gives all things up to God.

159.   In I:5.2.3.i-5.2.3.ii, we have discussed the traditional doubling of the *indistinct* as, on the one hand, the formless matter under all beings and, on the other hand, the ineffable divinity above all beings. We have objected to this doubling viewing both as an unfortunate opposition *posited* between two *symbols* of *one* ontological *foundation*, the *indistinct nothingness*. But now our concern is not only the ontological but the *concrete foundation* and here we can discern the opposition. It is, however, not the opposition between matter and spirit but between two faces which *one* shows to *Yes*, respectively *No*. The *indistinct nothingness* can be stated, to some extent described and . . . left for itself. But leaving it for itself is only an illusion because its *presence* is perpetually *reflected*, if in nothing else then in the *thirst*, perhaps even in the search for a *foundation*, for the *origin*. The *foundation* is *concretely present* in life, but this *presence* may assume one of the opposite forms, depending on the *spiritual choice*: "if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."[163] "God responds differently to different human attitudes."[333] One might be tempted to understand here by the "attitudes" any *actual* behaviors and acts. Although this is, to some extent, possible, it is primarily the *spiritual* attitude which makes God show different face. *One* never appears, it is never *object* of *any experience*, yet it is *experienced*. It is *experienced* in the *rest* of all the *acts* we perform and all the *actual* situations we encounter. The *spiritual choice* gives this ontological omnipresence a *concrete* form of the *analogues* which, when brought down to the level of *actuality*, may become *objects* of *actual experiences* appearing as direct *signs* of God.

160.   *No* encounters emptiness – apparently indifferent but eventually terrifying – not as a demonic fear, perhaps as Kierkegaardian *Angst*, but then also, as underneath the emptiness it starts to suspect its illusion, as the specifically *numinotic*, awe and terror inspiring *tremendum sacrum*, *ira deorum*. It is *tremendum* aroused often by the God of the Old Testament, by the *nothingness* turned into emptiness by the *disobedient pride* which, having denied it any power, confronts suddenly its ultimate strength and *majestas*.[334] "As roaring torrents of waters rush forward into the ocean, so do these heroes of our mortal world rush into thy flaming mouths. And so as moths swiftly rushing enter a burning flame and die, so all these men rush to thy fire, rush fast to their own destruction."[335]

There is also a more subtle sense of the dread of God which does not arise from the *actual disobedience* but from the mere possibility of damnation, woven into the understanding *that I am not the master* and into the awe of God's *invisible* power. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. [...] the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy."[336] Such a fear is an *aspect* of another form of *confrontation*, for which God's face emerges "as a sacred fire that gives light and life to the whole universe in the splendour of a vast offering."[337] For *Yes*, *nothingness* emerges with

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[333]P. Tillich, *The Question about the Unconditional*. I:4.Biblical religion and quest of being.4.1

[334]One distinguishes, of course, this *tremendum* arising awe and trembling from any fear of things, people, demons or the world itself. Cf. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, IV.a.

[335]*The Bhagavad-Gita*. XI:28-29

[336]Ps. II:11/XXXIII:18

[337]*The Bhagavad-Gita*. XI:19. Krishna answers the reverent invocations of Arjuna: "Thou hast seen the

the ultimate goodness, majestic and sacred *augustum*. The attracting force of the sacrum, called by Otto "*fascinans*", may *found* more *actual experiences* of exaltation or mystical joy and completeness. But it is primarily the *non-actual* force of constant *inspiration* which has delivered one from the threatening emptiness and *alienation*.

So God may be revengeful and merciless or else merciful and generous. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."[338] But He remains the same God for that – the two are only faces of the *one*. The two – let us say, 'Good' and 'Evil' – do not represent opposite ontological poles. Ontologically, they are the same *nothingness*. 'Evil' is not just the last, lowest level of emanations from the 'Good', or perhaps only a lack of some aspect of a full emanation. In a much more Christian way, 'Evil' has its site at the very beginning, it emerges from paradise with the first human: it is very close to Godhead. But this closeness to the *origin* does not mean that 'Evil' follows from it. It only means that human *existence* reaches all the way to the border of *nothingness* – only therefore 'Evil' can corrupt it so deeply, even if never completely. The two represent only the characteristics of the *meeting* with God, the extreme and opposite possibilities of the *existential confrontation*: the *No* seeing only emptiness and void, and the *Yes*, likewise seeing only *nothing*, but *nothing* which is the *invisible origin*. The negative emptiness, in particular, is not an ontological opposite of the *one*, but only an epistemic mistake in one's *experience*. It is despair – and, most generally, evil – which *alienating existence* from its *origin*, makes the latter appear as empty nothingness, total lack. This total lack, this ultimate void of emptiness is the substantialisation of *thirst* effected by the *No*.[339]

The need to speak about God may arise from the *reflective* attitude. Enscribed within the *horizon of actuality*, it cannot escape the spell of *objective* way of speaking, inscribed within the circle of its actions and voluntary choices, it cannot escape from deciding for or against. Indeed, speaking about God may be helpful as an admonition that *visibility* of *this world* does not exhaust the field of *existence*; as a suggestion of the quality of the *confrontation*; as a reminder that what seems impossible may nevertheless happen, that the reality of *thirst* overcomes the *actuality* of all facts. God has "set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."[340] Speaking about God may help in such a *choice* for, as Bacchylides quoted by Clement says, "one becomes wise from another, both in past times and at present, for it is not very easy to find the portals of unutterable words. [...] We speak not as supplying His name; but [...] we use good names, in order that the mind may have these as points of support, so as not to err in other respects."[341]

The simplistic contradiction – "God is" vs. "There is no God" – is possible only after one has reduced the supposed 'being of God' to the level of *actual experience*, to the level of 'being a thing'. It helps little to claim that this is not the intention when this is the result. When the results are clear, the intentions matter very little. Assuming that such an alternative is at all possible, one has already falsified the meaning of the

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tremendous form of my greatness, but fear not, and be not bewildered. Free from fear and with a glad heart see my friendly form again." [Ibid. XI:49]

[338]Is. XLV:7

[339]Considering the biblical personalism, Paul Tillich remarks "There is no sense to ask if the holiness itself is personal or if its carriers are persons. [...] The question is: What do they become as the elements of a religious meeting?" [P. Tillich, *The Question about the Unconditional*. I:4.Biblical religion and quest of being.3.1] We extend this claim to the attributes of God which reflect only the *aspects* of the *confrontation*.

[340]Deut. XXX:19

[341]St. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*. V:11/12.

possible positive answer. A better question would be "What does "God" mean?", or even "What does God mean?", though this, obviously, involves one in the matters on which even the most prominent theologians (or, perhaps, especially they) can not agree. Any *precise* answer can be accused of arbitrariness. The advantage of this form of the question is that the previous alternative ("He is not" vs. "He is") becomes now "He means nothing" vs. "He means something". The former will quickly declare Him to be non-existent but this denial will now involve some uneasy awareness of rejecting more than one intended. No matter the declared choice, one feels that the question has now much more relevance, that it addresses not only the universal order of the *objective* world but also one's *existence*. And it does because it also makes more clear the underlying element of choice which is not dictated merely by *objective* 'being' or 'non-being' of something, but by the way one meets whatever one meets.

At the very beginning, I:§4, we likened *existence* to an *imago* of *nothingness*, not in the sense of a similitude but of a reflection, like one player reflects moves of another. The asymmetry of *confrontation* can be likened to the fact that one player has a winning strategy, in fact, is bound to win. But as the game admits the win-win situations, the other player can win, too. The names of God indicate the winning strategy. Men call God "good" and not "evil", "omnipotent" and not "impotent", and "in saying that God lives, they assuredly mean more than to say the He is the cause of our life, or that He differs from inanimate bodies."[342] The names attributed to God are expressions of *Yes*, and as such are not arbitrary predicates ascribed to *nothingness* which cannot be ascribed any. They tell the story of a possible *experience* – not of God but of the *confrontation* with the divine. For "the form of God is itself the joy with which it is recognised."[343]

162. Just like *commands* leave us free to accept or ignore them, so God's face reflects only the *spiritual choice* made in the soul's depth. As we saw, *spiritual choice founds concretely* the *quality* of the world and its *experience* which become permeated by the aspects reflecting the underlying *Yes* or *No*. *Yes* establishes a relation between the contents of all the levels, *founding* thus also *concrete* ways of encounter and *experience*. The *traces* – down to the level of the most *actual reflections* – of the *spiritual choice*, the *signs* of the *absolute*, are what we call the "analogues".

The term "*analogy*" is used in the way St. Thomas would only partly accept. *Love*, *humility*, etc. are not only genuine *aspects* of *spirit* – they are also adequately, absolutely and not analogically predicated about it. This is possible because *spiritual* relation to *nothingness* is not something absolutely foreign to human *experience* but, on the contrary, the most intimately *present*, whether *concretely* or not, *aspect* of *experience*. The impossibility to specify *precisely* their meaning does not, in any way, diminish its *concreteness*. On the other hand, they not only belong merely *analogically* to the aspects of *visible* experience, but are also predicated *analogically* about it. For this experience, even if prior with respect to the *reflective* knowledge, is actually *founded* in the *invisibles*. It is from there that words like "love", "humility", "presence", etc. obtain their genuine meaning, which is only *analogically* applied to the *visible analogues* of the *spiritual love*. The fact that we cannot define *precisely* what they mean, does not mean that we do not know that. Even if *spiritual love* has not been our share, so *thirst* is an ever *present* reminder of what it could mean. Aquinas would say: "as regards what these names signify, they are applied primarily to God but as regards the imposition of the names, they are primarily applied to

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[342]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. I:q13.a2
[343]Visvanatha [after A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. VII]

creatures which we know first – hence they have a mode of signification which belongs to creatures."[344] This looks almost the same, but in our case not even the mode of signification belongs to creatures – with respect to particulars we never know *precisely* what "love" or "humility" mean, we are seldom entirely certain if the use of such names is perfectly adequate, if the *actual sign*, the *act*, is true with respect to the *invisible* truth which it seems to manifest. This uncertainty, however, does not prove that we do not know what they mean, but at most that we do not know it *precisely*. We are uneasy with applying them to all too particular situations because, as a matter of fact, they do not quite apply there. To some extent – but only to *some* extent – we can recognise particular *acts* of love or humility, but they arise as such only from their *concrete foundation* in *love* and *humility*. There is no *act* of love without *love*, and we do not learn what "love" means by collecting examples of particular (kinds of) acts, by taking a course.

Most probably, we learn it *before* we learn anything else. In any case, it is not so that we know "creatures first", unless we let "knowledge" mean nothing more then the *reflective episteme*, §55. The *analogues*, these *traces* of the deepest and most *concrete aspects* of *experience*, are not any *actual signs*, are not any misnomers misunderstood as properties of some *actual objects*. (Although, of course, there is also such possibility.) They reside primarily in the *rest* of any *actuality* and are also known – consciously and *reflectively* – to reside there. *Reflection* takes recourse to the 'analogical way of speaking', in which the *aspects* of the *spiritual* dimension of Being find *reflections* as sedimented, *actual* properties, as the *analogues* predicated about 'Something'. What this 'Something' is remains forever hidden in the *nothingness* of its conception, and the best name we have is "God". These properties and predicates are but expressions of the *experience* starting in the *spiritual* center of Being, of the *aspects* which defy any objectification and remain forever in the background, in the *rest*. From this *invisible* depth they affect all the *actual experiences* in a most significant way. If God is good, omnipotent, forgiving, loving, etc., one may imagine that all the problems are solved or, as the case may be, posed. But such *analogues* neither create nor answer any problems. They only express *aspects* of the *spiritual* dimension of *existence* which, living *Yes*, confronts the same particular problems as any other *existence* – different is only the form, the *quality* of this *confrontation*.

4.3.1. The analogues of Yes

The *analogues* of each *choice* are only expressions of various *aspects* of the respective *nexus*. We list only a few standard examples.

4.3.1.i. Omnipotence

The *humility* of *love* means *recognition* that *I am not the master*, *recognition* of the *origin* 163. as the ultimate power which is the power of the source. Even if nothing *actually* is the way it was at the beginning, when it emerged *in illo tempore* from the *virtuality* of the *origin*, so without this source, there would be nothing at all. This simple indispensability – not the ability to determine every minute detail of *this world* – is the *omnipotence* of God. Without Him there would be nothing, which is very different from saying that everything is the way He has made it. "Without Me, ye can do nothing."[345] – is very different from "You do everything the way I want".

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[344]St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. [after I:q13.a6.ans.]
[345]Jh. XV:5

His indispensability as the first condition accounts also for the misused label of "necessary being". Once we have reduced necessity to logical necessity, even to an appropriately interpreted unary sentential operator □, there isn't much left...But we have objected to the linguistic reductions. God is certainly not necessary in the sense of being a particular agent whose absence would entail a logical self-contradiction.[346] He is necessary in the above sense of omnipotence, that without Him there would be (not only *nothing* but) absolutely nothing. "If *one* is not, then nothing is."[347] He is the necessary condition, not the necessary cause, of everything that is. The cosmological argument claims well-foundedness of the order of causality, but we would recast it in terms of the order of *founding*. It becomes then an expression of the intuition that this ordering has the *origin*, the indispensable condition.[348] The *indistinct nothingness* is, indeed, the first cause, but not in any sense of *actual* causality – it is the first cause being the first and necessary condition of everything. The necessity of the *one* is here, almost analytically, the same as the indispensability of the *foundation* in its *original indistinctness*. If we take the label "cause" in this deeper sense of *foundation* then *one*, remaining *indistinct above* and *before* all *distinctions*, is not only the cause of everything but is also 'self-caused': *indistinct* needs no *distinctions*, I:6.1.3. This uncaused or self-caused being of God used to be a way of formulating His necessity. Eventually, it is the same as His omnipotence – not the ability to do everything but to *create*, to bring something out of *nothing*, without which nothing else would be possible.

164.   In a much less genuine sense, involving a possible objectification, one speaks *analogically* about 'His will'. But the "Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not". Only *existence* can will. "God's will" is but an expression conveying what *I* should will – *nothing* or, to give it a positive appearance, to say *Yes*. There is no more content in 'God's will' than the salvation through *love*. "Sin is nothing else than that the creature willeth otherwise than God willeth, and contrary to Him."[349] Indeed, but this 'will of God', for which confusion looks only in *visible signs*, is nothing else than that *I* do not sin, that *I* do not make *idols* of *this world*. *Obedience* – if one insists, to God's will – is nothing more (nor less) than directedness towards *Yes*. Such an *obedience* is *humility* which does not try to reach for the *invisible* – forbidden – fruits. For the striving in which "[w]e strive always for the forbidden, and we desire things denied,"[350] expresses only a misunderstanding of *thirst*. Renouncing it may be rightly called the "fear of God". Although it need not involve any *actual* fear, it expresses God's omnipotence – *origin founding* everything that is.

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[346]One could, however, attempt the proof of the form: if there were nothing *indistinct*, nothing to *distinguish*, there could be nothing *distinguished*.

[347]Plato, *Parmenides*.

[348]This was expressed, for instance, as the distinction between the productive and the conserving causes, I:§115. Ockham pointed out that the order of productive causes with Duns Scotus could actually be continued *ad infinitum* (in time), and to avoid this possibility he 'modified' the argument (for God's existence) by introducing conserving causes. The modification can be disputed for Scotus, too, observed the simultaneity of the essential causes which do not produce a thing but maintain it in its being and thus are co-present with the thing itself. (*Actual* infinity seemed absurd to all, and so the conclusion about the first cause followed.) This form of 'causation' corresponds to our *founding co-presence* of all levels, which nevertheless coincides with the generative order of productive causes. (Ockham's 'proof' figures in W. Ockham, *Quaestiones in lib. I Physicorum* q.82-86.)

[349]*Theologia Germanica*. XXXVI

[350]Ovid, *Amores*. III:4.17

4.3.1.ii. Omnipresence

The description of *omnipotence* might have left some taste of deism in which Godhead, 165. giving only the initial impulse to the creative differentiation, withdraws from the world leaving it to the secondary causes, that is, to itself. In a sense, this is what we are saying, for God is never any *actual* efficient cause of anything, He never interferes directly into the course of *actual* events: He remains *transcendent*, stays *above* all *visible* and *invisible* things. But at the same time, He is always *present*, as the deepest *aspect* of every situation, as the eventual limit where *actuality* dissolves in the *invisible* horizon of its *foundation*. And as this horizon surrounds every situation, it not only provides all its *actual* and *visible* elements but can also bring the completely new and unexpected ones. It is like the presence of a quiet person who apparently does not contribute to the situation, does not influence the events but, by the very presence, makes the situation into something completely different than what it would be without this person. And as it later turns out, this was the person who invited all the others, created and maintained the situation. We have just recalled the distinction between the creative, efficient causes and the conserving ones that do not produce but sustain and perpetuate the effects. Again, replacing the former with the latter, "cause" with *foundation*, we recognise such a constant sustaining *presence* of the *origin* as the *invisible horizon of actuality* and, eventually, of all *visibility* and differentiation.

Openness is openness of the heart for all gifts of the *origin*. In more *actual* terms, it can 166. denote preparedness to meet with the open heart everything and everybody but, for the moment, we are relating it only to the understanding of the (role of the) *one*. *Openness* means that we *recognise* it as *omnipresent*, that everything is encountered with the fundamental, only implicit rather than explicit understanding of its being a *gift* of the *origin*, of its being a hierophany and, hence, of the *origin* being *present* behind it. In the most *actualised* form, *openness*, this recognition of *omnipresence*, can find expression as the wonder and joy, a calm intoxication with the world which at every moment unveils new events whose freshness lends them the character of miracles. It is not the intensity of such a joy which makes it the *analogue*, but its constancy – as Eckhart puts it "Who is joyful all the time, he is joyful above the time, liberated from time."[351] The same *analogue* may be discerned in the wonder owing to which, according to Aristotle, "men both now begin and at first began to philosophize."[352] Psychological and emotional differences notwithstanding, this famous philosophical wonder expresses the same *openness* to the world which is *experienced* as a *gift*, if not miraculous, so in any case generous and wonderful, even in its most wicked appearances. Just like man who is *thankfully open* thinks himself undeservedly rewarded, so "a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant". Being ignorant of everything and wondering at everything, being like a child, is to recognise the generous *presence* in every *actuality*, to *experience omnipresence*.

Self-awareness is an aspect of every *actual* encounter which makes one always, even if only 167. implicitly, aware not only of the *actual* situation one is confronting, but also of the fact of this confrontation, of its anchoring in the field of *experience transcending* the limits of *actuality*. Although formally we can say that it is one's *self-awareness*, yet it does not 'belong' to one, it is not something one influences and controls. It accompanies one as an associate, as a witness, not as an attribute; it is an *aspect* of every *experience*, never its *object*. In one's focusing on the *actual* contents of *experience*, it witnesses to the

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[351]Eckhart [after R. Otto, *The Mysticism of East and West*. A:V.8.a]
[352]Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. II

presence of something that *transcends* it. Feeble and dependent on one's recognition, on one's acceptance of its voice, in the context of *love* it *founds* the *analogue* we might call "God's *omniscience*". This is the *omniscience* of which also those not recognising it are warned: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?"[353] "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."[354] It may take the form of a voice of conscience which discloses the *spiritual* context of one's *action*, it may be a mere *awareness* of the *presence* which *transcends actuality* and also, in the most figurative sense, modified by the *reflective* attention directed towards it, it may appear as the feeling of 'somebody looking at me'. The lower such a form, the more common it is. But the *presence* of its higher forms, and particularly of conscience, is indeed dependent on the *concrete foundation* in *Yes*. The better a person, the more conscience he has and, in fact, the more guilt he can feel – criminals seldom *feel* unclean conscience. For conscience is yet another *aspect* of *openness* which, *opening* us for others, *opens* the *communion* with others to us.

4.3.1.iii. Goodness

168. *Thankfulness* amounts to the acceptance of the *origin* and acceptance means: *recognition* of its goodness or being the source of goodness. This goodness, if taken in itself, is empty and impossible to characterise. It does not mean *anything else* except the attitude of *thankfulness* and acceptance, nothing except the *recognition* of the value of everything one encounters and willingness to accept it with the underlying *love*. Goodness is the *experience* of *thankfulness* rendered in terms of *actuality*, is an *analogue* of the latter. Nobody, who does not know this *thankfulness* can ever experience, let alone understand, the goodness of God.

Again, in a less genuine sense, one speaks about 'God's love', 'God's benevolence', etc. Misleading as such expressions may be, they stand for the purity of *thankfulness* which is its own reward. It "is not chosen in order to serve any end, or to get anything by it, but for the love of its nobleness, and because God loveth and esteemeth it so greatly."[355] There is no being, no non-being, no ~~being~~ – if one insists, no God – sitting there and loving or esteeming anything. This love and esteem are first of all the value and nobleness such a *love* and *thankfulness* have in themselves, opening one to the *transcendent gift* which gives the ultimate value to *life*. Certainly, the ineradicable possibility of *grace*, the fact that it may be given irrespectively of the earlier circumstances (and sins), irrespectively of how deep one has plunged into the hell and despair, so that even "they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined"[356] – this can be taken as an expression of God's loving forgiveness in an anthropopathic, almost mundane sense.

169. A yet more specific *analogue* of *thankfulness* is the goodness of the world, with perhaps the most powerful expression in the idea of the best possible world. It is impossible to agree concerning what is the exact acceptable 'amount of evil in the world' and whether it is greater or smaller than the total 'amount of goodness'. Likewise it is impossible to specify exactly the laws which make it impossible to improve this world. But the impossibility lies not in our inability to see or think, but only in the fact that, except for the *visible* details which do not affect that much, there is nothing to improve for nothing

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[353] Jer. XXIII:24
[354] Job XXXIV:22
[355] *Theologia Germanica.* XXXVIII
[356] Isa. IX:2

else is under our full control. One may become very indignant at such a dictum, just like one may deny any necessary laws which cannot be transgressed in constructions of the new brave worlds and then in elimination of some evils. For, indeed, whenever we can point at some specific failure or 'evil', we can also design schemes to combat it. But strong indignation, with an associated moralism, arise when one is no longer able to see only various, lesser or bigger sufferings and failures, but begins to recognise The Evil, the unjust, unfair, inequitable world which offends one's human dignity, in short, when *visible* evils acquire monstrous dimensions of social or even metaphysical principles. The evils in the world may be innumerable, but the conclusion that the world is evil is a clearest *sign* of *alienation*. The idea of the best possible world is the most charming *conceptual reflection* of the understanding that neither God nor even the world owes us anything – least of all any reasons and explanations.[357]

The world is good in the trivial sense that salvation is always possible. In this respect, it needs no improvements. All the detailed improvements of the world can be needed for making the society more comfortable or more just, but that has nothing to do with God, for He is getting involved when, and only when, personal salvation is at stake. *Actual* things and events may have their positive values but never become thoroughly good unless seen in the light of the goodness underlying the whole world. The performances of televangelists praying for most specific items are certainly close to the peek of vulgarity. But they are only extreme examples of turning God into a mere guarantor of the goodness of the world and its *visible* particulars. God who figures as a mere postulate of a sheer faith that all my good deeds and my good life will be eventually rewarded with equally good items according to a principle of justice, not to say, of just payment – such a god is reduced to an honest clerk matching the list of my deeds against the list of *visible* wishes and goods. "Happiness is the condition of a rational being in the world with whom everything goes *according to his wish and will*; it rests, therefore, on the harmony of physical nature with his whole end and likewise with the essential determining principle of his will."[358] The pietistic opposition of duty and nature, with the associated opposition of morality and happiness (which is merely "rational being's consciousness of the pleasantness of life uninterruptedly accompanying his whole existence"[359]) calls indeed for somebody who might guarantee at least some, and at best ultimate harmony, who might dose "happiness proportioned to [[

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[357]The reservation made by Timaeus in the myth of creation contains the essence of this idea: "God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, *so far as this was attainable.*" [Plato, *Timaeus.*] Teodicy only elaborates this reservation in ever longer passages. "Evils, then, if those be meant which are properly so called, were not created by God; but some, although few in comparison with the order of the whole world, have resulted from His principal works, as there follow from the chief works of the carpenter such things as spiral shavings and sawdust, or as architects might appear to be the cause of the rubbish which lies around their buildings in the form of the filth which drops from the stones and the plaster." [Origen, *Against Celsus.* VI:55]

The idea involves two elements: 1. the totality of the world – it is *its* goodness and perfection which is maximal, even if it does not appear so to individuals within it; and 2. some inviolable laws which even God must obey – these are responsible for the individual 'evils' but they can be only unproductively opposed if they are not resolutely accepted. One might be tempted to discern the idea *whenever* these two elements are present. Thus one might ascribe it to Spinoza as much as one observes it in Leibniz. None of these elements appeals to our anthropology. Although we can recognise its underlying value, the *motivating* force of acceptance, it appears, however, a bit like saying, in a resigned and moralising tone, "Do not argue, things won't get better any way". It hardly comes close to the genuine *openness* which recognises, equally in the moments of happiness and of suffering, not only something one has to put up with but goodness deserving *thankfulness*.

[358]I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason.* II:2.2.v [K224]

[359]Ibid. I:1.1.§3

morality".[360] Unfortunately, such a guarantor of justice is not much better than one who can offer only an irrational hope of a new car or plastic surgery. Goodness of God, however, has nothing to do with *any* rewards, not to mention granting one a happy life "according to his wish and will". God owes us nothing – not only no candies or feelings of pleasantness, but not even any just rewards. His goodness is, originally, only the *gift* of life and world. More *concretely*, it is the promise of salvation, the always present possibility of saying *Yes* – to God, and hence also to the *gift* of life in whatever form it meets one.

4.3.1.iv. Person

170.   Like description of any *nexus*, this one could continue indefinitely. Let us only mention one more *aspect* constitutive for the *experience* of God as *transcending* all the more particular *experiences* of *analogical* kind. The *analogues* like those described above can enter *any experience* finding the most *actual* expression (as the *actually felt* wonder, thankfulness, presence, look from above). In no such *actual experiences*, however, one meets a person.

What makes one a person is the capacity to enter personal relations (as *nexus* precedes its *dissociated aspects*, so here the relation precedes its poles.) Personal relation is one which reaches the very center of Being, which is a true *communion*, *sharing* of the *origin*. This *communion* is possible in its deepest form only between persons. Only one person can reach the personal center of another, only one being *open* to the *origin* can meet another in the same *openness*. Only one person can tell the name of another, for telling the name is exactly the sign of recognising the unique value of the person, which is but another side of recognising the *shared origin*. A personal meeting is a meeting in the face of the *origin*, is a meeting where nothing is left outside, that is *closed*, for what is being *shared* is the *absolute* beginning, opening on *nothing*, that is, everything.

There is a habit (going back to Locke and Hobbes, if not all the way to Aristotle) of insisting on more definite aspects which would constitute a person, e.g., responsibility, self-consciousness, rationality, freedom. But the only reason for it seems to be the forensic need for a more definite *concept*, allowing us to distinguish persons from non-persons (sic!). Saying "He is not a (mature) person for he lacks the basic sense of responsibility" or "He is not a (legally responsible) person for he lacks elementary rationality" may sound quite reasonable, unlike, for instance, "He is not a person for he is not rational". The parenthetical adjectives press themselves into the formulations, for being a person comes before and stays *above* being anything else. Such 'definitions' do not define person but special kinds of person or *persona*. No attribute nor its lack can ever account for a human not being a person. We have described in Section 3.3 the meaning of 'becoming what one

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[360] As nature becomes thus completely *dissociated* from the spirit, and desires from morality, such a warrantor "must contain the principle of the harmony of nature, not merely with a law of the will of rational beings, but with the conception of this law, in so far as they make it the supreme determining principle of the will, and consequently not merely with the form of morals, but with their morality as their motive, that is, with their moral character." [Ibid. [K225]] One might probably look here for an attempt to go beyond purely formal ethics, although the attempt is left to God. The hypothesis of God is needed, as usual, to make the *dissociated* neds meet; here, to make us believe that moral life can possibly pay off. This is the cornerstone of pietistic dualism, and its abhorrence of the senses from which it is unable to liberate itself, so that "the moment the fool gives up concentration//And his other spiritual practices,//He falls prey to fancies and desires." [*The Ashtavakra-Gita*. XVIII:75] The reward one expects must be given not only in principle – and not only in the *absolute* dimension of life – but also in all particular wishes and projects which, for such a repressive consciousness, remain *unfounded* in and opposed to any *spiritual* truth. As if "virtue itself and the service of God were not happiness itself and the highest liberty." [B. Spinoza, *Ethics*. II:49]

is', becoming through the *concrete foundation*, so to speak, a complete person, but even this concerned only the *kind of person* one might become and not being a person.

Ontological *foundation* of human *existence* is equiprimordial with its personal character. This *foundation* accounts also for the uniqueness of every *existence*, but with respect to the aspect of personality, decisive is the fact of *participation* in the *origin* which, *confronting existence*, *shares* itself, §121. It is thus God who "makes of us a complete person and, consequently, in a meeting with us is fully personal."[361] This making a 'complete person' amounts to augmenting the merely ontological *participation* with the dialogue of *concrete foundation*. But primarily God makes us also a person, because *existence* is constituted by *participation* in the *origin*, emerges only in the face of Him, in a *confrontation* with Him.[362] Strictly speaking, *nothingness* of Godhead has the non-personal, or trans-personal character of *self*. But this trans-personal character is at the bottom of the very being a person. It is itself non-personal, void of any 'essence', the mere purity of the *distinction* of *birth*, and yet it is the personal center, it *founds* the fact of being a person, the *unity* of *existence* stretching all the way to the most *actual reflections*. The center of personal being is not itself personal, and it is only by *confronting* something *transcending* one's personality, something trans-personal, that one is a person. This *confrontation* is the context but also the eventual content of personal relation. In it God Himself emerges as a person; firstly, by the very definition, by being involved into the personal relation, by being the *absolute* pole of the *spiritual* tension. *Spirit* is a fully *concrete* person or it is not at all. More *concretely*, God is a person because He says your name, because "your names are written in heaven."[363] God uses quite some part of the book of Genesis for telling people what their names shall be: no more Abram, but Abraham, no longer Sarai but Sarah, and Isaac, and no longer Jacob but Israel, etc. All these names, given by God, represent the personal character of the relation: in the act of naming, God establishes the person as a person. From the very beginning, He is not a mere technician constructing only the mechanism of the world – He addresses a person, long before any consciousness can *actually* grasp the fact. "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me."[364] And He keeps addressing persons responding to the personal calls and prayers or, as we might also say, to the deepest need of a person: the need of reality, the need of help, the need of *grace*. He is a person because our only relation to Him is personal, in the depth where the center of our being meets the center of Being. Personality of God is the *analogue* of His *omnipresence* in the ultimate *communion*, *sharing* everything with everyone.

4.3.2. The analogues of No

It is the *spiritual Yes* which calls forth, from the abyss of Godhead, the generous and benevolent person of God. The *No*, on the other hand, encounters only its own negativity, emptiness. *Self-centeredness*, refusing to accept that *I am not the master*, does not lend its characteristics to possible descriptions of God. The primary *analogue* of this attitude amounts to the simple conflation of *nothingness* and void – beyond the *visible world*, there is emptiness. Yet, the objectified characteristics of the respective aspects – of *pride*, *ingratitude* and *closedness* – carry a lot of strength, even if one is unable to say to what

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[361]P. Tillich, *The Question about the Unconditional*. I:4.Biblical religion and quest of being.3.2

[362]This seems to be the source of the well known close connections between personalism and some form of (typically Christian or Judaic) theism.

[363]Lk. X:20

[364]Is. XLIV:4

they possibly could be ascribed – to the world? to the life? to my life? to the proclaimed void surrounding all that? A bit to this and a bit to that, eventually, to everything for *No*, even when it remains most consistent and agreeable, lacks the *unity* and finds its reflections only in scattered bits and pieces – "smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."[365]

171.   *Pride* is not necessarily a personal pride, an individual attitude of superiority over others. *Pride* is merely an attitude which does not *recognise* any higher power, any *origin* beyond *visibility*. The *analogues*, the objectified expressions of that embrace so many *idols* that one can hardly attempt to enumerate them all. The *objectivistic illusion* from I:5.2.2, the assumption or conviction that everything consists of things, eventually, of *objects*, is an important example. It underlies all kinds of intellectual arrogance, naive or sophisticated scientism, exclusive worship of causality and 'hard facts'. As has been frequently observed, humanism is another field providing a host of examples. "But how can anyone judge or love what he does not know?"[366] – this is, perhaps, the most concise summary of *The Oration*. The real question, however, is what one understands by "knowing" and what is there worth such "knowing". In a sense, this text is an attempt to elucidate some fundamental issues of our life – it is humanistic. But the adjective rings wrongly because the human nature is not so plainly and *visibly* human as many 'humanists' would often like it to be.

The objectified *analogue* of *closedness* can be expressed by the statement "The world is as it is". The facts are there, true, 'objective', irresistible, and the only thing we can do is to conform to them, possibly, to manipulate them so as to achieve our goals. The apparent activity of such an attitude of smartness towards the givens is underlied by the fundamental, *spiritual* passivity, the resigned acceptance of givens as givens – the world is as it is. It becomes stiff and rigid, underlied the highest and only reality governed by the irresistible laws of necessity. Impossible as such laws may be to specify *precisely*, they are haunted behind all our failures and defeats which, certainly, must have some 'objective' reasons.

The objectified *analogue* of *ingratitude* is the image of life and world as to a large extent, if not basically, bad, mischievous, perhaps, even evil. In the world we meet many things and situations and most of them require an attitude of suspicion and scrutiny. Such a project can hardly fail; the field for Voltairean grimaces at Candide's disasters and the naivité of Panglos' optimism is inexhaustible – the grimaces are so obviously convincing, that they will always appeal to the adolescent 'rationality' of the Enlightened flavor. One will always find many serious examples which can be used as strong reasons justifying ungrateful attitude, indeed, ridiculing any idea of *gratefulness*. And, in fact, in many situations one better stay alert. But there is a great difference between seeing a danger in the particulars of a situation, and seeing danger everywhere, between being wary of a person who creates an impression of dishonesty and being wary of all people, perhaps, even of all people in general. The suspicious alertness is the fundamental modus of ungratefulness, reflecting and originating in the general idea of the world rendered in terms of harm and reward; the world which, moreover, unless one prevents it, will do one some harm. "Most are at odds with that with which they most constantly associate – the account which governs the universe – and ...what they meet with every day seems foreign to them."[367]

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[365]Zech. XIII:7 [Mrk. XIV:27]
[366]G. P. della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man.*
[367]Heraclitus DK 22B72

4.3.3. Yes or No

All *aspects* of *No* express the opposition to the idea that it results from any choice, whether *spiritual* or not. There is nothing there, and so there has never been anything inviting to, not to say forcing, any fundamental *choice*. Lacking the *concrete foundation*, *No* is occupied with a constant search for *visible* reasons serving as its explanations – in the world, in life, in one's life... The lack of *justification* only increases *thirst* for it. But as no *visible* and objective foundation can be obtained, the *spiritual Yes* appears as a pure subjectivism, a mere projection. The answer to the accusation of projections, given in 3.2.2.ii, pointed out that since *Yes* accepts the *absolute invisibility* of the *origin*, it amounts exactly to *not* projecting anything into it. This might still leave some doubts concerning its subjectivism. Since there are no *visible, objective*, sufficient reasons for selecting one alternative rather than other, the *choice* seems arbitrary and subjective.

Every real choice can be accused of subjectivism, or rather voluntarism, in so far as it is not determined by other factors except the person making the choice. Choice means that there is no necessity in following one path rather than another. In this sense, the *reflective choice* of *Yes* is a voluntary *act* remaining at the discretion of every individual. This does not mean that it is subjective but only that it is a real choice.

As it seems, the accusation of subjectivism is actually not different from the claim that one does not choose between some *objectively* given alternatives but, so to speak, creates the result by making the choice. This is bound to appear so for the *attachment* which accepts only plain, *visible* explanations. For the *choice* is directed only towards *nothing* and it affects primarily only the sphere of *invisibles* which, to the extent it is at all recognised by the *attachment*, is considered purely subjective. We have seen the ambiguities involved in this concept which could be opposed to the *external objectivity* as much as to the internal, deeper sphere of *vertical transcendence* reaching beyond *oneself* towards *self* and *nothingness*. The personal dimension of this *vertical transcendence* does not, in any way, make it *subjective*. It only expresses the *existential* character of the *absolute*, the fact that "man infinitely transcends himself."[368] *Yes* does not choose anything *objective*. It chooses the *absolute* which *founds* all objectivity.

Now, one can meet *subjective* attempts to view every situation in positive terms, to see only good side of things or other forms of, sometimes charming, sometimes irritating, naivité. The *analogues* of *Yes* can be only *subjectively posited* and then maintained and protected the more intensely, the weaker and shallower is the recognition of their truth. They remain *subjective* and unconvincing as long as they are not *concretely founded*, as long as they are not recognised as manifestations of the *absolute* but only *posited* as desirable expressions of *unclear* faith in some, perhaps *objective*, but *subjectively* inaccessible truth. They remain unconvincing and only *subjective* because nobody can voluntarily *posit* the object of one's faith. To believe, in the *spiritual* sense, is not to blindly accept an *objective* postulate, but to *recognise* the *invisible foundation* of *existence*. Only in this sense, of an *existential openness* to the *invisible origin*, is faith opposed to reason which occupies itself exclusively with the *visible objectivities*.

But *subjective* is as opposed to the *objective* as to the truly personal. Personal, or *existential foundation transcends* all *subjectivity*. It is, however, not *objective* but *absolute*. It is not the matter of mere *subjective* faith or wish but of the truth, conformance to the *origin*. *Analogues* of *Yes*, flowing thus from the personal center, that is, the center

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[368]B. Pascal, *Pensées*. VII:434

of Being, embrace all *subjective acts* and *actual* choices with the reminiscence of their *origin*. They witness to its *eternal presence* which, *invisible* as it is, waits to be found, though not seen. And whenever it is found, it is found as having been there all the time, waiting unmoved, unchanged, the same as millennia ago and as it will be in all the future. The ultimately certain – unchangeable, *shared* and objective – is the ultimately *invisible*: *eternity*, the *presence* of the *origin*.

Actual objectivity – of things, events, theorems – borrows its characteristics – of constancy, independence, non-relativity, intersubjectivity – from this *foundation*. But when one starts looking for such characteristics, one quickly realises that, in the *absolute* form in which one would like to find them, they are not to be found among the *actual obctivities* where *reflection* naturally starts its search. For they are only borrowed by the *actual objects* from the *origin*. The choice of *Yes* is not an arbitrary, *subjective* decision. It does not create the object of its faith, for this object is the first *ontological* fundament of our *existence*. It simply recognises the relative character of all *actuality* and accepts its *invisible foundation*. It is the only choice which conforms to the *origin*, which is true.

The fact that there are no *objective*, forcing reasons to make just this, and not the opposite choice, does not mean that it is *subjective* but only that it is a real choice. It is only a relativistic seduction to think that wherever there is a real choice, the actual one must be left to the privacy of every person, since no alternative can be more true than any other. The truth of a mathematical theorem does not depend on anybody personally understanding it or not – it is usually announced by the more able to the less able ones. When announced, it remains as a possibility for anybody interested to figure out its meaning and proof. The fact that most of us never do, does not take any truth away from it. But you know that, once you sit down and study, it will emerge with the sense and meaning which others have discovered before. It is there, waiting with the indifferent patience and unchangeable form for anybody willing and able to recognise it. Is there any more *absolute* sense of truth? Can there be anything more objective, more certain?

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