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**Images of Otherness: On the Problem of Empathy
and its Relevance to Literary Moral Cognitivism**

By

Peter Ian Richard Shum

**A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Philosophy and
Literature**

**Department of Philosophy
University of Warwick**

May 2013

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Declaration

The author hereby confirms that (1) This thesis is his own work; (2) This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university; and (3) This thesis does not incorporate work already submitted by the author for another degree.

Part of chapter 4 with minor modifications has already been published by the author as a paper entitled 'Edith Stein and the Problem of Empathy: Locating Ascription and a Structural Relation to Picture Consciousness', in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 43, No. 2, May 2012.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, namely my late father, Jonathan Chung-Hin Shum (1930-2011), and my mother, Clare Teresa Cavanagh Shum (*née* Richardson).

Abstract

If the possible ends of art criticism are taken to include not only the provision of a detailed evaluation of the artwork, but, cognately, an elaboration upon how one has been, or believes oneself to have been, changed by a particular artistic encounter, then the very praxis of art criticism stands to benefit from a theoretical elucidation of the possible nature of the subjective transformations that may flow from the critical appreciation of art. We are entitled to enquire, in particular, into the conditions under which, and indeed the extent to which, such putative change at the personal level can be explicated in moral epistemological terms. It is pertinent in this context also to investigate the phenomenal character of the experiences that have been operative and their essential structures; to enquire, in short, into the phenomenology of the transformative artistic encounter. In this thesis, the bearing, in particular, of intersubjectivity upon the content and modalities of disclosure in a literary context will be investigated. It will be shown how an understanding of the relevance of intersubjectivity to the phenomenology of literary experience can inform an assessment of the claims of literary aesthetic moral cognitivism.

Yet the intention to clarify the connection between literary experience and intersubjectivity also requires reflection upon what it is in the first place to encounter someone else, and to apperceive a foreign subjectivity and its motivations. For this reason, the contributions of Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein to the investigation of the phenomenology of empathy will be discussed and evaluated. This discussion will in turn be shown to be of assistance in clarifying the role of the imagination in the apperception and comprehension of another person's mental life. The thought of Jean Starobinski will prove to elucidate the question of why the insights of the phenomenological tradition are highly pertinent to the investigation of literary experience, and to the development, in particular, of a conception of an imagined 'Other' who is (in a sense that will be clarified) embedded within the literary text, a person, that is, to whom one might coherently refer as the "implied author".

For reasons which will emerge in the course of this study, it will be argued that authentic empathy, in its fulfilling explication (in the Steinian sense), is given to the empathising consciousness in the manner of a semblance, and, consonantly, that the phenomenological structure of authentic empathy is characterised in its mature phases by an homological relation to picture-consciousness. The epistemological significance of literature's capacities for moral suggestion will be explicated principally in terms of the unfolding of values within the human personality, and in terms of the disclosure of the phenomenal character and structures of virtuous experience. It will be explained why the structure of empathy has implications for the aesthetic value of literature. The question of the relation between aesthetic and ethical value will be clarified. In this context, it will be argued on phenomenological grounds that the presentation of moral virtue in an implied author could contribute to the aesthetic value of a literary work, although it will also be shown that implied authorial moral virtue could conflict irremediably with other qualities like moral doubt and uncertainty, which may themselves be important sources of aesthetic value. For this reason, the thesis will conclude by challenging the ethicist view that an aesthetically relevant ethical flaw in a literary work must count as an aesthetic flaw.

Abbreviations

Works by Edmund Husserl

<i>CM</i>	<i>Cartesian Meditations</i>
<i>EP</i>	<i>Erste Philosophie</i>
<i>Ideas</i>	<i>Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy</i>
<i>LI</i>	<i>Logical Investigations</i>
<i>PI</i>	<i>Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass</i>

Works by Edith Stein

<i>OPE</i>	<i>On the Problem of Empathy</i>
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Works by Jean Starobinski

<i>LE</i>	<i>The Living Eye</i>
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List of Illustrations

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Artist	Title	Date	Medium	Size	Page
Claude Monet	<i>Still Life with Flowers and Fruit</i>	1869	Oil on canvas	Unframed: 100.3 x 81.3 cm (39 1/2 x 32 in.) Framed [outer dim]: 139.4 x 120 x 12.1 cm (54 7/8 x 47 1/4 x 4 3/4 in.)	v



Monet: *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*, 1869. Oil on canvas. © The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

Chapter 1 - Introduction: Keats, Truth, and the Bearing of Intersubjectivity upon Disclosure and Revelation in a Literary Context

At one level, Keats's sonnet entitled *On Peace* (1814) is full of philosophical certainties. The speaker believes, for example, that a nation's people have a right to live in freedom under the rule of law, and that the rule of law should be applicable to everybody. Political and philosophical commitments of this kind do not seem to be called into question in this poem, or made the subject of an enquiry. On the contrary, it is as though we are confronted with somebody who, in certain central thematic respects at least, appears to know his own mind.

At a different but no less important level, however, this is surely a poem which is pervaded by uncertainty. The startled opening "Oh Peace!" is juxtaposed with interrogative doubt.¹ Some kind of glimmer of "peace" may have flickered in the war against Napoleon, but its significance and signification within the terms of the poem remain manifestly open to question. (The year, after all, is still only 1814.) The speaker may be experiencing joy, but he still yearns for it to be "complete[d]".² Just how this incipient "peace" is to unfold remains a question whose answer is conspicuously deferred, with the poem's historical consciousness in the closing line straining somehow to bridge a void between "horrors past" and a highly indeterminate "happier fate".³ The poem thus ends by invoking the kind of liminality of thought – between presence and absence, between the "now" and the "not yet" – that so often seems to constitute the result (I do not say conclusion) of Keats's poetical ruminations.

¹ Lines 1-4.

² Line 7.

³ Line 14.

We find, then, that while part of what this poem discloses can be adequately paraphrased (e.g. certain moral and philosophical stances), part of it cannot. The poem conveys not only the intellectual content of a certain state of mind, but something about that state of mind itself as a lived experience. If we are entitled to assume that certain aspects of experience are common to all human subjects (I want to concur with Edmund Husserl's view that we are), then we are entitled, too, at least to broach the possibility that a poem could disclose important aspects of experience in general. This in turn must lead us to take seriously the possibility that poetry, and perhaps literature more generally, could be pertinent in substantive respects to the field of phenomenology.

Even at this early stage, we can see that a number of interconnected philosophical and literary theoretical lines of enquiry seem to be presenting themselves. It should help if I briefly outline those of them that I intend to form the underlying agenda for this thesis as a whole. Firstly, if we are interested in literary disclosure and revelation, then there is the question of what kinds of content can be disclosed. I want to focus on the possibilities that literary disclosure could be affective, could be phenomenological, and could be moral. But we also need to think about how these different kinds of content might be inter-related, and whether there is something about literature which might make it especially conducive to affective, phenomenological, and moral disclosure. We also need to start to think about the kinds of claim we might be able to make, and under what conditions, about the epistemic status of such disclosures.

Secondly, there are questions about value, and in particular about the relation between aesthetic and ethical value. An initial formulation of these questions might put them as follows. If an artwork conveys thematically relevant

moral truth by artistic means, is that in itself a reason to value the artwork aesthetically? And if an artwork contains an ethical flaw which is pertinent to the determination of its aesthetic value, should it be deemed in that regard, and to that extent, to be aesthetically flawed? These questions, which focus on the question of ethicism, indicate the direction of one the central enquiries of this thesis.

Thirdly, there are questions about the modality of disclosure in a literary context. Deductive reasoning is a perfectly good example of a modality of disclosure, but it is not one which is characteristic of literary experience, which is not to say that literature has no role to play in wider processes of rational enquiry, but that is a separate matter. Very often, however, it does seem to be appropriate to say of literary experience that it is as though one is encountering the particularity and uniqueness of another mind. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a work of literature for which this is not the case. In reading Keats's *On Peace*, it is as though one is encountering another mind expressing complex emotion in a unique and personal way. Intuitively, then, it seems right to say that there must be some kind of connection between intersubjectivity and the modalities of literary disclosure. Yet it is much harder to explicate just how a literary text could take us to another mind. Is the speaker in *On Peace* a construct of the imagination, or a construct of the text? I want to suggest that this is a question which is proper to the discipline of phenomenology. I have already suggested that the content of literary disclosure could be phenomenological. I now add the observation that phenomenology is unmistakably, and arguably by definition, the most appropriate means by which to explore the modalities of literary disclosure.

Fourthly, questions about the modality of literary disclosure seem to lead on to questions about indeterminacy of meaning. I remarked earlier on how aspects of the meaning of Keats's *On Peace* seem to be indeterminate. The opening exclamation "Oh Peace!" could express desire or surprise, or both. It seems to some extent to be up to the reader to surmise the degree of each emotion that is involved. The poem ends by looking forward to an unspecified "happier fate", but do we not value this closing line's indeterminacy precisely because there is something essentially indeterminate about yearning? We are also entitled to ask if literary interpretation in general has an ineluctable moment of indeterminacy. Is there always a gap between poetical self-expression and self-disclosure? What is the phenomenological relation between the experiences that we comprehend in artistic expression and the artistic phenomena themselves? My intention is that seeking answers to these questions should clarify the relevance of intersubjectivity to indeterminacy in art, and the relevance of such indeterminacy to aesthetic value.

Fifthly, any project which attempts to theorise in a sustained fashion about the nature of literature will almost inevitably bring some meta-theoretical questions in tow, and not undesirably so. For academic scholars of literature, the impulse to theorise about literature is often strong, and in many respects appropriate. Sometimes it is desirable within academic discourse to seek to make claims about art in general, or about literature in general. One such claim, for example, is that it can be fruitful and illuminating to construe the encounter with a literary work in intersubjective terms, and this is a claim that I want to broadly sustain. Yet it is also widely recognised that there is something about literature which makes it curiously resistant to theory; that literature is

continually in a process of transforming itself; that bold claims about the nature of literature sometimes seem to invite or provoke the surfacing of counter-examples. I am not going to foreground the theory/anti-theory debate in this thesis, but I don't deny its importance. It may even be constitutive of the study of literature itself. The main way in which it will manifest itself in what follows will be that I shall make every effort to refrain from purporting to make claims about "the essential nature of literature", and from assuming that the term "literature" refers in the end to something historically stable and self-identical.

Keats certainly revelled in poetry's capacity to surprise those of a theoretical disposition, as his oft-quoted remark that "What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet"⁴ seems to suggest. Nonetheless, Keats's understanding of this putative poetry-philosophy polarity did not prevent him from thinking abstractly *about* poetry. Indeed, some of the concerns of this introductory chapter stem from the observation that Keats, a poet whose genius is as undisputed as his canonical place in the history of English literature, also bequeaths to us, in the text of his posthumously collated letters, a sophisticated body of meta-poetical writing, and a complex implicit theoretical understanding of his chosen art.

One of the subsidiary aims of this introduction is to examine the extent to which a coherent theoretical understanding of poetry may be extracted from Keats's meta-poetical thought. I propose to examine the text of Keats's letters in order to assess his account of the nature of poetry and its relation to truth, as well as his explanatory account of how poetry and poetical effects are produced. My principal conclusion will be that Keats's implicit theoretical understanding

⁴ Letter from John Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818. Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.387.

of poetry, though sophisticated and coherent, also raises a number of important questions which require further investigation.

Keats, as I have just indicated, was not a philosopher. However, this is not to say that he did not think about philosophy. Quite to the contrary, it is clear that Keats thought a great deal about philosophy, and indeed came to conceive of his own poetical project as being essentially opposed to philosophical thought. This oppositional configuration, conveyed, as we noted, in Keats's desire to confound "the virtuous philosopher", also turns out, as I intend to elaborate below, to be congruent with his yearning "... oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!".⁵

If this latter, and deceptively straightforward, remark is to be properly understood then an initial clarification of Keats's terminology is now necessary. It should immediately be pointed out that Keats does not intend, in this apparently heartfelt exclamation, to disparage thought in general. We shall, indeed, soon explore in more detail the particular poetical significance that Keats attaches to thought as such. Instead, Keats has in mind in this context (i.e. his letter of 22 November 1817 to the theology student Benjamin Bailey) a particular type of cognitive activity, namely logically deductive, or what he calls "consequitive",⁶ reasoning. Rational argument, not unreasonably, is what Keats takes to be the proper business of philosophy.

We must also be wary of the fact that Keats has a particular conception of "sensations" which goes beyond any usual meaning of the term, and this notion is elaborated in his letters in some detail. In a poetical context, the

⁵ Letter from John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.185.

⁶ Ibid., p.185.

“sensations” in which Keats’s interest lies are also referred to as “passions”,⁷ and Keats takes the “passions” to encompass not only the emotions (as the term is normally understood) but, perhaps most importantly, to include a faculty that Keats calls the “imagination”. We must ask why this “imagination” should be construed as a “passion”. The reason implicit in Keats’s letters is clear: the imagination is both creative and intense. For example - a century before Proust did the same - Keats reflects upon the intensely evocative and synaesthetic powers capable of being invoked by a sensory fragment. (Keats’s chosen example, an auditory precursor of Proust’s Madeleine cake, is an old melody.)⁸ It is via this notion of spontaneous intensity that Keats finds a conception of beauty. Intense passions are held to be “sublime”, and it is precisely in this sublimity that they are “creative of essential beauty”.⁹ For this reason, Keats reaches the view that “[t]he excellence of every art is its intensity”.¹⁰

For Keats, however, the powers of the imagination are not only artistic but capable of engaging with truth. This is not to say that Keats wishes to abolish any philosophical sense to the term “truth”. Though he admits to difficulty in seeing how deductive reasoning could give rise to truth, he nevertheless appears to concede (hesitatingly) this possibility. (“... I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning – *and yet it must be.*”¹¹ (My italics.)) Indeed, he concludes his letter with a remarkably even-handed suggestion that Bailey strive for an harmonious combination of poetical and philosophical truth, accommodated by a

⁷ Ibid., pp.184, 186.

⁸ Ibid., p.185.

⁹ Ibid., p.184.

¹⁰ Letter from John Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.192.

¹¹ Letter from John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.185.

[...] complex mind, one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits, who would exist partly on sensation, partly on thought – to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic mind. Such an one I consider yours and therefore it is necessary to your eternal happiness that you not only drink this old wine of heaven, which I shall call the redigestion of our most ethereal musings on earth, but also increase in knowledge and know all things.¹²

Keats is evidently content to permit a dual conception of truth. On the one hand, there is truth apprehensible by the “consequitive” deductive “philosophic mind”,¹³ and it is clear that knowledge of this kind of truth – a philosophically substantive knowledge – is not something that Keats necessarily discourages. On the other hand, there is what Keats calls

[...] the truth of imagination. What the imagination seizes as beauty must be truth, whether it existed before or not. For I have the same idea of all our passions as of love: they are all in their sublime, creative of essential beauty.¹⁴

This imaginal truth, then, is constituted in the imagination as beauty. We shall shortly have cause to return to the subtleties of the above passage, but I wish to highlight at this point the facts that, firstly, for Keats the imagination is a creative force, and secondly, the beauty it creates is not contingent or projected, but, in being “essential”, is ascribed by Keats a certain ideality. Furthermore, imaginal truth, in contradistinction to its philosophical counterpart, is portrayed as “ethereal” and associated with “heaven”.¹⁵ Keats, indeed, is

¹² Ibid, p.186.

¹³ Ibid., p.186. Keats borrows the phrase “philosophic mind” from Wordsworth’s *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, line 189.

¹⁴ Ibid, p.184.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.186.

convinced of the “holiness”¹⁶, no less, of the “heart’s affections”, the “passions” or intense emotions of which the imagination is counted as one.

Keats goes on to suggest that the apprehension of imaginal truth *as truth* is conditioned, firstly, by the apprehension of beauty by the imagination, and secondly, by an emergence or awakening of the subject from the imaginal mode of consciousness, for “[t]he imagination may be compared to Adam’s dream: he awoke and found it truth”.¹⁷ Knowledge of imaginal truth *as truth* thus becomes conceived as the (dispassionate) correlate of the (passionate) apprehension of beauty. In the sense that sleeping as such involves the immanent possibility of awakening, the disclosure of imaginal truth for Keats is necessarily latent within the apprehension of beauty.

Philosophically speaking, the fact that Keats sets up a dichotomy between “philosophic” propositional truth and imaginal artistic truth itself seems to require some further explanation. Keats, the poet, presumably saw nothing unsatisfactory in elaborating upon the polysemous nature of the word “truth”. Yet the following question seems difficult to ignore. What is it about poetical beauty that leads Keats to suppose that it has an essential connection with truth? What, to put it another way, makes Keatsian truth *truth*?

One possible explanation (an hypothesis that I shall shortly reject) is that Keats supposes that poetry engages with an unchanging metaphysical realm, and derives its truthfulness from such putative fixity. The *prima facie* evidence to support this idea is Keats’s use of precisely the kind of quasi-religious terminology that I have already remarked upon. However, this line of explanation is undermined by the fact that Keats equivocates on whether beauty

¹⁶ Ibid., p.184.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.185.

exists before it is apprehended: the imagination seizes beauty as truth “whether it existed before or not”.¹⁸ Indeed, the imagination is hardly a passive observer of pre-given metaphysical entities, but instead “creative of essential beauty”.¹⁹

The striking feature of Keats’s account of the apprehension of beauty is the way in which he inverts the Platonic priority of essence over actuality. Indeed this reversal provides us with the direction for a more promising explanation for Keats’s claim that poetry has a necessary relation to truth, namely that Keats believes poetry’s truthfulness to be attributable to a certain relation it has with the real world. More precisely, poetry, for Keats, is not truth-bearing because it necessarily tells us something about the world, but rather because it can invoke for the reader the content of real-world experience. For this reason, it seems to me, the Keatsian account of poetry is inextricably bound up with the role of consciousness. Let us examine more closely the way in which Keats implies a connection between consciousness and truth.

It is understandable, but perhaps not entirely unremarkable, that Keats should use the word “heart”²⁰ – a metaphor, commonplace enough, for the emotions – to signify the locus of those aspects of experience he calls “the passions”²¹. Perhaps “heart”, in implying a separation from the brain, reinforces the idea of Keats’s proposed opposition between philosophical and poetical truth. Nonetheless, the drawback of this trope, in my opinion, is that it gives the misleading impression that Keats considers the passions to be devoid not only of

¹⁸ Ibid., p.184.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.184.

²⁰ See, for example, Letter from John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, Letter from John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1., pp.184, 281-2, and Journal-Letter from John Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 February to 3 May 1819, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.2, pp.103-4.

²¹ Letter from John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, pp.184, 186.

deductive reasoning, but of thought in general. This surely is not Keats's view. The imagination, after all, is itself conceived as one of the passions. And, as we have seen, it is the imagination, according to Keats, which apprehends certain experiences as beautiful.

Moreover, the generalised notion of thought as such turns out to be significant in relation to Keats's understanding of the emotions. The absence of thought, in Keats's view, corresponds to a nondescript state of nascent consciousness that he calls the "infant or thoughtless chamber".²² It should not go unremarked that Keats has almost nothing to say about this condition, other than to configure it as a transient phase of pre-cognitive immaturity. The significance of the "infant chamber" lies simply in the fact that it is a primal state from which we find ourselves "imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle within us".²³ Thought, or the "thinking principle" is an immanent awakening in which consciousness finds itself in a second chamber, apparently full of "pleasant wonders",²⁴ and with which we are initially "intoxicated".²⁵ However, the paradoxical nature of this chamber of thought is such that it lends acuity to our understanding of "the heart and nature of man",²⁶ and "convinc[es] one's nerves that the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness, and oppression".²⁷

The allegorical fashion in which Keats portrays the forms of consciousness (in terms of chambers in a mansion) serves the purpose of marking out a relatively clear trajectory of discrete mental states. From an initial

²² Letter from John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.280.

²³ Ibid., p.281.

²⁴ Ibid., p.281.

²⁵ Ibid., p.281.

²⁶ Ibid., p.281.

²⁷ Ibid., p.281.

state of cognitive limbo, consciousness comes, through thought, to an understanding of the world, and from there to a recognition of suffering in others. Furthermore, Keats goes on to suggest that the awareness of suffering in the world gives rise to a state of depressed subjectivity, as the “chamber of maiden thought becomes gradually darken’ d”.²⁸

Keats’s image of the darkened chamber signifies an obscured condition of partial knowledge, for in it “[w]e see not the balance of good and evil. We are in a mist. *We* are now in that state. We feel the ‘burden of the mystery’”.²⁹ However, this darkening of consciousness, that Keats considers to be an inevitable result of thought, is not an eventuality that Keats proposes to avert through some kind of poetical line of flight. On the contrary, it is precisely the exploration of this depressive “chamber”, and the “dark passages” onto which it opens, that Keats considers to be an undertaking of profound poetical significance. For this reason, the Wordsworthian quality that Keats picks out for praise is that his “genius is explorative of those dark passages”.³⁰ And Keats attributes the epistemic power implicit in the idea of such exploration to Wordsworth’s cognitive gift for “think[ing] into the human heart”.³¹

This idea of the poetic exploration of suffering further illuminates the connection Keats makes between poetic beauty and truth. The poetry that Keats calls for is “true” in the sense of being grounded in real-world experience; and what could be more real, more earthly, than our apprehension of “misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness, and oppression”?³² The combination of Keats’s

²⁸ Ibid., p.281.

²⁹ Ibid., p.281. The phrase “burden of the mystery” is a quotation from Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey*, 39.

³⁰ Ibid., p.281.

³¹ Ibid., p.282.

³² Ibid., p.281.

conviction that poetry is truth-bearing with his commitment to the poetic importance of real-world experience is strongly suggestive that Keats believes the apprehension of poetic beauty to have an important recognitional aspect.

An important paradox now presents itself in Keats's conception of poetic truth. How is Keats's proposed sense of rootedness in the world to be reconciled with his conviction about the "holiness of the heart's affections"?³³ A dialectical emergence of the heavenly from the earthly is indeed one of the central motifs of Keats's thought, both theological and literary. From the "mist" of anxiety associated with suffering, in which "[w]e see not the balance of good and evil",³⁴ there emerges (according to Keats's theological view)³⁵ the (non-spatiotemporal) soul, an identity forged only by the heart. This pattern of an immanent permanence within transience – an ideal "beyond" accessed precisely through a vicissitudinous actuality – is replicated in Keats's account of poetic beauty and truth. For from the poetical engagement with the experience of suffering, according to his meta-poetical position, comes the imaginational apprehension of poetic beauty, and a realisation of its truth.

The Keatsian cognition of beauty centres on a moment of "seizing" which manages at once to be both a form of *creation* (for, as we noted earlier, the imagination is "creative of essential beauty")³⁶ and, I suggest, a special kind of *recognition*. The idea of a recognitional aspect to the apprehension of beauty is of assistance in rendering intelligible Keats's otherwise somewhat puzzling

³³ Letter from John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.184.

³⁴ Letter from John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.281.

³⁵ For some of Keats's theological views, see the Journal Letter from John Keats to George and Georgiana Keats 14 Feb - 3 May 1819, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.2, pp.102-4.

³⁶ Letter from John Keats to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.184.

claim that the experience of beauty in art is connected in some essential way with truth. But in suggesting that the recognitional experience of beauty is also simultaneously creative, Keats seems to be implying that such an experience is to be phenomenally differentiated in some important way from a more straightforward perception or apperception of something ostensibly pre-given or prior to the artistic encounter itself. What seems to be missing from Keats's account is some further and more detailed explication of what it means, and why it should be plausible, to think that the "recognitional" and "creative" dimensions of aesthetic experience should co-exist in such an intimate way.³⁷ Although Keats does not fully elucidate this matter directly in his letters, he does go some way toward attempting to explain poetic effects. He does this, however, neither through appealing to textual considerations, nor through addressing cognitive matters relating to the reader. Instead, Keats focuses upon the cognitive skills possessed by the poet. It is to this aspect of Keatsian thought that we shall now turn our attention.

According to Keats, the paradox of beauty we have just considered is made possible by the feature of poetic genius that Keats aptly calls *negative capability*:

Several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously. I mean *negative capability*; that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.³⁸

³⁷ In the chapters toward the end of my thesis, which engage with the relation between literature and moral knowledge, I shall return to this question by exploring the idea that the aesthetic experience of a literary work can involve the unfolding of personal moral values in the reader.

³⁸ Letter from John Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.193.

It is, as Keats's wording implies, an existential rather than an epistemic talent, for it is "*being in* uncertaint[y]" (my italics). And this being is not distracted or interrupted by "any irritable reaching after fact and reason". The implication of Keats's description is that negative capability is a non-fleeting, sustained dwelling within uncertainty. The sense of stability thus implied provides the ground for the elevated certainty of beauty that Keats believes great poetry intimates. As Keats suggests, doubt is swept aside when "with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration".³⁹

In one sense, which illuminates Keats's understanding of the relation between poetry and philosophy, the "uncertainties" Keats has in mind can be understood to include the kind of paradoxes and equivocations that philosophy often sets out as a matter of course to disentangle. In this respect, Keats conceives of poetry as preceding philosophy, and as residing precisely *in* the questions that straight-talking philosophical argument purports to answer, or at least examine rationally. In a different, more practical sense, however, the uncertainties that interest Keats also include the real-world anxieties inherent in human suffering. Indeed, Keats admires Wordsworth, as we have seen, precisely for elucidating such "dark passages" of consciousness. Yet Keats's attitude towards Wordsworth's poetry is ultimately ambivalent. Perhaps Keats's most central worry is that Wordsworth's poetry has the tendency to draw attention to the narrator's own mental activity, at the cost of an immersion in lived experience. Wordsworth, in Keats's view, gives the poetic self, its imaginative powers and mental prowess, an undue conspicuousness. In a letter of 3rd

³⁹ Ibid., p.194.

February 1818 to John Hamilton Reynolds, Keats goes so far as to imply that Wordsworth's self-consciousness is ultimately both intrusive and constrictive:

Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject. [...] Why should we be owls, when we can be eagles?⁴⁰

The owl, Keats seems to suggest, holds forth (however wisely) as a self-conscious intellect; preferable, by implication, is the eagle soaring instinctively and unreflectively.

Keats therefore opposes his own conception of poetry not only to philosophical enquiry as such, but also to the Wordsworthian predilection for explicit cognitive introspection. The Keatsian alternative entails a dissolution of poetic self-identity, an effacement of subjecthood brought about through an inhabitation, so to speak, of the objects of contemplation. In a privileging of difference over identity, Keats conceives of the poet as exemplifying a protean changeability. Indeed,

[t]he poetical character [...] is not itself – it has no self – [...] What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. [...] A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence, because he has no identity, he is continually in for – and filling – some other body.⁴¹

Keats thus proposes a displacement of an authoritative poetic voice by an ostensible merging of poetic consciousness with its field of contemplation.

Let me briefly recapitulate the progression of Keats's ruminations on what it is to be a poet. Keats appears to inaugurate his notion of Negative

⁴⁰ Letter from John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 February 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.224.

⁴¹ Letter from John Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, pp.386-7.

Capability in his famous 1817 letter to his two younger brothers, in which, in the important claim I quoted earlier, but which bears repeating, he describes the true poet as “capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason”.⁴² Yet subsequently, as we have seen, Keats continues to reflect upon the true character of the poet, perhaps most notably in his equally celebrated letter to Richard Woodhouse in which he elaborates upon the “chameleon” character of the poet who “has no self”.⁴³

In his book *Keats the Poet*, S.M. Sperry seems ready to assimilate all of Keats’s musing and speculation about the poetical character into an expanded conception of Negative Capability,⁴⁴ even though Keats does not always invoke this term explicitly. In this chapter I am not primarily concerned with the hermeneutical question as to whether Keats conceives of Negative Capability as actually encapsulating the poetical character, or instead considers Negative Capability to be a particular aspect of it. It is important, however, that we do not blur the distinction between two different claims about the capabilities of poetry. On the one hand, there is the claim that the poet has a capacity for empathic identification to such a degree that the subject-object dichotomy collapses. On the other hand, there is the idea of the poet dwelling in ambiguity and paradox, an expressive mode that Keats places in opposition to rational argument. Let us examine these two aspects of the poetic character in more detail.

The claim that the poet must be capable of empathic identification is, of course, hardly controversial. Who would suggest that a poet can do without an imaginative understanding of human nature, a sense of what it might be like to

⁴² Letter from John Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.193.

⁴³ Letter from John Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.387.

⁴⁴ Sperry (1973), pp.243-4.

be somebody else? Yet the striking feature of Keats's position is the degree of subject-object identification that he requires. In Keats's view, the adequate poetical treatment of others and otherness requires a complete effacement of the self. For Keats, furthermore, poetry effects an important transformation of subjectivity. The transformation which begins in self-negation finds its consummation in the percipient creative discovery of new identities to inhabit and animate what was previously locked in alterity. Keatsian poetic consciousness not only empathises with its objects, but actually *becomes* them, and this is made possible only through a dissolution of the self.

This is indeed a bold literary claim, and Keats, rather than attempting a theoretical explication of how this might be possible, instead sets up Shakespeare as the paradigm, an exemplar of Negative Capability whom Keats strives to emulate. Spurning the self-conscious Wordsworthian cogitations, Keats seeks to emulate instead the Shakespearean demonstration of a comprehensive range of human sympathies, and perhaps most significantly for Keats, Shakespeare's sympathy for human suffering. The theoretical question remains, however, as to how a transformation of consciousness, of the kind Keats describes, could be so complete as to annihilate one's own identity. In this sense, while Keats's elaboration in his letters of the concept of Negative Capability is theoretically suggestive, he ultimately appeals to the concrete historical context of English literature rather than explicitly theoretical considerations.

Our analysis of the Keatsian understanding of poetic empathy has led us to a preliminary sketch of the kind of cognitive acrobatics that Keats implicitly advocates, and I have configured this as a kind of transformation of

consciousness. The other Keatsian claim that we have identified, which pertains to dwelling within “mystery”, relates not only to the cognitive requirements that Keats places upon the poet, but also to the Keatsian conception of the production of poetic meaning. In many ways, Keats’s theoretical understanding of poetic meaning emerges from his postulated opposition between poetry and philosophy. An important aspect of this opposition is conveyed in Keats’s vigorous stipulation that

We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us – and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches’ pocket.⁴⁵

The poet, in other words, must renounce the didactic disposition prevalent in philosophical argument. In its place, ambiguity and indeterminacy take root, not as undesirable consequences of loose, unrigorous thinking, but as the unpremeditated outcome of the empathic transformation of consciousness. Indeed, it is clear from Keats’s admiration for Shakespeare that Keats takes such indeterminacy, which may “crystallise a paradox”,⁴⁶ as Sperry puts it, or, I might add, give rise in many cases to a proliferation of possible meanings, to be a hallmark of the canonical work. Yet Keats leaves a further theoretical question unanswered. If a poetical consciousness can dwell within existential uncertainty and anxiety, can anything be said in theoretical terms about the nature of such an experience, and about its relation to the poetic text?

In this chapter I have sought to assess the extent to which a theoretical understanding of poetry may be extracted from Keats’s meta-poetical thought. Keats turns out to take a deeply cognitive approach by providing a detailed

⁴⁵ Letter from John Keats to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 February 1818, Rollins (Ed.) (1958) Vol.1, p.224.

⁴⁶ Sperry (1973), p.247.

account of both the nature of poetic experience and the special creative talents peculiar to the poet of true genius. His description of the latter goes some way to explaining certain aspects of the former. However, in emphasising the particular abilities of the poet, Keats tends to remain causally upstream of a theoretical explication of how the literary text itself produces its effects.

Keats's discussion of the poet's capacity for empathic identification helps to explain why he believes poetry has an essential connection with truth, by implying that poetry in some sense collapses the subject-object dichotomy. The implicit notion of subject-object identity renders Keats's account deeply philosophically suggestive, but unfortunately this important poetical matter does not receive, at Keats's hands, the kind of theoretical elaboration I suspect it deserves. In this respect, Keats is more inclined to tell us *what* poetry can achieve than specify precisely *how*, either in purely textual terms, or in terms of the reader's cognition of the text.

Keats's idea of the poet dwelling in uncertainty coheres with his view that poetical thought is alien to philosophical reasoning, and that poetry has the capacity to realise complex emotion by evoking real-world pre-reflective experience. However, in the absence of any cognitive elaboration, it remains ultimately mysterious as to what Keats thinks it might mean, existentially, to "be" in such uncertainty, and how such "being" might be invoked by the poetic text. While not rejecting the notion of propositional truth, Keats believes that poetry has an essential relation to a different, non-propositional form of truth. One of the aims of this chapter has been to explore the degree of justification, implicit or explicit, that Keats provides for this view. I have discounted the possibility that Keats believes poetry to engage with an unchanging

metaphysical realm on the grounds that Keats equivocates on whether poetic beauty exists before it is apprehended. Keats is committed to the ideality of both poetic beauty and truth, but remains metaphysically neutral. I have argued that a more likely explanation, though not explicitly articulated by Keats, is to be found in the importance Keats attaches to real-world experience, and that the truthfulness of Keatsian truth consists in the poetic role of experiential recognition. The resulting double aspect to poetic truth, its Janus-like relation with ideality and actuality, is a paradox that Keats certainly registers but does not fully explain.

While Keats's notion of Negative Capability is certainly primarily concerned with explicating the abilities required of the true poet, it would be mistaken to think that Keats attaches little theoretical significance to the role of the reader. On the contrary, it is clear from Keats's account of aesthetic value, and the nature of the apprehension of beauty and its relation to truth, that the reader of poetry is not conceived as a passive and humble admirer of the poet's craft, but instead turns out to be inseparable from the Keatsian understanding of poetry itself. The reader, and more precisely, the role of consciousness, are implicated in the very constitution of beauty.

Considerations of poetry's oppositional relation to rationality contribute to Keats's suggestion that poetic beauty can emerge in a context of indeterminacy of meaning. In a very particular sense, a sense easily misconstrued, this position liberates the reader from a felt obligation to somehow master a text's meaning, an obligation which amounts in itself to a dialectical domination of the reader *by* the text. Accordingly, the reading act itself can come to be conditioned by an *a priori* acceptance of the possibility of

multiple readings. It may seem tempting, if slightly overwrought, to characterise this as some kind of transcendental emancipation of the reader. The necessary possibility of different readings certainly seems to emerge naturally from Keats's thought. Nonetheless, we must not forget that Keats also places formidable demands upon the reader. As I have argued, Keats implies that readers only apprehend poetic beauty by accessing aspects of their own real-world experience in a recognitional encounter with the text; by exploring the depressive "dark passages" of consciousness; by being in uncertainty, suffering, anxiety. The Keatsian vocation for the reader is to live the emotion of the text, and to recognise certain of its aspects as one's own. It is, in this sense, a call to empathy.

The trajectory of my thesis, then, has begun with, and found part of its motivation in, the meta-poetical thought of John Keats. I have begun to describe the way in which Keats intimates a distinctive theoretical position which configures questions relating to affectivity, the imagination, and intersubjectivity as being ultimately constitutive of the encounter with a work of poetry. As I intend to elaborate, from a theoretical perspective, one of the most arresting features of Keats's meta-poetical thought is the way in which it connects with some of the central concerns of twentieth-century phenomenology. It will be the work of subsequent chapters to enlist the resources of phenomenology to investigate some of the theoretical questions Keats raises. It is therefore important that we now turn our attention to the phenomenological understanding of intersubjectivity and the imagination developed by Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein.

Chapter 2 - Husserl and Intersubjectivity

A review of the work on intersubjectivity which Husserl either published in his lifetime, or else explicitly authorised for publication, yields two principal texts. *Ideas II*, largely completed in 1928 but published posthumously in 1952 by the Husserl Archive, contains a relatively brief outline of Husserl's fundamental conception of the constitution of the Other in empathy [*Einfühlung*], an account of his important concept of motivation [*Motivation*], and a delineation of a secondary kind of empathy understood as the perception and understanding of another person's motivations. Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, published in 1931, contains a more detailed analysis of the primary form of empathy and its consequences, notably the constitution of transcendental intersubjectivity and the objective world.

It is, however, also known that there is much more to Husserl's understanding of intersubjectivity than that which he explicitly authorised for publication. Husserl's voluminous literary remains speak of an abiding interest in the question of intersubjectivity which began as early as 1905. Even after the publication of *Cartesian Meditations*, it is now clear from Husserl's working manuscripts that he continued to grapple with the problem, at least until 1935, just three years before his death at the age of seventy-nine.

A moment's reflection will show that the question of how seriously Husserl's unpublished working manuscripts should be taken is not one which should simply be glossed over. Two related considerations, I would suggest, must give us cause for caution in this context. Firstly, it is known that Husserl was inclined to continuously subject his ideas to revision, and this process was evidently supported and facilitated through his prolific daily writing routine.

Secondly, I think it is worth remembering that the decision, in the life of any philosopher, to authorise a text for publication, to have it subjected to the rigours of public scrutiny, surely in itself counts for something, hermeneutically speaking. And if one accepts this latter premise, then, conversely, the absence of any evidence of an intention to publish a given manuscript can hardly be said to be hermeneutically irrelevant.

On the other hand, we should also remember that Husserl was serious about having his manuscripts preserved, and that in 1935 he permitted Eugen Fink and Ludwig Landgrebe to systematically classify them. It would be incorrect, then, to claim that Husserl did not believe the manuscripts to represent the *potential* basis for further (possibly posthumous) publications. Indeed, Dan Zahavi points out that in a letter of 1931, Husserl writes that he believes his most important work to be contained in the manuscripts. But such an informal claim, at once both grand and vague, is hardly illuminating. Which parts of the 40,000 handwritten pages, mostly in shorthand, did Husserl have in mind? In the same letter, we should also note that Husserl concedes that the manuscripts are “scarcely manageable because of their volume.”¹ The Husserlian *Nachlass*, it would seem, presents us with an hermeneutical enigma, an enigma which demands both interest and caution.

The *Nachlass* manuscripts help to underscore the fact that Husserl investigated a variety of forms of intersubjectivity. For example, in *PI III*, Husserl considers the empirical fact that a newly born baby readily imitates the expression of its mother. From a phenomenological perspective, one of the interesting aspects of this interaction is that it is by no means clear that the infant

¹ *PI III*, lxvi. Trans. Zahavi (2001b), p.xx-xxi.

of a few hours understands, at any level, its mother as possessing both her own separate subjectivity and her own perspective on the world. This is to say that we are at least entitled to call into question the presumption that empathy, in the Husserlian sense of *Ideas II* and the *Cartesian Meditations*, has taken place. Yet it seems apparent that some form of intersubjectivity is nonetheless at work. The baby is aware of the mother, and aware too, at some level, of an interaction taking place. This leads Husserl to suppose that there is such a thing as instinctive intersubjectivity, and that the intersubjective instincts may precede empathy. The idea that the human subject may be primordially intersubjective leads to questions regarding the priority of empathy in relation to other forms of intersubjectivity, and the priority of subjectivity in relation to intersubjectivity, questions that we shall consider in more detail in this chapter.

At least one further form of intersubjectivity will be drawn into our discussion. We shall discover in what follows that the empathic path to transcendental intersubjectivity compels the subject towards a transformed understanding of perceptual objects as the objects of transcendental co-constitution. As a consequence of this transformation, averted aspects of objects, such as the back of a building, carry a certain sense of being available in principle to an indeterminate Other. Husserl calls the indeterminate subjectivity correlated with an object's range of possible appearances *open intersubjectivity*.

Although the *prima facie* implication of *Cartesian Meditations* is that empathy manifestly precedes open intersubjectivity, it has been suggested, notably by Zahavi, that there is a quite different Husserlian story to tell.² According to Zahavi, a serious engagement with the *Nachlass* manuscripts

² Zahavi (2001b).

shows that Husserlian thought is ultimately orientated toward an intersubjective transformation of phenomenology, and that empathy is necessarily conditioned by open intersubjectivity. The obvious bearing of this claim upon our understanding of the Husserlian account of empathy requires us to examine Zahavi's position carefully, and this will be pursued in the latter half of this chapter. Let us turn now to the question of empathy, before considering its possible inter-relations with other forms of intersubjectivity.

Part of the achievement of the transcendental reduction is to keep alive Husserlian aspirations for a properly rigorous philosophical foundation for the sciences. Yet a price incurred for the project of transcendental phenomenology is that the threat of the objection of solipsistic self-enclosure would seem to be effectively programmed in from the start. Is the transcendental ego, disclosed by the *epochē* as the static subject transcending the flux of experience, ultimately isolated epistemologically from other egos? Husserl himself certainly recognises the force of this concern. Indeed, he proposes to enquire as to whether

[...] we, as phenomenologists, [can] do anything but [...] say: "The Nature and the whole world that are constituted 'immanently' in the ego are only my 'ideas' and have behind them the world that exists in itself. The way to this world must still be sought."³

An indispensable part of the response to this question will appeal to Husserl's conception of the "noematic-ontic mode of givenness" of others as objects of knowledge, arguing that the noema gives to consciousness neither a mediating sense in the style of Frege, nor mere representation of the intentional object, but precisely the object as it is intended. The epistemic value of this transcendently constituted noema is held to be sustained by virtue of its being

³ *CM*, §42, pp.89-90.

intersubjectively verifiable in principle. Yet this “noematic” response to the objection of solipsism now leads us to a more basic problem for the transcendently meditating phenomenologist: what is the origin for consciousness of the notion of intersubjectivity? How could it come about that the very idea of “someone else” should become thinkable for the post-*epochē* transcendental subjectivity? It is to this fundamental question that Husserl turns his attention in §§43-47 of *Ideas II* and in more detail in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*.

It is surely worthy of some reflection even at this early stage, and without any explicit mention of the Other’s interior life or affectivity, that Husserl considers that a certain conception of empathy [*Einfühlung*] is already operative in such a way that its construal *as* empathy is not strained beyond credibility. Husserlian empathy, in the first instance, may be said to be formal rather than material. By this I mean that the accomplishment by transcendental subjectivity that interests Husserl in the Fifth Meditation is not primarily the grasping of the content of a foreign consciousness, but instead the necessary precondition for such an act: precisely the “perception” (in a broad sense of this term that we shall later make more precise) of a foreign consciousness. As Husserl specifies,

[...] the problem is stated at first as a special one, namely that of the “thereness-for-me” of others, and accordingly as the theme of a *transcendental theory of experiencing someone else*, a transcendental theory of so-called “empathy”.⁴

It is understandable that Husserl, in predicating “empathy” with “so-called”, should register at this point some degree of equivocation in categorising

⁴ *CM*, §43, p.92.

the experience of the “thereness-for-me” of others as empathy, for it is, after all, simply the experiencing of someone else as there being someone else present. If I were to inform you that I had consciously apprehended you as someone who is not me, would you conclude that I had empathised with you? I doubt it. Indeed, I may very well have been unable to empathise with you in any ordinary non-phenomenological sense of the term.

In fact, contrary to what our everyday pre-philosophical intuitions might perhaps incline us to believe about what is entailed by the concept of empathy, Husserl underscores a sense of *essential* subject-object *disjunction* in the empathic act, by arguing that the Other’s subjective processes are in principle inaccessible to the empathising subject’s primordial experience.⁵ Nonetheless, it will also become clear that Husserl does ultimately have justification in configuring the bare apprehension of a foreign consciousness as a genuine instance of empathy. The Other is not ultimately locked in alterity, but instead comes to be understood at a certain fundamental level, and in a sense that we shall shortly explore, as another “I”, an intentional modification of myself. For Husserl, this pure moment of sameness, between a pure “I” and an apparent alter ego, is a condition for the possibility of the constitution of the Other.

As Iso Kern helpfully points out, the three *Husserliana* volumes of *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* help to illuminate an important stratification in Husserl’s overall conception of empathy by making explicit the distinction between what I have just referred to as formal and material empathy.⁶ Husserl’s corresponding terms are inauthentic [*uneigentlich*] and authentic [*eigentlich*] empathy. Inauthentic empathy is the basic, formal empathy of the

⁵ Edith Stein concurs with Husserl on this point, arguing that a so-called “feeling of oneness” should not strictly be aligned with the concept of empathy. (Stein (1989), pp.16-18.)

⁶ Bernet, Kern & Marbach (1995), p.165.

Fifth Meditation, which involves, as we shall soon see in more detail, a kind of empty appresentation. Authentic empathy, on the other hand, is somewhat closer to an everyday sense of “empathy”. It addresses, but is not limited to, questions of affectivity, and is configured by Husserl as a genuine intuition of the other person’s “motivations”. The problem of authentic empathy is one pursued in more detail by Husserl’s assistant Edith Stein, and we shall benefit from her important work, *On the Problem of Empathy*, in a later chapter. For the time being, however, it is important that we turn our attention to the explication of “inauthentic” empathy that Husserl provides in the Fifth Meditation.

The clarifying power exercised in the phenomenological reduction is something that Husserl seeks to harness in a particularly focussed way in his engagement with the problem of empathy. If the sense of the natural attitude’s “external world” is ultimately sublated, in Husserl’s thought, as the intentional correlate belonging to transcendental constitution, could it be that a more bespoke reduction could clarify, or redeem in a higher sense, a particular aspect of the natural attitude fundamental to intersubjectivity, namely the very distinction between myself and others? The possibility of a rigorous elucidation of the phenomenological origins of the apprehension of otherness leads Husserl to undertake a fresh reduction which, prior to being performed, presupposes the post-*epochē* transcendental attitude and its constituted world, a methodological starting point that Husserl calls the “universal transcendental sphere”.⁷

Let us remind ourselves of the nature of this “universal transcendental sphere” into which the *epochē* delivers us. Husserl may be understood as implying that the *epochē* brings about a reduction in the *scope* but not the *depth*

⁷ *CM*, §44, p.93.

of one's cognition of the world. Let me clarify what I mean by this. The reduction in scope stems from the suspension of ontic presuppositions bound up with the Natural Attitude. Instead of being posited as existing in absolute transcendence, intentional objects are apprehended as phenomena. This restriction to phenomena *qua* phenomena means that "the world" as such becomes tied to the intentional life of transcendental subjectivity. To adopt a methodological perspective, the scope of *my* world is now delimited, as Husserl puts it, to "that portion of the world which holds good by the measure of my experience".⁸ Nonetheless, the depth of my world-cognition is not degraded, in the sense that perceptual objects *qua* phenomena carry a noematic-ontic mode of givenness. The apple tree in my garden, as experienced, remains a public object, and is not suddenly assimilated into my stream of really-inherent content. This is to say that a certain intersubjective sense that Husserl articulates as "experienceable by everyone" is retained.⁹

Although Husserl may appear to speak in *Cartesian Meditations* of a single reduction from the universal transcendental sphere to the sphere of ownness, there are good grounds for believing that two quite distinct methodological steps are actually at work in Husserl's account. These steps are not methodologically equivalent, and cannot be regarded conceptually as mere restatements of one another. On the one hand, there is the idea of including (and only including) in my world all that is originally given to consciousness. On the other hand, we find present in Husserl's thought the idea of an expressly solipsistic reduction, that is, a reduction which brackets intersubjectivity in general, and acts of empathy in particular.

⁸ *PI* II, 51. Trans. Bernet, Kern & Marbach (1995), p.159.

⁹ *CM*, §44, p.93.

In the combination of these two steps, we accomplish the “abstraction from everything that transcendental constitution gives me as Other”.¹⁰ The individual, in bracketing others, has bracketed cultural, communal, and societal predicates from its experiences. In this sense, it becomes impossible to ask the question “Who am I?”, if being a “who” means being such for others. A more meaningful question, for the phenomenologist at this juncture, is to ask “*What am I, in and for myself?*”. To this we have an immediate, and for Husserl, quite certain answer: I am the static self-identical subject which transcends the flux of its experience, the pure “I” disclosed by the original *epochē*. Husserl conceives of this transcendental ego as “the identical Ego-pole of my manifold ‘pure’ subjective processes, those of my passive and active intentionality”.¹¹

Yet the presence of the transcendental ego does not exhaust the content of my individuality. The aggregation of my experiences also compels me, on the grounds of consistent verification, to conclude that I am embodied. Husserl shows us that the sense of this embodiment is continuously confirmed in a number of ways. For example, my body determines my centre of orientation, the spatial origin from which my perceptual acts are performed. I am not able to separate myself, spatially, from the locus of my body. I may, of course, be able to imagine doing so, but such imagined experiences are not posited as being real.

Husserl reminds us that the body is the locus of sensation, and that sensation may be used as a way of perceiving the zone of one’s own body and its boundedness. If I touch a surface with my hand, only to find that I sense the surface but do not sense being touched by my hand, then, subject to consistent confirmation, I conclude that the sensed region does not belong to my self, but

¹⁰ *CM*, §44, p.93.

¹¹ *CM*, §44, p.98.

to otherness. Otherness has now become disclosed to consciousness as a consequence of the constituted boundedness of my body.

If otherness is now thinkable, we are surely substantially closer to being able to apprehend someone else as someone *else*. Yet this is still not a phenomenologically trivial step to take, especially as we have, as yet, no conception of the objective world. The remaining phenomenological explication of empathy envisaged by Husserl involves, firstly, perceiving another body as just a body [*Körper*], and then realising that it is also a living body [*Leib*], an animate organism. Husserl emphasises that the *Leib* is not to be conceived as an assemblage comprising two essentially separate components. Instead, *Leibe* are given as “two-fold unities [...] of things and subjects, along with the subjects’ psychic life.”¹² The significance of the embodiedness of subjectivity is an Husserlian theme to which we shall have cause to return later in this chapter.

The central concept employed by Husserl in accounting for the perception of another human body as such is that of “pairing” or “coupling” [*Paarung*]. This “pairing” does not only occur in the context of empathy, but is understood by Husserl to be a general phenomenon of intentional life. Pairing is conceived as the phenomenological founding of a “unity of similarity” by two phenomenally similar data, in which there takes place an “overlying” of each with the sense of the other.¹³ As we shall shortly observe, it turns out to be important to note that, for pairing to occur, the two data involved do not need to be interchangeably identical in appearance. Instead, pairing may well be founded on a partial likeness, and the extent of the consequent overlaying of

¹² *Ideas* II, §43, p.170.

¹³ *CM*, §51, pp.112-3.

sense will be determined by the moments of similarity between the respective phenomena.

Husserl classifies pairing, thus conceived, as an example of passive synthesis, and more specifically, of *association*. As such, pairing is no deliberate act of the intellect, but a primordial feature of consciousness, which, precisely in its primordially, resists further phenomenological explication. As Natalie Depraz puts it, Husserlian *Paarung* is “the grounding process of empathy, without which no further intersubjective experience is possible”¹⁴. Certainly, as far as the Fifth Meditation is concerned, the appeal to *Paarung* is explanatorily foundational. It provides the conceptual source of the sense of affinity between subject and object whose explication must be regarded as indispensable to any satisfying account of empathy.

As I intend to elaborate in what follows, if we proceed to examine carefully the way in which Husserl employs this concept in the Fifth Meditation, then it will emerge that two distinct functions are involved. This is to say that two distinct cognitive gains would seem to be taking place, even if pairing itself only occurs once, or, perhaps more plausibly, is occurring continuously during the encounter with the Other. The concept of pairing helps to clarify how, in the first place, the notion of “someone else” becomes thinkable for consciousness. Beyond this, however, it also helps to explain how someone else as such comes to be perceived. We turn now to the first of these two roles.

Having elaborated intensionally upon the concept of pairing, Husserl proceeds to observe that in the phenomenology of empathy “pairing *first* comes

¹⁴ Depraz (2001), p.173.

about when the Other enters my field of perception".¹⁵ The significance of the encounter with a body sufficiently similar to mine such that pairing occurs, and especially the first such encounter, is that consciousness is awakened extensionally to the very *idea* of someone else. *Paarung*'s overlaying of sense associates the presenting body with my own, and, consequently, the sense ascribed to myself of "animate organism" is transferred.

The concept of *Paarung*, we must remember, involves an overlaying of *each* phenomenal datum with the sense of the other. We are therefore relying upon the assumption that the subject's body is necessarily simultaneously given at the time of such an encounter. Is this justified? If my attention is directed towards the Other, what reason is there to suppose that I am aware of myself? Husserl's answer is that I can be aware of myself without paying attention to myself. In fact, Husserl claims that

I, as the primordial psychophysical Ego, am always prominent in my primordial field of perception, regardless of whether I pay attention to myself and turn toward myself with some activity or other. In particular, my live body is always there and sensuously prominent [...].¹⁶

Husserl's claim here is an important one, not least for his immediate purposes of describing how basic empathy always stems from a primordial pairing of bodily appearance. A claim broadly to the effect that my body is somehow always on hand or available for the requisite pairing would indeed seem to be called for, if Husserl's account is to succeed. Yet the rather brief formulation of this view quoted above seems to require some unpacking, and might even seem at first glance to be overtly paradoxical. In what sense *could* I

¹⁵ *CM*, §51, p.113, italics mine.

¹⁶ *CM*, §51, p.113.

be said to be “prominent” [*abgehoben*] for myself in the case in which I do not “pay attention to myself”?

Clearly, part of the significance of the above passage lies in its implication that there is something more to the structure of Husserlian intentionality than that of straightforward volitional conscious directedness of attention. The absence at this point in the text of any explicit elaboration upon the exact nature of the mode of intentionality that Husserl has in mind seems to invite, on the face of it, two alternative interpretations. On the one hand, we might conclude that Husserl believes that the conscious subject always has an awareness – either reflective or pre-reflective - of his or her own body. On the other hand, Husserl may be referring to a kind of background awareness conditioned by an antecedent reflective moment of bodily self-awareness. Let us consider these possibilities more closely.¹⁷

At issue for us here is the question of whether conscious human subjects *always* have pre-reflective bodily self-awareness. It seems to me particularly difficult to sustain this idea. Convincing counter-examples can draw upon the phenomenology of being engrossed in abstract thought. If I am seated in a comfortable armchair and deeply absorbed in a mathematical problem, then I become utterly oblivious to my bodily sensations, and they play no part in the cognitive activity in progress. In this scenario, from time to time I may well develop a pre-reflective awareness of some sensation or other, such as the texture of the fabric of the armchair, but through an act of concentration such temporary intrusions soon recede, and I am once again “lost” in my abstract thoughts.

¹⁷ In this context, I am using the term “reflection” in the strict Husserlian sense of the thematisation of an occurrent or retained lived experience.

Of course, it is just possible that Husserl does mean to say simply that conscious subjects are always bodily self-aware, pre-reflectively or otherwise.¹⁸ Yet in the light of such considerations as my counterexample above, this seems to me unlikely, even though Husserl accepts the phenomenological possibility of having pre-reflective awareness of lived [*erlebt*] experiences.¹⁹ Another possibility is that Husserl means to say that conscious subjects *engaged in perceiving the world* are always bodily self-aware, pre-reflectively or otherwise.²⁰ Finally it is also plausible to suppose that Husserl is proposing that, simply by virtue of my acquaintance with my being always already embodied (an acquaintance made phenomenologically explicit in the discoveries following the reduction to the sphere of ownness), I necessarily carry with me and retain a background awareness of myself as a living organism. In such a background reflected awareness (and I am distinguishing here between “reflected” and “reflective” awareness), the proprioceptive givenness of my own body as a persistent component of my primordial sphere is apprehended as always present and available to me, should I so choose, through a simple alteration in the direction of my attention.

Husserl may be said to be describing an objectifying background awareness even if the sense of objectivity is not yet mature. The objecthood of my living body at this point lies somewhere between the bare objecthood possessed by all intentional objects [*Gegenstände*], and the intersubjective objectivity of *Objekte* towards which Husserl’s investigation is currently

¹⁸ Edith Stein seems close to this view when she says that bodily sensations are “impossible to cancel”. (Stein (1989), p.42.)

¹⁹ For evidence of the Husserlian acceptance of the possibility of non-conceptual conscious content, see Poellner (2003), p.48.

²⁰ For evidence that Husserl believes that direct perception involves at root a buried belief in, and commitment to, the subject’s embeddedness within a causal external world, see Poellner (2007).

directed. The objecthood of my *Leib* seems to consist both in its being consistently reidentifiable as “my body”, and in its being apprehended as a contiguous bounded portion of my constituted world.

We are moving closer now towards a justification for Husserl’s considered position that pairing occurs when a body sufficiently similar to mine appears in my primordial sphere, but we must not overlook the need to interrogate the perspective from which the putative similarity is being implicitly judged. If the only perspective from which this similarity can plausibly be said to be apprehended is that of some notionally transcendent point of view situated outside of both bodies, and capable in principle of observing them objectively, then Husserl’s entire Fifth Meditation would seem to face the threat of circularity. The principal motivation, after all, behind Husserl’s investigation into the problem of empathy is to show that empathy, in Husserl’s basic sense, turns out to be a condition for the possibility of the constitution of the objective world.

It is slightly surprising, therefore, that Husserl does not devote just a few more lines, notably in §51, to explicitly articulating the implied similarities between the proprioceptive givenness of my own body and the exteroceptive givenness of the Other’s. I believe, however, that a coherent justification for believing there to be such a phenomenal similarity can, in fact, be inferred from what has gone before. Firstly, the passage in which Husserl qualifies his description of *Paarung* by stating that “complete likeness” is but a “limiting case”²¹ now becomes particularly significant. Partial coincidence is now clearly understood to be a sufficient condition for pairing to occur. Pairing is not

²¹ *CM*, §51, p.113.

necessarily triggered by some all-encompassing congruence, but instead essentially takes place on the basis of moments of similarity, for the mutual transfer of sense occurs “so far as moments of sense actualised in what is experienced do not annul this transfer with the consciousness of ‘different’.”²²

In the particular case of the pairing that takes place in empathy, of course, it is precisely the moments of difference upon which we must rely for the disclosure of this presenting somebody as somebody *else*. The salient differences between the givenness of my own body and that of a different body are traceable to the original distinction that my body belongs to my sphere of individuality, while any different body is situated in my sphere of otherness: I do not govern the other body’s movements, and its surfaces are not a source of primordial tactile sensation for me. I, as transcendental ego, am situated inside my body, not the Other’s.

What, then, are the moments of similarity that Husserl has in mind? Perhaps most obviously, certain parts of my body, such as my hands, are visually accessible to me in such a way that they present an image similar to that of the exteroceptive givenness of the corresponding parts of the Other. But perhaps more significantly, because the *entire* surface of my body is in principle accessible to me through the sense of touch, I am able to apprehend, entirely proprioceptively, my own bodily topography. My bodily appearance, though not entirely accessible to me through primordial visual perception, is nonetheless made non-primordially accessible to me in an appresentation founded upon primordial tactile sensation. It seems to me that this discovery, made without the benefit of any external transcendent perspective, is sufficient to provide me with

²² *CM*, §51, p.113.

an immanent phenomenological basis for the apprehension of a morphological similarity between another body and my own. With its concomitant mutual overlaying of sense, the pairing that occurs in the primal encounter with the Other thus harbours a moment of disclosure for consciousness: before, my grasp of my external appearance was founded on proprioceptive givenness, but now I can conceive, for the first time, of the nature of the primordial content of an exteroceptive perception of myself. In this sense, the Other may be said to have displaced me from my sphere of individuality. As Husserl observes, the appearance of the Other's body "brings to mind the way my body would look 'if I were there'".²³ Perhaps this "bringing to mind" falls just short of what could properly be called a moment of intentional meaning fulfilment: there is no exteroceptive primordial self-perception such as that which occurs when one observes oneself in a mirror. It is, nonetheless, a moment of recognition, manifested in a pairing between my previously apperceived self-body-image and my primordial perception of the Other's body.

The aspects of Husserl's thought that we have considered thus far work to explain how the notion of "someone else" becomes thinkable. The overlaying of sense involved in the spontaneous pairing that Husserl describes configures the Other as an intentional modification of myself, that is, as an animate organism whose body is co-present with mine and understood to be governed by a foreign transcendental "I", my "alter ego". A spontaneous moment of associative passive synthesis, however, is not sufficient to compel the Husserlian transcendentially meditating phenomenologist to posit the existence of the Other. The existence of intentional objects, according to the necessary rigour of

²³ *CM*, §54, p.118.

Husserl's method, may only be posited on the basis of harmonious and continuous verification. Let us now turn to the question of how such verification might occur.

When Husserl speaks of "a body similar to mine" presenting itself "as outstanding in my primordial sphere" and "a body with determinations such that it must enter into a phenomenal pairing with mine",²⁴ it is easy to presume, especially for those of us with the gift of sight, that Husserl has in mind only the body's visual appearance. Granted, Husserl observes that the appearance of the Other's body calls to mind the way my body would look if it were to be seen exteroceptively. But is it any less true that the sound of the Other's voice calls to mind the way my voice would sound if heard exteroceptively? And is it any less true that the experience of touching the Other's body calls to mind the way my body would feel if touched exteroceptively? Even if Husserl's examples do sometimes display a visual bias, I find no evidence that he privileges, in any phenomenologically substantive sense, visual perception over the other sensuous modes. When Husserl speaks of the subject's primordial "appearances", it should not be forgotten that phenomenal appearances can sometimes be auditory or tactile (or, for that matter, olfactory or palatal). My point here is that this generality inherent in the terms "perception" and "appearances" is itself indicative of one respect in which Husserl implies verification of the perception of an Other may occur. Under conditions of semi-darkness, for example, touching a face may confirm that what is seen is human and not a statue; hearing a voice may confirm that what is touched is human and alive.

²⁴ *CM*, §51, p.113.

However, Husserl's interest in the verification of the existence of someone else is not limited to corroboration between the sense modalities. Instead, a further important avenue of verification lies in the intuition of precisely that aspect of the Other which remains necessarily *inaccessible* to my primordial stream of experience, namely the foreign "I" and the really-inherent content of its conscious intentional life. Husserl's concept of appresentation again becomes relevant here, not because it explains in itself the phenomenology of empathy, but because it describes formally what takes place: there is a non-primordial making present which is founded upon primordial experience – sensuous perception in this case – of the Other. As we saw earlier, empathic experience, for Husserl, can never be properly construed as straightforwardly primordial. It is, instead, always mediated by what is originally given to the empathising consciousness.

This indirected or distantiated structure involving an objectifying containment of a posited primordial experience is similar to that which is liable to occur in the context of other intentional acts in which a primordial experience itself becomes an intentional object, such as remembering, expecting, or imagining. In fact, the imagination is necessarily implicated in Husserl's understanding of empathic intentionality, for time and again Husserl explicates the apperception of a foreign consciousness as a spontaneous act of imaginative self-transposal. Consider the progression of the following examples:

[The appearance of the Other's body] brings to mind the way my body would look "if I were there".²⁵

²⁵ *CM*, §54, p.118.

[The other ego] is appresented as an ego now co-existing in the mode There, “such as I should be if I were there”.²⁶

[The other’s primordial Nature] is my primordial Nature. It is the same Nature, but in the mode of appearance: “as if I were standing over there where the Other’s body is”.²⁷

From the sensuous perception of the other *Körper*, the passive synthesis of *Paarung* guides us not only to the apprehension of a foreign *Leib*, but to the apperception of both the alien “I” and, finally, its primordial world. In a non-primordial analogue of my “original intuition” of my own transcendental ego, I now have a non-original intuition of the Other’s transcendental ego, and this intuition coincides with the categorial judgement *that* there is someone else present.

The repeated counterfactual “if I were over there”, whose motivation stems from the original pairing of bodies, signals precisely the direction of the Husserlian method of empathic verification. My ability, in principle, to move spatially over to the Other’s centre of orientation, to make the Other’s “Here” mine, is what renders possible, again in principle, the intentional meaning fulfilment of my empathic act of the imagination. Conversely, the perceived absence of a continuous spatial path from me to the Other would seem to preclude the possibility of empathy taking place. The imagination, then, is operative in Husserlian empathy, but in an heteronomous fashion, constrained by the immanent factual domain. The distinctive, even paradoxical, feature of empathy is that while there is, in epistemic terms, something to be got right and verified, the only route to doing so is via the imagination.

²⁶ *CM*, §54, p.119.

²⁷ *CM*, §55, p.123.

We are now in a position to observe a particularly striking phenomenological consequence of the accomplishment of empathy. Constituted in the Other's primordial world is the Other's own body, defining the centre of orientation from which the Other's world is experienced. But this body is the same body that is constituted in my primordial sphere as the Other's body, the body into which I imaginatively transpose myself during the empathic act, in which I apprehend a continuous spatial path from my own body to the Other's. In empathy, then, the Other's primordial world is apperceived both with the sense "my primordial world as experienced if I were to go over there", *and* with the sense "the Other's primordial world". I am compelled to conclude that I and the Other share the same world.

Husserl shows us that empathy is epistemically transformative. It transforms my verifiable understanding not only of others but of myself and the world. The Husserlian description of the path towards the accomplishment of empathy is a demonstration of the overcoming of the phenomenological problem of solipsism. Empathy, far from being an autonomous act of the imagination (though the imagination is involved as we have seen), is instead conceived as a veridical intuition of an alien subjectivity. As Husserl remarks, "[In empathy] *[s]omething that exists is in intentional communion with something else that exists*".²⁸ This "intentional communion" is what explicates the sense of self-transcendence in his conception of empathy: I may be said to displace or transpose myself into the experience of the Other.

In empathy, I discover that I am but one individual among other individuals. I apprehend myself (just as I apprehend the Other) as a closed unity

²⁸ *CM*, §56, p.129. Husserl's italics.

of body and transcendental ego. Husserl calls this an “objectivating equalisation of my existence with that of all others”²⁹, and as such it entails the realisation that my perspective is not privileged. In this way, Husserl’s Fifth Meditation clarifies the sense of “objectivity” and “the Objective World”. The Objective World is now grasped for the first time as the identical world shared by all “monads”, where a “monad” is understood to be the concrete conjunction of a transcendental ego, the associated individual person, and his or her transcendently constituted world. In the sharing of the constituted world, a *de facto* community is formed, with the “objectivity” of intentional objects now understood as precisely the property of being transcendently co-constituted. When one appreciates that Husserl understands such “objectivity” to be precisely the sense of “being”, it becomes intelligible for Husserl to announce that the intentional communion of transcendental intersubjectivity “makes transcendently possible the being of a world, a world of men and things”.³⁰ In this transcendental finding, empathy itself comes to be revealed as the necessary route to the real world.

The phenomenological accomplishment implicit in Husserl’s account of empathy and its role in the constitution of transcendental intersubjectivity, if it is to be broadly accepted, is that it provides us with a way of explicating the sense of relatedness to others that we carry around with us, often as a kind of lived intersubjectivity, in the natural attitude of everyday life. Our relatedness to one another turns out to consist to a large degree in our understanding ourselves to be coordinate subjects sharing a co-constituted world.

²⁹ *CM*, §56, p.129.

³⁰ *CM*, §56, p.129.

One of the advantages of Husserl's approach in the Fifth Meditation is that by effectively undertaking a rational interrogation of cognitive processes which are implicitly understood to be verifiable by the phenomenologically reflective reader, Husserl ostensibly side-steps an engagement with the primordial mysteries of human instinctual life. This is not to say that Husserl has no interest elsewhere in the idea of an expressly primal kind of intersubjectivity. His *Nachlass* manuscripts indicate that the question of primal intersubjectivity was one he took seriously. Zahavi points out that Husserl's manuscripts sometimes refer to a "persisting primal aliveness of the totality of monads" which Husserl characterises as a kind of temporally "streaming intersubjectivity".³¹ Yet Zahavi also tells us that this occurs *after* a monadic communalisation of temporalities has taken place, which would seem to imply that streaming intersubjectivity is conditioned by the thematisation of transcendental intersubjectivity.³²

Leaving aside the concept of streaming intersubjectivity, it is nonetheless clear from other parts of the manuscripts that Husserl was intrigued by the idea that transcendental subjectivity may at root be conditioned by some kind of instinctive or drive-based intersubjectivity. As Zahavi puts it, Husserl intimates the idea of "the being on hand of a pre-theoretical [...] interconnectedness [*Verbundensein*] of subjects".³³ According to this hypothesis, the apprehension of transcendental intersubjectivity is to be understood as a *disclosure* of an influence already at work within transcendental subjectivity, rather than as a genuine transition from subjectivity to intersubjectivity. But it has to be said that the view of the empathic path to transcendental intersubjectivity as disclosure

³¹ Zahavi (2001b), p.70.

³² Zahavi (2001b), p.70.

³³ Zahavi (2001b), p.74.

rather than transformation is at odds with the Fifth Meditation. The very nature of the content of Husserl's published work indicates that he felt his investigation into intersubjectivity had more success explicating and thematising implicitly rational cognition rather than essentially primordial drives and instincts.

Husserl's overall approach seeks to distil what is essentially true of our experience of the Other and ultimately of our grasping of an objective world. In this sense, both empathy and the awareness of transcendental intersubjectivity, though often occurring as background experiences, are always essentially thematisable, and they are not understood to be necessarily conditioned by a more basic, prior form of intersubjectivity.

Zahavi adopts a different interpretation, and his detailed account of Husserl's understanding of intersubjectivity draws upon an impressive knowledge of Husserl's *Nachlass* manuscripts. Zahavi argues that, understood in its entirety, the Husserlian analysis of intersubjectivity cannot be understood as being committed to the phenomenological priority of transcendental subjectivity over transcendental intersubjectivity, but instead as holding that transcendental subjectivity and transcendental intersubjectivity turn out to be equiprimordial. The world-experiencing subject is *a priori* intersubjective, independently of its factual encounter with other persons.

This interpretation colours Zahavi's understanding of the Fifth Meditation, in which the solipsistic subject ostensibly precedes all forms of intersubjectivity. Zahavi's proposed resolution to this discrepancy is to argue that while the Fifth Meditation describes the thematisation of both empathy and of transcendental intersubjectivity, a form of intersubjectivity is already performing an anonymous constituting role prior to such thematisation. As

Zahavi puts it, “constituting intersubjectivity founds constituted intersubjectivity”. The route by which Zahavi attempts to substantiate this claim is to argue, firstly, that horizontal intentionality is essentially intersubjective, and, secondly, that, even following the ownness reduction, the experience of an alien body is still horizontal. It is time for us now to consider Zahavi’s case more closely. And in responding to Zahavi’s position, it will prove illuminating for us to do some phenomenology for ourselves.

First of all, I believe it may be helpful for us to reflect briefly upon what happens to the nature of the experience of transcendence when we move from the natural to the transcendental attitude. In the Natural Attitude, the sense of the transcendence of objects is loaded with ontological baggage: I take certain objects to transcend me ontologically, in the sense that they do not depend upon me for their existence; I can entertain without difficulty the idea of the world containing objects of which I am unaware, and the idea of objects existing prior to my birth and after my death.

Yet in the wake of the transcendental reduction the experience of transcendence itself is not bracketed. Instead, the sense of transcendence, purged of ontological content, is now understood purely in terms of the subject’s intentional life. In the transcendental attitude, the sense of the transcendence of an intentional object is not conceived in relation to me as psycho-physical individual, but in relation to my intentional act. One and the same intentional object may be understood to be amenable to being apprehended in separate acts located across a set of perspectival and temporal positions. In the sense that the set of perspectival and temporal positions may be said to form an intentional

horizon, transcendent objects are said to be grasped as such in acts of *horizontal intentionality*.

I believe it will also prove useful to distinguish at this point between two types of transcendence, both of which may be apprehended within the transcendental attitude. Firstly, there is what we might call “purely subjective” or “solipsistic” transcendence. In cases of purely subjective transcendence, although the intentional object is given horizontally and transcends the individual intentional acts in which I experience it, the intentional object is nonetheless exhausted in the aggregation of possible acts in which I experience it. Let us suppose, for the sake of an example, that I am a carpenter and I have in mind an innovative design for a chair. Then I may imagine perceiving an instance of such a chair horizontally, and find that the imagined chair transcends any given perspective I have of it. Yet this chair is not a public object, and it is exhausted in my imagining it. This absent “public” quality now leads us to the second type of transcendence, which we might call *genuine transcendence*. Genuinely transcendent objects are not only given horizontally but also carry the sense “experienceable by everyone”. Genuine transcendence, thus defined, coincides with the full sense of Husserlian “transcendence within immanence” in the transcendental attitude.

The subjectivity correlated with the range of perspectival and temporal positions associated with a purely subjectively transcendent object is simply my transcendental subjectivity. On the other hand, there is something essentially intersubjective about the subjectivity correlated with the intentional horizon of a genuinely transcendent object, for such an object effectively refers to an indeterminate or “open” plurality of subjects. As I indicated earlier, Husserl calls

this concept of indeterminate intersubjective correlated subjectivity *Open Intersubjectivity*.

The matters considered thus far relating to horizontal intentionality would seem to point to the conclusion that genuine transcendence is essentially intersubjective while purely subjective transcendence is not. Zahavi, however, argues that this is not the case. The view that Zahavi proposes, and which he regards as authentically Husserlian, is that horizontal intentionality *itself* is intrinsically intersubjective. This is by no means obvious at this point. Indeed, in due course I shall argue that Zahavi's position is incorrect. At present, however, it is important that we examine more closely Husserl's own understanding of horizontal intentionality. Does Husserl believe horizontal intentionality to be intrinsically intersubjective, or are his writings on this matter compatible with the more moderate view that genuine transcendence is essentially intersubjective but that purely subjective transcendence is not?

There are undoubtedly some passages in Husserl's work suggesting that he was at least drawn to the idea of intersubjectivity performing a constitutive role in horizontal intentionality. In these passages, the constituting contribution of a foreign subjectivity (or, in a phrase which carries a slightly less rigid sense, "alter ego") is brought in, to some extent quite plausibly, to resolve an apparent paradox centring on the question of the co-presence of absent aspects. On the one hand, my experiencing of any given profile of a particular intentional object in itself entails the absence (or, to put it more precisely, precludes the primordial presence) of certain other profiles of the object. For Husserl, this is not merely a matter of contingent anatomical constraint, but ultimately a necessary feature of

all intentionality associated with spatio-temporal objects.³⁴ On the other hand, the averted sides of the object, though absent or excluded from the subject's direct experience, are nonetheless understood by the subject to be co-present with the available profile. There is a grasping by the subject of the simultaneous *availability* in principle – to an indeterminate subjectivity - of all aspects belonging to the object's intentional horizon. But how can a particular profile – an averted one - be both available in principle to an indeterminate subjectivity and unavailable in principle to me? The answer that Husserl sometimes seems to favour is that averted co-present aspects must be available in principle to a foreign subjectivity, and that, in this case, horizontal intentionality relies at root upon an essentially intersubjective constituting contribution. But we must note that the factual co-presence of aspects does not rest upon a factual co-presence of a plurality of subjects simultaneously observing the same object. The subject, after all, may happen to be solitary. Instead, the co-presence at work in horizontal intentionality is co-presence *for me*, in which averted sides are made non-primordially present in appresentation.

It certainly seems permissible to adopt this understanding of co-present aspects, at least in relation to instances of genuine transcendence, in which intersubjectivity is already implicated in the structure of the kind of transcendence involved. Indeed, when it comes to genuine transcendence, there is no doubting Husserl's position: genuine transcendence is essentially bound up

³⁴ It seems to me worth noting that the following two propositions are not incompatible. Indeed, I see no reason to think that Husserl would deny that both in fact obtain. (1) For any given pair of profiles of an empirical object, such as the front and back of a building, which are in principle incapable of being simultaneously originally experienced by a human subject, it is always possible to imagine an embodied subject, with a different anatomical structure, not being so constrained. (2) For all imaginable subjects, regardless of anatomical structure, the experience of any given profile, or combination of profiles, of a perceptual object will necessarily preclude the experience of certain other profiles of the object.

with a foreign subjectivity's experience. In the Other, we find the Husserlian source of all genuine transcendence. But are we compelled to generalise this conclusion to purely subjective transcendence, or is there instead a purely subjective way of accounting for horizontal intentionality? Husserl informs us, after pairing has occurred in the Fifth Meditation, that all objects of appresentation are correlated with an appresented alter ego, an intentional modification of myself.³⁵ This alter ego is *ipso facto* not myself, and in that sense foreign. But the option remains to interpret this "alter ego" as a counterfactual imagined "myself if I were over there". Surely that too, plainly, is not me. Such a view is indeed consonant with Husserl's thought, and I intend to show in what follows that such an understanding of horizontal intentionality is both coherent and plausible.

Let us begin by reminding ourselves that the term *horizontal intentionality* designates a particular kind of object-directed experience which involves a belief on the part of the subject in the object in question being amenable to intuition across a range of perspectival and temporal positions. Now, it seems to me that if we jump straight away to the idea of an indeterminate foreign subjectivity being in principle available to take up any given perspective (if, in other words, we presuppose open intersubjectivity) then we may actually miss something important about horizontal intentionality itself. For the present purposes, therefore, let us bracket open intersubjectivity and attend for ourselves to the phenomenology of horizontal intentionality as experienced by an expressly solipsistic subject. In restricting the correlated subjectivity of possible appearances of the object to only myself, I find that the

³⁵ *CM*, §52, pp.115-6.

simplest and most natural way of grasping the range of appearances is in a sequential fashion, that is, by correlating them with smooth and continuous movements, either by me in relation to the object, or vice-versa. Indeed, it is clear that the only way for me to experience a variety of perspectives is precisely for there to be relative movement between me and the object. As solipsistic subjects, we discover of necessity an important *dynamic* quality to horizontal intentionality which is far less salient if open intersubjectivity is presupposed: in occurrent acts of horizontal intentionality, the object's aspects are not isolated discrete views, divided among numerous observers, but instead always interconnected by smooth spatio-temporal pathways, in principle observable by a solitary mobile individual.

Two important observations must now be made about the significance of movement for the accomplishment of horizontal intentionality. Firstly, the subject must be able to *control*, to the extent necessary for the purposes of the verification of absent aspects, which relative movements take place, and when. If I stand before a building then it is part of my horizontal apprehension of it that the back of the building will be given to me whenever I decide to walk round to the back. Absent aspects, for the careful phenomenologist, may only be posited as existing (as opposed to merely hypothesised) on the basis of their ability in principle to be confirmed. Secondly, the cognition of a smooth unfolding of aspects depends upon the subject being *aware* that relative movement is taking place. Without such awareness, the experience of an object's changing aspects may be rendered either unintelligible (perhaps as a puzzling kaleidoscope of changing patterns) or simply uninformative (e.g. a rotating white sphere may be erroneously grasped as a stationary white disc).

These questions of control over, and awareness of, relative movement between (objectivated) subject and object inform the importance that Husserl attaches to our being embodied, and in particular to the role of kinaesthetic awareness, in horizontal intentionality. In *Thing and Space*, Husserl goes so far as to suggest that bodily self-locomotion and the associated kinaesthetic awareness turn out to be conditions for the possibility of horizontal intentionality.³⁶ The thought behind this claim is that the continuous appearance of new aspects of an object is implicitly correlated with the kinaesthetic sensation of corresponding bodily movements by the observer. The apprehension of averted aspects comes to be motivated by the thought of the associated kinaesthetic sequences. “The rear aspect of this building” is understood as precisely “the view of this building if I were to go round the back”.

The expressly dynamic conception of horizontal intentionality just described has the advantage of explicating the sense of absent aspects without requiring an inflationary departure from the solipsistic attitude in which our current investigation began. The absent aspect is not correlated with a foreign subjectivity, but instead is understood as an unfulfilled intention of *mine*. As such, it belongs to the horizon of my own capabilities. A possible concern, however, about such a strictly solipsistic explanation of horizontal intentionality, lies in the idea that it may be unable to account for the absolute co-presence of aspects. If the subjectivity correlated with an object’s intentional horizon is a solitary ‘I’, is it ultimately coherent to understand the perspectives associated with mutually exclusive standpoints (e.g. the front and back of a building) as

³⁶ Husserl (1997), 176 & 189.

being temporally co-present? I intend to argue that a commitment to the co-presence of aspects is in fact compatible with a strictly subjective understanding of horizontal intentionality. This will involve some further reflection on the implications of the “dynamic” account of horizontal intentionality that we have developed thus far.

Let us suppose once again that, at a particular moment in time that we shall call T_0 , I am standing facing the front of a building. Then, because of my understanding of the horizon of my own capabilities, I am able to imagine a time T_1 in the future at which I would be in a position to observe for myself the back of the building. Similarly, I am also able at T_0 to imagine a time T_2 after T_1 at which I would once again be in a position to view the front of the building. Now the interesting feature of T_2 is that at T_0 I could also imagine viewing the back of the building at T_2 . This would occur if I were to remain stationary between T_1 and T_2 . It now becomes clear that at time T_2 , the front and back of the building are both in principle equally available to me: they are therefore, in this sense, co-present at T_2 . But now suppose that I imagine myself carrying out precisely this same thought experiment at a certain moment in the past, specifically at time $T_0 - T_2$. Then my conclusion would be that the front and back of the building turn out to be co-present at T_0 . This is precisely the result we are looking for. At any given time, a solitary subject may grasp any two perspectives belonging to an object’s intentional horizon as being co-present, on the basis of performing an appropriate sequence of acts of the imagination.

Let us reflect now upon the question of the priority of empathy. Is empathy the way in which the conscious subject originally enters into a state of relatedness to others, or is there already something intersubjective about our

conscious experience which precedes the factual encounter with others? In answering this question, we must be careful to distinguish between factual and necessary precedence. Husserl purports to demonstrate in the Fifth Meditation that there is no necessary precedence of intersubjectivity, in any form whatsoever, over the taking place of an act of empathy. I have argued in this chapter that, with careful analysis and elaboration upon what is not always explicit in the Husserlian text, it is possible to defend Husserl's fundamental published position that the primordially³⁷ reduced solipsistic subject is capable of discovering empathy in the basic sense of experiencing someone else as someone else, and, furthermore, that such empathy provides the necessary pathway towards the constitution of transcendental intersubjectivity and its thematisation as an open community of monads.

In order to sustain Husserl's position, it has been necessary to address some potentially serious concerns about his account. Firstly, there was a possible objection that Husserl might be seen to be implying that the sphere of ownness already contains what it was supposed to find, namely intentionality towards others. On my reading of the Fifth Meditation, however, this objection is dealt with through a clarification of Husserl's conception of the ownness reduction as involving two distinct steps: a reduction to the sphere of originality, and an expressly solipsistic reduction. Secondly, there was the problem of circularity, encountered if the subject is presumed to apprehend the foreign body objectively. We noted, however, that Husserl's position is resilient to this danger, and that pairing may take place on the basis of the non-objective

³⁷ I shall follow Iso Kern's lead and use "primordial" (rather than "primordial") in relation to the sphere of ownness. In the original German, Husserl on certain occasions adopts the neologism "primordial" in relation to the sphere of ownness, but this innovation does not seem to have propagated into Dorion Cairns's English translation.

phenomenal appearance of the other's body in my primordial world. Finally, we faced Zahavi's objection that open intersubjectivity turns out to exert an anonymous constituting influence on the experience of the foreign body prior to the apperception of the foreign subjectivity. In this sense, Zahavi believes that Husserl's overall position, understood in the context of the unpublished manuscripts, implies that transcendental intersubjectivity is already at work prior to its thematisation. This leads Zahavi to advocate a complex, contextualised interpretation of the Fifth Meditation, according to which the nature and scope of the ownness reduction is ultimately understood to be less absolute than Husserl's account in the Fifth Meditation, on the face of it, would seem to suggest. *Pace* Zahavi, his argument on this matter, in my view, is not compelling, not least for the fact that in his published work, Husserl chooses not to register any suspicions that empathy is at root conditioned by a buried form of intersubjectivity. I have also shown that there is a technical reason for rejecting Zahavi's argument: Zahavi relies upon the premise that horizontal intentionality is essentially intersubjective, a view that I have argued is false.³⁸

If intersubjectivity does not precede empathy necessarily, does it precede it factually? This possibility seems more promising, and there are very strong grounds for thinking that Husserl himself believed as much, notably in his treatment of the human instincts and what he calls drive-intentionality [*Triebintentionalität*]. Yet even here, Husserl always falls short of asserting that intersubjectivity strictly precedes subjectivity, in the sense of positing a pre-egoic collective consciousness into which the individuated subject subsequently taps. Husserl suggests instead that intersubjectivity turns out to be woven into

³⁸ In many other important respects, of course, my debt to Zahavi (2001b) is considerable.

the fabric of human subjectivity, that the instincts bring about, as Zahavi puts it, “an inter-monadic interpenetration of egoic life”.³⁹ This primordial intersubjectivity, though pervasive, is not in itself self-sufficient, but is ultimately conditioned by the plurality and diversity of concrete subjectivities.

The question of the primordality of intersubjectivity with respect to subjectivity is the locus of an important divergence between the Husserlian and Schelerian understandings of inter-human relations. According to Scheler, the being of man (the human subject) is essentially both being-self and being-with, but that the Thou is always fundamental and prior to the I. This is explained by our being embedded in a neutral stream of experience which finds one’s own experiences and those of others. This *Mitwelt* is what grounds our experience of others, and makes possible a sharing and participation in the other’s feeling-state. But this is precisely the radical form of empathy that Husserl rules out. Husserl never permits a confluence of primordial experience, because the disjunction of subjective processes is constitutive of the other being other.

In ruling out a radical togetherness or *Mitwelt*, Husserl is obliged to provide an alternative explanation of the fact of intersubjectivity. I have argued in this chapter that the Husserlian alternative essentially revolves around acts of the imagination. Acts of imaginative self-transposal explain how any perceptual object, including the other’s body, may be understood horizontally without appealing to the idea of a foreign perspective. And they explain how a foreign subjectivity and its primordial world come to be apperceived. The imagination, then, is ultimately what bridges the intersubjective subject to others. The imagination is prior to intersubjectivity, and makes intersubjectivity possible.

³⁹ Zahavi (2001b), p.75.

Chapter 3 - Husserl and the Imagination

The discussion in chapter 2 ('Husserl and Intersubjectivity') about horizontal intentionality and empathy provides us with an indication of just how important the notion of mediated or non-primordial intuition turns out to be in the context of Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology. By 1923/4, Husserl believed that questions to do with the stratification of experience into layers of varying immediacy turn out to be constitutive of Transcendental Subjectivity itself. In a lecture contained in *Erste Philosophie II*, Husserl goes so far as to say that

[...] transcendental subjectivity in general is given in stages of relative immediacy and mediacy, and exists [at all] only insofar as it is given in such stages, stages of an intentional implication.¹

Husserl felt that the structure of what he calls here "intentional implication" had the capacity to illuminate the nature of all kinds of acts involving mediated intuition, in all the "peculiarity of [their] subjective being and [...] subjective performance".² As we shall discover in this chapter, "intentional implication" turns out to go to the very heart of Husserl's mature understanding of such ostensibly diverse acts as memory, expectation, and what Husserl calls "phantasy" [*Phantasie*].³ In a different way, it also informs his understanding of the structure of picture-consciousness.

In the first instance, the distinction between what Husserl calls "the stages of relative immediacy and mediacy" is a distinction between presentation

¹ *EP II*, 175, Trans. Bernet, Kern & Marbach (1995), p.154.

² *EP II*, 128, Trans. Bernet, Kern & Marbach (1995), p.153.

³ Throughout this chapter, the term "phantasy" (so spelt) will be used in the Husserlian sense of *Phantasie*.

[*Gegenwärtigung*] and re-presentation [*Vergegenwärtigung*]. This canonical distinction underpins all of Husserl's mature thought, and is exemplified in his understanding of the relation between perception and phantasy. Even in his early thought, he knew that, in the context of phenomenological investigation, it was a fundamental mistake to think that perception involves a mediating image. The problem when it came to phantasy lay in upholding phantasy's intuitional character while accounting for the fact that the phantasy object is not primordially present. Husserl was fully aware of Brentano's position on this matter, having attended his lectures in Vienna in 1884/5. Brentano thought that phantasy was only approximately intuitional, and that, more specifically, phantasy "presentations" turn out to be partly intuitional and partly conceptual.⁴ But it is evident that Husserl felt that the Brentanian view compromised phantasy's wholly intuitional character. The defect in Brentano's account, according to Husserl's early view, was that Brentano focussed on phenomenal content to the exclusion of analysing the interpreting apprehension. Husserl initially tried to resolve the dilemma by pursuing the hypothesis that phantasy, unlike perception, is given in an act-character of pictoriality.

In order to adequately adjudicate on this hypothesis it will be necessary for us to begin this chapter with a discussion of Husserl's understanding of picture-consciousness, before proceeding to consider Husserl's early account of phantasy. We shall find, as Husserl did, that the imagistic account of phantasy runs into various difficulties, difficulties which force Husserl to re-evaluate the foundations of consciousness. We shall follow the transition in Husserl's thought to his mature position, according to which acts not only of phantasy, but

⁴ Mohanty (2008), p.307.

of memory and expectation too, are understood to be, in a sense that we shall explore, “reproductions” of (respectively) non-posited or posited acts of perception.

In this sense we shall find emerging from Husserl’s thought a sharp structural dichotomy in his understanding of re-presentation, also sometimes referred to as *intuitional presentiation*, between the distinct structures of reproductive re-presentation and the perceptual re-presentation found in picture-consciousness. I wish to argue, however, that in the context of more complex acts of reproductive re-presentation, a structure remarkably close to picture-consciousness is in fact liable to arise. The pre-condition for the entire chapter, then, is that we develop a coherent account of picture-consciousness, and it is to this question that we now turn.

We might observe first of all that there is something effortless about viewing a picture. Indeed, we appreciate pictures even before we learn to read. Can such a familiar experience really be worth many lines of explicatory reflection? What could be more straightforward? I see a picture. It represents something else. But to dismiss picture-consciousness as a banal commonplace is to presume that what comes easily to the human subject must have a simple underlying phenomenological structure. This presumption is mistaken. Even after just a few minutes of introspection, one finds that the phenomenological structure of picture-consciousness reveals itself to be remarkably intricate.

On my desk before me lies a postcard. It is a print of Rembrandt’s *Homer*. The painting depicts, to characterise it with extreme brevity, an enrobed elderly man. The subject of the painting is ostensibly Homer, yet this seems more like a stipulation than a phenomenological datum, for we do not know

whether the depicted man particularly resembles the way Homer looked. Yet the painting's title cannot be taken on those grounds to be gratuitous. Homer himself is part of the meaning of the painting. The competent viewer's consciousness cannot fail at some point to be directed precisely towards Homer, the historical individual. The painting refers to Homer primarily through its title, but it arguably also alludes to him in supplementary ways, through certain features of the painting's content. One might, for example, try to make the case that the golden band across the man's forehead somehow signifies Homeric poetical inspiration.

Yet if we leave aside titular and hermeneutic considerations, and concentrate expressly upon the phenomenology of picture-consciousness, then we are obliged to adopt a less complicated account of the "picture-subject" [*Bildsujet*]. The picture-subject is now simply the man who is represented here, whether he ever existed or not. Let us say, then, for the purposes of the following discussion that the picture-subject is he who is represented here as the enrobed elderly man. If, in the interests of conciseness, I refer in what follows to the picture-subject as "Homer", this proper name will always be qualified with quotation marks.

Strictly speaking, of course, I do not *see* the picture-subject. Before me is a postcard, not a man. Let us note in passing that the postcard, being a print of Rembrandt's *Homer*, is a photograph of a painting, that is, a picture of a picture. This fact, however, will not affect our discussion, for this factual nesting of images is in this case not phenomenologically salient. The postcard remains for me a straightforward "picture-thing" [*Bildding*] in its own right, a picture of an enrobed elderly man. It is a physical spatio-temporal object, capable, for

example, of being torn and of curling and fading in sunlight. The phenomenological question before us is precisely how the man's appearance comes to be represented to me by way of the primordial presentation of the picture-thing, the postcard.

In spite of what I have just said, it would be mistaken to think that the very idea of perceiving the picture-subject is not somehow at work in picture-consciousness. A sense of what it would be like to perceive the man is contained in the experience of the presentation of the picture. As Eduard Marbach puts it, the picture-subject is seen *as it were*. And in Marbach's formal terminology, perception of the depicted picture-subject as such is *patently implied* in picture-consciousness. This is to say that to perceive the man as he is represented would be a fulfilment of the meaning intention of the picture. It will turn out that the underlying reason for this is that the presentation of the picture-thing gives rise in consciousness to the constitution of a *semblance*, a so-called "picture-object" or "image-object" [*Bildobjekt*].⁵ An elaboration of this notion of image-object is now required if we are to adequately complete our account of the essential structure of picture-consciousness.

Thus far it has been relatively straightforward to delineate two distinct objectivities given to picture-consciousness. On the one hand there is the picture-thing, the physical entity which belongs to the empirical world. The picture-thing is, more explicitly, a picture-bearing-thing, the rectangular piece of coloured card lying on my desk. It is embedded in my spatio-temporal environment, and in that sense just one object among others. On the other hand,

⁵ In general I shall favour the use of the term "image-object" rather than "picture-object" for two reasons. Firstly, "picture-object" seems rather too close to "picture-thing", potentially giving rise to confusion. Secondly, I think "image-object" helps to convey the notion of resemblance more effectively than "picture-object".

it has become clear that this piece of card refers to something beyond itself. The card is *about* something, and the content of this aboutness is not something that I can arbitrarily specify. Instead, the aboutness is proper to the card. In a stipulative sense, it refers to Homer the historical individual. But more to the point for our present concerns, it refers intuitively to a particular individual, the enrobed elderly man. This man himself is the picture-subject. One's apprehension of this man is prior to one's judgement regarding whether or not he exists.

On the basis of what has been said so far, we have grounds for endorsing the claim that the notion of resemblance is in some way constitutive of picture-consciousness. The picture-subject, one feels bound to say, is given *intuitively* in some suitably broad sense of the term, though not in the manner of perception. The picture-subject, as Marbach puts it, is "given in the mode of non-actuality". The enrobed man is not now here in person in my perceptual field. The most natural way of explaining the observations (1) that the picture-subject is given in an inauthentic (non-primordial) intuition and (2) that the apprehension of the picture-subject seems to be founded in the perception of the picture-thing is to appeal to the idea of resemblance.

Yet we must ask whether we really mean here a resemblance between picture-thing and picture-subject. In certain respects, it is true that moments of resemblance do exist between the respective phenomenal contents of picture-thing and picture-subject. The part of "Homer's" beard that appears grey can be correlated with a grey region on the postcard. But even with something as ostensibly simple as colour, there seems to be a problem with the extent to which the case can be made for a *necessary* resemblance between picture-thing

and picture-subject. Part of “Homer’s” clothing appears to give off a golden shimmer. On careful examination, however, the corresponding area on the postcard is in fact pale yellow interspersed with regions of brown. It is “Homer’s” garment which shimmers golden, not the postcard. We are now forced to recognise that picture-consciousness cannot be adequately accounted for in terms of just two intentional objects, the picture-thing and the picture-subject. Something giving off a golden shimmer is presentified. It is not the postcard, which is yellow and brown in the corresponding region. And it is not the man’s garment, as the golden shimmer appears here and now; the garment is not here and now. There must be a third intentional object. The Husserlian answer is that one sees an image-object. The image-object is a *semblance*. One sees a *semblance* of a golden shimmer. One sees a *semblance* of a grey beard. One sees a *semblance* of an enrobed elderly man.

The relation between picture-thing and picture-subject, then, is not *merely* one of signification. Signification does not necessarily entail resemblance, a fact demonstrated by the majority of words in the English language. But an adequate account of picture-consciousness, as we have just seen, does entail the notion of resemblance. More specifically, picture-consciousness - when fully explicated - entails an *awareness* of a resemblance. The appearance of the picture-subject is bound up with, indeed governed by, precisely the picture-thing. But the foregoing considerations suggest that the presence of moments of resemblance between the respective phenomenal contents of picture-thing and picture-subject is not constitutive of picture-consciousness. There may be factual resemblance between picture-thing and picture-subject, but according to the Husserlian account, it is the apprehension

(pre-reflective or otherwise) of a resemblance between image-object and picture-subject which is constitutive of picture-consciousness.

It will prove important for us to note at this point that there is a relation of founding between picture-thing and image-object. More precisely, if one is unable to perceive the picture-thing, then one is necessarily unable to view the image-object. Perception of the picture-thing pervades awareness of the image-object. Picture-consciousness itself is founded upon and permeated by the primordial perception of the picture-thing. For reasons that will become clear later in this chapter, it is also important that we note at this point that if one is able to see the image-object, then one is then able in principle to switch one's attention back towards the picture-thing, and indeed back and forth as one pleases.

Let us suppose now that I wish to check something about the appearance of the picture-subject. Suppose, for example, that I cannot remember "Homer's" facial expression. I turn to the picture. Now the phenomenological fact of the matter is that my volitional act of checking "Homer's" expression does not consist in looking up an appropriate region of the surface of the postcard. This is not to deny that perceptual activity in relation to the picture-thing is factually taking place. My subjective concern, however, consists in viewing the image-object, not the picture-thing. I need to consult the semblance in order to find out "Homer's" facial expression. The semblance of "Homer" looks worried and frail. And so I know that "Homer" looks worried and frail. My point here is that the image-object has what we might call quasi-epistemic value. The image-object cannot be said to refer to an image of the picture-subject, if our account is to avoid an infinite regress. The image-object refers precisely to the picture-

subject. "Homer" is intentionally given to consciousness, but in a non-primordial fashion.

In order to illuminate further the constitution of the image-object, I wish to differentiate between two distinct attitudes that may be adopted during the viewing of a picture. My intention in doing this is to illuminate the way in which a switching between the two attitudes corresponds to a switching in attention between the image-object and picture-subject. Firstly, there is what Husserl understands to be a kind of aesthetic attitude, in which concern centres upon the way in which objects appear. Aesthetic experience finds value exclusively in appearances, and, like the post-*epochē* transcendental attitude, is not essentially concerned with any putative reality underlying phenomena. When viewing a picture in the aesthetic attitude, the image-object is apprehended *qua* image-object, precisely as a semblance of what is depicted. But to apprehend a semblance *qua* semblance is to have one's attention simultaneously directed towards what is represented. In this sense, awareness of the picture-subject always penetrates awareness of the image-object. There is a double-object consisting of both the image-object and the picture-subject.

As I indicated earlier, in picture-consciousness I am not free to imagine any image-object that I wish. The constitution of the image-object in consciousness is constrained by what is given in the phenomenal content of the picture-thing. Yet the image-object is still a construct of an act of the imagination: it is an ideal, or purely intentional object. The semblance is what I make of the picture, not a spatio-temporal entity that I perceive. The semblance is not substantive, in the sense that its constitution is necessarily conditioned by the constitution of something else, namely the picture-thing. The semblance then

is a pure objectivity, constituted in consciousness in an heteronomous act of the imagination.

It is, however, possible to adopt a different, non-aesthetic attitude during picture-consciousness: one may shift the emphasis of one's attention onto the picture-subject. If a customs official views my passport photograph in order to check my identity, then he is concerned primarily with whether the photograph is of me, not with the manner with which I appear in the photograph. However, as I intend to elaborate, while it may seem possible to attend solely to the picture-subject in a lived experience of picture-consciousness, a reflective explication of such a lived experience must inevitably lead back to an awareness of the image-object as such and therewith some form of, or approximation to, an aesthetic attitude. Let us suppose that I contemplate Rembrandt's *Homer*, but deliberately focus my attention upon the picture-subject, precisely the enrobed elderly man, the perception of whom is implied in the picture. I do not think I see a real man. I am not fooled. But it is *as if* I see the enrobed elderly man – yet only *as if*. In this case my attention is in the first instance directed towards the picture-subject. This is not to say that an image-object has not been constituted, but rather that my attention has penetrated the image-object and grasped the painting's subject. When I reflect upon the way in which "Homer" appears, I become explicitly aware of the image-object that was constituted yet buried in my lived experience. The image-object penetrated the picture-subject all along, just as my attention at first penetrated the image-object.

Husserl remarks that the image-object "truly does not exist".⁶ An assertion of this kind is certainly warranted, indeed arguably quite helpful

⁶ Husserl (2005c), §10, p.23.

inasmuch as it registers at a stroke two important facts. Firstly, the image-object is not real in the sense that it does not belong to the domain of spatio-temporal reality. Secondly, the image-object also does not possess the quality of what is perhaps best called ideal existence. The number π may be said to have ideal existence because it possesses the character of being pre-given, of seeming to have been awaiting discovery. The number π is taken to be mind-independent: the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter exists regardless of whether people exist. But the image-object is not self-sufficient in this way. Without the picture-thing it is nothing. The image-object is, as Marbach puts it, "permeated" by the perception of the picture-thing.

To say that the image-object is "truly nothing"⁷, as Husserl does, seems less helpful than saying it "truly does not exist". To say that something is nothing seems to imply that it is not amenable to predication, which the image-object is. It is of the essence of the image-object that its predicates be couched in terms of appearance, for the image-object is the picture-subject as it appears in the picture-thing. And "Homer" as he appears in Rembrandt's *Homer appears* to have a grey beard, *appears* to be wearing various garments, one of which *appears* to give off a golden shimmer, and so on. We might perhaps best put matters like this: the image-object is intersubjectively verifiable, and is ontically heteronomous in relation to the picture-thing.⁸

It is now possible to see why Husserl ultimately conceives of picture-consciousness as "imaging in the sense of perceptual phantasy understood as immediate imagination".⁹ The paradoxical phrases "perceptual phantasy" and

⁷ Husserl (2005c), §10, p.23.

⁸ On occasion Husserl uses the term "irreal" to describe entities that are constituted by consciousness but which do not exist. E.g. Husserl (2005c), p.84.

⁹ Husserl (2005c), Text 18b.515, p.616.

“immediate imagination” speak of the remarkable tensions implicit in the essential intentional structure of picture-consciousness. The imagination involved is “immediate” in the sense of not seeming to require any creative constituting effort on the part of the subject. The content of the phantasy is governed by the constitution of the picture-thing, and in this sense the phantasy is “perceptual”. This layered intentional structure of picture-consciousness, though intricate, is not ultimately mysterious, which is not to deny the noetic truth of Marbach’s remark that “there is something unreal about pictures”.¹⁰ The phenomenological force of this latter remark lies in the fact that picture-consciousness cannot be adequately understood as simply a special kind of direct perception. The apprehension of pictoriality is not, for example, analogous to the apprehension of rectangularity. Rectangularity is a perceptually grasped property, but picture-consciousness, though founded upon and permeated by perception of the picture-thing, necessarily involves in addition some entirely new intuitional faculties. The picture-subject, which may or may not be posited, is represented in the image-object, which itself strictly does not exist but is constituted in the realm of irrealty. The constitution of both image-object and picture-subject show that picture-consciousness, far from being an advanced yet fundamentally perceptual act is in fact a *sui generis* mode of intuition of which direct perception is merely one, albeit founding, component.

In reaching the finding in this chapter so far that picture-consciousness cannot be adequately explained in terms of a theory of perception, the topic of the imagination has naturally and necessarily been broached, but without until this point a great deal of elaboration upon what exactly imagining consists in.

¹⁰ Marbach (1993), p.138.

The advantage of investigating the nature of picture-consciousness before turning to the question of what Husserl would call “pure phantasy” is that it should enable us to adjudicate with some clarity upon Husserl’s early position that pure phantasy itself has the structure of picture-consciousness. This idea, that to imagine something is to picture it in one’s own mind, is in certain respects a seductive one, and Husserl’s unpublished manuscripts show that he required no small amount of phenomenological reflection in order to extricate himself eventually from its grip. Let us turn initially to Husserl’s early position before addressing the reasons that led Husserl ultimately to reject it.

With respect to the relation between picture-consciousness and the imagination, questions of terminology now become particularly pressing. In German, as in English, the notion of the imagination is often bound up, through general association or etymological resonance, with the notion of an image [*Bild*]. Most obviously, the etymological link is visible in the noun *Einbildung* (imagination) and the verb *sich einbilden* (to imagine). Husserl’s preference for the term *Phantasie*, in reaching back etymologically to the Greek *phantazein* (‘make visible’) via the Latin *phantasia* (‘appearance’), helps to preclude problematic and unintended connotations with pictoriality. In English, however, the term “fantasy” (so spelt) often carries with it connotations that are not pertinent to the present discussion. Talk of “fantasy” sometimes has overtones connected with desire. The question of desire may well emerge more strongly in later chapters of my thesis (I am thinking here in particular of the chapter on Starobinski, and the chapter on literature’s capacity for moral suggestion) but it is not directly relevant to the Husserlian concerns which are the focus of this chapter. “Fantasy” is also often used in relation to an event or occurrence

considered to be either impossible or improbable. In a literary context, it refers to a genre of fiction involving such things as unrealistic settings, and magical adventures. As I indicated earlier, throughout I shall often make use of the term “phantasy” [*Phantasie*] and do so in the Husserlian sense, both to avoid implying pictoriality where no such implication is intended and to avoid the unintended connotations often invoked by the word in its more common spelling of “fantasy”.

The most general feature of phantasy that Husserl grasps from the outset (and in this basic respect he remains consistent throughout his treatment of the imagination) is its intuitional character. As he suggests in *LI II*, in both perception and phantasy the object is given in what he calls “intuitive presentation” [*Vorstellung*].¹¹ In phantasy presentation, it is not a sign or symbol that is given to consciousness. Instead, an object appears, but not “in person” [*leibhaft*]. As Husserl puts it, “it is as though it were there, but only as though”.¹² The “as though”, then, is double-edged. In one respect it points to a structural analogy with perception. Indeed, as Husserl observes in *Hua XXIII*,

[...] to every possible perceptual presentation there belongs a possible phantasy presentation that refers to the same object and, in a certain sense, even refers to it in precisely the same way.¹³

As in perception, phantasy involves both act-matter and act-character. And again, as in perception, the act-matter is perspectival: it amounts to a view of the object, not the object itself. Yet in a different respect, the “as though” registers precisely a differentiation from perception. The object is not “there”, “here”, or

¹¹ Husserl (2005b), p.235.

¹² Husserl (2005c), p.18.

¹³ Husserl (2005c), p.17.

“now” in my perceptual field. It is not unnatural to conclude that consciousness is therefore being confronted with an *image* of the object.

Husserl’s position regarding the pictoriality of phantasy is consistent across *LI II* and the early texts of *Hua XXIII*. In Text N^o.1 from 1904-5, Husserl invites the reader to consider the example of imagining a landscape that one has previously viewed.¹⁴ Then we find in this case that there is a *similarity*, or *likeness*, in phenomenal content between the perception and the phantasy. Indeed, Husserl goes on to assert that, quite generally, “[a]nyone who phantasies has an image experience”.¹⁵ One takes the phantasy presentation to be “a re-presentation, a pictorialisation”.¹⁶ Again, in *LI II*, the claim is no different: “[In the imagination] the same object appears *in a likeness*”¹⁷; “[...] imaginative contents comprise only analogising contents”.¹⁸

The central phenomenological question at stake here is, however, whether the constitution of the likeness is immanent to the act itself, or whether it occurs only in a subsequent act of reflection. On this matter, Husserl’s early work is unequivocal: he refers precisely to the *character* of the act itself: “[...] the character of the imagination lies in analogical picturing”¹⁹. The Husserlian rationality at work here then is not inferential. The apprehension of the imagined object as being re-presented in an image is not held to be an inferential accomplishment. Instead, Husserl is arguing that the phantasy act itself has the very *tincture* of pictoriality. As J.B. Brough translates it,

¹⁴ Husserl (2005c), p.17.

¹⁵ Husserl (2005c), p.27.

¹⁶ Husserl (2005c), p.27.

¹⁷ Husserl (2005b), p.222.

¹⁸ Husserl (2005b), p.237.

¹⁹ Husserl (2005b), p.235.

[...] image consciousness has a tinction that confers on it [...] the characteristic of representation according to resemblance. [...] And this is not a conceptual knowing either, nor does it imply that I undertake an act of distinguishing and relating, setting the appearing object in relation to an object thought of. On the contrary, the image is immediately felt to be an image.²⁰

It is, of course, somewhat inadequate merely to *insist* that phantasy is endowed with an act-character of pictoriality, even if one were to find this to be the case as a matter of descriptive fact. Husserl proceeds to attempt to justify this claim by describing the intentional structure of phantasy, arguing that phantasy and picture-consciousness share what he calls a “community of essence”.²¹

We are entitled to ask ourselves first of all, however, whether on introspective reflection, Husserl’s claim about the imagistic character of phantasy actually rings true. One way of challenging the claim is to pursue the question of whether there are any necessary limits on how realistic a phantasy may seem to be. It is conceivable that I might be able to imagine extremely vividly, and regardless of whether it exists or not, a certain landscape. I might assert without hyperbole that it is *as though* I were there, *as though* I were breathing the very country air, *as though* I were seeing the very trees. If I make such assertions in good faith and without hyperbole, then one must conclude simply that I have a very vivid imagination. It is erroneous to think that if a phantasy *seems* sufficiently real then it will be taken by the subject to *be* real. I do not mistake the appearance of the imagined landscape for an immediate perceptual presentation no matter how vividly it may appear. There are other

²⁰ Husserl (2005c), pp.27-8.

²¹ Husserl (2005c), pp.22.

reasons quite distinct from the quality of *fullness*²² of the imagining which ensure that I never waiver from my apprehension of its phantasy character. It might be that I am aware that I am volitionally imagining something, and aware for that reason that the lived quality of my intentional act is other than that of direct perception. Pre-reflective awareness of one's own imaginative volition would then permeate the act-character of phantasy.

We must consider whether the imagining subject always has this kind of self-awareness, awareness that one is volitionally imagining. Is awareness of one's own volition always strictly present to the imagining consciousness? The case of a spontaneous day-dream seems to suggest that this is not the case. I might have a spontaneous day-dream of the same landscape that I imagined deliberately earlier on in our discussion. Now in this case the character of phantasy is still given to consciousness. I do not believe that I am suddenly in the countryside no matter how vivid the day-dream may be. The difficulty here then lies in explaining the act-character of phantasy without appealing either to a deficiency in the phantasy's fullness, or to awareness of the presence of conscious imaginative volition. The most convincing answer must be that I am aware of a *conflict* between the phenomenal content of the immediate presentation of my surroundings, and that of the day-dream. They seem to overlap each other, and cannot be attended to simultaneously. If my awareness of my surroundings were to somehow recede, for example if I were to fall asleep, then my believing myself to be in the countryside would become a real

²² Husserl discusses the concept of the "fullness" of a presentation in *LI II* pp.233-238. Fullness in this context is characterised by three dimensions that he calls "extent" (completeness of scope), "liveliness" (fidelity), and "reality-level [...], the greater or less number of its strictly presentative contents" (which I take to mean richness of detail, vividness, or what we might perhaps call "resolution"). (Husserl (2005b), p.238).

possibility. The act-character of imagining would dissolve into one of perceiving.

We now have particularly strong grounds for rejecting the idea that the act-character of imagining necessarily depends upon some kind of deficiency in the fullness of the content. There are perfectly good reasons why an extremely vivid phantasy may be grasped as such, namely awareness of one's own imaginative volition, and the conflict with one's awareness of one's surroundings. All of this now puts pressure on Husserl's early position that phantasy has the act-character of pictoriality. The structure of picture-consciousness, as we saw earlier, relies upon an essential discrepancy and differentiation between the appearance of the image-object and that of the implied perceptual presentation of the picture-subject. In *Hua XXIII*, Husserl attempts to deal with the question of what he calls "thoroughly vital phantasy"²³ by arguing that it does not retain its freshness for long. As he puts it, "[...] what appears turns into an image object of itself, as it were".²⁴ Husserl's suggestion here is that the structure of picture-consciousness ineluctably asserts itself in phantasy. The intentional object is re-presented in an image-object. Image-object and intentional object are interwoven, and inter-penetrate one another. The image-object is unreal, constituted in consciousness and founded upon really-immanent phantasms.

It is not incoherent to claim, rightly or wrongly, that vivid imaginings eventually break down into something else that has the structure of picture-consciousness. But there is something evasive about Husserl's move here, for it remains for him to explain the vivid imaginings themselves, whose possibility

²³ Husserl (2005c), p.33.

²⁴ Husserl (2005c), p.34.

and existence he does not deny. It is a notable lacuna in Husserl's early position that the essential structure of vivid imaginings remains unexplicated, beyond his saying that they differ in structure from what he thinks they become.

Let us remind ourselves that the Husserlian account of picture-consciousness that we considered earlier involves three interwoven objectivities: picture-thing, image-object, and picture-subject. The interwoven character of these three objects in itself provides us with grounds for suspicion regarding Husserl's simultaneous contention that although phantasy possesses the essential structure of picture-consciousness, it only involves two of the three objects, namely the image-object and the picture-subject. In fact, Husserl has good reasons for excluding the picture-thing from the structure of phantasy. Firstly, Husserl is certainly averse, indeed methodologically opposed, to being drawn into psychologistic speculations regarding mental images held to be susceptible in principle to empirical investigation. It is to the empirical world, as we noted earlier, that picture-things belong. There can therefore be no picture-thing immanent to consciousness. Secondly, when I imagine a landscape, the landscape does not appear to be framed or contained within a separate physical object. No picture-thing is given to consciousness, and this differentiates imagining a landscape from walking into an art gallery and viewing a painting of it. We must therefore also discard the idea that a picture-thing is somehow constituted by consciousness during phantasy.

The naïve view, the view which is often implicitly under the sway of psychologism, is that the image given to consciousness is a really-inherent inner picture. But we noted earlier that the image-object is not immanent to consciousness but constituted in a spontaneous act. Now if the structure of

phantasy does not include a picture-thing, we must ask what Husserl considers to found the constitution of the image-object. His answer is that the image-object is constituted on the basis of *phantasms*. By “phantasm” Husserl means the imaginary correlate of sensation, indeed an intentional modification of sensation. Phantasm is the presentative content of phantasy, and interpreted in phantasy.

We noted earlier, however, that one of the distinctive features of picture-consciousness proper is that it permits the subject to switch attention back and forth between picture-thing and image-object. This volitional alteration in intentional object corresponds to a switching in conscious activity between direct perception and a “dwelling within” picture-consciousness. We should not take, however, the phenomenological and indeed ontological differentiation between picture-thing and image-object to imply constitutional independence between the two objects. The constitution of both objects is founded upon the same sensuous phenomenal content. Beyond this, however, the constitution of the image-object depends upon the perception of the picture-thing. As Eduard Marbach puts it, perception of the picture-thing is in fact an “intentional moment” of the constitution of the image-object.²⁵ This is to say that for the subject engaged in picture-consciousness, the possibility in principle of turning one’s attention to the picture-thing is an essential part of the structure of picture-consciousness itself. This finding has important consequences for the discussion concerning Husserl’s early understanding of phantasy. If the hypothesis that phantasy has the structure of picture-consciousness is true, then imagining, say, a landscape, implies the necessary possibility of turning one’s attention towards a picture-thing bearing the landscape’s image. The picture-thing *itself* must

²⁵ Marbach (1993), p.179.

therefore be capable in principle of being constituted in phantasy. It would seem that we are then obliged to permit the possibility in principle of turning one's attention towards a new picture-thing bearing the first picture-thing's image. But then we would be faced with an infinite regress. The hypothesis that phantasy has the structure of picture-consciousness is showing itself to be deeply problematic.

Let us briefly reflect and recapitulate upon Husserl's early writings on phantasy and picture-consciousness. We must observe that they actually entail a rather odd combination of commitments. On the one hand, the picture-thing is interwoven into the structure of picture-consciousness, the structure allegedly possessed by phantasy. But on the other hand, Husserl finds very strong, indeed compelling, grounds for excluding any essential role for a picture-thing in phantasy. Something, as we have found, has to give. It certainly seems implausible, on detailed investigation, to speak of picture-consciousness without implicit reference to a picture-thing. Even when one "dwells within" picture-consciousness in the sense of being deeply absorbed in a picture, for example during aesthetic contemplation, there is still awareness of a conflict between image-object and picture-subject, a conflict which is attributable precisely to the constitution of the image-object being founded upon the same phenomenal content that founds the constitution of the picture-thing. The image-object is permeated by the perception of the picture-thing. The picture-thing cannot be subtracted from picture-consciousness without losing picture-consciousness itself.

One wonders, of course, just what happened to what I paraphrased as the salient "tincture of pictoriality" when Husserl eventually changed his account of

the noetic character of phantasy. In Husserl's defence at this point, there is admittedly some phenomenological merit to the imagistic explanation. There is a neatness to it inasmuch as it coherently explains both the intuitional character of phantasy, and why we do not mistake phantasy for perception. Yet we have noted that the imagistic explanation also has certain seductive undertones that require exposure. For one thing, as I pointed out earlier, there is in common parlance a deep-seated conceptual entanglement between phantasy and pictures, attributable at least in part to the etymological linkage, present in both German and English, between imagining and imaging. In addition to this, however, we have also noted that the imagistic account is suspiciously closely aligned with the direction of neuroscientific and psychologistic discourses, discourses from which Husserl rightly sought to distance himself and his phenomenological project. It may be that an underlying worry about lapsing into psychologism in some sense "necessitated" Husserl's remarkable initial certainty about the "tincture of pictoriality". Husserl may equally have felt philosophically obliged to adopt, at least provisionally, the imagistic explanation for want of better or more plausible explanations. Towards the end of this chapter, however, I intend to indicate the direction of a quite different underlying explanation for Husserl's adopting his initial position. This is that the structure of *reflection* upon past acts of imagining turns out to be remarkably close to that of picture-consciousness. This is a finding which, I intend to argue, emerges from Husserl's mature understanding of phantasy, and it is to this more promising account that we now turn.

Husserl's early understanding of intentionality, notably that set out in *Logical Investigations*, is informed by what is sometimes referred to as a

representation theory of the structure of consciousness. According to this view, conscious acts are underpinned by an essentially bi-partite structure of really-inherent content together with an interpreting apprehension. Portions of the stream of really-inherent content are taken by the reflecting phenomenologist to *represent* features of the act's intentional object. Sensation, which in Husserl's early writings remains conceptually undifferentiated from sensuous content, thus provides the basis for acts of perceptual apprehension. Husserl's early account of phantasy is also moulded to fit the representation model, with phantasy entailing a phenomenal content of phantasms (the phantasy-correlate of sensations) which are interpreted in an "objectivating apprehension".²⁶

As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Husserl initially thought the apprehension of phantasmal content yields an appearing image-object, a view toward which he must have gravitated because of its coherence with his early hypothesis that phantasy conforms to the same structure as picture-consciousness. Husserl does not proffer the representation theory, or "schematic view" as J.B. Brough calls it, as a descriptive account of what is normally experienced in cases of direct perception and clear phantasy. When I perceive a landscape, I do not first see immanent sense-data and then proceed from there to an interpreting apprehension. As a matter of descriptive fact, my intentional object is not immanent but transcendent. My attention in this case is not introspective but, on the contrary, directed precisely outwards, towards what is other. We must ask, then, wherein lies the merit of the representation theory? What contribution does it make to Husserl's enquiries?

²⁶ Husserl (2005c), p.24.

It seems to me that the best way of answering this question involves the idea of grasping the representation model as an important yet flawed prototype for Husserl's mature understanding of intentionality. Husserl retains certain aspects of the representation model, namely the idea that the structure of consciousness is stratified and permits of explication, and that the stratification does not proliferate indefinitely but instead terminates at an absolute foundational stratum. Yet Husserl's understanding of the foundational layer changes over time, and the way in which it changes helps to explain Husserl's shift away from the imagistic account of phantasy.

One of the problems with the representation model is that it turns out to be unable to foster an adequate account of the relation between perception and phantasy. It is reasonable to suppose that perception and phantasy must have similarities in their intentional structure, on the grounds that both acts are intuitional: when I imagine a landscape, it is in some phenomenologically substantive sense *like* perceiving a landscape. Part of the problem, however, is that it remains unexplained just how the subject distinguishes between sensation and phantasm. If perception and phantasy both comply with the representation model then phantasms themselves must belong to the stream of really-inherent content. In this sense, phantasms are present to consciousness, in the here and now. Phantasy itself, after all, is not a phantasised experience, on pain of infinite regress. Phantasy itself is an occurrent lived experience, with its own occurrent phenomenal content. But then the objects of phantasy constitution, being grounded in phenomenal content deemed to be present in the here and now, must be judged, like perceptual objects, also to be present. This cannot be the case. Even if I have a spontaneous day-dream about being in the countryside

looking at a landscape, I do not take the landscape to be present. The structure of phantasy must have a degree of complexity greater than that afforded by the representation model.

Husserl progresses beyond the schematic/representation model by penetrating the structure of experience to a more primordial level, namely that of the experience of experience, that is, the experience of conscious acts. This is the stratum of lived experience that Husserl also calls *internal consciousness*. Internal consciousness may be said to be non-thetic and non-objectivating in the sense that it does not involve any sense-making apprehension of what it experiences. It is prior to the interpreting apprehension of which Husserl speaks in the context of the representation model. The stratum of internal consciousness is the foundation of consciousness: there is no “observer” within Transcendental Subjectivity watching internal consciousness as it occurs, and there is therefore no infinite regress of the experience of experience, beyond the layer of internal consciousness.²⁷

Husserl’s understanding of internal consciousness is intimately bound up with his concept of *impression*. Husserlian impression has two deeply interconnected aspects, aspects which reach to the very heart of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. Firstly, impression is bound up with temporality, and Husserl on occasion uses the term to refer to the “now” phase of time-consciousness. Impression in this sense can only be properly understood as but one member of an interdependent triad of constitutional moments, the other two being what he calls “protention” and “retention”. For Husserl, the flow of time-consciousness is not phenomenally distinct from the internal

²⁷ For this reason it seems to me to be misleading when phenomenologists speak of the experience or awareness of a lived experience rather than simply of *having* a lived experience.

consciousness we have just discussed. As J.B. Brough points out, in *Hua X* Husserl regards internal consciousness as the “absolute time-constituting flow of consciousness”.²⁸ Again in *Hua XXIII* Husserl remarks that the “perceiving” activity of internal consciousness is “nothing other than the time-constituting consciousness with its phases of flowing retentions and protentions”.²⁹

Secondly, however, Husserl also uses the term “impression” to refer more explicitly to specifically *sensory* impression. Sensory impression upon internal consciousness is what is meant in Husserl’s mature position by the term “sensation”. Sensation itself, then, is now understood to be a form of consciousness, and therefore differentiated from sense-data or sensuous content, a distinction that the representation model lacked the sophistication to support. Husserl replaces the representation model with a fresh paradigm according to which consciousness “consists of consciousness through and through” and sensation is “already consciousness”.³⁰ Sensation is an impressional consciousness occurring at the foundational stratum of internal consciousness.

The question now arises as to whether an adequate phenomenological account of perceptual intentionality needs to appeal to the notion of sense-data at all. One of the most prominent commentators to argue that sense-data as such should properly be excluded from the phenomenological account is Aron Gurwitsch. Gurwitsch certainly endorses the direction of the transition in Husserl’s thought as Husserl moves away from the schematic model to the noesis-noema distinction of his mature position. However, Gurwitsch, unlike Husserl, is motivated by a Gestaltist critique of the idea that intentionality is structured according to the strict dualism of neutral sensuous content supervened

²⁸ *Hua X*, §34, p.73. Cited in Brough’s introduction to *Hua XXIII*, p.LXII.

²⁹ Husserl (2005c), Text 14 (1911-12), p.370.

³⁰ Husserl (2005c), p.323.

upon by a separate interpreting apprehension. On Gurwitsch's account, a perceptual object's "sensuous aspect" or "sensible appearance" is ultimately held to belong to the noematic side of intentionality. To be sure, it is indeed a feature of the Husserlian account of the noema that the noema is composed of both sensible and non-sensible (conceptual) manifolds. But Gurwitsch ultimately departs from the Husserlian view in at least two important respects. On the noematic side, Gurwitsch develops his own distinctive and original conception of noema, according to which the relation of an object's presentative appearances to the thing itself is held to be one of parts to whole. And on the noetic side, Gurwitsch ultimately proposes to discard entirely the theory of neutral sense-data.³¹

My purpose in mentioning Gurwitsch is primarily to illustrate the point that the question of sense-data marks a significant fault-line in Husserl scholarship. I do not propose at this stage to undertake a detailed exposition and evaluation of Gurwitsch's position beyond what I have already said, on the grounds that this would lead us too far away from the principal concerns of this chapter. For one thing, a full examination of Gurwitsch's understanding of perceptual intentionality would be likely to draw us into the details of the discussion surrounding how exactly Husserl's concept of noema should be interpreted. It is important nonetheless that we note that Husserl's position on sense-data (or "hyletic data" as he calls it) is a locus of significant controversy. In what follows I shall argue that there is a case for retaining (as Husserl does) some notion of sense-data, but I shall also seek to show how Husserl's understanding of this notion changes over time.

³¹ For an informative commentary on Gurwitsch's position see Drummond (1990), especially chapters 4 and 6. John Drummond himself is also in favour of discarding the theory of neutral sense-data, but does not endorse Gurwitsch's understanding of the noema.

As I indicated earlier on, I regard it as a relatively uncontroversial point that, as a matter of descriptive fact, our everyday conscious life is not about sensations but about ostensibly transcendent entities in the world. Yet it seems to me that commentators such as Gurwitsch and Drummond don't give adequate consideration to the idea that there are certain circumstances which make it possible, even relatively easy, for the subject to attend to his or her own sensations precisely *qua* sensation. One obvious example is that of being in pain. It seems disingenuous to say that someone with severe toothache is aware of a tooth, or a nerve. It is more descriptively accurate to say that this person *is having* a pain sensation, and moreover *is able to attend to* this pain sensation. This is demonstrated by the fact that it is possible to characterise the pain as "sharp", "dull", and so on. "Sharp" and "dull" in this context are predicates attributed to the pain, not to the tooth or the nerve. Another example is that of sitting in sunlight with one's eyes closed. In this case one becomes aware of redness in one's visual field. There is no determinate intentional object beyond the redness, and we might say for this reason that the objectivating motivation of consciousness is being frustrated. The question is, how is this redness best understood phenomenologically? According to his early position, Husserl understands this redness to be really-inherent sense-data available to consciousness in a kind of raw presence. But with the discovery of internal consciousness, the story in Husserl's mature position becomes more complicated, and must register the fact that one's awareness of this redness is essentially conditioned by the flow of time-consciousness. Awareness of hyletic data is now understood to be already an outcome of the hyletic-retentional-protentional process. The moment of hyletic impression is certainly immanent to

the process, but the process itself is foundational and phenomenally atomic. There is in this sense always already a “meaning beyond” what is strictly the hyletic data. Sitting in the sunlight with my eyes closed, then, my awareness of redness in my visual field is best characterised not as consciousness of a discrete intentional object that we might call “red hyletic data”, but instead as an awareness of a flow of sensations of redness. The hyletic data is grasped as immanent to the lived experience of the sensation, but only on reflection. It would seem that strictly descriptively speaking, hyletic data *as such* turns out to be an abstracted moment of the atomic hyletic-retentional-protentional process, rather than something directly experienced.

If consciousness must always involve a “meaning-beyond” what is really-inherent to consciousness itself, and intentionality always directed toward what is in some sense constituted rather than what is given, then should we not argue, with Gurwitsch and Drummond, that the notion of hyletic data has no proper place in a truly phenomenological account of intentionality, and that Husserl’s commitment to hyletic data is really a mistaken remnant of psychologistic analysis, and needs to be exposed and rejected as such? And if, as Drummond suggests, the Husserlian noesis is to be understood to comprise only those moments of the act which “bear in themselves the specific trait of intentionality”³² and by virtue of which the act may be said to be intentional, then does this not mean that hyletic data, which Husserl accepts are intentionally neutral and indifferent, cannot be held to belong to the noesis?

The difficulty with taking the radical step of excluding the hyletic data from the noesis is that it seems regressive in the sense of effectively effacing the

³² Husserl (1998), p.203, cited in Drummond (1990), p.56.

qualitative difference between the experiences of perception and sensation. During sensation, one is aware of *something* which is different from a perceptual object in that the object of sensation is given apodictically to consciousness. If one cannot appeal *in some way* to the notion of hyletic data then it becomes remarkably difficult to account for the descriptive facts about such non-perceptual intentional experiences as we considered earlier (namely, being in pain, or sitting in sunlight with one's eyes closed). Husserl, in his mature position, however, *is* able to adequately account for such purely sensory experiences: one is aware of an impressional *flow* of hyletic data by virtue of the hyletic-retentional-protentional process which is foundational to consciousness. During normal perception, the impressional flow of hyletic data as such is transparent to consciousness. But the phenomenological significance of attending expressly to one's sensations is that it renders the impressional flow salient, and discloses hyletic data as being really-inherent to the noesis. On these grounds Husserl is, I believe, justified to remark in *Ideas I* §36 that

One easily sees [...] that *not every really inherent moment* in the concrete unity of an intensive mental process itself has the *fundamental characteristic, intentionality*, thus the property of being "consciousness of something." That concerns, for example, all *data of sensation* which play so great a role in perceptual intuitions of physical things.³³

On this view, it would certainly be confusing to claim that sensation is founded by a *separate* stratum, a layer of hyletic data. The relation between hyletic data and sensation cannot be one of founding, because hyletic data is really-inherent

³³ Husserl (1998), p.75.

to sensation. Hyletic data cannot be said to found something which is already supposed to contain it.

This discussion about sensation now enables us to understand what Husserl means by the term “phantasm”. The Husserlian understanding of phantasm depends upon his account of sensation. But the relation between phantasm and sensation is not only one of analytical dependence. There is a phenomenological dependence which can be expressed by saying that phantasm is a *reproductive modification* of sensation. What does this mean? It means that every phantasm bears within it a relation to a particular sensation, and that this relation is one of non-primordial reproduction. Phantasms reproduce sensations in a non-primordial fashion.

It seems appropriate at this juncture to underscore the importance of the distinction between the notions of actuality and authenticity, a distinction which I feel Marbach (1993) does not always observe particularly closely.³⁴ An object is given *authentically* if it appears primordially such as in an act of direct perception. But appearing authentically is not the same thing as appearing actually. An object is said to appear *actually* if it is posited. A phantasy object may be given both actually and inauthentically, for example if I were to sit at home and imagine the university library. We noted earlier that sensations are positing because they occur at the level of impressional internal consciousness. This is to say they are grasped immediately as actual because they involve impressions upon internal consciousness in the here and now. But phantasms,

³⁴ On many occasions Marbach (1993) refers to acts of intuitional presentation as involving perceiving an object “in the mode of non-actuality”. (e.g. pp.60, 72, 73, 79, 126, 148, 179.) But this seems to me somewhat misleading. In these cases the implied act of perception itself may or may not be posited, depending, for example, on whether we are considering an act of memory or an act of phantasy. The act’s intentional object is given inauthentically but may or may not be posited.

unlike sensations, are *constituted* rather than primordial and consequently are not given in the manner of authenticity. As Husserl puts it “phantasm, the sensuous content of phantasy, gives itself as not present”.³⁵

As I indicated earlier, phantasy is sometimes said to intentionally *imply* a perception. We are now in a position to explicate in more detail the sense of this claim. Husserl remarks in *Hua XXIII* that the distinction between perception and phantasy rests upon the distinction between sensation and phantasm.³⁶ The account of phantasm as the reproductive modification of sensation enables us to understand the nature of the phenomenal content of phantasy. So one sense of the claim that acts of phantasy are reproductions of acts of perception is that phantasy involves the reproduction of the sensations which ground a particular perception.

Yet this is really a structural point about the relation between phantasy and perception rather than a descriptive one. Phantasy is to perception what phantasms are to sensations: reproductions. But it seems to be at odds with the descriptive facts to suggest that during an act of phantasy, the primary act being undertaken by the subject is a reproduction of sensations. Of course, it certainly seems possible to volitionally reproduce a sensation or a flow of sensations (“sensation” understood here in accordance with Husserl’s mature position as consciousness through and through, not merely sense-data). I might, for example, to develop the case we considered earlier, imagine sitting in sunlight with my eyes closed. In this case I am readily able to attend to the red phantasms as such, because the spontaneous motivation toward objectivation is, as I put it earlier on, being “frustrated”. But in standard cases of phantasy, in which one

³⁵ Husserl (2005c), p.87.

³⁶ Husserl (2005c), p.87.

has a distinct intentional object, one does not reproduce sensations *in order to* reproduce a perception. Imagining is more immediate than that: one normally imagines something, as it were, “without further ado”. The question, then, is what exactly is the object of reproduction? The appropriate *descriptive* answer must be that the object of reproduction in fact *is* the implied perceptual act itself. But I believe it would be incorrect here to suggest that it is an *objectified* act that is reproduced, on the grounds that phantasy itself remains intuitional in character. Instead, the object of reproduction must be the implied perceptual act *as lived experience*. In this case, we must conclude that reproduction always operates at the level of noesis. Noeses are both the objects and the outcomes of reproductions.

The term “reproduction” is helpful in this context insofar as it conveys an essential sense of indirection - that there is, so to speak, a fold in the intentional structure of acts of phantasy. On the other hand, the term “reproduction” is not without its drawbacks. For one thing, it might be taken to mean that the implied perception is replicated with the utmost fullness, something which is rarely, if ever, the case. Imagining is characterised by variability in fidelity, vividness, and completeness of scope. There are often discontinuities in the angles from which the object seems to appear. The object may appear clearly at one moment and vaguely the next. Husserl remarks that the objects of reproduced acts seem to “hover before us” [*vorschweben*].³⁷ This “hovering before” one is connected with a kind of overlapping between what is given in the realm of phantasy and one’s actual perceptual field. But what is imagined “hovers” because, of the two fields, the phantasy field is the less

³⁷ Husserl (2005c), p.405.

steadfast, even in cases of what might be called clear phantasy. Only the implied perception itself, precisely as the fulfilment of the imagining, can be said to attain the ideal of fullness.

A further terminological difficulty lies in the fact that, under normal circumstances, talk of a “reproduction” implies a positing of something prior, that is, of precisely the reproduction’s object. In the case of phantasy, there is undoubtedly something odd about claiming to *re*-produce an act of perception which is precisely non-positing or neutralised from the outset. In this sense, there is certainly a case for describing phantasy as a *simulation* of an act rather than a reproduction of one. The advantage of retaining the term reproduction, however, is that it makes explicit the structural homology between phantasy, memory, and expectation, which is surely one of the central discoveries of Husserl’s entire treatment of the imagination. Memory and expectation both posit the acts that they reproduce, while phantasy can perhaps most accurately be categorised as a non-positing reproduction of an act of perception. The act of perception is non-positing, while the perceptual object in question may or may not be posited, the concept of phantasy admitting of both cases.

Husserl’s understanding of the homology between phantasy and memory implies that phantasy has the same essential structure as a neutralised memory. But we must distinguish this view from the claim that phantasy precisely *is* a neutralised memory. As J.B. Brough points out, although Husserl initially did regard phantasy precisely as a neutralised memory, he changed his position at some point during the 1920’s, instead holding that acts of phantasy do not essentially entail a prior act to be neutralised, and that phantasy is non-positional

“from the beginning”.³⁸ Yet in this respect we are entitled to ask, if only in passing, just how it is possible in the first place to imagine something that one has never experienced. It is not implausible to think that there may in fact be *some* kind of relation between acts of phantasy and memory, but one which is more complex than phantasy simply being a neutralised memory. One would expect, for example, that someone who has never seen a picture of a unicorn (and, for obvious reasons, never seen a unicorn) should nonetheless still in principle be able to imagine a unicorn, *provided* they have had prior experience, through pictures or otherwise, of such things as horses and horns. This would seem to point to the idea that the phantasy noesis can, at least on some occasions, be understood as *some kind of composite* (and this would require further elaboration) of one or more reproduced noeses drawn from memories.³⁹

What may be observed more confidently, however, is that in Husserl’s thought there emerges an important reciprocal relation between the concepts of impression and reproduction. On the one hand, all impressions – actual and possible – upon internal consciousness are held to be capable in principle of being reproduced.⁴⁰ All actual impressions permit of being reproduced after the fact in the act of memory. And all possible impressions are susceptible in principle to the non-positing reproduction occurring in phantasy. Pure phantasy, according to Husserl, is the consciousness in which pure possibilities are given.⁴¹ On the other hand, reproductions, like all experiences, also make their

³⁸ Husserl (2005c), pp.XXXVIII-XXXIX.

³⁹ The possibility that I am raising here is that moments of a phantasy experience may on reflection carry a buried act-quality of remembrance. But there is a danger here of allowing psychologistic reasoning to influence the direction of phenomenological speculation. And it is not immediately clear that this hypothesis necessarily conforms to the descriptive facts. I do not propose to pursue this matter further at this stage, beyond saying that it appears to require further phenomenological investigation.

⁴⁰ Husserl (2005c), pp.369, 402.

⁴¹ Husserl (2005c), p.696; Husserl (2005b), p.259.

own impression. An impression of remembering, of imagining, is simply made by virtue of the noetic component of the act, the lived experience of the reproduction itself.

Our discussion so far of the reproduction of acts has been implicitly making use of an extremely important feature of phenomenological introspection in general, the capacity to objectify conscious acts in reflection. It has been possible to elucidate the essential structure of the reproduction of acts through an objectifying reflection upon a primarily descriptive enquiry into the nature of the experience of phantasy. Alternatively, if we look at our investigation in a slightly different way, we might say that we have found it to be in the nature of reproductions to be amenable to objectification by the subject. Of course, one has a choice. One does not find oneself compelled, as part of the act of phantasy, to objectify the act. One may, volitionally or otherwise, simply “live in” the reproduction. In fact, there is nothing to prevent us from repeatedly switching our attention back and forth between reproduction as lived experience and reproduction as objectified act. I believe that it will prove valuable for us, especially when it comes to the discussion of empathy to explicitly note at this point this double aspect to the reproduction of acts. As Husserl is right to observe and make explicit, “In every ‘reproduction’, I have a double focus or attitude as a possibility” – to live the experience or to objectify it.⁴²

What strikes me as most interesting about the relation between these two phenomenological perspectives is that while they need to be strictly differentiated from each other, we must also require that they be ultimately

⁴² Husserl (2005c), p.672.

reconciled. One's lived experience of an act cannot coherently refute the act's essential structure. In this regard, the most salient question that arises would seem to be this: given that the structure of reproduction as we have discussed it thus far involves the intentional implication of a perception, how (if at all) does this "fold" in the intentional structure show up in one's lived experience of such an act? It might at first seem surprising to note that there is in fact no noetic fissure or transition in the performance of such an act. One is not somehow at first aware of an original perception to which one then, and only then, applies a certain modification into a mode of inauthenticity, a mode of not being subjectively occurrent in the here and now. There is instead, if we attend carefully to the lived experience of, say, an act of phantasy, a notable unity of performance. One imagines objects, in the phrase that I used earlier, "without further ado", which is to say that the structural complexity of the act is transparent to the performing consciousness.

Husserl's explanation for this phenomenon actually illuminates the structure itself. Phantasy bears a *relation* to another conscious act, namely a perception, but does not itself *contain* this perception. Phantasy is not the *application* of a modification but instead, as Husserl puts it in *Hua XXIII*, precisely "modification through and through".⁴³ The wording of Husserl's account of this structure in *Ideas I* §99 suggests that he is not unaffected by a sense of its strangeness:

[T]he *reproductive* modification simpliciter, the presentation simpliciter [...] in *its own essence*, remarkably enough, is *given as*

⁴³ Husserl (2005c), pp.323, 326.

modification of something else. Presentation refers back to perception in its own peculiar phenomenological essence [...].⁴⁴

To the twin attitudes that we remarked upon above, namely those of objectification and of dwelling within the reproduction, there correspond the twin intentional objects of the reproduced act and the reproduced act's intentional object. If, for example, I sit at home and imagine the university library, then my attention is directed towards precisely the library, and not towards some image or semblance of it. Yet not only am I thinking *about* the library (and not about an image of the library) but I am also *quasi-perceiving* the library. This is to say that it is *as if* I were perceiving the library or that the library is given intuitively in the mode "as if".

My awareness of the modification "as if" is traceable to the fact that reproductions are not primordially impressional in the sense that they do not entail occurrent sensations. Awareness of the difference in act-character between perceiving and imagining then is surely attributable, if not wholly then at least in part, to a pre-reflective awareness of the constitution of phantasms, the constitution of reproductions of sensations. Reproductions, like all experiences, make their impression as lived experiences, but they are not in the first instance impressional, because their content is governed not by the sphere of otherness but by subjectivity from the beginning.

We are now compelled therefore to differentiate between two distinct kinds of impression. Firstly, we have primordial impressions of sensuous content upon internal consciousness. And secondly, we have the impressions made by the lived experience of reproductions. Husserl explicates this difference

⁴⁴ Husserl (1998), p.244.

in terms of two time consciousnesses: awareness of present time and awareness of represented time.⁴⁵

This idea of a double time-awareness leads us into a further reason why phantasy is not mistaken for perception. According to Husserl, the perceptual world is always to some extent present to consciousness during acts of mental re-presentation.⁴⁶ Now, in an earlier chapter I called into question whether this is in fact always the case. But let us assume for the present purposes that we are dealing with a case in which the subject has some awareness of his or her surroundings. Then, according to Husserl, the relation between what is re-presented and what is presented is one of “overlapping” [*Verdeckung*]. They cannot be attended to simultaneously because they belong to different streams of time-consciousness. This phenomenon of overlapping works to differentiate re-presented appearances from the presentation of one’s surroundings. Marbach argues that perceptual awareness of the world is actually constitutive of the structure of reproductions of acts.⁴⁷ However it seems to me that the presentation of one’s surroundings only becomes critical in cases of involuntary phantasy. In cases of deliberate phantasy, the apprehension of the “as if” modification of a perception can be explained by the subject’s own awareness of the very activity of imagining.

It is a straightforward yet highly significant corollary of our discussion of reproductions that reproductions themselves are capable of being reproduced. As the careful reader will have already observed, the reason for the reproducibility of reproductions must be that reproductions themselves produce an impression

⁴⁵ *Hua X*, No.45, cited in Marbach (1993), pp.84-5.

⁴⁶ See, for example, *Cartesian Meditations*, §51; or *Experience & Judgement*, §42, cited in Marbach (1993), p.84.

⁴⁷ Marbach (1993), p.85.

(an impression which we have noted must be non-primal) which, like all impressions, permits of being reproduced. In Eduard Marbach's terminology, the reproduction of a reproduction can be said to be an example of the *iteration* (or "nesting" as we might also call it) of acts of intuitional presentation. Examples of iteration include such mental activities as phantasy within phantasy, memory within memory, memory within phantasy, and so on, even including higher orders of iteration.

Let us consider the following example. I am remembering imagining the library. The double focus that we discussed earlier means that I remember not only the act of imagining the library but also its lived experience. I remember the library appearing in the manner "as if I were perceiving it". We must now consider the additional effect of the modification introduced by remembering the imagining. The original imagining does not occur again, and is not *itself* experienced again. But it is *as if* I were imagining the library again. Strictly speaking this is precisely to say that it is *as if it were as if I were perceiving* the library again. This recursive articulation of what it is like to remember imagining something may seem convoluted but the convolution is, I believe, genuine, and a consequence of the recursive structure of the iteration of reproductions.

According to Marbach, the experience of remembering imagining something possesses an immanent tendency towards self-simplification.⁴⁸ On Marbach's account, if one dwells within the lived experience of remembering imagining, say, the library, there is a tendency for one to simply end up imagining the library. The modification introduced by remembering doing so

⁴⁸ Marbach (1993), pp.153-4.

seems to recede, if not wholly disappear. The suggestion here then is that a level of intentional implication somehow becomes suppressed. Furthermore, Marbach argues that remembering imagining something is not the only case in which such a transformation might occur. In Marbach's view, imagining imagining has a tendency to become simply imagining, and remembering remembering has a tendency to become simply remembering.

As I intend to elaborate in what follows, Marbach's account of this kind of contraction in the structure of nested reproductions is, in my opinion, ultimately at odds with the descriptive facts. It seems to me that where such transformations do occur, they are perhaps best viewed as consequences of some kind of subjective frailty which it would be mistaken to regard as particularly significant. However, I believe there is one important aspect of Marbach's account that needs to be noted and to some extent preserved. If I am presently remembering imagining something then the presentation of my current surroundings is liable to dominate, or at least interfere with, any reproduced impression I may have of my original surroundings at the time of the imagining. Naturally this assumption will hold true provided (1) the respective presentations of my surroundings (present and remembered) are of similar prominence, and (2) my attention is directed towards the imagined object as it was imagined and not the remembered surroundings. Let us assume for the present purposes that (1) and (2) happen to hold true. Then in this case Marbach thinks that the effective suppression of the remembered surroundings by my present surroundings gives rise to a kind of collapsed structure involving the original imagining, yet grounded in the awareness of my present surroundings, and that this collapsed structure itself is homologous to that of a simple

imagining. The problem here is that Marbach overlooks the fact that something about the activity of remembering is still at work: I am remembering the way the imagined object looked, not imagining the object. It is mistaken, then, to think that, for a competent subject, remembering imagining tends to undergo a transformation into straightforward imagining.

In fact, something more interesting is surely going on. When I dwell in the lived experience of remembering imagining the library, the remembered object is not the library. I am not remembering the library, but the appearance of the library when it was imagined. My intentional object is an image grasped as an image, that is, as a semblance. I have a picture-subject, namely the library. And I have in a sense a picture-thing, namely the imagining as an objectified act. We arrive then at a most interesting finding: remembering imagining something conforms to a structure homologous to that of picture-consciousness. And this provides us with a possible explanation for Husserl's reaching his initial account of phantasy: in the course of his phenomenological reflections on this matter, he may have been remembering previous acts of imagining.

Husserl remarks that remembering has the quality of "again" or "once again".⁴⁹ But this "again" is not merely a quality that is passively observed by consciousness, unless the act of remembering is involuntary. In acts of volitional remembering, the quality "again" is a requirement towards whose fulfilment consciousness actively works. Once one has specified what one is to remember, the remembering is, to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the nature of the specification), heteronomous and constrained. Now the act of remembering imagining the library is wholly constrained by the way the library appeared

⁴⁹ Husserl (2005c), pp.345-7.

when I imagined it. This transcendence of the remembered object contributes constitutively to our discovery that remembering imagining has the structure of picture-consciousness. A picture in a gallery and the semblance it bears transcend my viewing them in the same way that the imaginational appearance of the library transcends my remembering imagining the library.

Now as I intend to elaborate in what follows, acts of *imagining remembering* something are not heteronomous in quite the same way, and for this reason are not, I would suggest, plainly given in the manner of pictoriality. But why should we be interested in imagining remembering something in the first place? Under what circumstances would an act of imagining remembering something take place? One answer to this question lies in the encounter with a literary text. Consider the scene early in *Hamlet* when Hamlet remembers his mother appearing to be in love with her first husband, Hamlet's father, the late King who has now been murdered.⁵⁰ An actor playing Hamlet, or indeed a reader of the text of the play trying to understand Hamlet's state of mind, might try to imagine remembering such an experience under the same circumstances. This might involve imagining *being Hamlet* remembering this experience, or imagining *being oneself in Hamlet's circumstances* remembering such an experience. It would be prudent for us to suspend judgement in this chapter as to whether even the former of these two possibilities might qualify as an act of empathy. Our concern at present is strictly to clarify the nature of imagining remembering. In a later chapter, however, I believe it will become apparent that there is an important structural affinity between imagining remembering

⁵⁰ *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 2, lines 143-5.

something and activities akin to empathy in the context of the encounter with a literary work.

For this reason, my principal aim for the remainder of this chapter will be to illuminate as far as possible the nature of imagining remembering something. In particular, I wish to explain a certain paradox which emerges in this context. The paradox concerns the relation between imagining remembering and remembering. On the one hand, while consciously imagining remembering x , one never succumbs, as a competent subject, to the delusion that one is remembering x . The actor playing Hamlet, if he is a competent actor, retains his grip on reality. He does not suddenly believe he is Hamlet or that he is remembering his mother behaving in a certain way. Yet on the other hand, there is, as I intend to argue, something about imagining remembering that has the act-character of remembering. Let us examine this paradox in more detail.

There is no reason in principle why our descriptive analysis of imagining remembering should not make use of the example of the actor imagining being Hamlet remembering his mother behaving in a certain manner. I feel, however, that the interests of clarity will be better served if we use a simpler example which does not involve the additional complication of imagining being someone else. Imagining being someone else is really superfluous to the essential structure of imagining remembering, and an activity whose detailed examination I propose to restrict to the chapters dealing expressly with questions of intersubjectivity and empathy.

For our present purposes, the following example will serve perfectly well. Let us suppose that the following events all take place within a single continuous phantasy while I am sitting in my study at home. I leave my home

and travel to the university campus where I stand and view the library. I then leave the campus and return home where I sit down in my study and remember my viewing the library. Then the phantasy ends.

Let us attend now to the act of remembering which takes place inside the phantasy, that is, my remembering perceiving the library. In accordance with our earlier discussion of the reproduction of acts, this act of remembering permits of a double focus. I have an objectifying awareness of it which includes within it an awareness that I am *imagining* remembering the library. Yet I grasp not only *what* the act accomplishes, its quiddity, but also its haecceity, its thisness, by dwelling within it as a lived experience. Now if I attend to my dwelling within this imagined remembering, I discover that it has precisely the character that Husserl referred to as “once again”. And this is attributable to the fact that I am genuinely remembering *something*, namely the antecedent imagined act of perceiving the library. But how can I reconcile this act-character of remembering with the fact that at no point do I believe that I am remembering perceiving the library? The answer must be that dwelling within a reproduced act is never wholly immersive. To a greater or lesser extent, the double focus is always in force. The twin perspectives are not merely options between which I may switch the emphasis of my attention, but in fact *parallel* perspectives neither of which ever fully obliterates the other. I am both inside and outside the remembering. Inside, we may say without exaggeration that the library “appears again”. But outside the remembering within the phantasy it is merely *as though* the library were appearing again, *as though* I were remembering the library.

Our discussion of the Husserlian account of the various forms of intuitional presentation has in a sense come full-circle. We began with an

examination of the structure of picture-consciousness and proceeded from there to a discussion of phantasy. We then traced the reasons behind the transition in Husserl's understanding of intuitional presentation and discovered how the mature account permits of the iteration of such acts. I then argued that the essential structure of picture-consciousness turns out to be capable of re-appearing in the context of such iterations, and that this clarifies and improves Husserl's initial intuition that phantasy is connected in some important way with picture-consciousness.

Let us reflect in more detail upon the important milestones of this journey. It is an indication of the seductive power of the imagistic account of phantasy that Husserl initially pursued this hypothesis in spite of being aware of the dangers of etymological and psychologistic biases. The careful development of a detailed account of picture-consciousness has proved invaluable in pinpointing some of the fault-lines in Husserl's early position. Perhaps the central problem relates to how or where the so-called picture-thing is supposed to fit into phantasy. For perfectly understandable reasons, Husserl tries to abolish any notion of the picture-thing and make do with the image-object and picture-subject. This avoids the pitfalls of being drawn into psychologistic accounts involving mental images supposedly amenable to scientific investigation. Equally, it also avoids the threat of infinite regress inherent in talk of imagining a picture-thing. Unfortunately picture-consciousness proper turns out to inherently involve the subject's ability to shift attention between picture-thing and image-object. The image-object is optically heteronomous upon the picture-thing and infused with the same phenomenal content. In running up against this

problem, Husserl is forced to confront the counter-intuitive idea that imagining may not after all necessarily involve an image as such at all.

The evolution of Husserl's understanding of phantasy is bound up with his changing understanding of what sensations actually are, and this in turn is bound up with the development of his crucial notion of internal consciousness. In rethinking the foundations of consciousness, Husserl moves away from the primitive representation model of *Logical Investigations* which turns out to lack the resources to properly account for phantasy. In re-conceiving of sensation as itself a form of consciousness through and through, and of phantasms as reproductions of sensations, Husserl finds a new way of accounting for the intuitional character of phantasy, and takes an important step in clarifying the relation between perception and phantasy, something that remained somewhat obscure when phantasy was conceived in terms of pictoriality.

According to the new model, a wide range of acts of intuitional presentation, most prominently phantasy, memory, and expectation, come to be understood as reproductions of primordial impressions made upon internal consciousness. These so-called "reproductions" do not somehow *contain* their corresponding original impressions but rather bear a relation of *implication* or *modification* towards them. Reproductions have a unity of performance such that they are given to consciousness as modifications through and through. The unity of the impression made by a reproduction renders it amenable to itself being the object of a subsequent reproduction. For this reason, Husserl's mature understanding of the imagination opens onto a potentially vast, and indeed in principle infinite, array of different types of conscious acts all conforming to the general structure of nested reproductions of impressions.

In this chapter I have looked at two of the most obvious and arguably important (as I hope will become clearer in subsequent chapters) cases of nested reproductions, namely imagining remembering and remembering imagining. These latter investigations have helped to illuminate some highly important features of reproductions in an iterated context. One of these is that the double focus to which Husserl refers is actually a *parallel* focus which permits of variations in emphasis between the objectified act and the dwelling within it. I have argued that the experience of dwelling within a reproduced experience can never be wholly immersive. I have also argued that a structure of experience homologous to picture-consciousness is capable of arising during iterated reproductions. In the case we examined, namely remembering imagining something, we found objectivities corresponding to the three intentional objects constitutive of picture-consciousness. I have tentatively suggested in this chapter that the fact of this homology may even have contributed to Husserl's starting intuition (ultimately found to be erroneous) that phantasy itself is given in the act-character of pictoriality.

Chapter 4 - Edith Stein and the Problem of Empathy

As we saw in chapter 2 (Husserl and Intersubjectivity), one of the essential features of Husserl's account of basic or "inauthentic" empathy is the taking place of an act of "pairing" [*Paarung*] in relation to the bodily appearances of self and Other. This pairing, which involves an overlaying of sense between distinct phenomenal data, was found to be a condition for the possibility of imaginative transposal into the Other's situation, and for the apprehension of this Other as another conscious living individual. If we now turn our attention, as Edith Stein does in her doctoral thesis *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*,¹ to the question of "authentic" empathy, conceived as the apperception and comprehension of another's mental life, then it is not unreasonable, I would suggest, to speculate that something close to this kind of Husserlian passive synthesis might well be taking place precisely as the condition for the possibility of the adequate grasping of the Other's lived experiences.

In fact, Stein herself appears to make no explicit reference to Husserl's concept of *Paarung*. Yet one of my intentions in this chapter is to elaborate upon the way in which Stein does in fact intimate a broadly analogous pairing or overlaying of sense of entities given to consciousness as a condition of possibility for the accomplishment of authentic empathy in its fullest sense. Without this particular kind of pairing, I wish to suggest, Stein is implying that one is left with something inauthentic, an empty intending of foreign experience bereft of a fulfilling understanding of its lived character.

¹ Edith Stein's doctorate was undertaken under the supervision of Edmund Husserl and awarded in 1916 at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau. Its English translation, *On the Problem of Empathy* (Stein (1989)), is hereafter abbreviated to *OPE*.

The occasional aptness and *prima facie* plausibility of demotic statements akin to “I totally understand how you feel” might lead us at first to suppose that if there is a pairing taking place in the context of authentic empathy, then the overlaying of sense must naturally relate to the respective lived experiences of self and Other. But for the cogent Husserlian reasons touched upon in chapter 2, the transcendental phenomenologist in general, and Edith Stein in particular, is obliged to relinquish Romantic pretensions to primordial access to the experiences of the Other. In a sense, this might be viewed as precisely the fundamental “problem” to which Stein refers in the title of her thesis. As we shall see, according to Stein’s account, during authentic empathy the Other’s primordial experience as such is not itself a primordial phenomenal datum at all, but remains veiled, at times attended to as the content of an objectifying apprehension, but always at one remove from what is originally given to the empathising consciousness. In the place of a claim to phenomenal unity with the Other, the idea is pervasive in Stein’s thesis that empathy should properly be regarded as a particular kind of “seeing”, not merely for the epistemic connotations of this word, but to the extent that one intuits something which is alien, and not something which belongs to one’s sphere of ownness. She remarks, for example, that by a person’s “walk, posture, and his every movement, we also ‘see’ ‘how he feels’”;² that “I can *see* a person’s sadness by his gait and posture”;³ and that in the Other’s expressions “we have [...] the spirit ‘becoming *visible*’ in the living body”.⁴ The advantage of Stein’s “seeing” metaphor is that it conveys entirely fittingly, and in a way that Husserl himself would undoubtedly endorse, the sense in which empathy turns out to be

² *OPE*, pp.68-9.

³ *OPE*, p.78.

⁴ *OPE*, p.92. Emphases mine.

quasi-perceptual. But its disadvantage, I want to suggest, is that it glosses the stratified complexity of Stein's own understanding of empathy's essential structure, and risks implying its collapse into something intuitionally presentational. One of my principal contentions in this chapter will be that a serious reading of the Steinian account must take it to be at least deeply suggestive of the idea that the respective lived experiences of self and Other should be understood to be phenomenally connected by a relation of resemblance. Surprisingly (in my opinion), the concept of a semblance, like that of a pairing, is not one to which Stein explicitly appeals in her explication of the empathic understanding of the Other's experience. But it is, I intend to argue, a concept which is not only strongly implied in her descriptive account of empathy, but one whose proper place within the phenomenology of empathy is corroborated by the findings reached during the detailed investigation into the Husserlian understanding of the imagination that we undertook in chapter 3. The constitution of a semblance, I intend to argue, is central to the accomplishment of authentic empathy, and pairing (the particular form of which, albeit implicitly, Stein illuminates) a condition of its possibility.

Empathy, as I have just indicated, is for Stein fundamentally intuitional. This commitment to empathy's intuitional character leads Stein to reject the idea that empathy is an inferential accomplishment, as well as the idea that empathy is either an *ascription* of a primordial experience to somebody else (a view she attributes to Adam Smith) or an *assumption* about the Other's experience (a view she attributes to Meinong).⁵ Stein by no means asserts that acts of inference, ascription, and assumption might not serve us well, especially in cases

⁵ *OPE*, p.14.

in which empathy (as she conceives it) seems difficult to attain. Yet one of Stein's primary concerns in her book's second chapter 'The Essence of Acts of Empathy' is to develop a sufficiently precise initial conception of the empathic act to enable further fruitful phenomenological investigation to take place. Many conscious acts, intellectual or otherwise, may prove to be useful in the encounter with the Other, but only the intuitional comprehension of a foreign consciousness counts as a fulfilment of authentic empathy for Stein. This initial conception provides the basis for Stein's opening delineation of her precise field of phenomenological investigation.

Empathy thus conceived has the epistemological advantage of structurally avoiding what we might call projective deception, a risk logically inherent in the act of ascribing to someone else a mental state with which one is already familiar. Clearly, if ascription *were* the name of the empathic game, then one might plausibly be inclined, precisely on epistemological grounds, to ascribe to the Other a mental state with which one is familiar, rather than one with which one is unfamiliar. But therein lies the danger of projective deception that Stein explicitly recognises and seeks to avert. As Stein puts it,

If we take the self as the standard, we lock ourselves into the prison of our individuality. Others become riddles for us, or still worse, we remodel them into our image [...].⁶

Yet Stein also remarks, in the same context as the passage just quoted, that "[o]nly he who experiences himself as a person, as a meaningful whole, can understand other persons".⁷ Thus, in spite of her admonition against

⁶ *OPE*, p.116.

⁷ *OPE*, p.116. As we shall see, Stein's understanding of the empathic act is influenced by specialised discourses and debates surrounding the theory of the humanities or cultural sciences

imprisonment within the self, she also rejects the idea that introspection has no contribution to make to the accomplishment of empathy.

We find emerging here the way in which Stein intimates the deeply paradoxical nature of the problematic of empathy. In fact, there seem to be two distinct paradoxes at work. Firstly, we have a paradox to do with how empathy is to be conceptualised. On the one hand, empathy is supposed to grant the subject *access* (in some sense yet to be elaborated) to the Other's experience. But on the other hand, the empathiser is precisely *not* the subject of the empathised experience. This distinctive feature of the primordially experiencing subject in question being essentially alien differentiates empathy from other acts of intuitional presentation such as memory, expectation, and "phantasy" in the Husserlian sense. Yet secondly, there seems to be a paradox arising from a tension between the intentional structure of the performance of empathy and the conditions for its possibility. On the one hand, the intuited intentional object is the Other's experience, and the ascription of one's own primordial experiences to the Other is held to be impermissible on pain of projective deception. But on the other hand, Stein also holds, as we recently noted, that "[o]nly he who experiences himself as a person, as a meaningful whole, can understand other persons".⁸ This is to say that no small degree of self-awareness is a condition for the possibility of the accomplishment of empathy. Both of these paradoxes require proper explanation if we are to avoid (as phenomenologists must) the

[*Geisteswissenschaften*]. She finds it noteworthy, for example, that Ranke expressed a desire to somehow "'erase' his self in order to see things 'as they were'." But there can be little doubt that Stein herself rejects any notion of self-erasure or self-nihilation as essentially unphenomenological. Instead, although critical of Dilthey's psychologism, Stein indicates that she is sympathetic to his view that "[t]he interpretive faculty operating in the cultural sciences is the whole person". The connection with Dilthey is an aspect of Stein's thought that we shall discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

⁸ *OPE*, p.116.

philosophically unpalatable outcome that empathy should be taken to be at some level impenetrable or ultimately mysterious. Stein criticises Theodore Lipps (1851-1914) for gesturing toward an “inexplicable adjustment of our spirit”,⁹ instead of providing a detailed account of the constitution of foreign experience within consciousness. Unlike science and other disciplines, philosophy, as Stein observes, has no “domain into which it can push unsolved questions”, and instead “must give the final answer, gain final clarity”.¹⁰ Let us begin by examining in more detail Stein’s phenomenological attempt to elucidate and ultimately resolve these paradoxes.

Given Stein’s explicit warnings about projective fallacy,¹¹ how are we to explain her implicit position that the most effective empathisers turn out to be remarkably self-aware individuals? I want to suggest that an important part of the answer to this question lies in Stein’s view that empathy, for the Husserlian phenomenologist, involves apprehending not only the Other’s lived experience as such, but also the latter’s essential phenomenological structure, and that a sharing between self and Other of essential phenomenological structures of experience makes empathy possible. The assumption that the structures of conscious acts (including, of course, the structure of empathy itself) are universal across all human subjects is an implicit part of the entire Husserlian phenomenological project, a project within which Stein consciously situates herself. Indeed, even when Stein considers pathological conscious experience, she interprets it in terms of the absence of externally intelligible motivations, not

⁹ *OPE*, p.37.

¹⁰ *OPE*, p.38.

¹¹ *OPE*, pp.87, 116.

in terms of deviation from the essential structures of conscious acts themselves.¹²

This presumption of the universality of the structures of human experience provides us with an important explanation and justification for Stein's ostensibly introspective interest in the structure of emotion. What seems at first to be a purely subjective enquiry into the phenomenology of affectivity turns out to be an essential contribution to her governing interest in the experience of the Other. While Stein always insists upon the intuitional character of the experience of foreign experience, she is also, I would suggest, implying that empathy is *partly* attributive after all, not at the noetic level of lived experience, but at the reflective level of the essential structures of experience in general, and of emotion in particular. A constraint upon one's knowledge of the Other is held to be the extent of one's introspectively corroborating knowledge of the essential structures of one's own experience.

In fact, for reasons that will become clearer as this chapter proceeds, it is Stein's understanding specifically of the emotions that turns out to be pivotal to what is most distinctive about her entire account of empathy. Let us therefore consider more closely Stein's account of the emotions, their place in conscious life, and their relation to other mental phenomena and activities. It is worth noting at the outset that it seems doubtful whether emotions should properly be regarded as conscious *acts*. Intentional acts like perceiving, imagining, remembering, and so on, are susceptible to volitional initiation by subjectivity. But it is not in the nature of the emotions to be subject to volitional initiation. While acts such as perception may properly be said to be *performed*, we do not

¹² *OPE*, p.97.

in the normal course of events *perform* emotions. Emotions *come upon us*, and seem to well up, we might say, from the depths of our being. Emotions *act upon* and *affect* subjectivity. In this sense, then, the emotional “direction of action” is precisely the reverse of that occurring in what we standardly regard as conscious intentional acts.

Emotions in the first instance, then, are not really acts at all, but involve a subjective passivity in their simply being a part of our lived experience, of the world or of ourselves. In fact, actively attending to an emotion has a tendency to interrupt or dissipate its action. For this reason, if an emotion should have an intentional object, it is rarely about itself. If I am full of joy, then under normal circumstances it is not the joy that I am attending to, but something else, something *over which* I am joyful. Equally, it is possible that I may be full of joy without knowing why. Emotions which do not seem to have a readily identifiable intentional object may be classed as *moods*. Moods are not, on the face of things at least, *about* something, but instead colour one’s entire experience, not only of the world but of one’s own conscious life.¹³

Two of the most important properties of the emotions that Stein identifies are what she calls *depth* and *intensity*. I remarked earlier that emotional lived experience is given as somehow welling up from the depths of one’s being. But how is this “depth” to be understood, and what makes one feeling deeper than another? Stein’s answer to this question is formulated in terms of the person’s hierarchy of felt values:

¹³ *OPE*, p.100.

Anger over the loss of a piece of jewellery comes from a more superficial level or does not penetrate as deeply as losing the same object as the souvenir of a loved one.¹⁴

On the Problem of Empathy is not a detailed axiological treatise, but it is clear nonetheless that Stein's implicit axiological view is not dissimilar to that of Max Scheler, at least in broad terms.¹⁵ Perhaps most importantly, Stein believes that if one attends carefully to the givenness of a lived emotion, then one finds it to be correlated with one's own personal value hierarchy. Emotions, in this sense, provide access to values, or, to put it another way, values *motivate* emotions. This is the most important sense in which Stein believes that all emotions, including moods, are in fact intentional: we might say that emotional experience *opens onto* the experience of values. Or as Stein herself puts it,

[A]s physical nature is constituted in perceptual acts, so a new object realm is constituted in feeling. This is the world of values.¹⁶

It seems right to say that while feelings correlated with peripheral values are inherently punctual, feelings governed by more central values take on a durative and therefore quasi-normative character, in the sense that they make claims upon the future. In this context, it is important to make a conceptual distinction between the value-correlated "depth" or "centrality" of a feeling and what Stein calls its "intensity". The intensity of a feeling is the degree to which it actually takes over the individual's conscious life and influences the will. The intensity of a feeling is not wholly governed by the person's value hierarchy, and Stein illustrates this point well with the observation that "the least mishap in

¹⁴ *OPE*, p.101.

¹⁵ In fact, in relation to the hierarchy of values, Stein straightforwardly refers the reader to Scheler's principal work on this topic, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (1913-16). See *OPE*, p.101, Note 127.

¹⁶ *OPE*, p.92.

our environment tends to excite us much more strongly than a catastrophe in another part of the world without our mistaking which event is more significant.”¹⁷ The implication of this point is that Stein believes a feeling’s intensity is determined not *only* by its correlated values (though it seems to me these must surely influence the intensity to some degree) but by a sense of urgency in one’s immediate living environment.

When Stein refers to the “intensity” of an emotion, she is really drawing attention to what is given to consciousness as a kind of build-up of excitation in one’s subjective processes. Feeling, as Stein observes, is “[a]s it were [...] loaded with an energy”.¹⁸ The qualification “as it were” registers the fact that Stein does not appear to be using the term “energy” in a scientific sense, for the domain under scrutiny is not that of the natural sciences but that of transcendental subjectivity, the domain of what Stein calls “spirit” [*Geist*].¹⁹ On the other hand, there are occasions when Stein also uses the term “intensity” in the context of discussing the psycho-physical individual.²⁰ This overlapping usage of the term “intensity” between the domains of science and consciousness seems to imply that Stein has in mind a correlation of psychic intensity at the psycho-physical level with intensity at the level of the conscious life of subjectivity. In fact, as I believe it will soon become clear, Stein’s account of empathy on the basis of bodily expression is implicitly committed to the idea of such a correlation, for it relies upon an overlaying of a causal view at the level of the psycho-physical individual with a motivational one at the level of conscious experience. On this view, when Stein speaks of “energy” within the domain of

¹⁷ *OPE*, p.105.

¹⁸ *OPE*, p.51.

¹⁹ The terms “spirit” and “spiritual” in this chapter are used specifically in this Steinian sense.

²⁰ *OPE*, pp.40, 105.

subjective processes, it should not be interpreted merely as a metaphorical flourish. It is something more than that because, for one thing, natural limitations upon energy levels at the psycho-physical level are held to have implications for the individual's conscious life. In addition to this, a further important property of energy, as science understands it, turns out to propagate into subjective experience. When a spring is compressed or twisted it acquires potential energy, energy which not only is stored within the spring, but which the spring has a natural tendency to release when permitted to return to its normal shape. The emotions, according to Stein, exhibit an analogous property:

[A]s I live through the feeling, I feel it terminate in an expression[,] or release expression out of itself. Feeling in its pure essence is not something complete in itself. As it were, it is loaded with an energy which must be unloaded. [...] By nature [feeling] must always motivate something, must always be "expressed."²¹

The above excerpt provides us with one of Stein's clearest intimations of the idea of a kind of phenomenal *contiguity* between feeling and expression. It is even a little surprising that Stein herself does not use the word "contiguity" at any point in her book. Yet there can be little doubt, I would suggest, that contiguity (divested of its Humean connotations), is precisely the concept she has in mind here.²² Feelings are not essentially static entities, but instead are pregnant with a kind of movement, an *essential* movement toward expression.

The movement toward expression is part of what feelings are. The frequent

²¹ *OPE*, pp.51-2.

²² I do not believe that Hume's use of the term "contiguity" in relation to causal connections should deter us from employing the same term in this context. In mathematical analysis, for example, the notion of contiguity has nothing to do with causation: a set of points S is said to be contiguous if and only if any two points in S may be joined by a line contained by S. For our purposes, the conception of contiguity that I am interested in developing is a "dual-aspect" one: that a single occurrent feeling-state may be understood to have both an inward and an outward aspect. While the inward aspect corresponds to its lived experience, its bodily expression is to be regarded as the outward aspect – the outward face of the very same state of mind.

occurrences of the word “must” in the sentences just quoted shows us that Stein explicates this contiguity in terms of an exigency. But the exigency Stein has in mind here is not that of psycho-physical causality, but an exigency which is itself felt by the subject. It is the exigency of *motivation*, part of the lawfulness of conscious life. In one sense, the fact of this exigency means that the subject is prevailed upon, affected by, the immanent movement of feelings toward expression. But this lawfulness is not given to consciousness in the first instance as an alien force permitting of apprehension. The subject *lives within* the motivation and is inside its movement. Indeed, it is precisely the experience of living within the motivation that makes it meaningful. So motivation in this context is given to consciousness as a meaningful proceeding from feeling to expression.

When Stein uses the term “meaningful” in this context, she does not intend to imply that the lived experience of the motivation of feelings toward expression is necessarily either amenable to linguistic articulation or conceptually intelligible to the subject. This is consonant with the fact that complex emotion often becomes the object of artistic attention precisely by virtue of its seeming both deeply meaningful and yet, if not ineffable, at least resistant in its primordial experience to adequate articulation. And we also need to sharply distinguish the meaningfulness in question from familiarity. Feelings and their tendencies, of course, may not be at all familiar to the person having them. Instead, the meaningfulness that Stein has in mind here is precisely to do with dwelling within an emotion and its motivations. The motivation is meaningful to the subject because it is, so to speak, a pathway which itself belongs wholly within the territory of subjectivity, the sphere of ownness.

Stein remarks that one of the important properties of the living body [*Leib*] is that it is “the field of expression of the experiences of its ‘I’”.²³ What this claim leaves unsaid, however, is that Stein does not in fact believe that all expressions are bodily. There may be occasions when the expression of feeling is realised in an act of the imagination. The example of this that Stein herself provides is that of the case in which awareness of social conventions forestalls outward bodily expression of one’s actual feelings. In such cases, “[t]he creation of another world where I can do what is forbidden to me here is itself a form of expression.”²⁴ So the living body is not the only field of expression available to the transcendental ego. And Stein is not arguing either that there is something about the *essential* structure of expression that somehow privileges bodily over ideational expression. Her point here is really factual rather than eidetic, that, as a matter of human fact, subjectivity has a natural tendency toward outward bodily expression, and that ideational expression tends to occur where supervening cultural factors require the suppression of primal motivations. Stein’s considered view, then, regarding the significance of the living body in the context of an investigation into empathy, is that the living body is not the *only* field of expression of the experiences of the transcendental ego but the *primal* one. And the primal nature of bodily expression makes acts of empathy founded upon such expression an appropriate starting point for the phenomenological investigation into the experience of foreign experience.

In the case of empathy founded upon bodily expression, the appresentation of foreign experience is an instance of the more general phenomenon of what Stein calls “co-givenness”, in which what is co-given

²³ *OPE*, p.57.

²⁴ *OPE*, p.52.

appears, strangely enough, “in that very peculiar way where what is not perceived can be there itself together with what is perceived”.²⁵ The Other’s faculty of sensation, for example, is co-given with their bodily presentation, as is the transcendental ‘I’. Yet what distinguishes the experience of bodily expression from these other cases of co-givenness is the apprehension of a particular kind of intuitional *unity* connecting what is appresented with what is primordially given. As Stein observes, “[f]ear is at one with the cry of fear just as sadness is [at one] with the countenance”.²⁶ At the root of this phenomenal unity is the apprehension of a proceeding of what is primordially given from what is co-given. It seems to be a natural implication of Stein’s position that this unity of proceeding must be understood as the empathic correlate of the subjective contiguity of expression that we discussed earlier. Yet it would seem the grasping of this unity is held to be intuitional rather than attributive, at least partly because the outward bodily expression on which the act of empathy in question is founded is (authentically) perceived. All the same, it is hard to see the ground for the constitution of such a unity if there were not some prior or background attribution of the structure of contiguity of expression that one experiences in oneself. The attributive dimension to empathy at the structural level is something that Stein leaves largely implicit, yet it can hardly be ignored if Stein’s account of empathy’s intuitional character is to be properly grounded and explicated.

Let us note that the co-givenness of the Other’s feeling with their bodily expression that occurs during an act of empathy is not signitive in nature. Signitive givenness is characterised by a phenomenal disjunction between the

²⁵ *OPE*, p.57.

²⁶ *OPE*, p.78.

given sign [*Zeichen*] and what it signifies, such as when, to cite Stein's own example, a flag announces that the king is in the castle. The relatedness between sign and signified is essentially arbitrary and governed by convention. At the same time, Stein also differentiates the contiguity experienced during empathy from the kind of connectedness found in what she classifies as an "indication" [*Anzeichen*], which she believes is exemplified in the relation of smoke to fire. Clearly, from what has just been said about signs, the relation between smoke and fire cannot strictly speaking be said to be signitive, because the smoke and fire are physically and causally connected entities, and their relatedness is therefore not arbitrary or a matter of convention. But equally there is a difference between the synthesis of smoke with fire, and the connectedness of a person's sad countenance with their feeling of sadness. The difference is that the phenomenal transition from smoke to fire, or similarly, I would suggest, from medical symptom to diagnosis, takes place at the thematic level. In this sense, indications are grasped in active rather than passive synthesis.

If the nature of the empathic phenomenal relation between an expression's appearance and that which is expressed is neither signitive nor indicative, according to Stein's understanding of these terms, then how is it to be denoted? From what has already been said, there is, in my opinion, a case for describing it as "contiguous" or "conjunctive", but Stein elects to call it a "symbolic" connection [*Symbolzusammenhang*], primarily, it would seem, to remain terminologically continuous with the work of Lipps, who made a similar distinction between signs and symbols. The disadvantage of Stein's choice of terminology here is that it obscures the phenomenological conception of contiguity that she works so hard to elucidate, both in her introspective account

of the experience of one's own emotions, and in her empathic account of the experience of the Other's.

Stein, as I have just indicated, was not the first to become intrigued by the discovery of certain instances of co-givenness involving the structure of the constitution of a phenomenal unity which cannot be rendered intelligible by appealing to notions of signification or indication. Stein endorses and tries to illuminate the view she attributes to Johannes Volkelt (1848-1930) who believed, as Stein puts it, that “[t]he experiences we comprehend in expressive appearances are *fused* [*verschmolzen*] with the phenomena of expression”.²⁷ Accordingly, Stein on occasion adopts the term *fusion* [*Verschmelzung*] to characterise the phenomenal contiguity between feeling and its bodily expression.²⁸

Yet, as Stein herself suggests, the most decisive influence upon her conception of what, it seems to me, we might reasonably call *empathic conjunctive co-givenness* comes from her doctoral supervisor Edmund Husserl, and in particular from his account of ‘Expression and Meaning’ provided in volume II of *Logical Investigations*. Husserl himself briefly remarks upon the intuitional character of empathy in the context of a discussion of expressions as they function in communication. While hearing another person speaking, Husserl observes, it is quite possible, for example, to “‘see’ their anger, their pain etc.”.²⁹ The kind of “seeing” that Husserl has in mind here provides the hearer with an outer but not an inner grasp of the speaker's experiences. The inner grasp, of course, is one of the things that Stein herself seeks to account for.

²⁷ *OPE*, p.127, Note 102. Emphasis mine.

²⁸ See, for example, *OPE*, pp.49, 58.

²⁹ Husserl (2005a), p.190.

And Husserl also speaks of “the experienced unity of sign and thing signified”³⁰ involved in expression. As Stein makes clear, it is this Husserlian notion of an “experienced unity” which forms an important basis for her account of the “symbolic” connection in empathy founded upon bodily expression, and which also, Stein surmises, may well have prompted Lipps to differentiate between sign and symbol in his account of empathy.

The account of conjunctive co-givenness that we have discussed thus far has helped to illuminate the phenomenal nature of the particular phase of the empathic encounter that Stein refers to as *emergence*.³¹ It is during emergence that one acquires an outer grasp of the Other’s experience, apprehended as an intentional object. One “sees” the Other’s feelings in a mode of intuition that Stein calls “the non-primordial parallel to perception”.³² Yet empathy for Stein is not only a form of non-primordial intuition but also a form of understanding, and the empathic understanding that Stein has in mind goes beyond an empty objectifying awareness of the Other’s experience, and beyond, too, an awareness simply of the *kind* of experience that the Other is having. Rather, Stein argues that it is part of the essential structure of acts of authentic empathy that they involve acquiring some apprehension of the nature of the Other’s lived experience precisely as a lived experience. This is to say that a full realisation of authentic empathy, as Stein understands it, entails the acquisition of an acquaintance with what it is to be the Other having the experience in question, an acquaintance upon which empathic knowledge may in due course be founded.

³⁰ Husserl (2005a), p.193.

³¹ *OPE*, p.10.

³² *OPE*, p.10.

The acquisition of this inner grasp of foreign experience lies beyond the phase of emergence, and takes place in a subsequent phase that Stein calls the “fulfilling explication”.³³ During the fulfilling explication, there is a shift from objectifying intuition into pre-reflective lived experience, a lived experience in which, to put it loosely, we might say that one “dwells within the Other’s experience”. But what sense can it make to say that one dwells within the Other’s experience? As we noted in chapter 2, Husserl explicitly rules out, on the basis of his investigation into the encounter with the Other, an identity or confluence of primordial experience between self and Other, on the grounds that a disjunction of subjective processes turns out to be constitutive of the Other being other.³⁴ Naturally, Stein is fully aware of this Husserlian finding, and it is clear that she does not dispute it. Her fundamental agreement with Husserl on this matter is demonstrated, for example, in her remark that “[the Other’s] joy is neither given to us as primordial joy over the event nor as primordial joy over his joy. Rather it is given as this non-primordial act of empathy [...]”³⁵ Empathy, in its relation to the Other’s primordial experience, is non-primordial throughout all of its phases, even including the lived experience of the fulfilling explication.

Part of the value of Stein’s assertion about the non-primordality of empathy is that it intimates some important conceptual distinctions between empathy, as Stein conceives it, and other forms of intersubjective emotional experience. One of these is the distinction between empathy and sympathy. For Stein, sympathy seems to entail (1) an *alignment* of primordial experience between self and Other, and (2) an apprehension by the subject of this

³³ *OPE*, p.10.

³⁴ Husserl (1999), §50, p.109.

³⁵ *OPE*, p.14.

alignment. For example, I sympathise with the Other's joy only if (1) I am joyful over that over which the Other is joyful, and (2) I am aware, pre-reflectively or otherwise, that (1) is the case. Strictly speaking, in sympathising with the Other's joy I do not *share* the Other's joy, if this sharing is supposed to amount to an identity of primordial experience, something ruled out by Stein for the reason recently mentioned. In fact, the concept of sympathy needs to be able to accommodate certain kinds of variation between the respective lived experiences of self and Other. For one thing, there may be differences in the intensity of the feeling, in the sense of "intensity" that we discussed earlier. Additionally, there may be differences in the complexity of feeling. For example, I may share some of the Other's reasons for feeling joyful over a certain event, but not others. In this case, I only sympathise with the Other's joy insofar as we are joyful over the same event and for the same reasons. We must take it to be constitutive of sympathy that there should be similarity not only in the kind of feeling being experienced, and in what the feeling is about, but also a similarity in what is motivating the feeling. This is to say that sympathy requires that the respective primordial experiences of self and Other be aligned across three distinct dimensions: kind, intentionality, and motivation.

Elaborating in this way upon the concept and structure of sympathy helps to clarify certain features of the relation between sympathy and empathy. Perhaps most importantly, it is now possible to observe the way in which empathy is prior to sympathy as a condition for its possibility, and is contemporaneous with sympathy in the performance of the act. It is not possible to sympathise *with* the Other if one does not hold in one's mind an apprehension of the nature and content of the experience with which one is in sympathy. Yet

the fact of this embeddedness of empathy within sympathy now raises in turn a further important question about empathy. We must ask what happens to the empathic fulfilling explication during the experience of sympathy. Does it somehow vie for attention with the subject's own primordial feelings? It seems to me that we cannot discount this possibility. In this case we face once again a scenario in which the phenomenon of *overlapping* comes into play. In chapter 3 we reflected upon the way in which imaginal lived experience seems to overlap with the primordial perceptual presentation of one's surroundings, and in particular on the way in which overlapping seems to be characterised by a mutual exclusivity of the "competing" experiences involved. It is not possible, Husserl argues, to attend simultaneously to what is given in phantasy and to what is given in one's perceptual field. It is indeed plausible to think that a similar kind of mutual exclusivity can arise during sympathy. In this case, for example, one either "dwells within the Other's joy" (to the extent permitted by the empathic fulfilling explication) or one lives wholly within one's own. Yet one is free to switch from one lived experience to the other, and back and forth as one pleases. I can be joyful over your examination result, *or* I can "dwell within your joy", all within the ambit of a single sympathetic encounter, yet as discrete aspects of it.

There is, however, a different possibility, one which involves the empathic act moving out of the lived experience of the fulfilling explication, and back into the mode of objectifying intuition. A reversion to an objectification of the Other's experience, an objectification which now benefits from both an inner and an outer grasp of it, is something that Stein regards as a maturation of empathy, indeed a kind of epistemic *telos* toward which the experience of

foreign experience has a tendency to move. In this third and final phase of empathy, one attains not only an external apperception of the Other's experience, but retains a noetic comprehension of what it is (for the Other) to be having such a primordial experience.

In chapter 3 we developed an account of the structure of acts of reproductive re-presentation which stressed the importance of the Husserlian observation that such acts involve a double focus in which the subject may attend to a re-presented impression either as the content of an objectified act or by dwelling within it as a lived experience. I argued that this double focus in fact turns out to be a parallel focus permitting of variations in emphasis between its two aspects, between which the performing subject is in principle free to switch attention back and forth as he or she pleases. It is difficult to think of a reason for supposing that something similar is not the case during empathy. Provided that I have already acquired for the first time the fulfilling explication, it would seem that there is nothing to stop me from choosing either to continue to dwell within it or alternatively to switch out of it and instead objectify the Other's experience. And from the objectifying apprehension I may revert to the fulfilling explication and alternate between the two foci for as long as the Other's primordial experience continues to take place. Given this descriptive evidence, it is perhaps slightly surprising that Stein herself does not engage substantively with this idea of a double focus within the context of her investigation. As my exposition of her account has indicated, Stein configures the aspects of the empathic experience into a *sequence* of levels (their sequential character being intimated by her labelling them numerically and by her implying that in the

optimal case one “go[es] through” them all)³⁶ rather than an accumulation of persistent perspectives which remain in the end co-present or at least co-available to the subject. The sequential characterisation is justified to the extent that the fulfilling explication, as Stein conceives it, cannot be performed unless the subject already believes, at some level, there to *be* a foreign primordial experience presently being had, and to the extent that this foreign primordial experience cannot be simultaneously objectified and adequately comprehended without the existential epistemic light of the fulfilling explication. What Stein fails to make explicit, however, is whether, or the degree to which, the different levels interpenetrate one another. Does one completely exit the fulfilling explication when one finally objectifies the Other’s experience, or do the two levels continue in parallel? The problem with supposing the final objectification to be a discrete phase, self-sufficient in itself and independent of the fulfilling explication, is that it makes it difficult to justify the claim that the empathising subject is presently in a state of intuitional comprehension of the Other’s primordial and presently occurring experience. It would be questionable to claim that one simply retains in memory the fulfilling explication, as this would appear to compromise empathy’s quasi-perceptual character, according to which something presently occurring is presently being “seen”. If Stein’s position is to be broadly sustained, then, we are now obliged to uphold the principle of the double focus, which Stein does not explicitly articulate or analyse. In this case, a Steinian position would have to argue that one’s claim to comprehend the Other’s lived experience is justified either by virtue of being able to switch *back* into the fulfilling explication whenever one wished, or by claiming that the

³⁶ *OPE*, p.10.

fulfilling explication and the objectification are contemporaneous and interpenetrate one another within the empathiser's stream of subjective processes.

We must assume that Stein's choice of the phrase "fulfilling explication" is intended to suggest the idea that the Other's primordial experience is somehow (indeed, in a sense that we shall shortly seek to specify) *fulfilled* and given to consciousness during the act of empathy. Yet we noted earlier that the fulfilling explication phase cannot be understood to *be* the Other's primordial experience, on the grounds that I, as empathiser, am the one experiencing it. I am in fact having a lived experience which precisely is *not* the Other's primordial experience, yet which bears an important relation to the Other's primordial experience, a relation moreover, which carries epistemic weight. What exactly is this relation? One of the slightly surprising features of Stein's account is that she does not actually provide a very explicit answer to this question. Stein's account of the essential structure of empathy is expounded early in her thesis, and in my opinion could do with being revisited toward the end, to take into account the phenomenological findings of chapters III and IV (entitled 'The Constitution of the Psycho-Physical Individual' and 'Empathy as the Understanding of Spiritual Persons' respectively). Some kind of conclusion at the end of the book regarding the essential structure of acts of empathy would seem to be appropriate, not only in terms of reflecting the methodological priority of descriptive phenomenological work over eidetic findings, but also because the position Stein sets out in chapter II, 'The Essence of Acts of Empathy', requires further elaboration if the implications of Stein's overall understanding of empathy are to be fully understood.

I wish to pursue the idea that there is in fact a fully coherent understanding of empathy implicit within Stein's account, but that Stein herself does not appear to fully appreciate, or at least fully articulate, certain important structural implications which remain latent within her position. As I have already indicated, I believe the part of her thesis that could particularly benefit from clarification is her understanding of the fulfilling explication, the lived dimension of the empathic experience in which one "dwells within" a foreign experience, to the extent that it is intelligible and phenomenologically possible to speak of doing so. I believe the key to clarifying Stein's account lies in certain important insights that we developed in chapter 3 to do with the essential structure of reproductive re-presentations within an iterated context, findings which both Husserl and Stein may not themselves have fully recognised.

A possible source of difficulty in properly understanding Stein's account lies in the different senses in which she uses the word "primordial". On the one hand, Stein wishes to stress the Husserlian idea that one does not have primordial access to the Other's primordial experience, a fundamental phenomenological stance which informs her problematisation of the views of both Lipps and Scheler. This view informs Stein's drawing of a sharp distinction between the "inner perception" of one's own mental life and the empathic intuition of the Other's, and explains why she makes assertions such as

If I experience a feeling as that of another, I have it given twice:
once primordially as my own and once non-primordially in empathy
as originally foreign.³⁷

³⁷ *OPE*, p.34.

And this is why she underscores the distinction between sympathetic primordial feelings of one's own and the feelings of the Other with which one is in sympathy. Primordial feelings of one's own in a sympathetic context are to be separated from the act of empathy, on pain of projective deception.

Yet on the other hand, it is also clear that Stein believes it to be constitutive of empathy that one should have primordial access to *something*, a primordial experience which illuminates the lived character of the Other's experience. So empathy is not regarded by Stein as "primordial" simply for the relatively trivial reason that it is, as she puts it, "primordial as present experience though non-primordial in content"³⁸, but because empathy in its fullest manifestation is not merely an empty objectifying intending, but incorporates an essentially lived component, the component of the fulfilling explication.

And while I am living in the other's joy, I do not feel primordial joy. It does not issue live from my "I." Neither does it have the character of once having lived like remembered joy. But still much less is it merely fantasised without actual life. This other subject is primordial although I do not experience it as primordial. In my non-primordial experience I feel, as it were, led by a primordial one not experienced by me but still there, manifesting itself in my non-primordial experience.³⁹

Stein is suggesting here that the lived experience of dwelling within the Other's feelings somehow intimates beyond itself a different lived experience, namely that of the Other. In this sense, the fulfilling explication is intentional: it is a lived experience which is about another lived experience. The reason behind Stein's observation that the Other's joy is not given to the empathiser as "merely fantasised without actual life" must lie in the fact that it is (in the way that we

³⁸ *OPE*, p.10.

³⁹ *OPE*, p.11.

considered earlier) constituted heteronomously on the basis of the Other's bodily expression. The Other's primordial experience is given as *pre-given*, as being prior to the empathic act, and furthermore governing the content of the fulfilling explication: "[...] I feel, as it were, led by a primordial [experience] not experienced by me but still there". With these words Stein clearly draws attention to the peculiar form of heteronomy constitutive of the act-character of the fulfilling explication. It is to be distinguished from the heteronomy found in acts of memory or expectation on the grounds of its being more radical by an order of structural magnitude, for not only is the empathised primordial experience subjectively transcendent to the empathic act but it is also apprehended as belonging to a foreign subjectivity, and I am aware of it "manifesting itself in my non-primordial experience". From this standpoint we may now observe that in registering descriptively the givenness of the foreign experience *as such* as an element of the fulfilling explication, it seems that Stein is in fact implicitly endorsing a notion of *parallel* focus of the kind that we discussed in chapter 3: one is both having a lived experience of one's own and constituting the Other's as an intentional object.

Had Stein continued in the train of thought set out in the passage recently quoted, even for just a few more lines, it seems to me almost inconceivable that she should not have, at the very least, speculatively raised the idea that the phenomenal relation between the fulfilling explication and the Other's primordial experience is one of resemblance. The precise extent to which Stein herself contemplated this possibility is going to have to remain a matter for conjecture. Yet a combination of features of Stein's account makes the case for investigating the question of the quasi-pictoriality of empathy quite compelling.

Firstly, empathy is held to be an intuitional act, but one which is not mistaken, by the careful phenomenologist, for having primordial access to the Other's primordial experience. This in itself does not point conclusively to picture-consciousness, but it certainly raises it as a possibility. And it is worth recalling in this context that it would seem that Husserl initially pursued the imagistic theory of phantasy at least partly because phantasy is intuitional in character while at the same time not being mistaken for perception. That Stein should not in a similar fashion pursue an imagistic explication of empathy, even if only with a possible view to discarding it, is therefore somewhat surprising.

Secondly, the content of the fulfilling explication is implicitly construed by Stein as being heteronomous in the sense that it is held to "speak", as it were, of an object which is not primordially present to consciousness. This corresponds to the way in which an image-object "speaks" of a picture-subject which is not primordially present.

Let us attempt to complete Stein's project and investigate the question of the "pictoriality" of empathy, that is, to verify the hypothesis that the essential structure of the empathic act is, in substantive respects, homologous to the structure of picture-consciousness. This will involve, in particular, showing that equivalents of the three distinct pictorial objectivities identified in chapter 3 turn out to be present within empathy, and fulfilling similar roles. We shall seek to locate, firstly, a governing intentional object implied within the experience (a picture-subject), secondly, an object grasped as a semblance (a semblance *qua* semblance or image-object), and thirdly, a containing object of some kind (a picture-thing).

In the cases of the image-object and the picture-subject, this task does not appear so difficult, for they have already emerged in the course of the preceding discussions. There can be no doubt that the governing intentional object in question is the Other's primordial lived experience. And the image-object with respect to this "picture-subject" must, as I have already suggested, be taken to be the fulfilling explication.⁴⁰ In this respect, Stein has already done much of the work for us in registering and explaining the importance of these objectivities. Her only omission was to forget or overlook the important idea that the fulfilling explication as a lived experience should be understood precisely as a semblance of the foreign primordial experience, but it will, I believe, shortly become clear that this is the only convincing way of reconciling its epistemic value with its essentially non-primordial character.

A difficulty remains, however, with the delineation of a container object. We are not at liberty to disregard the importance of locating a "picture-thing" within the structure of empathy, for one of the important conclusions of chapter 3 was that the ability to switch the direction of one's attention between image-object and picture-thing turns out to be constitutive of picture-consciousness itself. As we saw in that chapter, the fact that this does not take place during an act of pure phantasy contributed to the refutation of Husserl's early hypothesis about the pictoriality of such acts.

Let us consider the possibility that to the picture-thing corresponds the phase of empathy that Stein calls "comprehensive objectification". At this level of empathy, the foreign primordial experience is not only objectified but

⁴⁰ The structural correspondence between the image-object of picture-consciousness and the empathic fulfilling explication is exemplified in the fact that during the observation of a painting in an art gallery, the image-object may be dwelt within as a lived experience when one is absorbed in aesthetic contemplation of the work.

understood. But what is the basis for this understanding? The basis for the understanding is the insight provided during the lived experience of the fulfilling explication. So if Stein's "comprehensive objectification" purports to *comprehend* the Other's experience, then it must somehow involve the content of the fulfilling explication. In this connection, I want to suggest that there is a sense in which the comprehensive objectification may be said to *open onto* the fulfilling explication, which in turn opens onto the Other's primordial experience as an objectified intentional object. This view does indeed appear to be supported by the view I put forward earlier regarding the parallel focus. According to the parallel focus view, both the objectified foreign experience and the fulfilling explication are simultaneously available to consciousness and permit of being attended to with varying degrees of emphasis. An elaboration of Stein's account is therefore required if the view that empathy conforms to the structure of picture-consciousness is to be sustained. The level of the comprehensive objectification must be understood not merely as temporally conditioned by the fulfilling explication, but in fact as incorporating it as well, and permitting of a return to it through a shift in the emphasis of the focus of one's attention. In this case the conditions for an homologous relation to picture-consciousness may be said to be satisfied. Our picture-thing is the comprehensive objectification; our image-object is the fulfilling explication; and our picture-subject is the foreign primordial experience.

The finding that is now emerging is that the co-givenness of the foreign lived affective experience is to be explicated as the heteronomous constitution of a felt image-object on the basis of the Other's perceptually given bodily expression. But in this imaginational heteronomy, I am not imagining having the

Other's experience for myself: I am imagining *being the other person* having the experience in question. Even more precisely, I believe that in the final and fully explicated analysis, we must say that there are in fact two distinct acts going on in the fulfilling explication. I am imagining being the other person, and then within this act of imagining, I am imagining having the experience in question. It would seem that empathy is performatively stratified in this way because having the experience in question is in truth merely a factual, and not an essential, part of being the other person. The kinds of experience of particular interest to us in this chapter, such as feeling joyful, sad, or angry, are being considered as contingent experiences: joy over an examination result; sadness over a bereavement; anger over a stolen item of jewellery. For this reason, imagining having the foreign experience is not an essential part of imagining being the Other. In this sense, it would seem there is an essential fissure in the performance of the fulfilling explication. We are dealing at root, I would suggest, with an iteration of acts of the imagination.

On at least two occasions, Stein implicitly registers the idea that the fulfilling explication must involve a cumulation of distinct acts of the imagination. In the context of discussing the difference between empathy and inner perception (a difference she attributes to the lived character of the fulfilling explication) Stein refers to the fulfilling explication as “[t]he level [of empathy] where I am at the foreign ‘I’ and explain its experience by living it after the other [...].”⁴¹ Then later on while referring specifically to empathy based upon bodily expression, Stein appears to summarise the fulfilling explication by stating that “I project myself into the foreign living body, carry

⁴¹ *OPE*, p.34.

out the experience already co-given to me as empty with its countenance, and experience the experience ending in this expression.”⁴² In these passages, Stein sets out a temporal series of aspects of the performance of the fulfilling explication. But there can be little doubt that, beyond this sequencing, Stein must also be implicitly committed to a nesting of the acts she delineates. One cannot empathically carry out the foreign experience if one does not remain transposed into the foreign subjectivity. In fact, it is the imaginative transposal into the other person which is responsible for the very alterity of the fulfilling explication, and without which the fulfilling explication could not be said to be experienced as a semblance of what is radically other, the Other’s primordial experience, as experienced by the Other. So the explication of nested acts within the fulfilling explication underpins the claim that the Other’s experience is given in the manner of a semblance, a finding which in turn informs the discovery that empathy conforms to an essential structure homologous to that of picture-consciousness.

It is not surprising, therefore, that as her book proceeds Stein becomes increasingly interested in the phenomenology of understanding the foreign personality, as distinct from understanding its contingently occurring experiences. Veridically intuiting the structure and content of the foreign personality is precisely the pre-condition for the imaginative transposal of consciousness, which in turn conditions the carrying out of individual foreign experiences. It is appropriate therefore that we now turn our attention to Stein’s

⁴² *OPE*, p.82.

account of the intuition of the foreign personality, or, as she calls it, the “spiritual subject”.⁴³

When Stein speaks of the Other’s “personality” or “character”, she is referring to an objectivity which is not in the first instance adequately given to consciousness in an act of empathising with the Other’s present experience, but instead one which emerges gradually as a consequence of an ongoing aggregation of such empathic acts.

I not only comprehend an actual feeling in the friendly glance, but friendliness as an habitual attribute. An outburst of anger reveals a “vehement temperament” to me. In him who penetrates an intricate association I comprehend sagacity, etc. Possibly these attributes are constituted for me in a whole series of corroborating and correcting empathic acts.⁴⁴

Of course, we are confronted now with a circularity. Understanding the Other’s personality is a condition of imagining being the Other. But now we find that grasping the foreign personality is an *outcome* of an aggregation of empathic acts. So empathic acts at the respective levels of the person and of experience, are mutually conditioning. This is not so much a contradiction as a refinement of how empathy is to be conceived. The accomplishment of empathy is not just a binary question of success or failure (though success or failure, articulated loosely in terms of “getting someone right” or not, remain genuine possibilities) but a matter of degree and convergence. The better one is acquainted with a person, the more fully one is able to empathise. And the more one empathises with the Other’s present experience, the more one converges upon the underlying personality. In this way, the intuition and understanding of

⁴³ *OPE*, p.96.

⁴⁴ *OPE*, p.86.

the Other's personality is to be regarded not only as a form of empathy, but arguably as a kind of culmination of empathic activities. It is, then, an empathic act of a different order from the acts of empathy that we have considered thus far in this chapter. It is to be understood as a second-order apperception which differs in essential structure from the prior apperceptual acts upon which it is founded.

This "personality", like the experiences which speak of its structure and content, is an entity which belongs to the domain of the spirit, as opposed to the domain of psycho-physical reality. For this reason, strictly speaking, the constitution of the Other's personality does not entail, on pain of an ontological category mistake, its introjection into the Other's physical body. The Other's personality is co-given with the appearance of the Other in essentially the same way in which the Other's transcendental ego is co-given. Indeed, the transcendental ego and the personality are both to be understood to be parts of the concrete entity that Husserl calls the monad, as defined in chapter 2.

Stein's conception of the personality is bound up with notions of stability and intelligibility. In Stein's view, to refer to someone's personality is to imply that there is something consistent about this person, and that the personality has become salient and intelligible precisely because of this consistency. Such consistency need not be absolute, but the apprehension of a degree of consistency is constitutive of the apperception of the personality. One is only able to remark that a person acts *out* of character if a sufficient number of previous encounters have appresented a relatively stable and unified underlying

personality. Failing that, the person can only be held to be unintelligible, an eventuality that Stein configures as “pathological”.⁴⁵

The question of “acting out of character” is not one that Stein pursues in any great detail, but is one that I have introduced into this discussion as a way of illustrating one way in which an individual’s underlying character can sometimes seem to become phenomenologically salient. I do not suggest that Stein somehow believes that in non-pathological cases, people with whom one is well-acquainted are incapable of surprising one by their demeanour or actions. Yet the very idea of somebody “acting out of character”, though one that I believe is helpful in this context by virtue of its picking out an aspect familiar to most of us of the experience of others, is also, I believe, one which is, strictly speaking, ultimately at odds with Stein’s understanding of the fundamental nature of conscious life. By this I mean that for Stein, in non-pathological cases, the experience of what we might loosely term the Other’s “acting out of character” is instead to be understood as a disclosure of hitherto unexperienced aspects of their personality. To the extent that the Other can be said to have a coherent personality at all, their mental life is held by Stein to be not only roughly consistent over time, but essentially *lawful*. This is the basis for Stein’s assertion that

having [...] gotten a picture of the foreign “character” [...] this itself serves me as a point of departure for the verification of further empathic acts. If someone tells me about a dishonest act by a person I have recognised as honest, I will not believe him. [...] A truly good man cannot be vindictive; a sympathetic person, not cruel [...].⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *OPE*, p.97.

⁴⁶ *OPE*, p.86

So the empathic judgement, to take Stein's example, that someone is an honest person, does not correspond to a claim about probability, or a claim that the Other exhibits honest behaviour "in general", but to the constitution of a particular attribute of the personality in question, an attribute which is understood to hold a governing influence upon the person's conscious life. In making this point, Stein underscores her understanding of empathy as intuitional through and through, not only at the level of individual experiences, but at the level of the constitution of the personality itself. And the apperceived lawfulness of conscious life confers upon the disciplines of axiology and ethics a kind of rigour coordinate with that of the *a priori* sciences, and enables them, as Stein puts it, to "take their place beside logic".⁴⁷

For both Husserl and Stein, this "lawfulness" of spiritual life is encapsulated in the concept of motivation.⁴⁸ Earlier on, we touched briefly on the notion of motivation in the discussion about the expression of feeling. In that context, the motivation in question was understood to be an actually subjectively occurring meaningful proceeding from an incipient feeling to its completing expression. More generally, the term "motivation" often refers just in this way to a factual movement or transition within the noetic side of intentionality from one lived experience to another. Motivations belong to the subject, to the sphere of ownness, and not to the natural or psycho-physical world. Yet for both Husserl and Stein, the term "motivation" also carries an eidetic sense, in that it sometimes refers not to a concrete movement within consciousness, but specifically to the *lawfulness* of such a movement. Concrete motivations conform to the lawfulness of conscious life, and this lawfulness is sometimes

⁴⁷ *OPE*, p.97.

⁴⁸ For almost identical statements in this respect, see Husserl (2002), p.231, and *OPE*, p.96.

simply referred to as the person's "motivations". Motivations, in this eidetic sense, can be understood as latent tendencies belonging to the individual, tendencies which themselves transcend the occasions on which they are fulfilled. An individual may possess a tendency to be friendly, as a distinct part of his personality, even when he happens to be alone, and furthermore not thinking of others.

Part of the significance, then, of the eidetic sense of "motivation" is that it makes it possible to speak of such things as a person's various dispositions, preferences, habitualities, associations, instincts, and (of particular interest to Stein) values. Some kinds of motivation may be said to be "active", in the sense that they take place at the thematic level. Perhaps the most obvious case of active motivation is that of motivation under the norms of reason. For example, a perception may motivate a judgement on the basis of empirical evidence. A combination of judgements may motivate, in a syllogistic fashion, a new judgement on the basis of logical grounding. I may undertake a certain action deliberately because I hold a certain belief about the world, or because I have a certain goal. Doxastic or teleological motivations of this kind may also be said to be active and taking place under the norms of reason if they occur at the thematic level. Yet active motivations are really only a part of the story of the lawfulness of conscious life, for many motivations are, in Husserl's terminology, essentially *passive*, and occur pre-reflectively. Husserl understands passive motivations to pervade and govern the lived character of conscious life. To take an experience that we considered in an earlier chapter, viewing the front of a building can now be seen to *motivate* the presentation of its averted sides. It may also motivate a memory of a similar building; I may associate the building,

if it is the library, with the experience of studying; or it may motivate a valuing of the building on aesthetic or architectural grounds. All such kinds of motivation – appresentative, recollective, associative, value-based – are typically spontaneous and passive, or have a passive component, and form the intricate web of motivations constitutive of the noetic fabric of our quotidian conscious lives.⁴⁹

The apperception and understanding of the Other's motivations provides the foundation for a further level of eidetic intuition which moves beyond the specificity of the individual, and provides insight into the essential structure of the human personality. For Stein, this important property of the empathic experience does not simply provide a corroboration for what could otherwise be intuited from introspection, or the activity that she calls "inner perception" of the self. Inner perception and empathy work together, reciprocally verifying and corroborating intuitions about the essential structure of the personality. Beyond this reciprocity, however, Stein ultimately privileges empathy as the primary ground for such knowledge. To empathy Stein accords an equivalent or parallel role for the human sciences and phenomenological enquiry into the mind as perception holds for the natural sciences:

As natural things have an essential underlying structure [...] so there is also an essential structure of the spirit and of ideal types. Historical personalities are empirical realizations of these types. If empathy is the perceptual consciousness in which foreign persons come to givenness for us, then it is also the exemplary basis for obtaining this ideal type, just as natural perception is the basis for the eidetic knowledge of nature.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ For the Husserlian account of the concept of motivation, see Husserl (2002), §56.

⁵⁰ *OPE*, pp.95-6.

This epistemic privileging of empathy over inner perception is attributable to the idea that an introspective view of the personality is structurally vulnerable to certain blind-spots by virtue of the subject remaining caught up in their own web of motivations. Indeed, on at least two occasions, Stein refers to situations in which individuals might be mistaken about their own motivations behind certain actions.⁵¹ The fact that the noematic side of empathic intentionality lies outside the sphere of ownness favours empathy's status as the spiritual analogue of perception. Accordingly, Stein seeks to configure empathy as the more reliable mode of intuition, and as a kind of corrective for the deceptions of subjective self-perception. As Stein puts it,

It is possible for another to "judge me more accurately" than I judge myself and give me clarity about myself. For example, he notices that I look around me for approval as I show kindness, while I myself think I am acting out of pure generosity.⁵²

Stein by no means claims that empathy is always veridical, any more than she makes the same claim for perception. Deception and mistakenness always remain possibilities. But the epistemic answer always lies in the verification, clarification, or correction that may be furnished by supplementary acts of empathy.

Actions only invite understanding on the basis of the premise of the lawfulness of spiritual life. Not all actions and gestures are spontaneously expressive like the ones we considered earlier. Someone else's non-spontaneous actions, if observed in person, may also on occasion speak of a directedness toward some purpose which illuminates the individual's character. And the more

⁵¹ *OPE*, pp.33, 89.

⁵² *OPE*, p.89.

someone is observed, the fuller the picture that emerges of his or her personality. Stein explicates this appresentation of the personality in terms of a chain of motivations. Deliberate actions are motivated by a will, will by a feeling, and feelings, as we noted earlier, by values. The appresentation of values motivates in turn the empathiser's expectations regarding possible future feelings, volitions, and actions. Accordingly, as Stein memorably puts it, "a single action and also a single bodily expression, such as a look or a laugh, can give me a glimpse into the kernel of the person".⁵³

For Stein, then, the chain of motivations leads back to values. And for Stein it is values that provide the structuring principle for the personality. This is not to say that the personality is *composed* of values. Values are given as transcending the personality, yet they may be said to govern its motivations and the way those motivations are structured. The sense of this "governance" is really a correlation between the individual's hierarchy of felt values and the realm of the personality. As I indicated earlier, for Stein the personality is to be conceived as a component of the 'I' (i.e. the monad) which is the bearer of all experiences, including feelings. The correlation of such feelings with values is what makes ethical deliberation and judgement possible.

The principal structuring influence of values upon the personality is therefore one of stratification. Our deepest feelings are correlated with our highest values. Yet for Stein there is something more to the topology of the personality than a straightforward layering. She observes that feelings, to a greater or lesser extent, have a tendency to spread or radiate from their original location within the 'I'. In this connection she notes that certain of our feelings

⁵³ *OPE*, p.109.

(our deepest) originate from the “centre” and are capable of radiating from there and permeating the entire personality. The personality, then, is both *layered* and somehow *centred*, the centre being the locus of one’s deepest feelings. If such spatial notions of depth, layering, and centredness are to speak meaningfully of what is given in the empathic intuition and the inner perception of the person, then what kind of a topology can they imply? One thinks of concentric rings of different sizes somehow stacked upon one another. Perhaps the most straightforward geometrical interpretation of her position is that the personality is structured approximately like an inverted cone, with deep feelings originating near the centre, at the tip of the cone where they are capable of permeating the whole, while shallow feelings originate near what she calls the “periphery”, at the cone’s base. Unfortunately, further phenomenological investigation into the shapes and forms constitutive of the domain of the personality is an avenue that Stein does not pursue.

One of the important features of Stein’s account, which she has in common with Scheler, is that while values are given as transcending the personality, different individuals can have different value hierarchies. This raises in turn the question of whether it is possible to make general claims about the content of the value hierarchy. If we all have our own value hierarchy, or “personal moral tenor” as Scheler might put it, then does this mean *simply* that we are all *sui generis* moral agents? Stein’s answer is to try to impose some order upon the apparent proliferation of possible moral tenors, by suggesting that distinct personal *types* exist, although she does not elaborate to any great extent on what the nature of these types might be, beyond occasionally providing an example. She does, however, speculate that a doctrine of personal

types might provide the “ontological foundation” for the cultural sciences that Dilthey intended.⁵⁴

Stein’s relation to Dilthey, which she touches upon only towards the end of her book, illuminates an important feature of her account that we have not yet considered. This relates not to the essential structure of the act of empathy, nor primarily to her descriptive account of its performance, but instead to the conditions for its possibility. Prior to her discussion in terms of Dilthey, the intelligibility of the foreign subject is explicated principally in terms of the lawfulness of the Other’s conscious life. As we have seen, this view leads Stein in the direction of a pathologisation of cases in which the experience of the Other seems to stubbornly resist full comprehension. But Stein’s transcendental understanding of the intelligibility of the Other ultimately moves, under the influence of Dilthey, beyond considerations of the Other’s motivations by shifting attention back onto constraints imposed by *a priori* features of the empathising mind. As Stein points out, it was Dilthey who proposed that the intelligibility of the foreign individual is necessarily delimited by one’s own, and that the human person precisely *is* the interpretive faculty operating in the cultural sciences. This quasi-Kantian view is one that Stein broadly sustains, and seeks to transpose into the context of transcendental phenomenology. At stake here for Stein is not the possibility of the empathising objectification of the foreign experience, but the extent to which the fulfilling explication can take place. As she puts it,

[...] I cannot fulfil what conflicts with my own experiential structure.
But I can still have it given in the manner of empty presentation. I

⁵⁴ *OPE*, p.108.

can be sceptical myself and still understand that another sacrifices all his earthly goods to his faith.⁵⁵

According to Stein's example, religiously motivated behaviour is not unintelligible to the atheist. The atheist can acquire an objectifying apprehension of the Other's experience and the values motivating it. But it is not possible to feel a value that one does not "possess", that is, a value that is not included in one's own value hierarchy. For this reason, the performance of the fulfilling explication phase of empathy is necessarily precluded in such cases. It follows from Stein's position that the extent of the delimitation of foreign experience during empathy is determined by differences between the respective personal types of the empathiser and the Other. But the notion of personal type is really derivative in terms of its explanatory power. Personal type is a function of values, and it is the overlap of felt values that truly governs the extent to which a fulfilling explication might occur.

It is not possible, in Stein's opinion, for an individual to change his or her personal type. In this sense, there is something immutable about the personal value hierarchy. One does not somehow "pick up" values that were not deeply and essentially one's own in the first place. Values alien to the individual remain so, and values that one does possess cannot be somehow lost or erased. As Stein puts it, "[t]he levels of the person do not 'develop' or 'deteriorate'", and this regardless of upbringing and contingent life experience.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, empathy for Stein is ultimately bound up with a particular conception of subjective transformation. One's own values strictly do not *change* but they are capable of being "exposed" or "unfolded", precisely in their

⁵⁵ *OPE*, p.115.

⁵⁶ *OPE*, pp.110-1.

being experienced in the empathic encounter with others. Stein indicates that she believes that a complete unfolding of the personality is entirely possible, and not merely possible in principle. Yet equally, the essentially contingent nature of such encounters means that an individual's personal unfolding may very well remain partial:

He who never meets a person worthy of love or hate can never experience the depths in which love and hate are rooted. To him who has never seen a work of art nor gone beyond the walls of the city may perhaps forever be closed the enjoyment of nature and art together with his susceptibility for this enjoyment. Such an 'incomplete' person is similar to an unfinished sketch.⁵⁷

The unfolding of a value, then, takes place in the context of a lived experience of it in what is other. Hence the extent of one's personal flourishing, unlike the content of the levels of the person, is a function of the vicissitudes of one's own life experience.

It is interesting to note that in this passage, Stein does not construe such life experience solely in terms of the people one meets, but also in terms of one's experience of art and of nature. The implication of this momentary broadening of perspective from the principal concern of her work is that empathy, as Stein conceives it, is not to be regarded as the sole context for the unfolding of the personality. The extent to which the intentional structure of the encounter with an artwork, and in particular with a work of literature, can be said to be analogous to that of encountering another person is a question to which we shall turn in a later chapter.

⁵⁷ *OPE*, p.111.

Let us take a few moments now to reflect upon where our investigation into Edith Stein's account of the problem of empathy has taken us. Stein's engagement with the thought of Dilthey towards the end of her book represents in my opinion a significant epistemological transition in the way she understands empathic knowledge. From the outset of her work, Stein aligns her methodology with that of Husserlian phenomenology, and aligns the epistemic status of empathic intuition with that of the Husserlian understanding of intuition in general, and of perception in particular. Accordingly, empathic knowledge is held to be possible in principle, the condition of such knowledge being continuous and harmonious confirmation attained as an eventual outcome of a multiplicity of corroborating and correcting empathic acts. Beyond this, our detailed explication of the stratified essential structure of the component acts involved in empathy has revealed for us the way in which the epistemic quest for ever more complete and precise apperception of the Other's present experience is ultimately coterminous with a convergence upon a comprehensive understanding of the Other's underlying motivations. Yet with the introduction into the discussion of ideas associated with Dilthey, the epistemological picture becomes more complicated, and in an important respect quasi-Kantian. The extent of empathic knowledge becomes inescapably constricted by immutable features of the subject's own value hierarchy. And this in turn seems to raise the epistemologically chastening prospect that the empathic understanding of certain individuals may turn out to be, for certain would-be empathisers, *a priori* impossible. Empathy, then, is to be differentiated from other forms of intuitional presentation, not only for the reason that Stein herself remarks upon, namely that the subject of the re-presented experience is another, but also for the

transcendental reason that empathy's very possibility is conditioned by the particularity of the empathising personality, and, more precisely, the latter's contingent correlation with the personality of the Other.

Stein's entire treatment of values turns out to be an indispensable component of her thesis. It not only illuminates the essential structure of the personality but also explains, without resorting to pathologisation, why some people might be difficult or even impossible to understand. If I have a criticism of this aspect of Stein's work, however, it is that, in certain important respects, it has the character of a rigid importation of ideas from Scheler and Dilthey, rather than an axiological enquiry conducted, as it were, under her own phenomenological steam. Stein appears to unreservedly endorse Scheler's axiology, his account of the personal value hierarchy, and the subjective transcendence of values. This importation of Schelerian ideas seems to replace a detailed phenomenological investigation of her own into the givenness of values. Such an enquiry would admittedly be a formidable project in its own right, yet it might serve to illuminate, or call into question, certain doctrines that Stein appears to take for granted. Why, for example, should the content of the personal value hierarchy be held to be essentially unchanging? The phenomenological grounding is not clear for Stein's claim that new values cannot be acquired or old values discarded. There is also a tension in Stein's relation to Scheler in that she adopts his axiology while disputing his account of intersubjectivity, and it would therefore seem to be incumbent upon Stein to clarify the separability of these two aspects of Scheler's thought. In relation to Dilthey, Stein appears to adopt his doctrine of personal types. Yet she does not elaborate upon the phenomenological basis for the constitution of such types. In

relation to both Scheler and Dilthey, then, it would seem that Stein leaves undone the detail of certain phenomenological investigations, investigations necessary to fully and seamlessly assimilate into her own Husserlian project the aspects of their thought that she wishes to endorse.

For Stein, part of the tremendous significance of empathy is that it is capable of disclosing not only the nature of someone else's present experience, but features of the essential structure of the human person, features which could not be properly intuited and verified on the basis of introspection alone. Yet if Stein appears to grant empathy some kind of epistemic upper hand over introspection, such a privileging is mild, and cannot by any means be taken to imply the dispensability of introspection. The two modes of intuition are held to have an essentially reciprocal relationship of mutual corroboration and correction. Self-awareness, no matter how attentive and profound, cannot by itself solve the riddle of the Other. But it can provide important evidence relating to the essential structures of experience at the personal level, such as the correlation of feelings with values, the nature of the chain of motivations running from values to actions, and the idea that the personality seems to have a core as well as a stratified structure. What Stein seems to leave unsaid is that the fact that introspection is capable of disclosing and corroborating such findings implies that empathy, notwithstanding its intuitional character, properly has an ascriptive dimension at the level of the structures of experience, and, of particular interest to the concerns of this chapter, the structure of emotion. But I think it must be precisely this ascriptive property that Stein has in mind when she remarks that "[o]nly he who experiences himself as a person, as a

meaningful whole, can understand other persons.”⁵⁸ Understanding empathy’s ascriptive dimension as applying at the level of the structures of experience explains the paradox that the most effective empathisers should turn out to be remarkably self-aware individuals who nonetheless avoid the epistemic dangers of projective deception, and succeed in intuiting and understanding an experience which is essentially not theirs.

The kind of understanding of the foreign experience that interests Stein is not in the first instance conceptual, but instead takes the form of a lived experience which I have characterised as a kind of “dwelling within” the Other’s conscious life. One of the important philosophical problems that Stein seeks to address is the explication and rendering intelligible of the ostensibly paradoxical claim that in the performance of empathy one is having an experience which precisely is not one’s own. As we noted, the principal constraint imposed by transcendental phenomenology upon obtaining an answer to this question lies in the Husserlian view that a disjunction of subjective processes turns out to be constitutive of the Other being other. Stein’s proposed solution to this problem involves two extremely important phenomenological insights. Firstly, she implies that the lived experience of the fulfilling explication carries an essential character of non-primordial heteronomy in relation to the foreign primordial experience, and that the latter is only objectified, and not itself lived by the empathising subject. Secondly, she implies that a condition for the possibility of such a fulfilling explication is a distinct and phenomenologically prior act of transposal into the motivations of the foreign personality, a transposal which itself is conditioned by the extent to which a “pairing” or “overlying of sense”

⁵⁸ *OPE*, p.116.

may take place between one or more elements in the respective value hierarchies of self and Other. Without this prior act of personal-level transposal, the performance of the range of empathic activities described by Stein is curtailed, and cannot proceed beyond the emergent level of an empty objectification of essential features of the Other's experience. What Stein fails to properly recognise and make explicit, however, is that this nested structure of heteronomous acts of the imagination has an important implication for the way in which the foreign experience is itself experienced, namely that the fulfilling explication is given in the manner of a semblance, and that empathy essentially conforms to an intentional structure homologous to that of picture-consciousness. In this chapter, it has only been possible to substantiate this conclusion on the basis of findings which emerged in the course of our investigation, undertaken in chapter 3, into the development of Husserl's understanding of the imagination. Even so, it is surprising that Stein seems to have held back from at least raising the possibility that the Other's primordial experience could be given to the empathising consciousness in the manner of a semblance, although it is reasonable to assume that a contributory factor behind this omission lies in Husserl's sharp differentiation between the structure of reproductive representation, of which Stein took empathy to be a *sui generis* example, and that of the kind of perceptual representation found in picture-consciousness.

The notions of pairing and transposal are two of the features of the Husserlian account of basic or "inauthentic" empathy that turn out to propagate into the Steinian account of "authentic" empathy as discussed in this chapter. A third is the possibility of subjective transformation. In the Fifth Meditation, as

we noted in chapter 2, Husserl argues that inauthentic empathy is epistemically transformative for the subject, in that it transforms one's verifiable understanding not only of others, but of one's relation to others and to the world. For Stein, the transformativity of authentic empathy consists primarily in an unfolding of values which lie dormant within the individual. As Stein puts it, "through empathy with [...] persons of our type, what is 'sleeping' in us is developed".⁵⁹ Secondly, empathy also provides opportunities to have an empty intending of values different from one's own. In consequence of both kinds of encounter, one finds oneself better positioned to value oneself, favourably or otherwise, in relation to others. There can be no doubt, then, that Stein regards the empathic encounter with others, in all its possible forms, to be at the very heart of the processes of the unfolding of the person. Yet as we noted earlier, she also alludes in passing to other avenues of human flourishing, including the encounter with art. In some of the following chapters, I intend to engage with the question of the transformativity of the encounter with a work of literature, and to consider the possible connections of such subjective transformation to questions of intersubjectivity.

⁵⁹ *OPE*, p.116.

Chapter 5 - Starobinski's Conception of the Implied Author

The Swiss literary critic and theorist Jean Starobinski, frequently identified with the so-called "Geneva School", is understandably fascinated by his fellow Genevan, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Starobinski's most prominent writings on Rousseau include an extended work of literary criticism entitled *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le Péril de la Réflexion* (1961) and an acclaimed book-length study, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La Transparence et l'Obstacle* (1971). The respective (and notably polymathic) interests of the two men coincide perhaps most strongly around questions of otherness, and the intersubjective significance of literature.

Starobinski's engagement with Rousseau naturally has its essential historical and philosophical dimensions. Beyond these, however, the powerful gaze to which Starobinski subjects Rousseau is also infused with a self-reflexive subtext of literary theoretical questions. Rousseau functions ultimately not only as the object of study, but also as a case study in literary criticism, from which it is hoped that wider theoretical conclusions may be drawn. Criticism, as Starobinski suggests in his essay *The Critical Relation*, is ultimately obliged to look beyond the textual object and its concomitant world, towards a "generalisation of its discoveries", towards "a theory (in the sense of *theoria*, intellectual contemplation) of literature".¹

Meta-critical and theoretical questions are therefore seldom absent from the horizon of Starobinski's thought. What are the ends of criticism? In what sense can the text of Rousseau's work be said to be revelatory of Rousseau himself? What function can the term "author" responsibly take on in literary

¹ *The Living Eye (LE)*, p.114.

theoretical discourse? In these senses, in the broad sweep of Rousseau's thought, and in particular in Rousseau's own reflections upon the nature of literature, the ends it might serve, and his envisaged directions for its potential transformation, Starobinski finds a fruitful way into some central theoretical and meta-critical questions relating to the very possibility of literary self-disclosure, the role of the critical imagination, and the nature of interpretation. In this chapter, my particular interest lies in the nature and origin of Starobinski's conception of the *implied author*.

Let us turn our attention initially to Rousseau, restricting our focus primarily to those aspects of his thought that can be said to inform and motivate Starobinski's general theoretical position. One of Starobinski's most fertile lines of engagement with Rousseau, centring on a dialectic of transparency and obstruction, has important roots in Rousseau's conception of truth. The question of truth is arguably Rousseau's most deep-seated bone of contention with what we might now call, for the sake of historical precision, the increasingly "enlightened" intellectual climate in which he found himself. For Rousseau (as for Keats as we saw earlier), the significance of truth must be framed within a discourse of the passions: "Love of truth ... is the noblest [passion] that can enter the heart of man."² Truth does not amount to a property of timeless propositions, but instead is essentially temporal, lived, existential. To know others is to know their truth, and it is the love of truth that motivates Rousseau's desire to see beyond the linguistic meaning of other people's utterances, and look instead into their "hearts", their pre-reflective being.

² Rousseau (1959), 'Ébauches des *Confessions*', Book I, p.1164, Trans. R.J. Morrissey, cited in Starobinski (1988), p.xiv.

Rousseau privileges pre-reflective acts over deliberated ones, and aligns reflection with man's supposed fallenness from a kind of Edenic or Arcadian grace. As Starobinski points out, in Rousseau's *Dialogues* "sensuous souls" are depicted communicating through instantaneous signs rather than with "plodding" ("consequitive", as Keats would put it) discourse.³ In this sense, Rousseau understands reflection as introducing a rupture into the primordial connectedness (an "alliance of sympathy"⁴, as Starobinski puts it) of all humans, other creatures, and the whole of the natural world.

Love of truth, then, as the noblest passion, motivates Rousseau's valorisation of the existential truth of one's own lived being. In *Dialogues*, Rousseau develops an account of self-love as being, in one sense, a kind of contented and undivided self-presence and self-involvement. Yet such self-love cannot properly be construed as solipsistic, as Rousseau works to pre-empt the very topology of a self comprising an inside and an outside. In its untroubled idyllic state, the self is immersed in a stream of affection, and remains unconcerned with whether this affection flows from self or Other. In Rousseau's view, this primordial self-love merges seamlessly into sympathy with others.

Thus sympathy, for Rousseau, is no mere aspiration: there is such a thing, even if it lies dormant in the hearts of most "civilised" men. Sympathy, pre-reflective and antecedent to reason, remains a power for those, like Rousseau, in whom the "voice of nature" survives. Rousseau's position is that in perfect sympathy, one attains, however fleetingly, a primordial unity with the Other. Rousseau, like Keats, is not primarily preoccupied here with metaphysics. Indeed, it seems to me that Rousseau's emphasis upon the primitive importance

³ *LE*, p.55.

⁴ *LE*, p.59.

of Nature lends support to the interpretation that the sense of his conception of this interpersonal unity is phenomenological rather than metaphysical. This is to say that, without wishing to over-interpret him, Rousseau seems to imply that in sympathy the subject is not concerned with the strictly metaphysical question of whether the otherness of the Other is an illusion. The otherness of the Other simply becomes phenomenologically transparent, in what is for Rousseau an ultimately mysterious act of consciousness (for Rousseau provides no detailed explication of primordial sympathy of the kind produced by Scheler). The sympathetic effacement of otherness is a manifestation of the transparency of experience for which Rousseau longs, and which he understands to be a return to the innocence of natural intersubjectivity.

While Rousseau's ideas of truth and truthfulness illuminate the axiological dimension to his desire for transparency, his motivations can also be understood from a more explicitly sociological perspective. Rousseau is perplexed and repelled by the superficial conversations that he comes across in Geneva's salons. For Rousseau, the perversity of such ostensible social engagement consists in its insincerity, in its occlusion of true feelings. And at the same time, Rousseau's own openness to others is obstructed by his social awkwardness and anxiety. Timid and easily embarrassed, he turns to writing as a passage to authentic self-disclosure.

The striking, indeed revolutionary, feature of Rousseau's literary ambitions, and his ambitions for literature itself, is the way in which he sweeps aside the notion of literary language as a common property or tool for the production of meaning which is in some substantive sense distinct from the author's own subjectivity. Instead, the work is understood to *somehow*

(Rousseau's failure to adequately explicate this is ultimately significant) embody the author's very being. As Starobinski puts it, Rousseau "was the first to experience the dangerous compact between ego and language, the 'new alliance' in which man makes himself the word."⁵ It is this theoretical paradigm shift, entailing an authorial re-appropriation and re-assimilation of language, which leads Starobinski to claim that Rousseau "truly invented a new attitude, which became that of modern literature."⁶

Given such extraordinary stature accorded to Rousseau, specifically as a literary thinker, the paradox of Starobinski's engagement with Rousseau lies in the consistent emphasis Starobinski places upon the significant inadequacies, to which we shall shortly turn, in Rousseau's theoretical understanding of literature. This is indeed, I would suggest, the crucial dialectic informing Starobinski's relation to Rousseau. Starobinski's insight into Rousseau's aspirations for literature is that, while they seem to provide *prima facie* grounds for dismissing Rousseau as (in the worst kind of sense) a sentimental Romantic, the very fault-lines in Rousseau's implicit manifesto for literature themselves intimate and open up radically new and important literary theoretical and meta-critical questions. Let us look more closely at what seems to go wrong in Rousseau's account.

Rousseau's literary project is bound up with a quest for self-knowledge. Self-knowledge would seem to be a logical pre-requisite for faithful self-portraiture, which is the explicitly stated aim of his *Confessions*. Yet for Rousseau, self-knowledge is not only logically prior to such unflinching autobiographical literary production, for as we shall see, self-knowledge itself is

⁵ Starobinski (1988), p.xxiv.

⁶ Starobinski (1988), p.xxiv.

attained precisely in and through such literary endeavour. The attainment of new forms of self-knowledge comes to be understood to be part of the subjective significance of being an author.

In the interests of self-knowledge, Rousseau intends in writing his *Confessions* to both re-live past experiences and work at other times as a detached self-observer. As Starobinski puts it, Rousseau assigns himself a double duty of “complete unity and total fission”.⁷ Rousseau's view that self-knowledge stems from both feeling and detachment echoes his ambivalent stance towards reflection. To be sure, reflection in the first instance is held to fracture the idyllic self-presence that we considered earlier. Yet on occasion Rousseau also concedes that a sustained regression to the primitive pre-reflective state is impossible. Instead, the unavoidable remedy lies in a painstaking and progressive transformation of man through ongoing reason and reflection. Reflection, for Rousseau, turns out to be both poison and cure.

Let us turn first to the question of detached self-contemplation. Rousseau's fascination with mechanical technology and scientific instrumentation is connected with a valorisation of its capacity for impartial empirical observation. It is understandable, therefore, that at one point Rousseau should wish to liken his literary technique to that of working inside a camera obscura, the elaborate optical device providing exactly the kind of dispassionate images to which Rousseau aspires. Rousseau finds himself drawn to the *ekstasis* of the obscura's projection, for the impassive fidelity of mechanical optics, for the epistemic promise and variable viewpoints of its rotating all-seeing eye.

⁷ *LE*, pp.63-4.

Yet Rousseau appears to overlook the idea that any literary description, unlike the potentially variable viewpoints of the projected images of the camera obscura, remains locked in its perspective, and must necessarily, to a greater or lesser degree, shape and construct its object. If one's chosen object is oneself, as it is for Rousseau, then the problem of detachment would seem to be further compounded. It is not surprising that as his work proceeds, Rousseau becomes less certain about his chances of success.⁸

Questions of detached self-contemplation aside, what is one to make of what we might call Rousseau's expressivism? Rousseau's proposed transparency of expression is motivated by what Starobinski calls a "soulful imperative",⁹ an impulse to disclose with perspicuity one's deepest affective states. Let us consider in more detail Rousseau's idea of a literary work being in some sense adequate to the author's phenomenal being. Formulated thus, without reference to a reader as such, it amounts to a view that Starobinski is broadly prepared to sustain. Starobinski explicates it as a particular form of artistic narcissism. It finds an analogy in the myth of Pygmalion, who desired his own artwork (an ivory statue) to such a degree that Aphrodite decided to answer his prayer and make it come to life. Narcissism of this kind involves a double movement which obviates the need for the kind of straightforward self-reflection provided by a mirror. One initially alienates oneself in the production of the work, only to seek self-communion precisely through engagement with the work. Far from disparaging such narcissism, Starobinski stresses its deeply demanding and creative nature. Perhaps most importantly, the artistic desire

⁸ As Starobinski points out, there is a deeply sceptical passage in one of Rousseau's letters in which he writes "We do not see the souls of others, for they are hidden, nor do we see our own, because we have no intellectual mirror. We are in every respect blind, but blind from birth." (*Correspondance*, Vol.3, p.354. Trans. *LE*, p.64).

⁹ *LE*, p.73.

involved is bound up with the imagination. For Rousseau, the imagination is the setting not only for a kind of curiously perfected yet introverted intersubjectivity, but also for an idyllic self-love and self-presence. Pygmalion adores himself in what he has made.

The suggestion here is that while relations with others may seem only to disappoint in comparison with fantasy, an imagined communion with the "other" of one's own artwork offers the catharsis and satisfaction of a perfect interaction. It is in this movement that affective adequation is apprehended by the artist. The artwork compensates the artist for the disappointments of life, for unrequited desire. In communing with his desire, Rousseau attains the kind of primitive happiness he longs for, in which he is sufficient unto himself.

I suspect that what is right about this idea is that it captures the movement of an entirely plausible account of authentic poetic creation. According to this account, the poet in his or her most private moments is possessed of a pure motivation not so much to communicate as simply to express – to externalise, even expurgate - something that lies within. Naturally, the poet has a good sense of when such expression has been accomplished, of when the job is done. In this case, questions of communication, of being understood, are in an important sense secondary, or even immaterial for the artist. As Starobinski suggests, Rousseau was arguably among the first to seriously give primacy to the expressive function of literary language. But the difficulty with Rousseau's conception of the transparency of expression lies in its Janus-like quality of looking both back to the author's interiority and forward to the reader as such. Rousseau's self-expression always seems to have not only an accusative but a dative, an anonymous other to whom Rousseau imagines he

is disclosing himself. This conception of transparency of the text *for the reader* holds out the promise of a primordial sympathy between reader and author of the kind considered earlier, and, in Rousseau's case, thereby overcoming his sense of social alienation. Thus Rousseau's conception of literary expression ultimately turns out to be a conflation of self-expression and self-disclosure.

As Starobinski does not fail to point out, this turns out to be deeply problematic, both in literary theoretical terms, and in Rousseau's personal experience as a writer. The author may attain a kind of privileged self-communion in the work, but what Rousseau seems to overlook is that for any other reader of the work, the experience must necessarily be quite different. For readers other than the author, the encounter with a literary work is, as Starobinski puts it, "predicated upon loss of the object and its replacement (I do not say representation) by words".¹⁰ Literature is conditioned by the absence and inaccessibility of the originating primordial experience. What Starobinski calls "the purity of immediate sentiment",¹¹ far from being preserved for others, is precisely what is *lost*, the very moment the ink leaves the writer's pen. And authors become obliged, too, to take existential responsibility for the meanings they *choose* to see in their own work. But for Rousseau, the possibility of a proliferation of possible meanings leads only to anxiety about hostile and malicious interpretations. His later works, such as *Confessions*, betray a nervous cycle of correction and clarification.

Rousseau's apparent neurosis about the possibility of his writings being misunderstood is suggestive that he may have developed for himself the apprehension, unconscious or otherwise, that there was something inherently

¹⁰ *LE*, p.198.

¹¹ Starobinski (1988), p.xxv.

misguided about his aspirations for the transparency of literature.

Notwithstanding any doubts he may have had, however, Rousseau also preferred on occasion to disparage his own writing abilities and perpetuate his literary idealism. But Starobinski's scrutiny of Rousseau's project compels us now to confront the underlying theoretical problem that Rousseau unwittingly brings to light: if the very conception of literature as some kind of window onto the human heart begins to unravel before Rousseau's very eyes, to what extent does it make sense at all to configure the encounter with a literary work in intersubjective terms?

Starobinski is certainly alive to the seductions and pitfalls, epistemic and moral, of pretensions of being able to divine a soul in the transient play of appearances. According to Starobinski, the deepest intellectual concerns of *L'Oeil Vivant*, published in 1961, were already germinating in his mind some twenty years earlier amidst wartime anxiety surrounding the captivating power of charismatic leaders. What seems to have chilled the young Starobinski was the realisation that the charisma of such individuals "stemmed essentially from their knowing how to make use of a certain kind of mask".¹² For Starobinski, the perils of being seduced by appearances are bound up with a more general problematic of the desirous gaze. And he takes seriously the implicit insights and admonitions of classical myth. Poppaea's lovers come to grief because of their impetuous desire to see behind her veil. For the critic who desires to see too much, the risks are also serious. To fail to retain some distance from the text is to risk losing one's bearings in a manner which parallels the way in which Rousseau's persistent desire to see into others' hearts most often ends badly for

¹² *LE*, p.v.

him, in humiliation, confusion, or (in the end) paranoia. In attempting to see what cannot be seen, one is prone to fill in the void with a narcissistic projection. In Rousseau's case, a sense of personal guilt, apparently instilled during his puritanical upbringing, was not infrequently transformed into the presumption of the silent censure of others, the mirage of the hostile gaze.

In this context, Starobinski accords some validity to Paul Valéry's view that, at least in the normal course of events, and despite polite protestations to the contrary, we never do quite see with perspicuity into other people's affective lives. There is always an essential moment of ambiguity, a kind of truncation in empathic precision. Valéry traces the undecidability of foreign affectivity to a moment of signitive disguise that he considers to be constitutive of all human relations. His conclusion is as memorable as it is dialectical: "Human relations are based on ciphers. To decipher is to become confused."¹³ For Starobinski, part of the significance of this Valérian line of thought lies in the sense that, even in the very act of revealing oneself, something is always held back, obscured, or deferred.

Yet this hardly confounds the case for an intersubjective approach to literature. To the extent that empathy *does* take place in human relations, should we not at least take seriously the *possibility* of a literary analogue? Starobinski stands by the view that to the extent that a literary work implies thought at all, such thought cannot but be correlated with a consciousness employing the available linguistic resources of the times. Starobinski's dialectical solution to the problem of literary intersubjectivity centres on his conception of a work's *implied author*. It is time now for us to consider this idea more closely.

¹³ Valéry (1932), pp.103-4, Trans. *LE*, p.231.

In this chapter so far, it has become relatively clear that Starobinski's engagement with Rousseau has put Rousseau's literary ideals, and his manifesto for the transparency of literature, under quite serious pressure. Perhaps it is at junctures such as this that the many advantages of the critical approaches of the formalists, structuralists, and textualists become most apparent. In restricting attention to objectively observable features of the work, and to the life of the text itself, difficulties connected with the urge to see a hidden source or origin beyond what is manifestly given are systematically avoided. Starobinski himself, as it will turn out, is no anti-structuralist. Yet one of the dialectical subtleties of Starobinski's approach to the study of literature lies in the importance, indeed necessity, that he attaches to traditional philological rigour in tracking down, to the maximum scholarly extent possible, the nature of a given text's originary historico-linguistic context. To be sure, for Starobinski, cultural context and supposed *Zeitgeist* are not in themselves wholly adequate explanations of the literary work. The greatest authors not only subsist within their cultural environment, but kick against it, innovating and invigorating the very womb from which they are born. Yet this very individuality can only become fully delineable and intelligible against its contemporary cultural backdrop. Starobinski studies Rousseau in his socio-historical context precisely to illuminate Rousseau's radical differentiation and innovation. And Starobinski's point of departure from the formalists is that the text cannot ultimately be properly distilled and withdrawn from the passage of history. For this reason, he does not equivocate on the point that a diligent undertaking of the usual philological groundwork – the determination of “precise definitions of words in their historical context”, for example, and “establishing scrupulously accurate

texts”¹⁴ in the first place – is quite simply a prerequisite for any subsequent critical work, regardless of interpretive brilliance.

Even so, Starobinski's methodological interest in literary origins should not be interpreted as evidence of a literary theoretical commitment, at least in terms of the most crucial and distinctive aspects of his theoretical position, to a conception of “author” as necessarily absented and distantiated across the divide of historical time. Starobinski's theoretical understanding of literature ultimately moves beyond the terms and ambit of a purely philological discourse.

Nonetheless, in *Blindness and Insight*, Paul de Man claims that in his treatment of Rousseau, Starobinski is attempting to intuit truths about the historical Rousseau, truths that lie beyond the ostensible meaning of what Rousseau actually wrote. In the preface to *The Living Eye*, however, Starobinski, while admitting that his critical perspective may require some supplementary clarification, convincingly answers de Man's charge by pointing out that Rousseau himself urges his readers not to read him at face value. Starobinski insists that his critical interest never alters its focus from the Rousseau as author implicit across the entirety of Rousseau's work. For Starobinski, the literary text is not conceived as a mask behind which a pre-given author is *a priori* condemned to concealment, but instead as precisely a privileged disclosure of a particular and distinctive conscious interiority.

For Starobinski, the idea that a literary work should be correlated with an individual consciousness is not an isolated critical theme, or mere phenomenological detail, but instead goes to the very heart of his conception of what literature turns out to be, at least in its greatest and most significant

¹⁴ *LE*, p.115.

manifestations. To adumbrate such individuality, it is not sufficient for a work to simply *employ* a given language, to operate it according to its grammatical and syntactical requirements, and according to one's referential intentions, that is, to master it as one masters a bicycle to accomplish a specified journey, no matter how original or pioneering that journey may be. The literary work is distinguished from other instances of language usage by the fact that it *changes* the language in some way, and makes it its own. Literature ruptures the determinacy of language, in the sense that it is both conditioned by and conditions its language. The autonomy of literature gives it the power to change the course of history: it can alter the shapes of consciousness in a dialectical action of compliance and subversion of its language. As Starobinski sees it, the essential tension of literature is that it is both a "celebration" and a "profanation" of language.¹⁵ It is, in particular, this aspect of profanation which enables the correlation of a text with an individuated and distinctive consciousness, and informs Starobinski's fundamental intuition that literature is "intimately associated with a personal way of being in the world".¹⁶

The "profanation" of language of which Starobinski speaks can be understood in multiple ways. In one sense, at work here is an image of trauma, transgression, and violation. Writers, though existing within, or in relation to, a prevalent culture, make their way out of the temple of the cultural *Logos*, of linguistic and spoken conformity, towards a more marginal, semi-detached vantage point. From belonging within, the writer withdraws into a kind of parasitic ambivalence, if not overt hostility. Starobinski observes that the outstanding works of modern literature tend to relate to the world by rejecting it

¹⁵ *LE*, p.116.

¹⁶ *LE*, p.215.

in some way. The opposition to culture comes to be reflected in the violation of its literary and linguistic norms. At some level (precisely which, the critic must judge) the work remains internally consistent, yet stubbornly opposed to its outside. It falls to the critic to uncover the signs of destructuring and deviation manifestly or latently operating within the work.¹⁷

Yet Starobinski also recognises that literature's profanation of language is not always obviously traumatic. There is a softer way in which literature announces its cultural differentiation and individuation, and it involves bending and deforming language out of its customary shapes and contours. At this level, the question of hostile transgression become less prominent, and language's profanation becomes, too, its celebration. The writer may have left the temple, but may also turn outside to face it, to stand before it. While the style of a work may break or vitiate its host language, it may equally bend it and place it under the torsions of a personal rhetoric. Either way, the notion of *literary* style, for Starobinski, has now become intimately, even inseparably, associated with *existential* style. Such "style" can push expressive capacity and suppleness to its limits. Style as such has now become something more substantive than a vague reference to a work's way with words. Style is now not only surface but somehow contiguous with existential reality, not only artistic appearance but an opening onto authorial being.

In this respect, Starobinski believes that, for all of Rousseau's excesses, there is still something to be learnt from Rousseau's ambitions for style: Rousseau understands style's simultaneously subversive and authentic moments. Rousseau comes to the view that the nature of style, or at least of the kind of

¹⁷ *LE*, p.120.

style that his own autobiographical endeavours require, must be far more radical than merely the superficial, expedient, or even cynical employment of rhetorical technique and literary artifice. The allegiance of style lies not with accepted fashions or mannerisms, with the prevalent cultural grooves of expression (no matter how intricate or sophisticated they may have become) made familiar in the daily traffic of social encounters, but with the impulses, motivations, and directions of the individual's conscious interiority. The production of an authentic style amounts to the invention of a new language, the creation of a personal dictionary. As Rousseau pledges in *Confessions*,

I will always have whatever style comes to me; I shall change it without scruple according to my mood; I shall say each thing as I feel it, as I see it, without straining for effect, without embarrassment, and without worrying about the mixture of colours. By surrendering to the impression received and to the sentiment of the moment, I shall paint the state of my soul twice over, at the moment the event occurred and at the moment I wrote it down.¹⁸

Even as Rousseau elaborates his philosophy of style, however, the cracks in his position become more apparent. While his literary aim is clearly fixed or fixated on self-immediacy and self-transparency, he finds himself driven to a signitive metaphor to capture the operations of his authorial processes: an image of painting. The difficulty here is that representation is somehow being conflated with presentation. A painting of Rousseau does not render present Rousseau, except in the most hyperbolic of views. If it did, one would perceive Rousseau, not a painting of him. Depending upon the skills of the artist, Rousseau may be said to be *depicted*, but in depiction, *qua* depiction, the transparency of immediacy is ineluctably lost.

¹⁸ Rousseau (1959), Book I, pp.1153-4. Trans. *LE*, p.179.

Starobinski intimates precisely this problem when summarising Rousseau's understanding of the function of style: "Style [for Rousseau] *points infallibly* to the author's inward truth."¹⁹ It would seem that the aporia in Rousseau's thought has now been relayed into Starobinski's paraphrase, in which "painting" has become "pointing", and that Starobinski's very effort to convey Rousseau's view coherently results in the dubious idea of an infallible pointing. But pointing, like painting, necessarily implies distance, and distance surely precludes infallibility.

I alluded earlier to some of the alternative theoretical approaches to literature which could be said to bypass the troubling question of intersubjectivity. The siren call of scepticism would seem to offer the modern critic a comfortable way out, a resigned, even quietly relieved, retreat into the dispassionate impersonal analyses of structure, form, and text. The sceptical escape route even seems attuned, on the face of it, to the very ethos of detached critical discourse. To simply look carefully at a text, instead of curiously, even desirously, *into* it, is to remain discretely isolated from the difficult involvements of empathy and feeling, and, in short, the personal encounter.

The originality of Starobinski's ultimate critical response to Rousseau lies in the fact that he does not straightforwardly discard the spirit of Rousseau's intersubjective aspirations as some kind of hopeless artefact of a discredited form of Romantic idealism. The Starobinskian insight into Rousseau is to observe just how close Rousseau actually is to a coherent theoretical understanding of the intersubjectivity of literature. Rousseau is fundamentally right, in Starobinski's view, to propose and pursue the idea that questions of

¹⁹ *LE*, pp.178-9. My emphasis.

intersubjectivity go to the very heart of what it is to be a writer, and of what it is, in turn, to encounter as a reader a work of literature. Rousseau's difficulties, however, at both a theoretical and a personal level, relate to an inadequate grasp of the relation between appearance and reality in the context of encountering the Other. Rousseau sets out in his literary work, and often too in the encounters described in his *Confessions*, to somehow circumvent external appearances. He desires to bare his own heart, and to see directly into other people's. Yet his literary dissatisfactions, and his social disconnections, jointly intimate an underlying failure to address the difficulties of otherness.

The alternative view which informs Starobinski's entire critical approach first receives detailed philosophical elaboration only in the twentieth-century phenomenological work of Husserl and Stein on the question of intersubjectivity. As I indicated in a previous chapter, one of the most distinctive features of the Husserl-Stein account is the positing of a fundamental phenomenological contiguity between appearance and being. An object's being is ultimately inseparable from the primordial appearances which found its intersubjective co-constitution. And outward bodily expressions are held to be capable of disclosing through appresentation the nature of the person's conscious motivations. It is precisely through this phenomenological conception of contiguity that Starobinski proposes to transcend the appearance/reality dichotomy in the context of literature. The motivations implicit in literary expression, and capable of textual explication under the rubric of style, are now coherently understood to constitute the contents of an implicit authorial consciousness.

Further detailed study of Starobinski's thought (opportunities for which will be limited within the scope of the remainder of this thesis) would help to bring out the ways in which he denies neither that objective textual analysis is important to literary criticism, nor that the literary work always remains essentially open to multiple readings, and that critics ultimately find themselves to be existentially implicated and entangled in the forces at work in their own interpretations. Yet perhaps the most theoretically decisive aspect of his thought, the commitment which arguably governs his fundamental understanding of criticism, is the view that the literary work itself, distinct from historical background and philological enquiry, has the capacity to grant us an intersubjectively privileged insight into the intentionality of the Other, that is, that the work possesses and opens onto an inherent authorial consciousness.

This conception of the inherence of what is other leads Starobinski to configure the interiority of the inherent author as a kind of *latency* within the work. The Other's experience, precisely in being that of an Other, is not, to the reader's eye and mind, primordially accessible and apprehensible in the manner in which the textual surface and its manifest semantic value could be said to be. The Other is *present within* the work, neither manifest at the surface nor secretly hidden away, or hermetically sealed behind the symbols of the text. Instead, the Other is accessible *via* the text, susceptible to what Starobinski calls "greater penetration" into the work, towards its "second meaning".²⁰ We are dealing here with neither an encryption nor a straightforward occlusion. The critic's work is not at root to be understood as a project of deciphering, accomplished with the

²⁰ *LE*, p.11.

hypothesising guile common to allegorical or psychoanalytical interpretations, but rather a much more direct *seeing into* the work, an apperceptual penetration.

The textual Other is never disjoint from its textual appearance because its principal presenting aspect is that of literary style, the expression of authorial individuality in the profanation of language. For this reason, the search for what is deepest in a work often returns to what is formally and semantically relatively near to the surface of the text. Starobinski intimates this deeply phenomenological idea of a transcending of the appearance/reality opposition in the following way:

Frequently the search for what is most remote leads to what is nearest at hand: to what was obvious at first glance, the forms and rhythms that seemed merely to hold the promise of a secret message. After a long detour we come back to the words themselves, where meaning chooses to reside, and that gleaming mysterious treasure we had felt compelled to seek in a "deeper dimension".²¹

Literary façade and underlying being are ultimately fused into coherence: there can be no circumvention of the text. And in the literary as in the purely phenomenological domain, Starobinski suggests, we find the ontological force of the appearance/reality dichotomy to have been all but neutralised.

The trajectory of Starobinski's thought has now taken us from a strictly psychophysical conception of author to one belonging to pure consciousness. The concept of author has been transposed from embeddedness within history into the domain of the imagination. For this reason, Starobinski understands the intersubjective latency of the text to be "the vaster life or transfigured death

²¹ *LE*, p.12.

inherent in it.”²² The death to which Starobinski refers is that of the original living intentions of the historical author, a necessary death, promised and predicted in the undoing of Rousseau's fated hopes for literary self-transparency. Yet the “author's lived intentions” as such find a sense in which they can meaningfully survive, but only in a “transfigured” and non-primordial form, buried yet readable within the permanence of a text.

²² *LE*, p.12.

Chapter 6 - Literature's Capacity for Moral Suggestion

I began my earlier chapter on Keats's meta-poetical thought by remarking upon the way in which Keats registers an ostensible polarity between philosophical and poetical thought. We observed that Keats links poetry to a kind of protean pleasure capable of surprising and confounding the theoretically orientated "virtuous philosopher". Moral philosophy is indeed fundamentally concerned with general features of situations and actions, while literature very often seems to display, at least on the surface, precisely the opposite orientation: a preoccupation with singularity, with what seems to render experiences and events unique and unrepeatable. On the account of Keats's thought that I have provided, one has to admit that it would be difficult to imagine Keats being anything but instinctively sceptical about the possibility or validity of systematic moral deliberation. In this sense, the pursuit of the idea that literature has, after all, some contribution to make to moral philosophy would seem to be adventitious to the direction of Keats's poetical aspirations. Yet in that initial chapter of my thesis it emerged that Keats also takes the proper concerns of poetry to include what are, by any standards, some of the most serious and central questions pertaining to the human condition: questions, for example, to do with suffering, existential anxiety, and uncertainty. I argued that Keats implies that grasping a poetical treatment of such subject matter is ultimately connected with the question of empathy. From this perspective, it is not unreasonable to speculate that if, as Keats suggests, poetry can be a source of non-propositional insight into such matters, then such insight could turn out to have an important influence, possibly indirect but nonetheless formative, upon ethical understanding. More generally, and without wishing to pursue any

further my exegesis of Keats's theoretical position, I want to suggest in this chapter that empathic emotional engagement with a work of literature can be profoundly relevant in various ways to the processes of moral deliberation. Naturally, and as we shall soon discover in more detail, the suggestion that the modes of poetic contemplation are not merely at variance with those of deductive moral enquiry, but are also deeply relevant in other ways and at other levels to moral reflection, opens onto a set of interwoven moral epistemological and literary theoretical questions. We need to try to clarify, in particular, exactly why it makes sense to speak of quasi-empathic involvement in a literary work, what the relation of such literary "empathy" might be to that of real-world interpersonal encounters, why such empathic imaginational involvement in a literary work should turn out to be relevant to moral philosophy, and whether literature's contribution to moral deliberation can be said on occasion to have aesthetic value. In this chapter, I want to begin to unravel some of these complexities.

The epistemic component of literary aesthetic moral cognitivism claims that some literary works are capable of conveying moral knowledge. The version of this position that I wish to consider in both this and the next chapter is a relatively strong one, as it makes two distinct yet cognitively complementary claims. Firstly, there is the claim that literature has a special capacity for moral *suggestion*, and that the moral suggestions that a work of literature can make may correspond not only to beliefs either that the reader already holds, or at least whose content the reader is already familiar with, but, importantly, to views and insights that the reader simply would not have come across were it not for reading the literary work. Secondly, there is the claim that literature can be a

source of moral *justification* for the very suggestions it seems to be making, which is to say that there may be occasions on which the reader does not need to turn to activities extrinsic to the encounter with a literary work in order to rationally decide that what the work is suggesting is in fact morally justified. In observing that these two types of claim (a claim regarding moral suggestion, and a claim regarding moral justification) are involved in aesthetic moral cognitivism, I do not presuppose that proponents of aesthetic moral cognitivism are necessarily committed to the traditional tripartite account of knowledge, an account which remains a matter of epistemological dispute, most notably in the wake of Gettier-style counter-examples purporting to show that occasions can arise in which true justified beliefs do not reasonably count as knowledge. For the purposes of this chapter, it is sufficient for us merely to endorse the view that even if the traditional tripartite account of knowledge should turn out to require some kind of enhancement, any such enhancement would not have to involve a cancellation of the justification condition. Indeed, one of the main ways of responding to Gettier-style counter-examples (by those who take Gettier's position to be sound) is to argue that the tripartite account needs to be supplemented with a fourth condition, not that the justification condition needs to be replaced. Without committing ourselves either way with respect to the traditional tripartite account, we can, I would suggest, engage substantively with what is epistemically at stake in aesthetic moral cognitivism by restricting the scope of our investigations in this chapter and the next to the related questions of moral suggestion and moral justification. In the course of our investigation, I intend to draw attention in particular to two different kinds of object of moral suggestion: putative intuitions pertaining to the domain of values, and putative

phenomenological knowledge pertaining to the essential structures of what might be called “virtuous” experience. In both cases, I will wish to pursue in subsequent chapters the questions of rational moral justification, and of aesthetic value.

I want to begin our discussion of literature's capacity for moral suggestion by considering the problem of suggestive relativism. Proponents of what we might call literary aesthetic moral relativism will argue that great works of literature can certainly stimulate us to think afresh about moral questions, but that different readers will respond in different, and perhaps even opposing, ways. On this view, it would seem that the contribution of the literary work to the reader's moral deliberation is not to convey some determinate moral lesson, understood to be proper to the work itself, but instead solely to stimulate the reader's moral thinking, to put in play a set of ideas and questions that readers themselves must work through, in their own different ways. Articulated thus, the position of literary aesthetic moral relativism seems to lead us to view the literary work not even as strictly a “suggestor” of moral opinion, but primarily and essentially a “catalyst” of moral reflection.

Jenefer Robinson's work *Deeper Than Reason* can provide us with some assistance at this point in our discussion. I find Robinson's thought to be particularly relevant here because, while remaining alive to certain important possible connections between literary experience and moral learning (I do not say knowledge), she is also not prepared to repress the issue of literature's moral indeterminacy. On the one hand, she is interested precisely in the kind of literary works pertinent to the present chapter, works that can rightly be described as “morally serious”, in that they manifestly seek to confront and engage with

serious moral questions.¹ Yet on the other hand, Robinson recognises that different readers could have different, “equally plausible”,² interpretations of such a work, and that her prime example, Edith Wharton’s novel *The Reef*, which Robinson understands (not unreasonably) to be a “meditation on morality”,³ does not, for all its meditating, turn out to answer moral questions unambiguously.⁴

Robinson grounds the validity of a plurality of moral interpretations in her acceptance of an inevitable factual plurality in different readers’ emotional experiences of a given work. Robinson suggests that readers become emotionally engaged with a novel to the extent that aspects of the plot and characters appeal to the readers’ value commitments, interests, and emotional and psychological needs.⁵ Robinson also endorses Wolfgang Iser’s view that in addition to responding to characters and events that the narrative explicitly describes, an important part of reading a novel involves engaging one’s imagination in relation to things that the narrative omits. Accomplished novelists shape and construct their fictional worlds in part by skilfully selecting which perspectives to adopt, and which aspects of people or events to reveal. Yet these aspects and perspectives appresent a complete imaginary world, a world which “goes on”, so to speak, in between scenes, a world in which a brief glimpse of someone’s expression can bespeak a rich and complex mental life. Robinson implies that such “gaps” in a narrative contribute to a novel’s indeterminacy of meaning, because the manner in which readers “fill in” such lacunae will be conditioned to some extent by their own personalities and autonomous choices,

¹ Robinson (2005), p.159.

² Robinson (2005), p.185.

³ Robinson (2005), p.187.

⁴ Robinson (2005), p.178.

⁵ Robinson (2005), p.176.

and not wholly by what is disclosed in the text.⁶ Robinson's claim here, of course, is not that a literary work's meaning is wholly indeterminate, but that it is not wholly determinate. She wants to suggest not that *any* reading is critically permissible or appropriate, but that there is no reason in principle why substantially different, and even conflicting, readings should not emerge, and even that the structure of literary understanding itself is conducive to such critical plurality arising. She attributes hermeneutic variations, as I have indicated, to lacunae in the text, and ultimately to the impossibility of erasing the reader's critical subjectivity from the experience that a literary work seems to be offering.

As Robinson rightly indicates, readings can reasonably be said to be critically inappropriate when they become detached from any plausible philological or textual grounding.⁷ There remains something to be got right in a work of literary criticism, I would suggest, because literary works (and certainly great ones) do not merely present an inchoate constellation of ideas, but manifest some kind of organising principle, effecting a treatment of an underlying problem or theme. Yet in seeking to make general claims about the processes involved in literary criticism, one always needs to tread carefully, and my blunt assertion that engaging in literary criticism involves an attempt to apprehend features of the work's treatment of one or more themes may seem to risk in some way vitiating the delicacy of what it is, or what it should be, to encounter a literary work on its own terms, in all its otherness, uniqueness, and particularity. It may help, therefore, if I qualify my claim straight away with the point that in this context I do not employ the concept of "theme" as a way of transcending the

⁶ Robinson (2005), p.184, 192.

⁷ Robinson (2005), p.192.

literary work, but on the supposition that the work itself may possess its own implicit conception of what a theme can be, and of how a theme can be treated and developed. My suggestion here, then, is that serious literary works typically display an orientation toward exploration and enquiry into a certain discernible subject matter; that an important part of our valuing certain works is to do with what we take to be the importance of their subject; that we often explicate the importance of great works under the traditional humanistic rubric of their being “explorative of the human condition”; that questions pertaining to the human condition certainly include questions of morality. It would be premature at this stage in our discussion to jump to grand claims about the constitutive capacity of great literature to provide very clear answers to such questions. Indeed, to do so would be to overlook a somewhat less controversial yet highly significant observation: that literary works can be remarkably adept at articulating and illuminating moral problems *qua problems*. To clarify what is at stake in a moral problem, not only intellectually but in terms of value commitments, would in itself constitute an extremely important contribution to the processes of moral reflection. In stating matters in this way I am deliberately lowering the bar below the stringent requirement of acquiring the kind of moral *knowledge* that enables one to answer moral philosophical questions to do with knowing how a moral agent should act in certain situations, knowing more generally how to decide how to act morally, or being able to answer meta-ethical questions, e.g. questions such as whether moral values are objective, or whether all moral dilemmas are resolvable. My intention in lowering the bar in this way is not to imply that I am prejudging the discussion in a later chapter regarding the question of literature's occasional capacity to genuinely provide justification for

certain moral beliefs, but to bring into focus where literature's most obvious strengths in contributing to moral reflection seem to lie. For all the interpretive leeway implied by the reader-response aspects of literary criticism that we recently considered, the crucial point that now cannot be ignored is that morally serious works *call out for understanding* by the competent critic, in virtue of their (I do not say the critic's) intrinsic orientation toward the exploration of moral themes, conflicts, and problems. In this chapter I want to show how an investigation into the phenomenology of the critical reader's attempt to understand a literary work's explorations of moral questions can illuminate the nature of the different kinds of moral suggestion that literary works are capable of making, and that the apprehension of such moral suggestions turns out to be deeply integrated into the essential phenomenological structure of reading a work of literature.

We need to pursue a little further the important idea just intimated that a literary work's deepest meanings, and the levels of meaning with which critics are often most interested, are those bound up with the elaboration of a certain theme, and that such thematic elaboration coheres around what we might call "cogitative" (I do not yet say "cognitive") explorations or streams of enquiry. On the one hand, there is no need for us to presuppose that such literary meditations should necessarily arrive at some kind of unequivocal conclusion. Yet, on the other hand, the unity of the work, and our ultimate critical basis for taking it to be a single accomplished work rather than a collection of disparate textual pieces, depend to some extent upon different strands of contemplation discernible within the text being connected and coordinated in certain crucial ways. On unearthing such connections, critics can justifiably feel that they have

made progress in unlocking the secrets of the literary work in question, and that they are contributing substantively to the literary discourse surrounding that text. I would suggest that the contemplative coherence of a work can be an important contributor to our grounds for correlating its thematic elaborations with a single meditating consciousness. In this case, we need to investigate the extent to which a literary work's capacity for moral suggestion is bound up with the reader's experience of an implied author.

In chapter 5 ('Starobinski's Conception of the Implied Author') we considered Starobinski's understanding of the way in which the literary style manifested in a work has the capacity to disclose aspects, to use Starobinski's own phrase, of an implied author's "personal way of being in the world".⁸ I argued that Starobinski's account is connected in important ways to the phenomenological understanding of intersubjectivity, and in particular to the positions of Husserl and Stein discussed in earlier chapters. In the chapter on Starobinski, I sought to begin to develop the idea that the manner in which the experience of textual features of a literary work grounds the apperception of an implied authorial conscious interiority is not unrelated phenomenologically to the manner in which the perceptual experience of an Other's bodily appearance and expression grounds the empathic constitution of a foreign subjectivity, and its associated personality, motivations, and lived experiences. The notion of an implied author is also one which Robinson discusses in relation to a reader's emotional and imaginal involvement in a literary work, although Robinson's understanding of emotional response is framed within a physiological and psychological discourse, rather than a phenomenological one.

⁸ Starobinski (1989), p.215.

Robinson understands the implied author to be a kind of “construction” built up by the reader as he or she progresses through the work.⁹ Yet there are two reasons why Robinson’s notion of construction here does not parallel very closely the Husserlian concept of constitution. Firstly, she clearly indicates that she regards the nature of such acts of construction as inferential rather than intuitional or apperceptual.¹⁰ Secondly, Robinson’s evident enthusiasm for reader-response theory works to draw her position away from the idea (which I am interested in pursuing) of an implied author certain features of whom can be understood to be amenable to intersubjective co-constitution by different (philologically responsible and textually attentive) readers. Indeed, Robinson suggests on at least three occasions that different readers of the same literary work will be liable to construct different implied authors.¹¹ For Robinson, the respects in which the construction of the implied author is reader-relative are important because they have a bearing on the reader’s emotional experience of the work. Such emotional experiences, in Robinson’s view, can be a source of learning about life in general, and human relationships and morality in particular. The disadvantage, however, of Robinson’s stressing of the reader-relativity of emotional experience is that it risks unnecessarily underestimating the potential epistemic contribution of the work itself, and the idea that literature can on occasion be a *source* of intersubjectively identifiable moral suggestion.

To take seriously the idea of an implied author is to commit oneself, even if only implicitly, to the relevance of, and the need to elaborate upon, a certain understanding of *literary empathy*, conceived as the apperception and comprehension of such things as the implied author’s mental life, lived

⁹ Robinson (2005), pp.159, 181, 188.

¹⁰ Robinson (2005), p.181, Note 61.

¹¹ Robinson (2005), pp.179, 186, 188.

experiences, and personality. Indeed, in the course of this and subsequent chapters, I intend to bring out ways in which the idea of literary empathy can help to illuminate and orientate what thinkers such as Jenefer Robinson, Catherine Wilson, Berys Gaut, and Tzachi Zamir have to say about the relation of literature to moral knowledge. As my phrase “literary empathy”¹² seems to suggest, we need to use the term “empathy” in this context in a qualified manner. Empathy proper, in both its “basic” and “authentic” forms, as Husserl and Stein have shown us, is essentially a positing act, a perception of something which exists or is taking place. In this sense, “empathy” seems, on the face of it, to be, strictly speaking, inappropriate to literary theoretical discourse, a *prima facie* observation which perhaps goes some way (but not all the way) toward explaining why the term “empathy” is not infrequently simply absent from the indices of theoretical works which nonetheless seek to engage in some way with the relation between literature and morality, and which seem, furthermore, to take seriously the idea of an implied author, or an implied artist. One of my central contentions in this chapter, however, will be that, from a phenomenological perspective, *precisely* (I say again, *precisely*) the concept of empathy developed by Husserl and Stein turns out to be profoundly relevant to literary theoretical discourse, by virtue of the reproductive representation of an Other's experience being deeply embedded within the very phenomenological structures of literary experience and understanding.

In chapter 4 we reflected upon the aspect of Edith Stein's thought which recognises that emotions and values are essentially connected, and that careful attention to the givenness of emotional states provides the most immediate

¹² We might alternatively use the phrase “implied empathy” (empathy which is implied within the phenomenological structure of reading a literary work).

context for a clarification of one's own value commitments. We found that Stein suggests that feelings possess not only an "intensity" but a certain "depth", and that she explicates this "depth" in terms of a correlation with levels within a personal value hierarchy. It is in these ways that Stein aligns her own position with Scheler's understanding of the emotions and of values, and in particular with the Schelerian view that the emotions can be understood as conduits through which humans grasp values in a kind of axiological intuition, and that each person has a basic personal moral tenor which implies a subset of values to which the subject is particularly drawn. The significance of the relation between feeling-states and values for the question of moral cognitivism in a literary context is that it opens the door to a way of explaining how literary experience can on occasion be a source for the reader of discoveries in the realm of values, and of the kind of moral dispositions that an acceptance of such value perceptions would seem to motivate, and how, furthermore, such personal-level evaluative and moral development could properly be said to derive from an expressly *literary* experience. The idea that the exact nature of the evaluative suggestions apprehended during the course of reading a literary work should be understood as being directly tied to the detailed and complex emotional experience that the work itself seems to be offering would seem to imply that such evaluative suggestions are to be regarded as part of the unique fingerprint of the work, and that for this reason they simply could not have been grasped in their specificity were it not for the encounter with the literary work *qua* literary work. Indeed, one of my primary purposes in the course of this chapter is to substantiate, on the basis of both theoretical and critical reflection, the view that literary works can rightly be regarded as potential sources of sophisticated and

complex evaluative and moral suggestion, by virtue of the imaginative-empathic acquisition by the competent reader of ostensible intuitions pertaining to the domain of values, intuitions which are themselves deeply implied within the work. At the same time, I believe that as we proceed, it will also be important for us to remain open to the possibility that there may be other respects in which literary empathy substantially differs from non-literary or non-artistic interpersonal encounters, and that there may indeed be aspects of studying a work of literature that can provide levels of intersubjective insight that simply do not take place in non-literary contexts.

It is therefore now appropriate for us to turn our attention in more detail to the processes of seriously studying a work of literature, which I take to be the most fertile context in which moral learning, or at least morally relevant contemplation, is likely to take place in the encounter with a literary work. Anybody who has successfully studied literature at university level (or a comparable standard) will have developed and honed, in the accumulation of the texts studied, their own personal approach to studying literary works. It is not my intention to try to legislate for how scholars ought to go about reading literature, but to identify important universal or transpersonal aspects of this activity which, I would suggest, must inevitably arise, and particularly in the case of those whose reading patterns, either deliberately or pre-reflectively, are oriented toward an intersubjective relation to the work and its implied author. Without wishing to appear excessively programmatic in the way that I structure our discussion, I believe that the interests of clarity will be served if I begin by drawing attention to a central (perhaps even governing) dichotomy or “dialectic” that, I would suggest, needs to be at work in any attentive and diligent reading

process. This dialectic is to do with a complementary and alternating relationship between lived experience of the work and reflection upon it, on the part of the critic. During phases of lived experience of the work, the critic strives to enter into, and dwell within the life of the work, by which I mean the lived experiences that the work itself seems to be offering. During reflective phases, the critic extracts him/herself from emotional involvement in the work, and tries to render coherent all that s/he has read, thought, and experienced, not only in the most recent lived experience phase, but in all of the previous lived experience and reflective phases that have occurred since the process of studying the work began. In the chapter on Edith Stein and the problem of empathy, we noted the way in which Stein registers an important and unavoidable circularity in the ongoing processes of attempting to acquire ever more accurate apprehensions of someone else's presently lived experience and personality. We found that in order to reproduce an Other's experience it is necessary first to transpose oneself into their personality, but that the only way to properly grasp someone else's personality in all of its particularity (I refer here especially to value commitments) is to acquire a reproductive representation of their lived experiences for oneself. I argued in that chapter that Stein is proposing that it is only as an outcome of an ongoing and, in principle, potentially endless cycle of epistemic corroboration, correction, and clarification that one might attain a coterminous convergence upon veridical apprehensions of the Other's personality (on the one hand) and lived experiences (on the other). Literary works, I would suggest, need to be carefully read and re-read for exactly the same reason: the meaning of any given sentence attributed to the voice of an

implied author *both determines and is determined by* the underlying authorial personality implied by the text as a whole.¹³

If we wish to sustain the idea that the encounter with a literary work is capable of presenting a foreign subjectivity to the reader, then we need to enquire in more detail into the phenomenology of such literary intersubjective experience. At the level of the reader's lived experience, I want to suggest that the notions of "voice" and "speech" turn out to be deeply relevant to the phenomenally descriptive facts of being absorbed in a literary work. One particularly natural and plausible account is that the reader simply imagines hearing a voice as s/he reads. In the case of a monological poem, or the portions of a novel attributed to a narrator, the voice will be that of the implied author of those passages. If a play is being read, or a portion of dialogue from a novel, then the voices in question will naturally be those of the characters to whom the lines are attributed. This account seems particularly well suited to situations in which the reader has not encountered the literary work in question before. If one is new to a work, and does not know what to expect, then there is little that one can initially do except expose oneself to its otherness, to meet the work wholly on its own terms, to simply listen to what is being said. There can be little doubt that this kind of encounter with pure otherness is an important part of what it is to experience a work of literature. I want to suggest, however, that there is a slightly different and more sophisticated way in which the reader can experience

¹³ Rightly (in my opinion), Robinson (2005) implies something similar about a reciprocal interrelation between interpreting a literary work at any given point, and the understanding that emerges of the implied author's personality from the work as a whole, or even from multiple works ostensibly by the same implied author (p.186). However, I am concerned in this context about her statement that "[c]onstruing the implied author so that she is consistent with what is known about the real author is a further plausible constraint on what counts as an appropriate interpretation", because she does not explain how she would reconcile this view with her admission two sentences earlier that "an author might deliberately try on a new persona in a particular novel" (*ibid.*). In many other important respects, of course, my debt to Robinson (2005) remains.

a voice, a mode of reading which takes us deeper into the question of empathy, and which becomes much more relevant as the reader progresses into the work, and begins to understand the different characters involved, including the personality of the implied author. In this more mature mode, the reader transposes him/herself into the personality of whoever is speaking, and imagines what it might be to utter the words of the text.¹⁴ Introducing the notion of a voice into literary discourse in this way helps us to begin to see how the account of empathy developed by Husserl and Stein might be relevant to literary studies, because, for one thing, in the place of talking expressly in terms of making sense of a *text*, it moves our discussion closer to the ideas of a bodily encounter and bodily expression. We are entitled to enquire, however, whether we strictly *need* to introduce the notion of a “voice” at all. Could one not articulate the nature of reading a literary work in terms of an encounter with an Other’s *thought*, without configuring the access to this thought as being necessarily mediated by a voice? An initial response to this important question might begin by simply observing that sound has always been important to literature, and that many poems cannot be properly understood unless certain of their phonic and prosodic qualities are fully taken into consideration. I believe this point certainly leads us in the right direction, but the key to my more detailed answer, which I hope will emerge more clearly as the remainder of this chapter proceeds, will lie in the idea that certain forms of thought, and, of particular interest to us at this point in my thesis, the patterns of *moral* thought, often turn out to be intricately and inescapably bound up with patterns of rhetoric. My suggestion, then, is that the

¹⁴ I want to allow for the possibilities either that the reader is deliberately performing such acts of the imagination, or that such acts should turn out to be deeply embedded within reading processes, the complexities of which might well remain opaque to the reader, whose self-awareness as a reader may extend only to some kind of background awareness of being deeply absorbed in the literary work.

advantage of introducing the notion of “voice” into our discussion in the ways that I have described is not only that it provides us with a way of beginning to see how the kinds of acts of empathy whose phenomenological nature we discussed in previous chapters might turn out to be nested in some way within more complex structures of literary experience, but also that it fits extremely well with a mode of reading which is, as a matter of critical fact, often highly useful or even technically necessitated, within the context of competent and thorough literary study.

It may be that for many readers, perhaps even the vast majority, the lived experience of reading a literary text, or indeed any text at all, involves an awareness, at some level of consciousness, of the way the text might sound if read aloud.¹⁵ When one sees a written word that one recognises, the sound of the word seems to be appresented straight away, demonstrating a tight phenomenal linkage between the written word and its conventional sound. To know a word normally involves knowing how it is pronounced, and when one recognises a written word, it seems as though the word's sound is invoked as part of the recognition.¹⁶ If I am right about this aspect of the phenomenology of reading a text, then it helps to support and explain my proposal that the notion of “voice”

¹⁵ One theorist who certainly maintains that an essential part of reading a literary work involves apprehending the sounds of words is Roman Ingarden, who proposes that the literary work consists of several heterogeneous strata, the most fundamental of which is precisely the sound stratum. (See Ingarden (1973a) pp.56-61, and Ingarden (1973b) pp.12, 15.)

¹⁶ To see more clearly what I mean by this, it might help to try silently reading - first slowly and carefully, then at a faster rate - a sequence of (unconnected) words such as the following: *adjuvant, colluctation, desideratum, exculpate, hortatory, irenic, parataxis, recondite*. I want to make two observations about the phenomenology of doing this exercise, although my observations are tentative due to the very limited nature of this exercise, which is by no means intended to be a formal phenomenological investigation. Firstly, I would suggest that one finds that the word sounds are more salient when reading slowly and carefully, and recede somewhat, *but not entirely*, from conscious awareness when one reads them more quickly. Secondly, I would suggest that the less familiar one is with a word, the more salient its sound properties become when reading it. When one becomes more familiar with a word, its sound properties are less prominent when it is read, but, again, *do not entirely disappear*.

could be an important way of accounting for imaginative empathy with the experiences of an implied author.

The apparent immediacy of the phenomenal connection between a word's written appearance and its sound, whether salient or in the background of one's awareness, is surely traceable to the way in which these two aspects seem to become fused when a word is encountered and learned for the first time. Yet it is perfectly possible in principle to learn how to read a given language without having any knowledge of the way it sounds. To learn to read a particular language, one requires only an adequate knowledge of its grammar, and of the meaning of its written words. Observation of this fact seems to lead us to consider the extent to which one could empathise with an implied author of a literary work written in a language that one can read but of whose spoken aspects one has no knowledge. Suppose, for example, that I am taught Arabic grammar and the meaning of Arabic words in written form, and that all spoken aspects of Arabic are excluded from my education. In this case, assuming that I have been sufficiently well taught, I should be able to read an Arabic work of literature, and understand the content of the thoughts which are being expressed. This would mean that I would be able to understand not only the surface action of what is being described, but the thematic subtexts of the work, the implied author's contemplative preoccupations, the aspects of situations that s/he finds to be morally salient, his or her implicit value commitments, aspects of the way s/he experiences the world and other people, and so on. Insight of this kind into the implied author's conscious life would equip me to attempt a transposal into his or her personality and situation, and to try to imagine what it might be to think the thoughts being expressed in the text. A certain mode of imaginative

empathy, then, can take place during literary experience without imagining the implied author's voice, or imagining speaking the words for oneself, and without attention to phonic and prosodic qualities of the text.

Nonetheless, I want to draw attention to two advantages held by the mode of literary imaginative empathic experience which attends to the way the spoken text would sound. Firstly, as I indicated earlier, the complex production of meaning in a literary work is often intricately bound up with its phonic and prosodic qualities. Although a comprehensive elaboration upon all aspects of the relevance of such qualities to a work's meaning lies beyond the scope of the present chapter, it should help if I make a few observations to substantiate my point. The relevance of these qualities becomes especially prominent in works of poetry, the genre of literature in which the multifarious capacities of language to produce sophisticated meaning are perhaps most clearly and fully exploited. Rhyme, for example, is semantically as well as formally important because it is often suggestive of a contemplative linkage between the words involved. Departure from a seemingly established rhyme scheme can in turn also be significant, as it may, for example, signal some kind of disruption in the narrator's line of thought, or the idea of a breaking of norms or conventions at some level. The employment of rhyme is typically less prominent in novels, short stories, and some dramatic works, but the question of diction remains important in these genres, not least through the use of such phonic devices as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia or other phonic plays going on, sometimes between thematically important words. Rhythm, too, remains profoundly important in all literary genres, for it can be indicative of the linguistic register and degree of formality being employed, or the implied mood of the narrator,

e.g. measured, agitated, ruminative, abrupt, inconsistent, and so on. It is for reasons such as these that a detailed understanding of the meaning of a literary work always needs to take into consideration questions relating to the way the work will sound, or could potentially sound, if it were to be read aloud.

The second advantage of the “voice” component of literary experience that I wish to discuss is no less important than the first, and relates to the phenomenology of the co-givenness of the implied author's mental life. Let us return first to the example in which I am reading the Arabic literary work without knowledge of the way the Arabic language sounds when spoken. Let us assume furthermore that I am “fluent” in reading Arabic to the extent that there is no translational activity taking place in my conscious reading process, and that I would therefore be inclined to say that I am “thinking in written Arabic” as I read. In this kind of scenario, it would seem that I have some flexibility as to how I use my imagination to configure my intersubjective relation to the implied author or narrator. Perhaps the most obvious way would be to imagine, across a divide which is both temporal and spatial, the implied author having the thoughts corresponding to the sentences that I am presently reading. The divide in question could be very wide, both in terms of time and space. Yet I am simultaneously reading the text in front of me and imaginatively apperceiving the implied author's mental life. The implied author's mental life is co-given through an heteronomous act of the imagination founded upon the written text before me. Yet by further modifying my imaginational activity, I can attempt to narrow the divide. I could, for example, try to imagine being in the same room as the implied author, and reading the text just as s/he writes it. Yet in this kind of imaginational exercise of varying my proximity to the implied author, I begin

to discover that there is something about my separation from the implied author which remains constant: we remain both linked and yet ineluctably separated by the text, and the text, at once a bridge and a barrier throughout my imaginal variations, refuses to change.

By contrast, I want to suggest that the phenomenological structure of co-givenness of the implied author's experience is different, and in an important sense, more properly analogous to sense perception, in the context of imagining empathising with a spoken voice. When somebody speaks, there are intrinsically phonic and prosodic features of the utterance, most notably intonation and inflection, which can influence the precise meaning of the utterance, and in particular its affective content. And intonation and inflection are normally understood, I would suggest, empathically at the level of bodily expression. In the listener's experience, intrinsically phonic and prosodic qualities of a speech act, such as intonation and inflection, announce an individual's act of expressing him/herself; they announce that the utterance, as Stein eloquently puts it, "is borne by a consciousness" and "lives by the grace of a spirit".¹⁷ If the bodily expression of such qualities is spontaneous and not contrived, then we are entitled to assume that the empathic co-givenness of the Other's primordial experience in this context essentially conforms to the structure of conjunctive co-givenness of bodily expression that we discussed in chapter 4 ('Edith Stein and the Problem of Empathy'), in which one can, under the right conditions, "see" how the Other feels.

At the level of the fulfilling explication, I would suggest that, by drawing upon phonic and prosodic features of an utterance, in conjunction, of course,

¹⁷ Stein (1989), p.80.

with the requisite linguistic knowledge (about grammar, the ideal meanings of words, and so on) and inferences regarding the likely meaning of the utterance in the actual discursive context, the listener can attempt to reproduce the speaker's lived experience, in a manner which parallels the empathic reproduction of somebody's non-verbal bodily expression of emotion or mood. To be sure, we need to recognise that very often literary works leave largely unspecified the precise inflection and intonation of the implied author's voice. This means in turn that the very experience with which the reader imaginatively empathises depends to some extent upon the way the reader chooses to fill in such gaps. But my claim at this point is that such creative imaginative involvement on the part of the reader is important to moral cognition, because it facilitates a form of empathy which involves quasi-perceptual imaginative awareness of the implied author's emotional state, and hence a more vibrant empathic experience than can be attained in other modes of reading (c.f. my Arabic example) in which considerations pertaining to the spoken voice play no part. The more vibrant an empathic experience that one has, the more likely one is to be moved, and as this chapter proceeds, I want to develop the idea that the experience of being moved itself carries moral epistemological significance, because it signals that deep-seated value commitments in the reader are being aroused, even if the reader is unable to articulate straight away just what those value commitments actually are, and whether they are justified.

Let me take a step back for one moment from my detailed account of literary experience, and reiterate that I am trying neither to legislate for how students and scholars of literature should go about their studies, nor ultimately to adopt an essentialist stance, either toward the processes involved in literary

criticism, or towards some mistakenly transcendent idea of “literature”. It does not, in my view, (a view which has benefited from certain Keatsian and Starobinskian insights considered in earlier chapters, as well as reflections articulated by other literary thinkers (I am thinking here in particular of Paul de Man)) ultimately make sense to treat “literature” as a static concept curiously abstracted from the passage of history, or to expect it to function adequately as such, within either literary theoretical or philosophical discourse. We might say that the synchronic state of literary art in its dialectical relation to prevailing culture is subverted at all times by a refusal of self-identity, by an immanent tendency toward diachronic mutability, toward the subversion of culture, the rhetorical “profanation” of language and grammar of the kind that we discussed in chapter 5, the overturning by literature of what literature itself once was; that, as Paul de Man suggests, there is “something about literature, as such, which allows for a discrepancy between [literary] truth and [critical] method”,¹⁸ and that, consequently, literary “theory”, in spite of its name, cannot in the final analysis properly regard itself as theoretical through and through, but instead as being contaminated by what de Man calls a “necessarily pragmatic moment that certainly weakens it as theory”.¹⁹ In this sense, it would seem that Keats’s “chameleon poet” can not only disrupt the conceptual frames of systematic philosophers, but surprise theorists of literature too in ways that can never be fully predicted.

Yet, as de Man also suggests, literature’s resistance to theory is really only one side of what can more properly be regarded as a kind of literature-theory dialectic or double-bind. For experienced literary scholars, a

¹⁸ De Man (2000), p.333.

¹⁹ De Man (2000), p.337.

contemplative shift toward the controlled reflection upon the formation of critical method is arguably inevitable, and certainly justifiable in virtue of a commonality and recurrence in the modalities of the production and reception of meaning and value across multiple literary works, or even large subsets of the canon. We might say that great literary works are always unique but never wholly *sui generis*, in the sense that their greatness is connected with their embeddedness within, and relation to, a tradition that precedes them, and usually with a contemporary milieu of co-influencing works. For this reason, the apprehension of patterns (I do not say laws) in the way that literary works often seem to operate is an important part of literary scholarship which can in my view inform the development of a meta-critical and meta-rhetorical discussion engaging with such questions as the cognition of moral values in a literary context. But, as I have just implied, the development of a meta-critical position must always begin (in a manner not dissimilar to that of phenomenological enquiry in general) with a concrete engagement with the “facts on the ground” of literary experience, with the “actuality” of a critical encounter. In this respect, there is, I believe, no better terrain to explore, given our present interests in the field of moral intuition, in the idea of a meditating implied author, and in the essential structures of imaginational and intersubjective experience, than the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Wordsworth's *The Old Cumberland Beggar* (1798) is an important and remarkable poem for many reasons. Its various yet interconnected aspects include reflections upon existence at the margins of the human condition, upon the subjective origins of virtue and the disposition toward sympathy, the question of human decay and the relation of alienated life to a certain kind of

communion with nature. Yet it also provides at times, rather remarkably, what appears to be a polemical engagement with the politics of social justice, and the question of how society should respond to the problem of vagrancy.

Preoccupations with a poem's rank or canonical status within its poet's *oeuvre* are not always profitable, but an indication of the character of this poem's significance within our language is provided in Harold Bloom's according it the status of Wordsworth's most humanising poem,²⁰ and in his regarding it as Wordsworth's "finest vision of the irreducible natural man".²¹ Its subject is a human being reduced to a primordial state, yet somebody who in the movement of Wordsworth's poetical representation is somehow "transfigured", to use Bloom's apt term, into a being of value, and one of strange or alienated beauty. My intention in what follows is to show how a moderately detailed reading of this poem can begin to be of assistance in illuminating the more general question of how an encounter with a literary work can give rise to ostensible intuitions of value, as well as being phenomenologically suggestive with respect to the structures of virtuous experience.

In the manner that I briefly described earlier in this chapter, we need in the first instance to try to approach this text on its own terms, to expose ourselves to its otherness, to simply listen to what is being said. In its very textual constitution of monological blank verse, we encounter the otherness of an implied authorial consciousness seeking to employ and exploit the available linguistic resources of its day, namely late eighteenth-century English. Yet in the experience of this foreign subjectivity we find an account of an encounter with otherness which constitutes the poem's primary field of attention: a pastoral

²⁰ Bloom (1971), p.140.

²¹ Bloom (1971), p.178.

crossing of paths with a vagrant. We encounter not simply an “Other”, in the sense of “another person” or “someone else”, but rather somebody for whom multiple levels of alienation from society would seem to have coalesced and hardened into one peculiarly fated way of life. The figure in question, this “Old Cumberland Beggar” of the poem’s title, is not only destitute, but without companions. He wanders alone from village to village, and has been wandering, we are given to understand, for many years, indeed at least since the narrator was a child. This man is alienated, too, in consequence of his lacking the dignity and sociality concomitant with some form of employment. The language of the poem, as we might well expect, is stratified far beyond the ostensible level of bare description. But it also does not neglect, for all its poetical accomplishment, the crucial intimation of certain basic facts about the beggar’s alienated condition. Perhaps most saliently, his state of being is either described as “solitary” or connected with “solitude” on no less than six separate occasions within the space of the poem’s 197 lines. Furthermore, the man’s alienation from others is also illustrated for the reader in the poem’s depiction of his social situation, in which we find that many people, especially the young, “pass him by”²² rather than stop to communicate or assist. We might note, too, that this man is fundamentally alienated from others through his poor state of physical and mental health; that his cognitive faculties appear to have deteriorated significantly; that, although he is not blind, it is not always clear that he is consciously perceiving anything. He moves extremely slowly and there is some evidence that he is hard of hearing. When he walks, his posture is so severely stooped that he is forced to look at the ground. One of his hands shows signs of

²² Line 65.

paralysis and involuntary tremors. In this old Cumberland beggar we encounter someone whose otherness in relation both to those who ignore him, and to those with whom he interacts, in relation to the poem's narrator, in relation, indeed, to the attentive and careful reader of the poem, is overdetermined by his absolute solitude, by his mendicancy, by his gerontic infirmity.

Elsewhere in the poem, however, the nature of the man's alienation is not something which is strictly *shown* or exemplified for the reader in the descriptive manner just considered, but is instead intimated in a more indirect fashion. One of the ways in which this more oblique form of suggestion takes place is connected with the configuration and arrangement of compositional elements. For example, in the first stanza, the man is portrayed as

[...] seated, by the highway side,
On a low structure of rude masonry
Built at the foot of a huge hill²³

At the descriptive level, these ostensibly plain lines hardly call out for scrutiny. Yet regarding the poem as a whole, it is not hard to see the legitimacy in the view that these lines are suggestive of the man's relation to the society from which he attempts to eek out an existence. His position at the edge of the road is symbolic, I would suggest, of his situation at the margins of society. He sits aloof from, yet within sight of, the mainstream bustle of the world, from trade and commerce, from having an exchange value, from being pleasing to the utilitarian eye. Placing the man on some "rude masonry" reflects his lack of cultural sophistication and subtlety, and suggests that his mendicant lifestyle has, with the passage of time, eroded some of the airs and graces normally

²³ Lines 2-4.

concomitant with a fuller cultural participation. Locating the man “at the foot of a huge hill” emphasises his lowly position in society, and conveys the sense that he has nowhere further to fall. My claim here is not that picking out deeper significations of this kind is the only correct way of reading these lines, but rather that the poem's treatment of alienation, even in the opening lines of the first stanza, has already moved beyond the descriptive and the perceptual, and toward a symbolic production of meaning.

In his alienation from society, the man does not recede into some kind of nondescript hinterland defined solely in terms of exclusion. Instead, it seems that in his very demotion to the margins of society, the man has simultaneously moved ever more deeply into the domain of “Nature”, a movement conveyed, for example, in the inadvertent sharing of his meal with birds.²⁴ This movement does not only correspond to a change in physical circumstance or location, a transition from employment to beggary, from lodgings to homelessness, from domestic affections to solitude. The movement toward nature also signals a transition to a different mode of being, to a form of consciousness in which relationality toward others *as* others becomes much less prominent. Let us note that while the narrator observes the beggar, and has some affection for him, having known him from childhood, the beggar in his senility does not appear to reciprocate. The narrator looks at the beggar, but his gaze is not returned. We find instead that the “I saw” of the poem's opening two words is answered in the closing lines with the “eye of Nature” into which the beggar has now become almost totally absorbed. The phonic play employed here between the words “I” and “eye” keys into some of the most important thematic concerns of the poem

²⁴ Lines 19-21 and 194-5.

as a whole. The poem is concerned with ways of seeing and knowing people, particularly those who have become alienated from a society within which they nonetheless continue to try to subsist. But it is also concerned with the “I” of subjectivity, and its different ways of being in the world, the most primal of which, the poem seems to suggest, are overlooked in the bustle of everyday social interaction, but which become salient in the experiences of those alienated from society. (In several of his poems, Wordsworth is indeed preoccupied with the experiences of such people as discharged soldiers, vagrants, and the mentally ill.)

Wordsworth does not fully reduce the state of being “in the eye of Nature” into some kind of anaesthetised nirvana devoid of struggles and anxiety. (Line 186 informs us that “Few are his pleasures”. For the man’s struggles, see lines 172-6; for his anxiety, see lines 177-8.) But at the same time he does connect it with a kind of tranquillity that he associates with a giving of oneself over to the processes of nature. The phrase “He travels on”²⁵ is repeated as if the man has become some kind of unstoppable natural force, and has been assimilated into the often “wild”²⁶ processes of nature. Being “in the eye of Nature” is therefore suggestive of being within the eye of a storm, and the curious tension between turbulence and tranquillity that that can bring. The poem suggests that observing the beggar’s way of life helps to bring to light a mode of consciousness in which the perceptual awareness of “I saw” gives way to a dissolution or a transcendence of selfhood, and a radical stillness of consciousness connected with being absorbed into the very processes of nature.

²⁵ Lines 24, 44.

²⁶ Line 14.

Wordsworth's notion of being "in the eye of Nature" is one which is only named explicitly in the emphatic culmination of the poem's closing lines. Yet with the benefit of a careful reading and re-reading of the poem, it is possible to see that ostensibly contingent images connected with turning and encircling, in addition to images of being *enclosed by, yet oblivious to*, the natural world as such turn out to crop up remarkably often. In the first stanza we find that while the man is absorbed in his humble meal, he is "Surrounded by those wild unpeopled hills".²⁷ While he is virtually bent double and forced to look at the ground by his severe stoop he is surrounded by "fields with rural works, of hill and dale, / And the blue sky".²⁸ While he struggles merely to survive, he has been "borne" by something beyond himself, the "tide of things", into a "vast solitude".²⁹ And "whether heard or not" by him, he has "around him [...] [t]he pleasant melody of woodland birds".³⁰

To purport to make exhaustive sense of Wordsworth's "eye of Nature" and its related images is not my intention, but I wish to suggest that an exploration of its complex and stratified significations can take us deep into the poem's implicit understanding of different modes of human relationality. Part of the function of these recurring images is to convey not only a sense of the man's physical isolation as he wanders the Cumberland landscape, but a sense too of his being cut off from ordinary social relations, separated even from those who happen to cross the path of his travels, from our narrator who has known him for many years, and from those who in the face of his alienation nonetheless seek to offer him some form of charity. It is his declining health – his own *physiological*

²⁷ Line 14.

²⁸ Lines 49-50.

²⁹ Lines 163-4.

³⁰ Lines 184-5.

nature – which often impairs his ability to look others in the face, to hear them, even to grasp them *as* other people. The repeated images of being enclosed and wrapped up within nature serve as a metaphor for the beggar's intersubjective isolation, as though his physiological impediments have found an external projection in the form of a natural barrier seeming to separate him from others.

The poem, I would suggest, is thereby raising an important question of intersubjectivity, one which only becomes salient because of the nature of the beggar's predicament. Can such an individual, in his social isolation, really be reached through empathy? What prospect can there be of understanding and of reproducing his deteriorated conscious experience? The difficulty in resolving this empathic problem is partly what makes the beggar so remarkable, so worthy of our literary, moral, and phenomenological enquiry. If we turn our attention now to the acts of attempted empathy that our narrator undertakes, we must therefore not be surprised to find an empathy characterised by a certain “negativity”, that is, an empathy which is often formulated in terms of normally present mental activities intuited to be fully or partially absent from the beggar's conscious life. We find, for example, that when the beggar takes out some scraps of food from his bag, he regards them in a curiously perfunctory, even unthinking or unconscious, manner:

[...] from a bag
All white with flour, the dole of village dames,
He drew his scraps and fragments, one by one;
And scanned them with a fixed and serious look
Of idle computation.³¹

³¹ Lines 8-12.

The beggar's contemplation of his meal is formulated in the language of blind machinery and automation. The equivocation implicit in the predication of his "computation" with "idle" provides an early intimation of the beggar's deteriorating cognitive powers. Later on, we find that his perceptual activities have also taken on an automatic or pre-conscious quality, for he is "seeing still / And seldom knowing that he sees".³²

Something also seems to be missing, or to have fallen away, from his sense of relatedness to others, for we find that "he appears / To breathe and live but for himself alone".³³ It is as though, either through natural ageing, or through the loneliness of his mendicant lifestyle, his subjectivity has become pared back – "reduced", to invoke a phenomenological term – to his sphere of ownness, such that the idea of "someone else" is no longer even thinkable. His concerns and cares relate to "himself alone" not because he is selfish in any normal sense of the term, but because "himself alone" precisely represents the extent of his understanding of his situation in, and relation to, the world around him.

The value and significance of these acts of negative empathy undertaken by our narrator lie in their ability to disclose important lacunae conditioning the beggar's conscious experiences. These distinctive empathic acts merit our expressly phenomenological interest, because they seem to differ from the form of empathy that we explicated in chapter 4 as a reproduction of the other's lived experience. The lacunae by definition lie outside of the beggar's presently lived experiences, yet the empathiser's apperception of them is precisely what is so helpful in rendering the beggar's mental life intelligible. It is as though one acquires an understanding of the beggar's lived experience precisely through an

³² Lines 53-4.

³³ Lines 164-5.

apperception of what is absent from it, and it is not clear at this point that the lived experience itself could in practice be reproduced by somebody who was not in a similar state of mental ill-health, or who had not been in such a state at some point in the past. I don't wish to rule out the possibility in principle of somebody like our narrator attaining authentic empathy for the beggar, but it does seem clear that the kind of negative empathy finding articulation in the poem amounts to a different kind of empathic act. Yet negative empathy would seem to be *connected* to the idea of authentically empathising with the beggar, by virtue of its taking place being a condition for the possibility of transposal into the beggar's subjectivity in all of its concrete fullness. One would perhaps have to perform some kind of reduction resembling certain aspects of the reduction to the sphere of ownness discussed in chapter 2. Certainly, one would have to bracket intersubjectivity ("he appears / To breathe and live but for himself alone").³⁴ Yet in addition one would have to bracket many acts of reflection, for, as we noted earlier, his thought is described as "idle",³⁵ and we are told that he "seldom know[s] that he sees".³⁶ We find, then, that in the poem negative empathy ultimately beckons the narrator and the empathic reader toward a reduction or recession of subjective processes, toward a self-simplification of consciousness if the actual reproduction of the beggar's alienated experience is to be thought at all possible.

As we noted earlier, this beggar is not intrinsically valued by everybody, and is often ignored. There is something special about the narrator's approach and relation to the beggar which makes possible not only a certain nascent form of empathy, but a perception of his intrinsic worth, a feeling of pity ("Poor

³⁴ Lines 164-5.

³⁵ Line 12.

³⁶ Line 54.

Traveller!")³⁷, and volitions that he should be treated charitably, and his way of life respected. We must consider how the poem characterises the path to such human concern. For one thing, the narrator approaches and meets the beggar according to the normal routine of the beggar's existence. The beggar wanders the countryside alone, and the narrator too (like the historical Wordsworth) is a solitary walker ("I saw an aged Beggar in my walk")³⁸. Such an embodied and perceptual encounter within Wordsworth's Nature is conducive not only to the presentation of the beggar's subjectivity (the narrator apperceives in this context "the hope whose vital anxiousness / Gives the last human interest to his heart")³⁹ and the fact that "life is his"⁴⁰ but also that such subjectivity should be treated with "Reverence"⁴¹ and that "a spirit and pulse of good, / A life and soul, [is] to every mode of being / Inseparably linked".⁴²

In addition, the narrator has known him for many years ("Him from my childhood have I known")⁴³ and has spent sufficient time observing him to become well acquainted with his motivations, and to explicate in the acts of negative empathy we considered earlier the unusualness of the beggar's conscious experience. It is as though the narrator has reached the point where he knows the beggar better than the beggar knows himself. In this sense, the narrator's cognition of the beggar seems to transcend and even completely surround the beggar's mental life. The extent and duration of the acquaintance seem to motivate a feeling of attachment, an attachment that the narrator seems

³⁷ Line 58.

³⁸ Line 1.

³⁹ Lines 177-8.

⁴⁰ Line 168.

⁴¹ Line 177.

⁴² Lines 77-9.

⁴³ Line 22.

to express in his apprehension that “we have all of us one human heart”.⁴⁴ The valuing of the beggar, then, is partly informed by a valuing of all life as an intrinsic good, but also by a personal valuing that has grown over time, and that is bound up with a deep and even transcendent form of intersubjective knowing. We might call this the poem's vision of compassion.

Part of the significance of the poem's deep preoccupation with encircling and rotational imagery is bound up with its implicit understanding of what is involved in a compassionate response to alienated life. When a man on horseback notices the beggar, the horseman stops, gives the beggar money, and observes him with a look described as “Sidelong, and half-reverted”.⁴⁵ A toll-gate operator notices the beggar as she “turns her wheel”⁴⁶ and “quits her work”.⁴⁷ A post-boy turns his vehicle “with less noisy wheels to the roadside” to avoid colliding with the beggar, and “passes gently by”.⁴⁸ The effect of these successive depictions of different people manifesting what are, on closer examination, strangely similar patterns of response is to produce a certain suggestion that the phenomenology of compassion involves or requires at some level an experience of a stopping or a slowing down, together with a sensation of turning back, encircling, or swerving around, concomitant with a changing of perspective or understanding. This suggestion about the phenomenal character of compassion seems to be connected in the thought of the poem to a movement within consciousness from an objectifying perception of an Other toward an

⁴⁴ Line 153.

⁴⁵ Line 32.

⁴⁶ Line 34.

⁴⁷ Line 35.

⁴⁸ Lines 37-43. I refer somewhat vaguely here to a “vehicle”, because the type of postal vehicle involved is not explicitly specified in the text. However, readers of this poem attentive to its historical context of 1798 will infer that it can reasonably be assumed to be a horse-drawn coach or wagon.

inner perception articulated by our narrator in the assertion that “we have all of us one human heart”,⁴⁹ and is consonant with a movement of contemplative reassessment, as well as with a bodily impulse to embrace, to surround, to protect.

I would suggest, then, that compassion can rightly be said to be one of this poem's themes, and perhaps even its central theme, with the proviso that a critical thematic claim of this kind should best be understood as a delineation of a certain topos of human experience that the work itself seeks to explore, and not as an attempt to transcend the poem with a pre-given concept. The concept of compassion is itself in play (to some extent) at this point in our critical analysis of the poem, open to question, and amenable in due course to new insights and perspectives. Yet the assertion that “compassion is a theme of this poem” does, of course, remain meaningful in itself because the idea of compassion already has a conventionally agreed place within our language, and already occupies a relatively stable position within the competent reader's conceptual frameworks. We might say that “compassion” in its most immediate sense refers to sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings, predicaments, or misfortunes of others. Yet compassion in this initial sense, and certainly pity, can at best be understood as moments of a broader and richer sequence of emotional experiences that the poem strives to convey, for as Bloom helpfully points out, the narrator's response to the beggar's condition is not ultimately to regard it as charged with pathos, but instead to accord it an extraordinary form of dignity.⁵⁰ We can assume that our narrator would perceive pathos if the beggar were to be institutionalised in a workhouse, a possible eventuality to which the narrator is

⁴⁹ Line 153.

⁵⁰ Bloom (1971), p.181.

ardently opposed. The poem takes us on an emotional journey which may at times involve pity, a journey which entails a certain movement of consciousness toward compassion, brought about, in the manner that I suggested earlier, in an attempt to acquire an empathic understanding of the beggar's alienated state of being, but which ultimately moves beyond pity and perhaps even beyond compassion (depending on how broadly "compassion" is in the end construed) into a certain reverence for the beggar's apparent loss of selfhood and his benign, and in some respects tranquil, assimilation into impersonal forces of nature.

The motivational connection between values and emotions, that we considered earlier, provides grounds for supposing that reflection upon the nature of one's emotional journey through a literary work can help to illuminate the evolution of a sequence of value perceptions that the work implies. In *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, the emotional journey expressed by the narrator is entwined with a stream of moral enquiry which may be configured in the first instance as relating to how one ought to respond to vagrants such as the one described. But, as I indicated earlier, an intertextual perspective reveals a more general Wordsworthian preoccupation with encounters with what Bloom calls "alienated life", with hapless individuals living on the margins of society, and the idea that encounters with such people can be charged with transformative potential, in the sense of forming an experiential locus for progress and discovery in the field of values and moral reflection. In the poem's early stages, the beggar in his helplessness readily becomes, if not for all concerned then certainly for some, an object of pity, but perhaps even prior to pity there is a combination of curiosity and fear which is registered in the uncanny idea that

this man is so advanced in years that he seems to have almost stopped ageing (“Him from my childhood have I known; and then / He was so old, he seems not older now;”).⁵¹ In the poem’s incremental disclosure of more and more details about the extent of the beggar’s physical and mental deterioration, it gradually dawns upon the reader that in this encounter one is faced with a genuine tragedy – tragedy in the sense of an absolute value being lost, namely the man’s mental faculties and, more specifically, his ability to engage in human relationships. Yet in the poem’s empathic movement toward compassion, the narrator finds a way of averting two otherwise quite understandable responses. One of these is a detached insistence upon utility, articulated in the idea that the beggar is to be regarded as a burden upon society, and that the apparent lack of purpose in his existence should be dealt with by transferring him into a workhouse. The second response that is also forestalled is a descent into despondency over the irrecoverable loss of important parts of the man’s possible range of human experiences. Instead, the poem’s consciousness actually moves *through* a sympathetic involvement with the beggar, and a feeling of sadness over his absolute loss, into a kind of double affirmation: an affirmation both of his freedom and of his fate. We find that in this double affirmation a sympathetic impulse to wholly protect and a utilitarian impulse to control or institutionalise are countered by a bitter-sweet letting go of the man into “Nature”, and an alteration in perspective away from unequivocal grief over his fate. So the man’s tragedy is not repressed but overcome in a certain way, because his fate is not denied but ultimately affirmed, and this affirmation is connected with a recognition of the value of his freedom, and a recognition that there is something

⁵¹ Lines 22-3.

beautiful about the working out of his freedom, even as he recedes from the domain of human life and sociality into that of "Nature". The arrival at the apprehension of a certain beauty in the tragedy brings about a kind of catharsis, not on this occasion in an Aristotelian pairing of pity and fear (two emotions, interestingly, which we noted are involved early in the emotional life of the poem) but in what we might call a dialectic of love and letting go, which suggests that in this particular encounter it is in acquiring a perception of the intrinsic value of human life and human freedom that one can escape not only the despair of irretrievable loss, but a dehumanising and unfulfilling ethics of utility.

A sense of repeated acts of deliberate and reverential passivity in relation to the beggar is conveyed in the poem's climactic stanza by a series of more than a dozen imperatives exhorting such things as that we "let him pass [...]!", "let his blood / Struggle with frosty air and winter snows", and, in the final line, that we "let him die!".⁵² The relentless chain of imperatives not to intervene conveys an important feature of the phenomenological structure of valuing the freedom of a loved one, and of how such an experience is likely to unfold over time, by suggesting that this peculiar mode of intentionality seems to be characterised by a continual tension between attentiveness and distanciation. It is not that one makes a *single* decision to allow the Other to get on with their life, but rather that impulses to intervene, assist, or protect are being continually counter-balanced and subdued by deeper desires that the Other should be allowed the opportunity to flourish, to the extent that their capacities allow, and within the context of their own autonomy.

⁵² Lines 162, 173-4, 197.

The question of utility is one which the poem does not in the end seek to straightforwardly dismiss, but to engage with, and in a curious way, overcome. The qualitative poverty of the old man's everyday experience, his endless rounds of begging from the villagers, his obliviousness to the beauty of the countryside, his lack of reflective thought, the essential solitude of his being, all give cause for wondering about the value of his existence or the purpose of his life, and wherein such value and purpose might lie. One way in which the poem tries to answer the utilitarian concern is not by wholly rejecting the notion of contribution as a valid basis for the valuation of another person, but by drawing attention to certain immeasurable intersubjective contributions relating to personal transformation and human flourishing that the beggar's presence turns out to be capable of making. The poem's resistance to utilitarianism is partly signalled in the immeasurability of such consequences. But it is signalled too in a reversal of motivational priority between consequences and valuing. The beggar is not valued in the first instance because of the beneficial effect he might have on others; instead, others are moved to compassion and charity because they acquire a perception of his intrinsic value as a human being. The notion of "utility" in this poem is curiously redeemed in the narrator's suggestions that sympathising and repeated acts of kindness can have subtle but life-long consequences for the giver, perhaps most notably in a disposition toward virtue.⁵³ So a certain conception of "utility" remains valuable within the morality of the poem, but within the context of a kind of ethics which values virtues such as instinctive and spontaneous sympathy, kindness, and compassion above all else. Indeed, when our narrator exhorts statesmen to "deem not this

⁵³ For a notably unequivocal articulation of this position, see lines 99-105.

man useless [...] !”,⁵⁴ he does so not out of a desire to exclude the question of utility from all aspects of moral deliberation, but to endorse a certain conception of moral utility which does not fit easily with utilitarianism, a kind of utility whose active presence is difficult to measure, but which nonetheless involves a genuine contribution to a collective sense of community and societal well-being.

It is in stanzas 4 and 5 that the most progress is made in addressing the theme of the moral value of utility. In these stanzas, Wordsworth not only suggests that the beggar is to be valued because all life has intrinsic worth, but implies that the beggar should also be valued on what are ultimately consequentialist grounds, in the sense that having the experience of encountering the beggar is held to have the potential to be beneficial for the subject. My purpose at this point is not to assess the moral philosophical validity of this position, but rather to enquire as to whether, in addition to conveying this position as a moral position (which Wordsworth accomplishes fairly explicitly), the poem also makes suggestions, either in terms of the essential phenomenological structures involved, or in terms of phenomenal character, regarding the phenomenology of benefiting at what Stein would call a “spiritual” level from an encounter with such a beggar. It has to be admitted that some portions of stanzas 4 and 5 seem to be devoted to expounding the implied author's opinions, and this (at times) somewhat assertoric mood (in the place of a preference for more figurative expression) does not seem to be especially conducive to phenomenological disclosures of the kind that presently interest us. One of the narrator's observations which does, however, appear to be phenomenologically relevant is provided in the context of the somewhat

⁵⁴ Line 67.

complex passage in stanza 5 in which the “easy man”, who beholds in the beggar a “silent monitor”, is likened to a growing pear benefiting from the sun.⁵⁵ Part of the subtlety and ambiguity of this passage stems from the fact that the term “monitor” could be interpreted as meaning either a warning or a reminder. In one sense, the beggar could be taken to be providing a warning, to those who are more comfortable, not to be complacent, and even to take prudent steps to avoid ever becoming homeless. Alternatively, the beggar as “monitor” may be understood to be not only reminding more fortunate observers to “count their blessings”, so to speak, but, in accord with earlier parts of the poem, reminding them too of their previous and formative sympathetic encounters, and their own past acts of charity and kindness. The poem appears to be suggesting that such warnings and reminders can benefit their recipients, and can even be transformative over time, in processes analogous in some respects to the ripening action of sunlight upon fruit. The possible phenomenological suggestions implicit in this parallel include the ideas that, for thoughtful and sympathetic observers of the beggar, an experience of warmth, or something akin to warmth can be involved, and that one can experience a kind of growth which is imperceptible at the moments in which it takes place, yet which is clearly and undeniably observable after a certain amount of time has passed, and that such growth may be apprehended as valuable not only because of the feeling of warmth and well-being that accompanies it, but because it leaves one changed in a way that can be recognised by oneself and by others as being desirable, not only because such growth is likely to have good consequences of its own later in one's life, but perhaps also because the perception of the results

⁵⁵ Lines 116-132.

of such growth by others can involve an apprehension of beauty. Part of the rhetorical power of a simile of this kind lies in its ability to implant phenomenological suggestions like those that I have just enumerated simply in virtue of the reader's grasping and appreciating its meaning as a simile.

I want to suggest that our critical encounter with Wordsworth's *The Old Cumberland Beggar* has provided us with a concrete exemplification of the ways in which a poem can make morally serious suggestions pertaining not only to the question of which things ought to be held to be valuable, and the question of their comparative value, but pertaining also to questions of what it is to experience such values (their lived experience), of the range of possible situations in which a certain value can become salient, and of what a bare or abstract claim to hold a certain value, and to regard it as more valuable than another one (e.g. human freedom in relation to utility) can in fact commit one to in particular cases. My hope is that this chapter's analysis of this poem does slightly more than scratch the surface of its thematic concerns, although *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, like all great poetry, is surely a work whose deepest levels of meaning ultimately resist adequate summary or paraphrase. Yet acceptance of this fact should not prevent us from attempting to reflect upon and summarise our own critical experience of the work. Such an attempt may help to further clarify just how the work manages to intimate important insights into the realm of values, and how it seems on occasion to produce phenomenological suggestions about the structures of virtuous experiences and their phenomenal character.

Earlier in this chapter I indicated my view that considerations pertaining to the spoken human voice are very often, if not invariably, central to acquiring

an adequate grasp of a poem's meaning, and I have drawn attention to some of the reasons why this is true in the particular case of *The Old Cumberland Beggar*. One reason is that the poem employs a phonic play between "I" and "eye" which is bound up with a thematic concern with a transition in consciousness from objectifying perceptual awareness to more primordial modes of relationality to the world and to other people, a transition which seems in turn to be connected with a dissolution of selfhood. A further reason is that the poem makes frequent and important use of exclamatory vociferations which can hardly fail to be correlated with the idea of an embodied narrative subject giving vocal expression to deeply felt emotion. Part of the function of such outbursts is that, in their apparently heartfelt transparency, they serve to confirm and locate the precise values and evaluative terrain that the poem is seeking to explore. The pitying cry "Poor traveller!"⁵⁶ implies a valuing of alienated human life, but also, in its pity, a valuing of what the beggar has lost, namely his physical and mental health, and the social relations that we must assume he once had. With the command "[...] let him pass, a blessing on his head!"⁵⁷ the narrator implies a valuing of human freedom, and of a transformative state of being in communion with nature. The demand "deem not this Man useless [...]"⁵⁸ implies a certain idea of human value which is not properly intelligible within a utilitarian conceptual scheme, and a valuing of certain unquantifiable fruits associated with the poem's vision of what we might call a "virtuous" or a "blessed" way of life.

At one level, exclamatory vociferations of the kind just cited provide the reader with perceptions *that* the narrator values certain things, in virtue of the

⁵⁶ Line 58.

⁵⁷ Line 162.

⁵⁸ Line 67.

reader's acquisition of imaginative-empathic objectifying apprehensions of particular acts of valuing on the part of the narrator. Yet careful study of the poem, I have suggested, can also provide the reader with a phenomenally rich grasp of the lived character of such valuing, a level of literary empathy corresponding to what we noted Stein designates the "fulfilling explication". The reason certain lines in the poem, such as the ones recently mentioned, can be said by the attentive critic to be moving is that they come freighted with an emotional content built up, developed and informed by the text that surrounds them, or even by disparate portions of the text, or by the poem itself taken as a whole. As I have sought to elaborate in the course of this chapter, the capacity of a literary work to harbour such emotional content is attributable in large part to the implied author's deployment of rhetorical technique.

The purview of rhetoric is, of course, far wider than the production of evaluative and phenomenological suggestion. Very often, rhetoric operates primarily at the level of ideas, and is involved in the suggestion of ideational associations which are relevant to the contemplative and thematic concerns of the work, whatever such concerns may be – moral or otherwise. But such ideational associations themselves can sometimes be relevant to moral enquiry. For example, the statement "His age has no companion"⁵⁹ not only indicates the beggar's advanced years, but reinforces a sense of the poem's ongoing concern with the solitude of his existence. Rhetoric of this kind has the ability to select and focus attention, to bring to light aspects of scenes, situations, or characters which the implied author appears to take (consciously or otherwise) to be morally salient. Yet rather than doing so overtly, in the manner of everyday

⁵⁹ Line 45.

language usage, literary language often accomplishes this so subtly and eloquently (and yet without ultimate loss of conceptual acuity for the attentive reader) that the nature of readers' lived experiences of the work can be pre-consciously coloured and influenced by thematically important implicit moral saliences. Implicit ideational association, then, is one way in which evaluative and moral concerns can be implanted into a reader's experience without requiring in the first instance the reader's conscious attention or reflection.

Yet one of my central claims in this chapter has been that where rhetoric is concerned with conveying the nature of a lived experience, it very often does so through some kind of engagement with the phenomenology of the experience in question. For example, a certain depressive mood is created in the passage we considered earlier in which the beggar is depicted sitting "at the foot of a huge hill".⁶⁰ Such a mood is invoked, I would suggest, not only in virtue of an ideational association stemming from the topographical fact that a valley could be construed as a depression in the landscape, but because there is something about the lived experience of being depressed which bears a resemblance to that of sitting in such a location. The poem conveys, through a succession of rotational images, the idea that a transition from empathy to compassion involves something that could be construed as a feeling of "turning"; through a series of "let" imperatives, the idea that valuing the freedom of a loved one involves a repetitive and insistent loosening of impulses to constrain or protect; through the image of a pear ripening in the sun, the idea that the consequences of virtue can include something like a feeling of warmth and flourishing. Phenomenological rhetorical techniques of this kind often work (as rhetoric

⁶⁰ Line 4.

must, if certain value perceptions are to be effectively conveyed, or even deeply implanted) prior to the reader's grasp of how the text is operating, on the sly as it were, or to put it more technically, and without implying disparagement, at the levels of seduction and pre-conscious insinuation. Such techniques work to draw the reader into a series of lived experiences that are necessary in order for the reader to make progress in the domain of values and moral reflection, and make discoveries which constitute the substance of the literary work's thematic enquiries.

Therefore important aspects of critical method are, I would suggest, concerned with an entering into the life of the work, with a transposal into the personality of an implied author, with an imagining of what it might be to utter words ascribed to such a person, and with an opening of critical awareness to the moral epistemological significance of the possibility of being moved. But the critic's job is also to reflect upon all of this, to revert if necessary from the fulfilling explication, or even from sympathetic involvement, to a safe distance afforded by the objectifying dimension of empathy. In the modes of reflection and rhetorical analysis, the critic seeks to track down some of the textual origins of the work's suggestive power, and an important aspect of this process involves a certain critical vigilance for ostensibly minor features of the work which on closer attention can turn out to be capable of guiding the reader into the most complex and subtle emotional experiences and intuitions of value that the work has to offer. In this difficult and protracted process, we find, as we noted Starobinski has also observed, that the search for what lies deepest in a work often leads back to what was already waiting at the surface – to a pear feeding in

the sunshine, to the turning of a wheel – and toward a discovery of what such images always truly were within the life of the literary work.

Chapter 7 - Literature and Moral Justification

I want to begin our discussion in this chapter by briefly recapitulating upon the account of the phenomenological structure of literary experience that has been developing in the preceding chapters. One important reason for doing so is that it will place us in a strong position to understand and explain some of the various contributions that literary experience can make to the complex and diverse processes of moral justification. A further reason, however, which we must also bear in mind, lies in the possibility that the structures of literary understanding may themselves be capable of *indicating* certain avenues of justification appropriate to literarily motivated moral enquiry, even if such justificatory avenues are strictly extrinsic to literary experience. The suggestion of a fruitful justificatory avenue should be regarded as a contribution to moral justification, even if the acquisition of such moral justification lies, perhaps necessarily, beyond the purview of any literary work's moral explorations.

The phenomenological account that has emerged involves a layered structure of multiple conscious acts, which are nested one within another. To reinforce our understanding, let us take a few moments to move both forward and then backward through the different layers of this structure. In the first instance, the reader places him/herself, through an act of the imagination, into an encounter with the implied author of the text. The reader then acquires an apperceptive understanding of the implied author's conscious life through acts of empathy performed within the imaginary encounter. I argued in chapter 4 ('Edith Stein and the Problem of Empathy') that the structure of such acts of empathy itself involves a nesting of two distinct acts of the imagination. In a literary context, the first such component act of authentic empathy is a

transposal into the Other's personality on the basis of the values and motivations implied across the text as a whole. The second act is a reproduction of the lived experience which is being expressed. Due to our present interest in the relation between literature and moral knowledge, our attention has been drawn to the implied author's intuitions of value and virtuous experiences. Such experiences may themselves be, in the Husserlian sense, reproductive re-presentational acts, such as imagining, or remembering. For example, in the closing lines of *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, the narrator is valuing something which is not perceptually present to him, namely a temporally extended state of affairs in which the beggar is permitted to spend the rest of his life roaming the countryside. In desiring that something should be the case, the narrator is valuing an imaginary possible state of affairs. We might say that the volition involves a subjunctive value perception nested within an act of the imagination. The act of imagining is reproduced and dwelt within by the empathic reader. In the manner that I indicated, the empathic reproduction is undertaken within a prior transposal into the narrator's personality; and the transposal is undertaken in the context of an imagined sensory encounter with the narrator, an imaginary encounter in which, if one is to meet the requirements of the kind of detailed literary study upon which I elaborated in the previous chapter, one needs to "hear" the narrator's voice.

In the terminology of the Husserlian discussion of chapter 3 ('Husserl and the Imagination'), we are entitled to regard the phenomenological structure that we are encountering here is an example of iterated intentional implication. The reader's apprehension of an implied primordial value perception is mediated by a stratification of multiple implied acts of imaginative personal transposition

and re-presentation. And we find that this nested intentional structure is itself suggestive of what is, in phenomenological terms, the primary and canonical modality for the justification of such an intuition of value, namely perceiving for oneself and in person the state of affairs in question to be of value. Two separate axiological points are worth bearing in mind here, and will inform much of this chapter's discussion. Firstly, (I shall return to this fundamental point in due course) moral values do not change from one situation to another, and are potentially applicable not only in all actual situations, but in all possible situations. Indeed, a large part of their moral epistemological significance lies in their constancy, for they are not governed by contingency or expediency, but themselves govern what is right, what is good, what is virtuous, and so on – in morally serious literature as much, I want to suggest, as in real life. Secondly, values are not experienced in the abstract, but precisely in our experience of the particularity of the world. We experience values in the first instance as value-properties of other entities, e.g. the courage of a (particular) soldier, the beauty of a (particular) painting, the value of a (particular) beggar's freedom. For these reasons, to the extent that literary works demonstrate a marked tendency to deal in the particularity of concrete events and situations, and (through the use of rhetoric) to implicitly evaluate objects of experience often in the very process of purporting merely to describe, the domain of literature itself seems to be pointing outside of itself to an essentially non-literary context for the justification of its evaluative (and hence moral) suggestions: the domain of practical experience.

The domain of practical experience is, indeed, from a moral epistemological standpoint, an extremely important justificatory context. If one

turns from Wordsworth's poetry and goes to meet a homeless person face-to-face, then one has placed oneself in an optimal position for the clarification of one's own feelings in relation to the other person, and, as we noted in chapter 4, the clarification of one's own feelings provides the primary context for the exploration of values. As we also noted in chapter 4, perceptions of value affect desires; effective desires, i.e. volitions, motivate in turn the actions that one will be inclined to undertake - to bring about, or contribute to, the fulfilment of such volitions. In the aggregation of many similar virtuous acts, one acquires a collection of value perceptions which over time will corroborate and enrich one's understanding of the value(s) involved. And in conjunction with this evaluative development, one begins to derive satisfaction from performing actions which such value perceptions necessarily motivate. In processes of habituation, one increasingly (and in a non-frivolous sense) enjoys doing what one believes (on the basis of repeatedly confirmed value commitments) to be morally right, and develops what we might call a taste for what is noble. In this sense, practical experience provides a most important setting for the development of a disposition toward virtue. The justification for such a disposition, and for the value commitments that underwrite it, is acquired in virtue of processes intrinsic to such practical experience. Ideas about value and virtue which bore initially the character of mere suggestion, or even plausible suggestion, come to be internalised and embraced as one's own through the observation of, and the conscious volitional intervention in, the affairs of the world around us.

Now, it is true that my very understanding of real situations and people may well be influenced by literary works that I have previously studied, but such

influences can hardly be construed as *a priori* features of the way in which I, or any responsible person, should view the world. Instead, such literary suggestions themselves in principle require confirmation in the domain of practical experience. If I come across somebody consistently exhibiting personality traits reminiscent of the character Macbeth, then I might, on careful reflection, and in conjunction with other non-literary modes of thought (e.g. psychoanalytical, historical) cautiously formulate extrapolative hypotheses (I say hypotheses, not beliefs) about this person by drawing upon my understanding of Shakespeare's insightful and sophisticated characterisation of Macbeth. But the degree of authority that I attach to such hypotheses stems not from mistakenly regarding Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as justificatorily foundational, but from the fact that certain moral suggestions to be found in that play have been accorded, by myself and by others before me, a degree of justification precisely on the basis of contemporary real-world experience.

The view that I have just outlined of the moral justificatory significance for the virtuous moral philosopher of practical engagement in the world appears to constitute something of a set-back to those versions of aesthetic moral cognitivism which imply that, from the secluded comfort of one's armchair, the very encounter with a work of literature can be regarded as a source of moral justification for putative value commitments and beliefs about virtue. There are, of course, other avenues of moral justification distinct from practical experience, and we shall discover in the course of this chapter that literature is highly relevant to some of them. However, before proceeding in alternative directions, it is worth considering whether the position of aesthetic moral cognitivism can respond in some way to what has been discussed so far.

An important line of response to what I have said about the justificatory importance of practical experience centres on the observation that there are many possible experiences, e.g. experiencing the trauma and aftermath of a terrorist attack, or losing a parent to Alzheimer's disease, which may be highly relevant to moral enquiry, but for which the arrangement of practical experience by the enquiring moral philosopher is not a feasible or desirable option. Moral philosophical enquiry with an interest (and, in particular, a phenomenological interest) in such scenarios will be obliged to pursue alternative modes of epistemological justification. Such modes, e.g. testimony (broadly construed), imaginative introspection, and the method of reflective equilibrium (I want to argue that literature can be involved in all of these), to the extent that they are employable where practical experience is not, might be said in this respect to hold a certain epistemic advantage over practical experience.

Yet it is important that any explication of this epistemic advantage should not confuse the notion of justificatory *availability* with that of justificatory *authority*, and nor should it confuse *partial* justification with *adequate* justification. These important distinctions are illustrated in the following example. Suppose I am in a busy shopping street and I break my glasses (which have a correct prescription of, say, -5 dioptries) in an accident. Suppose further that in my bag I have an old pair of glasses made to an out-of-date prescription of, say, -2 dioptries. Then, provided the old pair helps me to see more clearly, even to some small extent, the best option would seem to be to put it on. But just because wearing the old pair is the best available option, it does not follow that it mysteriously acquires an elevated level of justificatory authority in relation to what I believe I am seeing, beyond what is merited by a -

2 dioptre pair of glasses being worn by someone whose correct prescription is -5 dioptries. The epistemological distinctions which emerge from this example (between justificatory availability and justificatory authority, and between partial justification and adequate justification) will turn out to be fundamental to my overall account of the relation between literature and moral knowledge. Both distinctions will be worth bearing in mind as we proceed through this chapter and consider different modalities of moral justification.

For reasons which rest upon the notion (which I shall shortly discuss) of personal credibility, an individual's moral testimony could be regarded as a potential source of (at least partial) moral justification, and given our present concerns, this observation seems to invite us to consider whether there might be circumstances in which moral suggestions found in a literary work could themselves be regarded as "testimony" in some sense. One reason for developing a notion of a distinctively literary form of testimony is connected to the relation between literature and culture. Literature is an important repository of cultural values, and if a literary work is held to be of canonical status, then we expect it to illuminate, as well as resist and attempt to revise, the way in which the culture in which the work arose understood certain values. If a literary work manages on certain occasions to somehow reproduce cultural values, or represent aspects of the way in which values are wrestled with and forged within a given culture, then we might justifiably call this a kind of "cultural testimony". This is relevant to moral reflection because it is important for moral philosophers to be aware of implicit cultural assumptions, blind spots, and biases which might otherwise go undetected and unexamined.

We need to consider, however, whether the moral suggestions found in a literary work can on occasion be regarded as a form of testimony about moral values, as well as about cultural values. The analogy between reading a morally serious work of literature and receiving moral testimony from a real person is not entirely straightforward. One's acceptance of the testimony of a real person requires, as I said, his or her credibility as an attester in the relevant subject area. An attester can be held to be credible if s/he is sincere, competent (in a position to know), coherent, and has a track record of reliability. If I listen to a recorded interview with Bertrand Russell and hear him assert that "Love is wise, hatred foolish", then I will be inclined to accord his statement a degree of authority greater than that of mere suggestion, because of what I know about the historical person Bertrand Russell. But this structure of testimonially grounded justification is not applicable to the views of an implied author, who is constituted heteronomously, in the manner that we discussed in chapter 5 ('Starobinski's Conception of the Implied Author'), on the basis of the literary text. So there seems to be a structural reason for being more cautious about testimony given by an implied author, even if the implied author's imaginary credentials happen to be impeccable. However, an implied author can certainly be coherent, and could appear to develop a track record of reliability in moral questions. So a modified conception of "testimony" could be applicable to an essentially intersubjective approach to literary experience of the kind that I have developed. Imaginative empathy of the kind that we discussed at length in previous chapters could be said to become an experience of (at least partially reliable) literary testimony when one feels prepared, to some degree, to trust the implied author's value commitments and moral judgement on certain matters.

Such tentative and qualified trust can only rationally arise when one realises, on the basis of careful study and reflection upon a work, and preferably upon multiple works by the same author and ostensibly by the same implied author, that the implied author has a track record of suggesting evaluative and moral stances that have turned out, for the morally enquiring reader, to be worth taking seriously.

We need to observe that the tentative growth of such testimonial trust can be compromised if the implied author demonstrates in the course of a literary work tendencies toward moral inconsistency, contradiction, or incoherence. This remains the case even if the implied author occasionally displays moral brilliance, if the reader sometimes or even often finds him/herself agreeing with the implied author's moral judgements, or if the reader finds non-testimonially grounded routes to justifying those judgements with which s/he agrees. Conversely, if the attentive reader attains a relatively clear and consistent overall apperception of the implied author's value commitments and approach to moral problems, then this could provide partial grounds, in conjunction with a track record of reliability, for a tentative testimonial trust in moral suggestions contained in the work, not least because a stable and reliable evaluative attitude is, by the standards of any mainstream theoretical school of ethical thought, and especially from the perspective of virtue ethics, an admirable and morally relevant trait in a moral agent. This is one modest way in which the moral epistemic status of a literary work (I leave aside aesthetic considerations in this chapter) can begin to be put to the test in the very context of literary experience.

However, I would still maintain that such tentative quasi-testimonial trust could not be regarded as justificatorily adequate on its own. Acceptance of

moral testimony about values not only requires that the attester be credible, but also ultimately requires that the testimony itself cohere with the recipient's evolving set of personal moral values, which govern the individual's ability to identify what is morally salient about a given situation. I want to suggest that such value commitments do not, to anyone but a proponent of some form of strong intuitionism (a position that I reject),¹ flow spontaneously from ostensibly self-evident and perspicuous insights into a noumenal realm of objective values, but need instead to be arrived at through a complex and difficult process of reflective equilibrium. In the method of reflective equilibrium, as Jeff McMahan argues, one tries to work one's way *back* to a personal set of moral values capable of underpinning and explaining disparate moral judgements. One has to work hard in order to discover the very values that one antecedently and unreflectively believes in.² During this process, one rationally includes experiences that come from a wide variety of justificatory sources, drawing upon testimony, practical experience, the experience of art, and all of one's memories of these.

Let us look more closely at the ways in which literary experience can support such a method of reflective equilibrium. It would suit the cause of aesthetic or literary moral cognitivism if we could somehow argue that the encounter with a literary work can itself provide a setting in which entire contemplative processes aimed at morally reflective equilibrium can take place. But precisely the inverse of this picture seems now to be emerging: properly wide-ranging, eclectic, and open-ended moral ruminations themselves provide a context in which literary experience can certainly participate in, but never

¹ For reasons to be sceptical about strong versions of moral intuitionism, see McMahan (2001).

² McMahan (2001), pp.105-6.

responsibly dominate, moral reflective activities. On this view, literature can properly be regarded as a moral cognitive participant but not, strictly speaking, as a teacher of moral knowledge. In the last chapter, I sought to develop the view that a central aspect of literature's relation to ethical thought lies in the idea that there is something special about literature's capacity for moral suggestion. I explicated this capacity in terms of an essentially rhetorical ability to deftly deliver and implant complex evaluative perspectives into the reader's experience, a seductive ability that very often produces its effects in a manner which is phenomenologically prior to the reader's conscious grasp of how the text itself is operating. Unreasoned and lacking in explicit justification in their literary context as they may be, such suggestions are not ultimately justificatorily insignificant in a reader's moral life, provided that the reader *feels* that a substantive or even original evaluative point has been well made, and that what is being suggested comes from an implied author whose implied moral judgement the reader has come to respect, and coheres with moral testimony that the reader has received from real individuals whom s/he thinks trustworthy, and coheres too with the reader's own practical life experiences and with beliefs the reader already holds. So justified moral understanding does seem to be capable of developing in certain ways precisely in the accumulation of disparate suggestions, suggestions which themselves are not explicitly justified in their own narrow contexts, but which often seem to be capable of corroborating, as well as conflicting with, one another, in the ongoing and in principle interminable morally reflective processes of sifting, comparing, and revisiting of one's own life experiences, including one's experiences of art and of literature.

According to the model of ethical reflection that I wish to advance, then, the way we feel about individual scenarios, and the judgements we are inclined to form when considering them in isolation, have a contributory role to play but do not in the first instance govern what counts as morally right or valuable, because they need to be weighed and balanced against a multiplicity of other experiences and sources of moral suggestion before something approaching a responsibly considered moral judgement can be formed. In other words, I want to suggest that the moral intuitions that we form non-inferentially and non-reflectively about particular situations should carry deliberative weight but not decisive normative authority. Yet, as McMahan indicates, there are good reasons for enquiring whether non-inferential and non-reflective moral intuitions should be taken into account at all.³ We know from the social sciences that moral intuitions can originate in prejudices inculcated during one's upbringing, in religious indoctrination, or in unconscious self-interest. This kind of psychological observation has led some philosophers, e.g. Peter Singer, to argue that moral intuitions should be excluded from ethical deliberation. According to Singer, moral enquiry is primarily theoretical, and is not validated through the consonance of its implications with our intuitions.

One way of problematising the exclusively theoretical approach to moral philosophy is to consider the way counter-examples often function in the very context of moral theory. If a moral theoretical proposition P is being considered, then a counter-example will claim that there is a situation S in which *we would not be inclined* to accept that P is the case. So counter-examples cited in this way themselves appeal to our moral intuitions. While counter-intuitive scientific

³ McMahan (2001), pp.94-5.

theories such as relativity theory are capable of effectively combating our intuitions about what is really the case through their explanatory and predictive power, moral theories do not have a similar capacity to make us give up our moral intuitions, because they do not explain or predict empirical facts in this kind of way. Now it is certainly true that our moral intuitions about situations can be modified as a result of moral reflection (and very often they need to be), and that moral theoretical thought is an important part of such reflection. But as long as a moral theory produces practical conclusions that conflict with our intuitions, we do not feel philosophically comfortable about accepting the theory, even if we are unable to articulate why we feel the theory is mistaken. The Schelerian explanation for this is that feelings are precisely the context in which value perceptions take place. The fact that moral intuitions can often be non-veridical is a reason not for discarding them from ethical deliberation but for recognising the importance of modifying them in the process of reflective equilibrium that I have described.

Implicit in much that I have said is that this entire reflective process is pervaded by acts of introspection as one attempts to reach the “equilibrium” of a mature set of values. Indeed, the conscious activity of introspection seems to offer us a potentially promising line of enquiry into the processes of moral justification in a literary context. For reasons that I am about to explain in more detail, introspection is a fairly common component of moral justificatory and confirmatory efforts. And it now seems plausible (I shall substantiate this point even further as this chapter develops) to suggest that introspection on the part of the reader is not out of place in the context of a contemplative reading experience. For one thing, as I indicated in chapter 4, the empathic

understanding of a foreign personality is conducive to comparing one's own value commitments with those of the Other. In this context, the empathiser sees where value commitments are shared, and where one holds a value commitment which the Other has not acquired, or vice-versa. Similarly, it is natural during the reading process to compare one's own evaluative attitudes, moral character, and approaches to moral problems with those of the implied author. Aesthetic moral cognitivists ought to be encouraged by the apparent moral relevance of introspection to literary experience, because it opens the door to the possibility that there may be occasions on which a reader could rationally decide that what a literary work is suggesting is in fact morally justified, without turning to cognitive activities extrinsic to the encounter with the literary work. To find out if this is the case, we need to think in general terms about the justificatory significance of introspection in moral thought, and to consider in tandem with this the scope for such introspective justificatory activities to take place during literary experience.

There are several ways in which introspection occupies a special place within *moral* enquiry over against other epistemic fields. On the Schelerian axiological view, which we noted also influences Stein significantly, the underlying reason for this is formulated in terms of the clarification and unfolding of one's own personal hierarchy of value commitments. Husserl's writings on the phenomenology of valuing are less extensive than those of Scheler, but he was not uninvolved in this field, and it is clear that he too recognises that the experience of values is often, if not always, a comparative experience.⁴ One naturally seeks to acquire evidence to either corroborate or

⁴ Hart (1997b), p.194.

challenge suggestions of the form “A is of greater value than B” through an introspective attending to the respective depths of one’s feelings for A and for B. Some acts of valuing, e.g. those found in the bonds between parents and their offspring, seem to be so profound that they do not appear to be compatible with any kind of ethical *deliberation*. A mother’s love for her child is primal, absolute, unconditional. Such values, which we might call absolute values, seem to be self-verifying in the context of introspection. Yet complex and controversial moral questions articulated in the form of value comparison, e.g. “Is systematic state intervention in the problem of vagrancy preferable to relying upon spontaneous charity within communities?”, can rarely be resolved by means of a single act of introspection. In such cases, the diligent moral philosopher typically proceeds by drawing upon activities such as reason, debate, testimony, memory, practical experience, and perhaps even the experience of art. But during such processes, one will inevitably return again and again to introspective acts of value comparison. In the accumulation of such temporally disparate and intermittent introspection, one hopes not to oscillate endlessly between contradictory commitments, but ultimately to converge upon a settled clarification of where one genuinely stands. Moreover, the realisation that one’s mind is settled with respect to a particular matter is itself acquired in an act of introspection.

This leads us to a related point concerning the role of introspection in moral life. Virtue ethicists from Aristotle onward have emphasised and explored the observation that the individual who, with appropriate guidance, strives to lead a virtuous life can, in the passage of time, develop, as M.F. Burnyeat puts it, a “settled state of character” in the face of life’s succession of ethical

challenges.⁵ This is not to say that one somehow completely ceases making ethical mistakes, but rather that one converges in time upon a firm and stable moral character, and begins to feel, as Sarah Broadie puts it, “at home with the noble and with reason and structured agency”.⁶ Yet this important idea of feeling “at home” with virtue is not the exclusive preserve of virtue ethics, but is undoubtedly also present in the ethical thought of twentieth-century phenomenologists such as Husserl, Stein, and Scheler. Certainly for Husserl and Stein, one’s feelings are rational to the extent that they are in tune with the realm of one’s own true values,⁷ and ethical life essentially requires, in Husserl’s own words, that we “*prefer* according to our best knowledge and conscience the best of what is attainable”.⁸ When the virtuous individual encounters and contemplates a morally demanding situation, certain of its features become salient and indicate what is called for.⁹ As I indicated earlier, just exactly what becomes salient is governed by the agent’s personal value hierarchy or moral tenor. The feature of the virtuous agent’s distinctive personal way of viewing particular situations that I wish to draw attention to at this point is that there is no reason for us to think that it should be capable of being formulated propositionally, codified, or rendered compatible with a deductive paradigm, either by the moral agent concerned, or even in principle. In fact, John McDowell argues that one’s fundamental conception of how to live is *only*

⁵ Burnyeat (1980), p.73. The possession of a settled state of character is, of course, a necessary but not a sufficient condition for virtue, for an immoral person might have a settled immoral state of character.

⁶ Broadie (1991), pp.109-110.

⁷ *OPE*, p.101.

⁸ Melle (2002), p.237. Emphasis mine.

⁹ The perception of moral saliences is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for virtue, for an akratic person may see correctly what is called for, but fail to act. On the Aristotelian account, the akratic person is not yet fully at home with rationality.

intelligible through the perception of saliences.¹⁰ Moral philosophers are sometimes inclined to think that there ought to be a neutral external standpoint from which moral rationality can be demonstrated. But for McDowell, the rationality of virtue, and of the desire to live a good life, is not demonstrable from an external standpoint. And in this respect, introspection would seem to be a particularly important, and certainly the most immediate, non-discursive avenue in which virtuous moral agents might perceive their own general and settled evaluative attitudes *as such*.

Questions of refining, unfolding, or converging upon a settled evaluative attitude which is congruent to one's personality and moral tenor bring us now to an important reason why literary experience can provide an important context for moral introspection. Great artworks collectively provide a *variety* of morally complex situations, vividly portrayed, far in excess of the range of experiences that any one person could possibly have in the course of a lifetime spent without art. In the case of literature, this very variety affords readers opportunities they would not otherwise have had to examine their own affective response to situations, to explore the personal value commitments that seem to motivate such responses, and to allow values that would not otherwise have to be felt to begin to unfold within their personality. It affords readers, furthermore, opportunities to reflect upon their own general moral evaluative attitude and to consider how flexible it is in assessing different situations; to reflect, also, upon how confidently one is able to pick out aspects of situations that seem to be morally salient. For any morally serious reader, such careful and attentive introspection can often turn out to be a less than comfortable experience. Indeed,

¹⁰ McDowell (2003), p.137.

part of the moral epistemological significance of literature lies in the way it can often disrupt our prejudices and leave us feeling uncertain on important moral issues. Naturally, my suggestion here is not, for example, that a committed and thoughtful consequentialist might suddenly reject consequentialism simply on the basis of reading a literary work. Yet, a utilitarian like J.S. Mill, who famously read, and was deeply affected by, Wordsworth's poetry while suffering from depression, might well read *The Old Cumberland Beggar* and find himself seriously re-evaluating, perhaps for the first time in his life, the place and significance of spontaneous compassion in moral life, and the value of human freedom. Such literary disruptions to ethical frameworks do not merely signal that one's moral assumptions may be in certain respects inadequate, but point to specific avenues of moral enquiry which need to be rationally pursued if one is to make progress toward acquiring the kind of well-rounded and stable moral character whose centrality in moral life is so often emphasised in the field of virtue ethics.

In one sense, then, literary introspection can take place in moments of contemplation during the process of reading and criticism, when one introspects upon certain characteristics (e.g. stability, confidence, or their opposites) of one's own evaluative attitude toward what one has read. Yet there is a different sense in which introspection, albeit in a modified form, can be said to take place during literary experience, and which is also relevant to moral justification. This relates to imagining oneself in a counterfactual situation depicted in the work (e.g. imagining for a time not being the narrator but actually meeting *for oneself* the beggar described in *The Old Cumberland Beggar*), and attempting to explore what one's own value commitments might then be. In short, one is performing

an act of introspection *within* an act of the imagination. Let us call this *imaginative introspection*.

I am making a clear distinction, then, between the conscious activities during literary experience of imaginative introspection and imaginative empathy. (My conception of the latter has been developed at length across several of the preceding chapters.) I employ these two phrases not as metaphors, but because, on the broadly Husserlian view that I have set out, I believe they accurately reflect important phenomenological structures involved in literary experience. Our phenomenological discussion of the imagination in chapter 3 ('Husserl and the Imagination') relating to the capacity of conscious acts to be nested one within another helps us to explicate the two activities in question as acts of introspection and of empathy taking place within a phenomenologically prior context of imagining. In *Art, Emotion, and Ethics*,¹¹ Berys Gaut's approach to the question of aesthetic moral cognitivism is not explicitly phenomenological, and he does not use the phrases "imaginative introspection" or "imaginative empathy". He does, however, place great emphasis upon the moral confirmatory significance of imaginative involvement in literature, and it is clear in this context (I have in mind here in particular his book's seventh chapter, entitled 'The Cognitive Argument: The Epistemic Claim') that sometimes he is referring to imaginative introspection, and on other occasions to imaginative empathy. In earlier chapters, we have considered the question of imaginative empathy in some detail, and in this chapter, its relevance to an expanded conception of "testimony" in a literary context. For our present purposes, it is important that we now consider more closely the notion of

¹¹ Gaut (2007).

imaginative introspection. Gaut's account of the epistemic significance of imaginative involvement in a literary work can help us to do this.

I am in agreement with Gaut on certain general epistemological points that he makes which support the view that imaginative introspection can under certain circumstances be epistemically worthwhile and justificatorily contributive. Perhaps most fundamentally (and this point is relevant to imaginative empathy too), moral values applicable in a counterfactual situation should rationally be applicable in actuality, and vice-versa: moral values range across the set of actual and possible counterfactual situations. This means that value commitments that come to light during imaginative introspection can be regarded, if not as discoveries then at least as partially justified hypotheses, about one's own present and actual value commitments. In addition, the principle of universalisability of moral judgements requires that moral judgements be applicable to *anybody* meeting the criteria proper to the judgement. Since "anybody" includes the person making the moral judgement, imaginative introspection can be an important tool in confirming or disproving such universalisability.

Gaut makes further valid points which are pertinent to imaginative introspection when he observes that some epistemic advantage is held by the imagination over direct experience in virtue of the facts that (1) two mutually exclusive future possibilities can both be imagined and compared, but not both directly experienced, and (2) that some experiences are so unlikely or undesirable that one is rationally obliged to resort to the imagination in order to find out more about how one would respond to them.¹² I do not disagree with

¹² Gaut (2007), p.156.

these last two claims in themselves (in fact, I think they are important observations) but I am concerned that the manner in which Gaut deploys them seems designed to make them serve as a consolation for his reluctant admission that the imagination has “lesser epistemic authority”¹³ than practical experience. Granted, Gaut is careful never to explicitly claim that justificatory availability can *compensate* for a shortfall in justificatory authority. But he also manages to avoid drawing much attention to the important conceptual distinction between justificatory availability and justificatory authority, and this omission risks making his position appear more convincing than it really is. I will also want to suggest in due course that there are good reasons for thinking that Gaut needs to pay more attention to the distinction between partial justification and adequate justification.¹⁴ To begin to see why this might be the case, we need to look more closely at his account of the potential role for literature in imaginative introspection.

During practical moral deliberation, one is often concerned not simply with the set of all possible situations, but with situations which correspond either to the way the world is now, or to the way the world will be in the future: one is concerned, in short, not only with the possible, but with reality, and with the way reality is *likely* to be. One context in which realism becomes important is when we seek to seriously investigate *kinds* of possibilities that seem to be intricately bound up with what it is to be human. One need only turn to Shakespeare to find examples of the kind of possibilities that I have in mind here. Somebody who is both insecure and jealous may be inclined toward murder. The Machiavellian machinations of somebody gripped by political

¹³ Gaut (2007), p.156.

¹⁴ In many other important respects, of course, my debt to Gaut (2007) is significant.

ambition may end in personal disaster. These are not laws of human behaviour (as if human behaviour were amenable to laws), but there is truth to them to the extent that they delineate patterns that have recurred throughout human history, and to the extent that they can indicate on certain occasions what is likely to be the case, or how matters are likely to end. If, as part of a serious moral enquiry, one is to try to imagine such a situation, or even to imagine being caught up in one, then one's imaginings would need to be informed and constrained by justified psychological beliefs concerning the way the people involved would be likely to behave, and what their motivations would be likely to be. Psychological realism is therefore particularly important to the exercise of the imagination in the context of moral enquiry, but there can also be occasions on which one's understanding of what is likely will also need to be informed by what is known scientifically or statistically. Consider the following example. Suppose someone (let us call him William) is inclined toward believing that there should be no systematic state intervention in the problem of vagrancy, and that homeless people should have to rely upon spontaneous charity from the local community. As part of his moral deliberation, William decides to investigate the universalisability of this judgement by imagining himself being a homeless person living rough in the countryside of, say, northern England. His intention is to see if, in the imaginary situation, he still believes there should be no state intervention. However, before William even begins his imaginative introspection, he realises that he is going to have to do some research into overnight temperature ranges for this part of England, and some statistical research into the probability of a homeless person in this part of the country receiving charitable assistance. Imaginative introspection, then, in a moral

context, often requires background psychological knowledge and understanding of human motivations, but can also require many other kinds of knowledge, e.g. scientific or statistical. It is important to note that the acquisition of such background knowledge is not part of the imaginational activity itself, but a prerequisite for it.

Gaut makes some helpful points regarding how literary works and their careful readers can contribute to the project of attempting to imagine in a realistic manner. For one thing, many literary works are not aimed at fantasy but at realism, and such works can guide the reader into realistic imaginings. The putative realism of a work needs to be independently verified, and this is addressed by one aspect of Gaut's account of using the imagination in a disciplined way: one's imaginings must fit with the available independent evidence and cohere with things that one already knows. This is surely right, but I believe two further points of qualification, to which Gaut pays insufficient attention, need to be added. Firstly, the source of verification involved here is not the literary work, but background knowledge (e.g. psychological, scientific, statistical) which is extrinsic to the literary work. Secondly, it seems strange to try to wrap all of the verificatory effort into imaginational activity, since an important part of such effort (i.e. gathering background knowledge) is a *prerequisite* for the imaginational activity. Granted, the literary work is contributing to imaginative introspection by guiding the reader into realistic imaginings, and imaginative introspection can contribute to moral justification. So at this stage we need to limit our acceptance of Gaut's position to the view that literature can *contribute partially* to the processes of moral justification by means of imaginative introspection.

In chapter 3 ('Husserl and the Imagination') we began to develop, with Husserl's assistance, a conception of "fullness" with respect to imaginative content. I concluded that this notion seems to have three important dimensions, which I referred to as completeness of scope, fidelity (to reality), and vividness. Vividness in this context really refers to richness of detail, and is therefore not equivalent to fidelity: an act of the imagination may be faithful to reality but have a disappointing level of vividness, and vice-versa. All three dimensions are relevant to our present discussion of imaginative introspection. We have just discussed fidelity, and I shall shortly have an important point to make about completeness of scope, but let us turn for the moment to the question of vividness.

Vividness is important to imaginative introspection because the more vivid one's imaginings are, the more likely one is to become emotionally involved, and to form clear evaluations with respect to the people and situations that are being imagined. If one imagines a situation vividly, then it is as if (but only as if) one is perceiving the situation for oneself. Great literary works typically display an assured yet unostentatious ability on the part of the implied author to depict scenes vividly, and thereby to facilitate an absorbed imaginative involvement on the part of the reader, in which the reader's deepest moral commitments may come to light, perhaps even for the first time. Part of the burden also falls upon the committed reader, who with sufficient practice can develop an imaginative faculty capable of great vividness, sometimes even on the basis of relatively meagre levels of rich detail provided within the literary text.

There is, nonetheless, a tension here that we need to be wary of. In the previous chapter, I sought to develop in some detail an account of the structure of literary understanding which stressed the centrality of imaginative-empathic engagement with an implied authorial consciousness. I argued for an approach to literary criticism in which vivid involvement in the life of a literary work requires an imaginative transposal on the part of the critic into the implied author's motivations and personal way of being in the world. To this account we add, in this chapter, the observation that once one has entered into the life of the work in this way, and is able to imagine vividly a given situation which it describes, one could also then imagine *oneself* being in the situation, and undertake activities of imaginative introspection. So imaginative introspection can work in concert with, and benefit from, imaginative empathy, because imaginative introspection benefits from vividness, and great vividness is one of the things that imaginative empathy in a literary context can provide. Yet this line of thought seems to be bringing to light something about vivid imaginings which suggests that, for all their importance within the processes of rational moral enquiry, they may not be as straightforwardly conducive to moral clarity as one might initially think. Vivid imaginings are essentially perspectival: it is as if one were really there, perceiving events not only from a certain *spatial* viewpoint, but from a certain *personal* viewpoint. One finds that, purely due to the way a literary work has been written, certain aspects of vividly imagined situations are more salient than others. Vivid imaginings, then, do not constitute a pristine and neutral horizon for moral contemplation, but are instead already invested with and pervaded by myriad implicit value commitments which work to condition any subsequent moral deliberation. Part of the difficulty here is

connected with the fact that literary works often produce their complex evaluative effects, as we noted in the previous chapter, prior to the reader's grasp of how the text's rhetoric is operating. Even the most ostensibly dry and clinically detached police procedural novel can deeply implant within the unsuspecting reader, through subtle and understated turns of rhetoric, through the inclusion of certain ostensibly minor details and the exclusion of certain others, value perceptions that can skew the way situations are understood, that influence which characters one feels sympathy for, that can determine to some extent whether the reader feels suspicious, uneasy, trusting, and so on. The capacity of a literary work to seduce the reader into feeling a certain way is partly what distinguishes literature from scientific texts, for example, or from an impartial police witness statement suitable to be considered in a court of law. Paradoxically, then, while the very vividness of the imaginings that can take place during literary experience can support imaginative introspection, the perspectival character of such vivid imaginings suggests that further justificatory work will still be required. If moral justificatory progress is being made here, its justificatory character is contributive, not decisive.

The double bind that seems now to be emerging might be restated as follows. Allowing literature *qua* literature to contribute where it can to moral justificatory efforts (in particular those in which imaginational activity is pivotal) requires concessions on the part of the moral enquirer to literature's perspectivism, and to that extent a displacement in these phases of moral activity of the pretensions to discursive objectivity that are sometimes held to be of a piece with rational moral enquiry. For those of us even remotely inclined to explore the extent of the potential cognitive significance of the imagination, the

answer surely cannot be that we aim for a wholesale repression of vivid imaginings from moral philosophical activity. A better alternative might be to indulge at certain moments the biases and tendentiousness that vivid imaginings (especially those deriving in some way from literary experience) to a greater or lesser extent usually bring, and then seek in due course to draw them back into broader overarching processes of rational moral deliberation. The paradox is that while realistic vivid imaginings can support moral justification in the ways that I have discussed, their doing so involves adopting and emphasising certain perspectives, and closing off others *which could still be pertinent* to the moral issue in question. The problem we still face, in other words, could be described as one of completeness of scope, if completeness of scope in imagining a morally demanding situation requires the ability to see the situation from all morally relevant angles. In a moral context, for our purposes, this corresponds to the third dimension of imaginative fullness that I mentioned earlier. It is not unheard of for a literary work to repeatedly return to the same scene, describing it each time from a different perspective, and perhaps even from the points of view of different characters. This is one way in which a literary work can begin to mitigate the problem of completeness of scope. I want to suggest, however, a more general way of broadening one's perspectival scope on moral problems which can still involve imaginative introspection in the context of literary experience, and which does not rely upon a given literary work treating the same situation from multiple perspectives. This more general solution is for the reader to seek out *multiple* works which all engage with the same, or very similar, moral issues, and to undertake activities of imaginative introspection during the encounter with each work. This approach takes advantage of the facts not only

that one's value commitments tend to come to light most saliently during the actual experience, or vividly imagined experience, of particular situations, but also that precisely these value commitments, if truly one's own, in principle span all possible situations, and are therefore certainly applicable across multiple literary works which aspire, minimally, to portraying possible situations. For example, having studied Wordsworth's *The Old Cumberland Beggar*, one might then seek out other works by Wordsworth, and then works by other authors, which undertake morally serious thematic enquiry into the nature of encounters with homeless people, or more generally, with individuals living, in some sense, on the margins of society. The exploration of a complex moral issue of this kind, I want to suggest, can always benefit from being investigated in different ways, and in particular by exploiting the moral epistemic advantages that can flow from imaginative involvement in the perspectives belonging to different personalities.

My underlying point, which is supported by the different lines of investigation pursued in this chapter, is that moral philosophical enquiry, because it is (at least in the view of an approach to ethics that stresses the importance of values and virtue) so closely bound up with personal moral development, needs to be conceived in gradualist terms, and that important moral issues with which literary works very often substantively engage are rarely if ever capable of being exhaustively or even adequately "decided" on the basis of the putative insights contained within a single literary work, no matter how seemingly thorough and convincing that work's thematic elaborations might be. We have certainly found that literature can *contribute* substantively to the processes of moral justification, and that this contribution can gain greater

justificatory authority if multiple relevant literary works are taken into account. Even so, we must accept that the nature of literature's role in moral justification ultimately *remains* contributive rather than decisive. Indeed, at every turn in this chapter, we have found grounds for epistemological caution in relation to the question of literary aesthetic moral cognitivism: caution, because the phenomenological structure of literary experience itself points beyond literature to practical experience as a proper domain for moral justification; caution, because literature's status as a potential source of moral testimony is partially compromised by the fact that the implied author is not ontically transcendent to the work, but instead is constituted heteronomously on the basis of what is given in the text; caution, because the complex processes of reflective equilibrium necessarily take in a variety of sources of experience and justification, of which literature is but one; caution, because part of the verificatory effort involved in ensuring imaginative realism is extrinsic to literary experience; and caution, because the perspectival character of realistic vivid imaginings evoked by any given literary work structurally entails a risk of excluding morally pertinent ways of viewing a depicted situation, and is liable, in virtue of the very deployment of rhetoric that renders literature precious to us, to be pervaded by implicit and even subtly tendentious evaluative suggestions.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion: Some Closing Remarks on the Relation between Aesthetic and Ethical Value

In the preceding two chapters, attention has turned directly to the question of the moral cognitive value of literature. I have argued that literature *qua* literature does have an epistemologically significant capacity for moral suggestion, but that it is ultimately misleading to claim that literature *teaches* us about morality, or that literature can strictly speaking be regarded as a *source* of moral knowledge, owing to the conspicuous frangibility of literature's various contributions to the processes of moral justification. Cognitivist protestations which involve resorting to the mantra that putative knowledge need not be indefeasible begin to have the look of straw grasping when, as I have argued, it becomes in the end rather difficult to accept in good epistemic conscience that literature satisfies the justification condition.

Questions remain, however, about the exact nature of the relation between aesthetic and ethical value in a literary context. If a given literary work contains important moral insights which are conveyed in a literary manner, it is not immediately obvious at this juncture in our discussion why that in itself should count as a reason for valuing the work aesthetically. Conversely, we need to try to decide whether a work which manifests an ethical flaw which is pertinent to the determination of its overall aesthetic value should be deemed in that regard to be aesthetically deficient.

Intuitively, it seems right to say that one of the reasons we value Wordsworth's *The Old Cumberland Beggar* as a work of art is precisely because it gets something *right* about the intuition of the intrinsic value of human life, and about the phenomenology of compassion, and that if an early draft of the

poem were to be found to suggest something false about these topics then that would count as a reason for aesthetically valuing the published work more highly than the earlier draft. It also seems right to say that we value this poem aesthetically not only because it *invites* (through exclamatory vociferation, for example) a response which is morally right (e.g. compassion for the beggar) but because it genuinely *arouses*, under its own rhetorical steam, such a response in the reader. Concrete observations like these which cite a specific literary work provide some evidence to support two kinds of general argument that the ethicist might deploy: a cognitive argument (according to which there are occasions when we value a literary work aesthetically because it conveys thematically relevant moral truth by artistic means), and a merited-response argument (according to which a literary work possessing an aesthetically relevant ethical flaw is to that extent aesthetically flawed because it prescribes and attempts to arouse a response which is unethical and therefore unmerited, since responses to art are subject to ethical criteria).

Yet, as Berys Gaut demonstrates, there is a third kind of argument that ethicists use, and this is the argument that ethical virtue is beautiful. For a number of reasons, this is the aspect of the case for ethicism that I wish to concentrate on in this chapter. Firstly, regardless of whether ethicism turns out to be true or not, the general claim that a person's ethical virtue is always in principle capable of being seen to be beautiful (I shall call this the virtuous beauty position)¹ has enormous significance for our understanding of the nature of value, implying as it does the idea of a fundamental linkage between the

¹ I propose to use the term "virtuous beauty" in order to give Berys Gaut's phrase "moral beauty" a more precise focus. In this chapter, I shall not be concerned with the broader question of whether morality in general coincides with the beautiful. Shaftesbury, for example, believed there to be a primordial metaphysical unity of the good, the beautiful, and the true.

fields of ethics and aesthetics. (I don't deny that the cognitive and merited-response arguments have significance here as well). Secondly, Gaut himself admits that justifying the virtuous beauty position is difficult,² and I believe that on the basis of the phenomenological investigations into intersubjectivity and the imagination contained in earlier chapters, and by adopting a phenomenological approach to the question of virtuous beauty itself, I may now be in a position to make some headway on this matter. Thirdly, I also want to show that an investigation into the virtuous beauty position can take us so deeply into the question of ethicism that it positions us to adjudicate on whether ethicism is correct, without requiring very explicit engagements with ethicism's cognitive and merited-response arguments.

My main conclusions will be three-fold. Firstly, I want to argue on phenomenological grounds that the virtuous beauty position can be sustained, notwithstanding an important *prima facie* objection that the experience of observing virtue in someone else fails to meet the central aesthetic criterion of disinterestedness. Secondly, I shall conclude that, precisely because the virtuous beauty position, on my formulation, is at root correct, occasions can arise in which ethical flaws in an artwork really do count as aesthetic flaws. Thirdly, however, I shall also argue that certain puzzle cases, in which virtuous beauty conflicts irremediably with some other valid aesthetic value, can serve as counter-examples to show that ethicism is false, on the grounds that it would be illogical to regard, even in *pro tanto* fashion, a failure to satisfy the virtuous beauty criterion as an aesthetic flaw, given that the actual satisfaction by a given

² Gaut (2007), p.118.

artwork of some other valid aesthetic value *logically entails* sacrificing virtuous beauty.

In my approach to the virtuous beauty problem, I propose to develop a phenomenological account of beauty in general, and then to argue for the applicability of such an account to the experience of virtue in someone else. As my exploration of the experience of beauty unfolds, I will develop a pluralistic account of aesthetic value, in a discussion which includes, but is not limited to, the aesthetic values of formal unity, harmony between subject and object, and the experience of freedom. For this reason, my readers should not be too surprised to find Kant's aesthetic theory figuring fairly prominently in the course of this chapter. My intention is neither to burden the reader with an unnecessarily detailed exposition of Kant's position, nor to attribute to Kant views which remain matters of hermeneutic controversy within Kant scholarship. Yet it seems to me that Kantian thought has such an important bearing upon the general question of the relation between aesthetics and morality, and the question of virtuous beauty in particular, that a failure to engage properly with Kant on these topics would either indicate a misguided philosophical attempt to reinvent the wheel, so to speak, or give an incorrect impression of ignorance of what Kant has already usefully contributed to the discussion. Kant can assist us in understanding some of the complexities of certain aesthetic values which are deeply relevant to the concerns of this chapter.

This is not to say that I intend to adopt uncritically what Kant has to say. On the contrary, I will ultimately argue that there are reasons for doubting the plausibility of Kant's claim that one is rationally entitled to impute one's own assessment of an object's beauty to others, and that Kant underestimates the

centrality of the image in aesthetic experience. Nonetheless, the account of the phenomenology of beauty that I develop will in the end retain certain recognisably Kantian roots, such as the importance of unity in the manifold of experience, harmony between the object and one's cognitive faculties, and the experience of freedom, but will also seek to modify the Kantian view to address what I regard as a kind of suppression in Kantian thought of the intersubjective dimension of the encounter with beauty, and the importance of critical discussion and debate, and to recognise that the aesthetic value of mimesis turns out to be pertinent, for phenomenological reasons that Kant does not anticipate, but which are not incompatible with his philosophy, to the experience of natural, as well as artistic, beauty. To begin with, however, it is appropriate for our phenomenological investigation to consider a concrete example of what it is to have an experience of beauty, and I can think of no finer artistic mind to assist us in this effort than that of Claude Monet.

Monet's *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit* (c.1869)³ is dominated by a very generous bouquet of flowers arranged in what appears to be a suitably stout blue and white vase. This oval vase, which is almost completely overshadowed, serves as the picture's understated origin from which still life seems to radiate in broadly orthogonal directions. In the vertical axis, the dense floral bouquet seems to erupt upwards and outwards in a notably conic debouchment of colour. Meanwhile, scatterings of fruit extend both toward the viewer and across to the right on a crisp white tablecloth whose creases from having been neatly folded adumbrate in ridges and valleys a faint grid of squares on the material. To the

³ One of my intentions behind the following brief account of this painting is to be faithful to the phenomenology of my own experience of the work, rather than to impose a theoretical or philosophical agenda upon it. The reader should not assume that all of my passing observations about this painting will necessarily be taken up later on in this chapter, although many of them will be.

left, a wicker basket of pears seems to echo the conical or bowl-like outline of the bouquet. The rounded forms of apples and grapes lying at surface level seem to be answered by those of the flower heads which are for the most part in full bloom.

One of this painting's great strengths lies in its conveying a convincing sense of the bouquet's volume and dimensionality, and this is partly attributable to the implied artist's subtle and assiduous understanding of the play of light and shade, a preoccupation which seems to have fascinated Monet for the entirety of his long artistic career. Daylight pours in from the left to create an almost dazzling effect when it strikes the white flower petals. The very flower heads which catch the light are shielding the ones behind them, which are thus plunged into a cool and subdued shade. The conspicuous absence of any detail at all in this painting's dark backdrop, which intimates an almost eerie kind of void, has the effect of accentuating the sense of detail provided in the flowers, so much so that it is perhaps rather easy to think that there is more detail in their brushwork than there really is.

Indeed, one of the great paradoxes of impressionism lies in its remarkable discovery that an attenuation in the level of detail can sometimes be deployed to actually heighten the precision of the overall impression. In this painting we find that adept brushwork and chiaroscuro seem to combine to produce just such an effect. And the unity of the overall impression, the singularity of effect, seems to be enhanced and reinforced in Monet's thoughtful organisation of colour, by the way the yellow of the sunflower to the extreme left is answered by that of the pears, the green of the leaves by that of the apples, the darkness of the purple grapes by the shaded mauves and reds of the flowers,

and by the darkness, too, of the void-like background. So successfully are these techniques demonstrated here that we might say without phenomenological exaggeration that accompanying the pictorial givenness of flowers, fruit, linen, and so on, there is to be had a certain kind of imaginative co-givenness of scent, of warmth and coolness, and of materiality and of texture.

For a second time, then, we seem to have found ourselves reflecting upon the way in which the indeterminate dark backing seems to be functioning and contributing to the overall sense of the picture. On the one hand, it seems to be participating in a quite fundamental way in the implied artist's organisation of colour across the picture as a whole. There is a sense in which the darkness is not strictly separated from the domain of still life, but instead begins to seep into it – in the depths of the bouquet that the sunlight cannot penetrate, in the shadows that the illuminated objects must cast, and in the rich darkness of the purple grapes. On the other hand, as we noted earlier, the extremely vague, almost unfinished character of the backdrop turns out to be a perfect way within the miracle of impressionism to emphasise and even elevate the apparent level of detail that one thinks one perceives in the flower arrangement.

This amorphous and nebulous backdrop might even prompt us to think more abstractly about the forms that the picture presents. As I implied earlier, it is possible to discern a distinctly geometrical subtext pervading the forms depicted, in the propagation of conical form from the flower arrangement to the wicker basket, in the circular forms principally of the vase and the flower heads, and in the grid of squares delineated by the creases in the tablecloth. Yet I also want to suggest that from the very geometrical and formal qualities of the objects depicted seem to flow some important ways of interpreting the picture

symbolically. At one level, it is as though the elaborate shape of the vase of flowers resembles and represents a colourful tree which has shed some of its fruit onto the table-top. In this sense, Monet's compositional decision to have the fruit scattered fairly freely across the surface has the effect of emphasising and reinforcing the production by the picture of ideas of growth, flourishing, plenitude, and fruitfulness.

This painting can assist us further in developing our understanding of the phenomenology of beauty if we start to think now in slightly more general terms about the nature of the experience that it offers, in terms both of its phenomenal character and of the essential structures of experience that are involved. The key phenomenological observation that needs to be made at this point is that the mode of intuition principally involved during appreciation of the picture as a work of art conforms to the structure of picture-consciousness that we discussed in detail in chapter 3 ('Husserl and the Imagination'). This is to say that three kinds of intentional object are given to consciousness: the so-called "picture-thing" (the physical artwork which is directly perceived), the "picture-subject" which in this case is a plurality of physical objects (e.g. flowers, fruit, tablecloth, etc.) which are represented, and the "image-object" which is a semblance of the picture-subject, and which does not exist either in reality or ideality but is constituted heteronomously by consciousness on the basis of perceiving the picture-thing. Perception is necessarily involved during aesthetic appreciation of this painting, but the aesthetic appreciation cannot be wholly explained in terms of perception, because one's mode of attention is essentially contemplative rather than merely perceptual. During aesthetic absorption in this picture, one contemplates the way in which the picture-subject appears in the image-object.

Now, the concept of contemplating the way in which something appears in an image does not logically entail taking pleasure in doing so. For example, one would not necessarily expect a doctor to contemplate with any pleasure the way in which a bone tumour appears in an x-ray. Yet contemplating the way in which objects appear in Monet's painting is pleasurable, and the taking of such pleasure is not an incidental but an intrinsic part of the appreciation of the work. It should help us to understand the phenomenology of beauty more fully if we try to clarify what it is that we are taking pleasure in when we contemplate the way objects appear in a painting. I want to suggest a number of different possible answers to this question, and my answers will highlight different dimensions of aesthetic value.

Firstly, there is the idea that mimesis in itself is an aesthetic value. According to Aristotle, it is simply a fact of human cognitive life that the human subject enjoys grasping a semblance as a semblance. Grasping a semblance as a semblance is a way of understanding what one sees, something that humans always enjoy. This is not to say that the only way to enjoy an artwork is through mimesis. For example, one might enjoy looking at a non-mimetic work of abstract modern art because one finds it to be soothing. Yet even in the case of a non-mimetic artwork, one's enjoyment of the work is very often attributable in some degree to the fact that one has begun to come to terms with it in some way, that is, to begin to understand it. Monroe Beardsley goes so far as to claim that during aesthetic experience "there is *always* something going on that can be called, in a broad sense, understanding".⁴ But we don't need to adjudicate on the essentialist overtones of this latter claim in order to accept the Aristotelian claim

⁴ Beardsley (1982), p.293. Emphasis mine.

that humans enjoy understanding what they see, and that mimesis is enjoyable for this reason. Yet if we do so then we are left with the problem of the doctor looking at the x-ray. Are we forced to accept that the doctor does, after all, enjoy looking at it? A plausible Aristotelian answer would be a *pro tanto* one. To the extent that the doctor recognises what the image shows, s/he will be cognitively satisfied, and to the extent that the doctor fails to recognise what the image shows, s/he will be cognitively dissatisfied. This kind of explication of our response to non-artistic mimesis is consistent with the Aristotelian view that everyone enjoys imitation.

Phenomenologically, there does indeed appear to be an essentially cognitive kind of pleasure to be enjoyed in the apprehension of a semblance as a semblance. And we are entitled to believe that this kind of pleasure is capable under the right conditions of being a specifically *aesthetic* pleasure because sometimes (but not always) we value an artwork precisely because of its representational accuracy. The astonishing realism of Van Dyck's depiction of silk is a reason to value his painting aesthetically. Yet when viewing Van Dyck's depiction of silk and valuing it aesthetically, one is not fooled into believing that one is actually looking at silk. On the contrary, one values it aesthetically precisely because one knows that it is a depiction, and grasps it as such in an act of picture-consciousness. This kind of example seems sufficient to justify the claim that mimesis in itself is sometimes aesthetically valuable.

Yet if evidence were needed that mimesis and aesthetic value are not identical, then our discussion so far has already provided it. For one thing, we have already noted that some artworks are non-mimetic. Secondly, some objects are mimetic but not regarded as aesthetically valuable, e.g. most medical x-rays.

This observation seems to suggest a possible way of structuring the way we understand aesthetic values. There may be some aesthetic values which only become salient in virtue of the artwork being non-mimetic. Secondly, there may be some aesthetic values which are capable of being perceived in both mimetic and non-mimetic artworks. Finally, there may be some aesthetic values which necessarily can only be perceived in mimetic artworks.

The appreciation of shape and form is an aspect of aesthetic experience which can take place both without and within the context of consciousness of an image as an image. To be sure, a non-mimetic artwork, such as an abstract sculpture, could still be said to *represent* certain ideal or abstract forms, whilst at the same time understood not to be purporting to imitate anything in the real world or any possible real world. Yet such an artwork might well be thought to be aesthetically pleasing not because it *represents* anything, but because it *is* a beautiful form. For example, a sculpture of a regular geometrical form such as a sphere, a cube, or a cone, could be said to be beautiful because of its reflective and rotational symmetry. Yet in the case of a mimetic artwork, the phenomenological explication of the apprehension of formal beauty seems to become more complicated, because it depends upon whether the predicate “beautiful” is being applied by the observer to both the picture-subject and the image-object, or only to the image-object. On the one hand, a viewer of a painting may understand the painting to be portraying the picture-subject as *being* beautiful when viewed in a certain way, or under certain conditions. For example, a painting might plausibly be suggesting that St. Paul’s Cathedral *is* beautiful when viewed from a certain perspective. On the other hand, the viewer may understand a painting to be portraying a prosaic or even ugly subject as

only appearing in a beautiful way. An example of this might be a painting depicting the back of a refrigerator when viewed through an intense heat-haze, or through the ripples of a swimming pool. But in the case of both examples (the paintings of the refrigerator and of St. Paul's Cathedral), it is the image-object which invites contemplation, and it is the image-object which is decisive in determining the beauty of the artwork.

It might be worth noting at this point just how resistant the notion of beauty is to the straitjacket of necessary conditions. If it seems implausible to claim that all beautiful objects are mimetic, it seems more so to claim that beauty requires symmetry. Closer to the mark would be to note that both symmetry and asymmetry are aesthetically relevant properties, and that often it is precisely an interplay between symmetry and asymmetry which is a source of aesthetic value. (Monet's *Still Life with Flowers and Fruit* seems to exemplify this, as does the human face.) One reason why symmetry arouses our aesthetic interest is that it seems to evince a differentiation from randomness, a movement from disorder to order, and therefore a certain sense of purposiveness or design, even if the purpose informing such purposiveness, and the conscious intentions behind such ostensible design, seem harder to specify.

The experience of such apparent purposiveness in an artwork seems to lend the object a unity which is itself an aesthetic value. Unity is perhaps the best candidate that we have for a quality shared by all works of art, and this is connected to the fact that all artworks exist within the context of an art/criticism dialectic. If an ostensible artwork were to lack unity at all levels of interpretation, including those of form, of content, and of meaning, then it would become difficult to see how a coherent critical account of the work could be

written. And if in principle no coherent account of a work could be attained, then it is hard to see how it could be said to merit worthwhile critical attention at all. Aristotle favoured mimetic works that imitate a single object, because he regarded unity as a fundamental aesthetic concept.⁵ This apparent privileging of single-object mimetic works seems justified only to the extent that such works can support a simplicity and concentration of contemplative experience which can never quite be matched by works depicting several objects. But in this context Aristotle seems to neglect the idea that a picture depicting multiple objects could possess unity at other important levels – at the levels, for example, of meaning, or of overall impression. Had Aristotle thought as deeply about paintings as he did about tragic drama (I don't believe he did), then he would very quickly have realised that what counts in a mimetic artwork is not that it should ideally portray a single object, but that it should possess unity of subject matter, and unity in the treatment of such subject matter. It is not that a picture should have only one component, but that its parts, like those of the action of a good play, should blend into an harmonious whole, and that each part in its proper place should be indispensable to the work. What Aristotle says of an excellent tragic drama is surely also true of other mimetic works: “If the presence or absence of something has no discernible effect, it is not a part of the whole.”⁶

We need to bear in mind, however, that very often an important dimension of aesthetic experience lies not merely in apprehending an artwork's unity and internal harmony, but in a subjective feeling and lived experience, on the part of the observer, of being somehow in harmony with the life of the

⁵ Aristotle (1996), §§ 5.3, 5.4, p.15.

⁶ Aristotle (1996), § 5.4, p.15.

artwork. We might say that we sometimes find a way, through a peculiar act of consciousness, of entering into the internal harmony which is represented, signified, symbolised, or evinced by formal and empirically observable features of the work. Although I will in due course call into question certain important aspects of Kantian aesthetics, I want to argue at this point that Kant's account of the judgement of taste provides us with a very helpful explication of this kind of harmonious aesthetic satisfaction, as well as illuminating an important aspect of the relation between aesthetics and ethics.

Kant refers to the intentional object of the contemplation of beauty as the "form", which is apperceived in the examination of the formal relatedness of the object's sensible characteristics.⁷ The form, then, depends upon sensuous perception, but is not itself to be identified with sensation. Instead, one apperceives the form on the basis of sensations. In these respects, it is worth noting that in the case of pictorial works of art, the Kantian form corresponds quite closely to what I earlier referred to as the image-object, which is constituted heteronomously on the basis of sensuous perception of the physical artwork. Yet for Kant, the object of the judgement of taste need not be an artwork at all, for it could be an object of natural beauty, such as a landscape, the aesthetic appreciation of which does not depend upon being aware of a picture as a picture. This is not to say that Kant thinks that beautiful natural forms are not representational. On the contrary, I will in due course propose that there is a fundamentally important sense in which Kant believes that all objects of beauty are in fact capable of being representational, namely in their representational capacity with respect to the phenomenology of moral agency. But in all cases,

⁷ I am following here Crawford's reading of the Kantian form (Crawford (1974), pp. 89, 96-8, 105, 108-10, 123).

the bearer of beauty, that is, the intentional object of experience to which the predicate “beautiful” is being applied, is neither what is represented nor the sensations upon which such representation depends, but the Kantian form itself, which orders the sensuous manifold and gives it unity.

For Kant, the ultimate cause of aesthetic pleasure is harmony between the object and the cognitive faculties. In the apprehension of a beautiful form, activity which is both harmonious and non-conceptual is stimulated between the faculties of the imagination and the understanding. The result is a lived experience of formal subjective purposiveness, which is to say that during aesthetic experience of the beautiful it is as though the beautiful object were designed for an humanly intelligible purpose, or that the object of taste seems perfectly pre-adapted to what at root governs a priori our cognition of the world. On the one hand, we might say that the imagination for its part finds a way of bringing the form into sharp focus for the understanding. On the other hand, one might say that subjectively one has a peculiar sense of legislating a principle with which the sensible world for once obediently seems to comply. It is precisely this harmonious experience of formal subjective purposiveness in the experience of the beautiful which is the source for the observer of aesthetic satisfaction and pleasure. For Kant, the crucial difference between aesthetic and empirical cognition is that in an empirical context the faculty of the understanding regulates the imagination by supplying determinate concepts. This means that empirical judgements are in principle susceptible to confirmation through the verification that the determinations of any concept employed in a judgement are themselves empirically observable. But in the judgement of taste, the object of understanding is not something whose

exemplification can be determinately specified in advance. This leads Kant to the view that in the judgement of taste the form apprehended sheds light upon an indeterminate type of concept, which in Kantian terminology is the same as a supersensible idea. In this sense, Kant believes that the beautiful, like the sublime, has the capacity to lead us toward the contemplation of the supersensible. Natural beauty accomplishes this by expressing the idea of the supersensible in general, the very idea that nature was designed for our powers of cognition, and is amenable to our empirical investigation. And art can echo this experience of formal subjective purposiveness by presenting, in miniature as it were, a formal ordering of nature.

Under the Kantian terminology, what we would call “values”, in the sense of aesthetic or moral values, must be taken to be present in all but name in the form of supersensible ideas. While we should not forget that Kant takes the domain of supersensible ideas to include non-evaluative ideas like eternity, fame, and the idea of the supersensible in general, it is also clear that he thinks it includes ethical virtues and values like love, freedom, and patience.⁸ Evidence that, for Kant, values belong to the realm of the supersensible comes not only from the examples of aesthetic ideas that he provides, but from his understanding of the way ideas are experienced. On the one hand, as constituents of the supersensible substrate of nature, ideas are experienced as being subjectively transcendent and universally communicable. On the other hand, the sensitivity of the faculty of the understanding to aesthetic ideas, and the sensitivity of the faculty of reason to rational ideas, govern and delimit which ideas can be experienced. In this broad sense, the account of values

⁸ Kant (1911), § 49, p.176.

provided by Scheler, and broadly adopted by Stein, that we have discussed in previous chapters, is not uninfluenced by the Kantian account of the subjective transcendence of values, and the delimiting role of the sensitivity of the faculties of the understanding and reason to values.

Opinion is divided within Kant scholarship on the question of whether Kant is in fact employing an implicit appeal to notions of moral duty in order to complete his transcendental deduction of the universal validity of the judgement of taste. But there is little room for doubt that, at a minimum, Kant believes the encounter with beauty to be capable of bringing to consciousness important aspects of the phenomenology of moral agency. This is why Kant construes taste as “in the ultimate analysis, a critical faculty that judges of the rendering of moral ideas in terms of sense”.⁹ Crawford, for one, takes Kant to be implicitly identifying the supersensible substrate of our moral and aesthetic faculties with the supersensible substrate of nature, and to believe that the ultimate ground of the experience of beauty is the ultimate ground of morality.¹⁰ Guyer, for another, accepts at the very least that Kant either “assumes” or “seems to assume” that aesthetic ideas “paradigmatically” have moral content.¹¹ The slightly vague nature of this admission by Guyer is indicative of the fact that Kant does not devote as much energy as one might have hoped toward substantiating his posited linkage between the respective grounds of the experience of the moral and of the beautiful. It is as though there is an implicit premise in Kantian thought that the most important aesthetic value is to illuminate the basis of morality. For example, when Kant enumerates some aesthetic ideas in § 49,

⁹ Kant (1911), § 60, p.227.

¹⁰ Crawford (1974), p.140.

¹¹ Guyer (1996), pp.15, 17.

most (but not all) of them bear undeniably moral overtones.¹² Yet § 52 does seem to provide an occasion on which the premise surfaces, for Kant observes that the pleasure that we take in merely charming or entertaining artworks which are devoid of moral content is shallower and less abiding than the “self-sufficing delight” which may be derived from works which are “either proximately or remotely, brought into combination with moral ideas”; that one eventually loses interest in a work aimed at mere enjoyment, and finds that one’s mind is “dissatisfied”.¹³ It is a pity that Kant does not elaborate at this point upon exactly what he has in mind with his distinction between the “proximate” and the “remote” bringing of an artwork into combination with moral ideas. Part of the Kantian answer must be that beauty can harmonise with morality in virtue of the fact that the apprehension of formal subjective purposiveness is a condition for the possibility of freely-willed practical engagement in the world. If, as I wish to suggest, Kant is implying that the experience of beauty can be representational with respect to the phenomenology of moral agency, then it is reasonable to assume that Kant believes beauty to be capable of introducing us to the same kind of experience of freedom which is relevant to practical reason.

One way in which Kant provides evidence of a fundamental link between art and morality is to make observations about the way people change over time as a result of artistic experience. Kant points out that a person’s exposure to moral ideas in art seems to facilitate a smooth transition from the enjoyment of art to being naturally morally motivated and disposed toward virtue.¹⁴ He also

¹² Kant (1911), § 49, p.176: Kant’s list includes “[...] the kingdom of the blessed, hell, eternity, creation, [...] death, envy, and all vices, as also love, fame, and the like [...]”

¹³ Kant (1911), § 52, p.191.

¹⁴ Kant (1911), § 59, p.225: “Taste makes, as it were, the transition from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest possible without too violent a leap, for it represents the imagination, even

believes that the ability to attend to beauty in a disinterested manner prepares us to love other people and nature disinterestedly.¹⁵ Kant is not claiming that one's exposure to art is a necessary condition for the acquisition of certain privileged pieces of moral knowledge, but it is part of his account that a sustained interest in art can in due course mould one's disposition and motivations to conform to what is moral, and help one to develop the ability to relate to others and to the world in a manner devoid of private interest. This in turn is consonant with the more general idea that I developed in chapter 6 ('Literature's Capacity for Moral Suggestion') that the experience and study of art provides an opportunity to develop one's understanding of the structures and phenomenal character of moral experience.¹⁶

We don't need to commit ourselves to the relatively strong reading of Kant according to which Kant is claiming that the experience of beauty is representational with respect to the noumenal world, in order to see the validity of the more moderate interpretation that Kant believes the experience of beauty to be representational with respect to important aspects of the phenomenology of virtuous experience and the intuition of moral values. For the simple reason that representation is always subject to a correctness condition, the question of warrant in the judgement of taste would now seem to become rather pressing. If a work of art seems to be portraying a moral value, like compassion or freedom, in a certain way, then a desire to assess the portrayal's veridicality is both

in its freedom, as amenable to a final determination for understanding, and teaches us to find, even in sensuous objects, a free delight apart from any charm of sense."

¹⁵ Kant (1911), § 29, p.119. It would seem to be an implication of Kant's position that judgements of taste could serve as a gentle propaedeutic to moral virtue in the sense that judgements of taste *devoid* of personal interest could help to prepare one to make moral judgements *contrary* to one's personal interest.

¹⁶ Readers who are mindful that in *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* natural beauty rather than artistic beauty seems to be configured as the paradigm case may rest assured that nothing in my exposition of Kant's understanding of beauty is intended to obscure or contradict this fact.

cognitively and morally appropriate. The seductive propensity of rhetoric upon which I elaborated in chapter 6, and the seductive capacities of art in general, must mean that an experience of harmony between an artwork and one's cognitive faculties, and a pleasurable combination of the imagination and the understanding, imply in themselves a requirement for further verification. Seen from this perspective, the normal discursive practices of the provision, exchange and evaluation of art criticism would seem to be an integral part of the processes of the aesthetic exploration of the domain of values, and, at their best, verificatory in character of the proposition that a given artwork offers to the aesthetically sensitive observer a genuine encounter with the realm of morality.

What strikes me as notable about Kant's aesthetic theory is that there seems to be no place for justificatory efforts in relation to the judgement of taste in the context of critical discourse and exchange. In Kant's view, it seems that if one takes an artwork to illuminate certain moral ideas, experiences a self-sufficing delight in such putative illumination, and feels the aesthetic pleasure of formal subjective purposiveness on the basis of a disinterested attending to the form, then one is already justified from a first-person perspective in arriving at the judgement of taste, and the judgement that one has had through sensory experience of the artwork an encounter with the basis of morality. The reason for this is that Kant thinks that one has already ensured the objectivity of one's experience of the work by restricting the subjective grounds of one's judgement to what is universally communicable. For this reason, on the Kantian model, in soliciting the agreement of others that a work is beautiful and expresses moral ideas, one is not seeking to acquire confirmation from others for a provisional

hypothesis of one's own, but imputing one's own judgements about the work's beauty and moral worth to all rational observers.¹⁷

Kant eschews the term "objectivity" in connection with the way one should experience an artwork, but he does presuppose that all that is aesthetically important about a work is intersubjectively accessible. The Kantian mechanism for ensuring intersubjective accessibility is to restrict the grounds of the judgement of taste to the form which consists only of what is universally communicable. Yet this requirement seems to neglect the possibility that there may be important aspects of aesthetic experience which depend upon and are governed by the observer's subjectivity and life experience, and which are in this sense objectively indeterminate.¹⁸ As we noted in chapter 6 when touching upon Wolfgang Iser's treatment of indeterminacy, readers of a literary work may fill in lacunae in the work in their own autonomous and personal ways, making it practically impossible to disentangle the reader's own subjectivity from the experiences that the work itself seems to be offering.

Even if we leave to one side for the moment the issue of the importance and value of indeterminacy in aesthetic experience, the Kantian position still has to explain why we should regard it as plausible to think that experiencing the form disinterestedly is practically attainable. In Kant's view, all rational judgements presuppose a common sense, and with respect to aesthetic judgement, Kant understands the common sense to be a capacity for experiencing a feeling that is universally communicable. This does not commit Kant to actual concurrence of the same feeling by different people

¹⁷ Naturally, I am not claiming that Kant makes the epistemological mistake of overlooking the defeasibility of the judgement of taste.

¹⁸ The standard Kantian response to this objection will be that such aspects are peripheral to the disinterested level at which Kant's account operates. My suggestion is that we need to take seriously the possibility that something important is being lost here.

contemplating the same object. But he does seem to be saying that experiencing a universally communicable feeling of aesthetic harmony with a given beautiful artwork is within the range of reliable competence of all rational human subjects. And it is difficult to see why this must follow from the fact that the judgement of taste must presuppose a common sense in order to be intelligible as a judgement. I concur with Kant's motivating intuition that the fact that we do on occasion exclaim to others that "This is beautiful!" in the absence of objective proof, and become suitors for their assent, is epistemologically significant and interesting. But the fact that an exclamation is epistemologically significant does not mean that it has no hyperbolic element. Kant either ignores or suppresses the hyperbolic element of such exclamations and accords them a straight-faced normativity. He ends up construing it as rational to impute to others one's own feeling prior to hearing what they might have to say by way of an account of their own aesthetic experience, something that in my experience sensible appreciators of art deliberately refrain from doing. Kant invites our verdictive judgement on beauty prior to our consultation with others, but I would suggest that we are more likely to be in some kind of proximity to objectivity in the context of critical discourse and exchange.

Instead of convincingly resolving the antinomy of taste, then, the Kantian train of thought seems to have led us into a fresh double-bind. On the one hand, the fundamental intuition that there is something deeply important to be gotten right in the way that we interpret art, and that we are not rationally free to respond in any way we wish, seems right, on pain of an hollow relapse into solipsism. On the other hand, the Kantian insistence that one not only aspire to but *actually attain* an experience of artworks that one would be justified from a

first-person perspective in imputing to others seems to be both implausibly demanding for the subject and actually to run against the grain of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience. The structure of this post-Kantian problematic of aesthetic experience is in fact remarkably similar to a tension presented in the phenomenological investigation of the apperception and understanding of the presently lived experiences of a foreign subjectivity. On the one hand, the empathic fulfilling explication is understood to be ultimately subject to an unequivocal correctness condition. On the other hand, as we noted in chapter 2, foundational phenomenological considerations pertaining to the encounter with a foreign subjectivity determine that a disjunction in subjective processes between the empathiser and the Other is not an unfortunate by-product of contingent human cognitive frailty, but something which is in fact constitutive of the other person being another person. On a Steinian view, the answer is not to insist upon an implausible phenomenal unity with the Other, but to constitute within consciousness an approximation to the Other's experience; to converge in time through the development of an ever richer and more accurate apprehension of the Other's personality; not to legislate for what co-empathisers should experience, but to regard the experiences of co-empathisers as potential sources of correction and corroboration for one's own empathic experience. The encounter with a work of art can also be understood in intersubjective terms, as an empathic encounter with the experiences of an implied artist. In this interpretive context, one's grasp of the experience implied in a given work is, as a matter of descriptive fact, phenomenally given as being subject to a correctness condition. But it is not given as something which can be necessarily imputed to other art observers and critics. Instead, one develops one's own

understanding of a work over time, and takes the critical accounts of others as possible sources of modification or confirmation of one's own perceptions and reflective judgements.

The idea that the encounter with a work of art can be plausibly configured in intersubjective terms seems to invite a converse corollary. Is the encounter with someone else capable of having an aesthetic dimension? Plato certainly thought that this was the case, holding that virtue is a kind of beauty, and wickedness a kind of deformity.¹⁹ Certain aspects of Plato's account in *The Republic* of justice in the individual can help us to begin to understand why it makes sense to say that somebody who manifests virtue can be said to have a beautiful soul. But we are also well-placed now to pursue an investigation into the putative beauty of virtue because we have, in the course of this chapter so far, developed a phenomenological account of certain important aspects of the experience of beauty, and, in previous chapters, a detailed understanding of the phenomenology of intersubjectivity. We can draw upon Plato's account of justice in the individual, and upon the Husserl-Stein account of the encounter with a foreign subjectivity, in order to clarify why important aspects of the phenomenology of beauty should turn out to be potentially applicable to the encounter with a virtuous person.

One aspect of virtue that Plato emphasises is self-control. Plato conceives of self-control as the bringing of one part of the soul, such as the appetitive element, under the discipline of an essentially higher kind of element, such as spirit or reason. The different elements vie among themselves for dominance, and if appetite is not controlled by spirit and reason, then it will

¹⁹ Plato (2003), p.154.

control them, and the individual will have become a slave to base instincts and drives.²⁰ The virtue of temperance is the subordination of spirit and appetite to reason. The higher relational virtue of justice refers to the state of the soul in which each element properly performs its own function under the rule of reason. Self-disciplined people may in this sense be said to be mentally at peace with themselves, and their external actions adumbrate a state of internal harmony in their subjective processes. The encounter with self-discipline in someone else, then, is capable of appresenting to the observer a state of internal harmony in the Other, and the apperception of such internal harmony, as we noted earlier, can be an important part of the experience of beauty.

On the Platonic account, then, it seems that the most prominent reason for regarding a just soul as beautiful is in virtue of its internal harmony. But another plausible explanation for the fact that it seems right to say that someone who behaves virtuously has a beautiful personality lies in the idea that observing such a person could involve the co-givenness of aesthetically pleasing forms and shapes. We might remark favourably on someone else by saying that they have a personality which is balanced, stable, or well-rounded. By this we usually mean that they can be relied upon not to respond unwisely to unusual or challenging situations, or that they can be said have a consistent and clear moral faculty. We noted in chapter 4 that Edith Stein finds the personality of the Other to be given to the empathising consciousness as being layered in a manner which reflects the Other's personal hierarchy of value commitments. In investigating what it is to feel a value deeply, Stein discovers an introspective awareness of a feeling issuing from deep within one's own person. She also observes that our deepest

²⁰ Plato (2003), pp.150-151.

feelings seem to radiate from the centre of our being, and are capable from there of permeating the entire personality. To apperceive someone else's personality, then, is to become aware of a certain topology, of a certain configuration of form, symmetry, and layering. The virtuous personality seems to be stably centred on its deepest value commitments, stratified in the sense of exhibiting a kind of nuanced sensitivity and capacity for discrimination across different kinds of value, and well-rounded in the sense of being able to reliably acquire value perceptions and pick out moral saliences in a wide range of circumstances.

We don't need to commit ourselves to specifying the precise nature of the co-givenness of such geometrical or quasi-geometrical forms during the empathic contemplation of the Other's personality in order to recognise that there must be an important morphological dimension to the way in which the Other's personality is understood. Even if personal-level attributes such as having "integrity", being "centred", being "well-rounded", or being "balanced" are being applied only figuratively, it is hard to see how they could mean anything at all if they did not possess at some level a morphological or topological connotation. So even if a shape is not phenomenally co-given during the contemplation of the Other's personality in the same way, for example, that the back of a building is appresented when viewing it from the front, it seems fair to say that a formal structure of some kind will be given to a linguistically competent reflective or pre-reflective consciousness at some level of linguistic or ideational association. To the extent that the Other is thought to have "integrity", I would suggest, the implied form will possess unity or contiguity; to the extent that the Other is thought to be "centred", the implied form will possess rotational symmetry; to the extent that the Other is regarded as "well-

rounded”, the implied form too will be rounded; and to the extent that the Other is thought to have a balanced evaluative attitude, the implied form will manifest reflective symmetry. I would also suggest that to the extent that the Other is thought to be refined or discriminating, the implied form will be likely to be finely stratified, or finely nuanced in some corresponding fashion.

The abstract form in question here is not given authentically to consciousness. Instead, what is given to consciousness is an imaginal reproduction of a non-positived primordial intuition of the abstract form. The abstract form itself is understood to be a non-mimetic representation of the Other’s personality, and is correlated with an understanding (which is refined over time) of the Other’s motivations. The imaginal reproduction is constituted heteronomously on the basis of an aggregation of encounters with the Other, or more precisely, on the basis of an aggregation of temporally distributed acts of authentic empathy. One can only build up a picture of the form correlated with the Other’s personality on the basis of the acquisition of an aggregation of images of the Other’s lived experiences. The structure of this kind of personality consciousness is homologous to picture-consciousness in the sense that to the picture-thing corresponds the objectified aggregation of empathic images, to the image-object corresponds the imaginal reproduction, and to the picture-subject corresponds the abstract form itself. As we discussed in chapter 4, one strives over time to converge toward an ever more accurate apperception of the structure of the Other’s personality. But the structure of such apperception remains during such efforts homologous to picture-consciousness, and can at no point be construed as intuitionally presentational, not only because one does not have empathic access to the

entirety of the Other's life experience, but because the access to the Other's life experience that one does acquire is itself given representationally as an image. So we find two senses in which mimesis can be said to be involved in the cumulative empathic comprehension of the Other. The Other's lived experiences, as we discovered in chapter 4, are given to the empathising consciousness in the manner of a semblance; but in addition to this, an abstract formal representation of the Other's personality is also capable of being given to the empathising consciousness in the manner of a semblance.

According to Stein's account of the flourishing of the human personality, the encounter with another person provides an important context within which moral values lying dormant within the individual may be somehow awakened and activated. One of the striking features of Stein's account of this unfolding of values is the way in which it centrally involves a tension between a confrontation with what is alien and new, and a pre-reflective moment of recognition of what was already deeply yet latently one's own. It is the kind of tension which makes it plausible to think that there is something about the experience of the unfolding of values that could be construed as aesthetic, and that one might say on such occasions, quite properly and not merely figuratively, that it seems as though the Other has a beautiful personality, or a beautiful aspect to their personality. On the face of things, in her thesis, Stein is not primarily interested in the nature of aesthetic experience, but she does imply a possible connection between empathy and aesthetic value in her observation that the unfolding of values may take place not only in the encounter with another person, but also in the encounter with a work of art, or with the natural world. And while the Kantian view of the judgement of taste that we discussed earlier

seems to neglect the idea that there may be some fundamental sense in which the object of beauty may remain locked in alterity, it does seem to be capable of explaining why there may be an aesthetic dimension to the unfolding of values, because it explicates the aesthetic feeling of harmony between the subject and the beautiful form in terms of the sensitivity of the faculty of the understanding to the realm of supersensible ideas.²¹

My thesis has sought to explore two principal aspects of the relationship between ethical and aesthetic value, and to develop a certain way of viewing these two aspects as mirror-images of one another. On the one hand, I have sought to develop the idea that encounters with artworks can be understood in intersubjective terms, as empathic encounters with the experiences of implied artists, including their value perceptions, character, and moral dispositions. On the other hand, I have sought to sustain the idea that the notion of beauty is capable of being properly applicable to the phenomenology of observing someone else behaving virtuously, and that the virtuous beauty position can for this reason be upheld. A certain conception of disinterestedness is certainly applicable in this context, because the judgement that someone else is virtuous, like any judgement in the Kantian sense, cannot permit of any personal bias, and implies universal validity for all rational subjects. Yet observing virtue in someone else is not disinterested in the sense of being indifferent to the existence of what one is observing. On the contrary, any morally competent observer could not fail to value the existence of virtue in the world. So the rational perceiver of virtue is disinterested in the moral sense of being impartial,

²¹ As I indicated in chapter 4, on a Steinian view, the unfolding of values should be understood to be capable of taking place only to the extent to which the empathiser has at least some latent affinity for the attitudes being evinced.

but not in the metaphysical sense of being indifferent to the other person's existence or possible existence in the world.

The question of the object's existence turns out to be central to Kant's notion of interest. As Donald Crawford points out, Kant characterises interest as a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction in the existence [*Existenz*] of an object or in the idea [*Vorstellung*] of a certain thing existing,²² or alternatively as "satisfaction in the presence [*Dasein*] of an object or action".²³ Part of what Kant intends to encompass with his notion of interest is interest stemming from personal desire (e.g. sensual interest) which he calls empirical interest. But Kant also wants to include what he calls intellectual interest, including moral interest, which is devoid of personal desire, because it is an interest which can be ascribed to any rational subject. Moral interest, though devoid of private bias, still involves a satisfaction in the object's existence, or the idea of its existence, because pleasure in the good, be it an intrinsic good or an instrumental good, values and desires that good's existence in the world.

Kant's notion of disinterestedness depends analytically upon his notion of interest: disinterestedness is to be understood as the absence of interest. The judgement of taste involves a disinterested feeling of pleasure in the object, and as such is devoid, as Diane Collinson puts it, of "any interest in the actual

²² Crawford (1974), pp.38-40, referring to *Critique of Judgement* §§ 2, 41. As Crawford points out, in § 2, Kant regards interest as "*das Wohlgefallen das wir mit der Vorstellung der Existenz eines Gegenstandes verbinden*". Crucially, the term *Vorstellung* is ambiguous in this context. On the one hand, it could mean "idea", which would lead to the interpretation that interest is "the satisfaction which we combine with the idea of the existence of an object". But on the other hand, *Vorstellung* might mean "representation". Since, according to Kant's philosophy, what we are aware of is always a representation, in this case the term *Vorstellung* has no special force in the sentence quoted above, leading to the alternative interpretation that interest is "the satisfaction which we combine with the existence of an object". When it comes to the awareness of values, as I intend to elaborate in what follows, the distinction between interest in the existence of the object, and interest in the idea of the existence of the object, turns out to be rather important.

²³ Crawford (1974), p.39, referring to *Critique of Judgement* § 4.

existence of what appears”;²⁴ it is devoid of moral, sensuous, prudential, and private interest.²⁵ On the face of things, this would seem to rule out judging a virtuous person to be beautiful because of their virtue, because, as I suggested earlier, it is not possible for a morally competent observer to fail to have a moral interest in what is manifestly morally good. So there is, to say the least, a *prima facie* tension between the Kantian understanding of disinterestedness and the virtuous beauty position. And Kant himself remarks that

Everyone must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the real existence of the thing, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste.²⁶

We can begin to make some progress in resolving this apparent tension by noting that the Kantian account allows for the co-existence or co-presence within the judge’s mind of the judgement of taste with interests of the kinds that Kant specifically excludes from the judgement of taste. It is not that interests foreign to the judgement of taste need to be expurgated from the judge’s stream of subjective processes, but rather that enquiry into such desire is, as Donald Crawford puts it, “completely beside the point”.²⁷ The fact that Kant is prepared to accept the principle of co-presence is demonstrated in his observation that social interest in the beautiful (e.g. the motivation to produce art for others, to adorn ourselves with beautiful accessories, to go to galleries with others, or to

²⁴ Collinson (1992), p.134.

²⁵ Kantian disinterestedness should be understood to be devoid of cognitive interest, including moral cognitive interest, but we can admit of the possibility that the judgement of taste is conducive to non-conceptual moral thought of some kind, precisely because of the free play of the imagination and the understanding.

²⁶ Kant (1911), § 2, p.43.

²⁷ Crawford (1974), p.42.

communicate one's taste) is constantly at work when one is in society, and that it does not compromise the validity of the judgement of taste. We might say that our social interest in the beautiful is a kind of background interest that we carry around with us much of the time when living in a society. Kant's point, however, is that there is nothing about our sociability or our sociality which necessarily conditions the judgement of taste.

What Kant seems to be implying is that the performance of the judgement of taste is capable of preserving its own purity by bracketing many kinds of interest – personal, moral, prudential, sensual, and social. If this kind of bracketing were not possible, then one would not be able to guarantee the impartiality required for the claim to universal validity. But in his account of the empirical deduction, Kant argues that we only believe we are justified in imputing our own feeling of pleasure in the beautiful to others because we become conscious precisely of our own disinterestedness. And the consciousness of one's own disinterestedness could only be possible if one were able to bracket any interest which could jeopardise the judgement of taste as a universally valid judgement.

On the Kantian view, then, disinterestedness is really something more than an abstracted or theoretically inferred moment of the judgement of taste. It is instead something which can itself become an intentional object of conscious introspection. And because Kant is prepared to accept the possibility of the co-presence within consciousness of interest with the judgement of taste, he seems to be committed in principle to the possibility of some kind of bracketing of co-present interest during the experience of the beautiful. If, as I suggested earlier, we take the Kantian notion of disinterestedness to relate to both interest in the

existence of the object, and interest in the idea of the object's existence, then we must assume that Kant believes both of these kinds of interest to be capable of being bracketed by the subject. This means that if we are to adjudicate on the question of whether the Kantian account of beauty is compatible with the virtuous beauty position, we need to try to verify phenomenologically whether both interest in the existence of another's virtue, and interest in the idea of the existence of another's virtue, are capable of being bracketed from conscious attention during the experience of observing their being virtuous.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the reason that Kant stresses the importance of a lack of concern for the beautiful object's existence is that he wants to make a distinction between a non-contemplative attitude (be it directly perceptual or morally evaluative) and one which is aesthetically contemplative. In the aesthetic appreciation of a landscape or a painting, one is not primarily concerned with the existence of what one sees, or the existence of the picture-subject, but with the way in which such objects appear. By analogy, it seems plausible to suppose that when one contemplates aesthetically someone else's virtuous personality, one is attending primarily to the way in which the Other's personality is appresented through their external actions and expressions, not only in the present moment, but on the basis of an aggregation of historical encounters retained in the observer's memory. So one could argue that when one attends specifically to the beauty of someone's personality, one is not essentially concerned with their existence, but with the way in which their personality appears, just as when one contemplates the beauty of the painting by Monet that we considered earlier, one is not essentially concerned with the existence of the bouquet of flowers depicted, but with the way in which the bouquet appears.

In fact, this kind of metaphysical neutrality is something that Husserl invites us to adopt in the transcendental attitude, in which one attends to the way in which objects appear to consciousness, and in which one becomes in an important sense indifferent to the veridicality of one's intuitions. It is not that after the reduction one has abandoned the world in favour of a Cartesian immanent sphere of intentional content, but that, as Husserl puts it, "every interest in the actuality or nonactuality of the world [...] is put out of play."²⁸ This is not to say that we may not attend to the doxastic aspect of perception, but that we suspend our acceptance of it. So it is not that the very idea of the existence of objects becomes bracketed, but that one suspends judgement on the existence of objects given to consciousness. And in the Husserlian investigation into valuing, the being of values remains in the first instance out of consideration, but the idea of their existence and the way in which values may seem to be subjectively transcendent does not. Phenomenologically, to hold a certain value commitment does not commit one to adjudicate one way or the other on its metaphysical existence, but it does seem to entail at some level the idea of the value's existence, because values to which we are justifiably committed are phenomenally given as being objective in the sense of being intersubjectively verifiable in principle, and it is precisely in terms of intersubjective co-constitution that Husserl explicates the notion of being.

It seems to me that we don't need to adjudicate on the metaphysical status of values in order to recognise that the idea of virtue existing is operative as an intrinsic part of valuing virtue in someone else. If we take rational experience in general to be conditioned a priori by moral value commitments,

²⁸ Poellner (2007), p.447, referring to Husserl (1970), § 53, p.179.

then we would have to accept that the bracketing of all interest in the idea of virtue existing is something that could never be rationally attained. This means that if we understand Kant's stipulation of disinterestedness to require the bracketing of all interest in the idea of the object existing during the judgement of taste, then virtue becomes something that could never be held to be beautiful in the Kantian sense. But a less demanding account of disinterestedness which does not preclude all interest in the idea of the object existing, such as the account corresponding to the reading of Kant which takes the statement about interest quoted earlier in footnote 22 only to refer to interest in the object's existence, or the account of disinterestedness provided by Shaftesbury, would not preclude the possibility of regarding someone else's virtue as being beautiful.

Virtue in somebody else does not always seem beautiful, even to someone who possesses some knowledge of what it is to be virtuous, or to someone who is skilled in recognising virtue in others. Someone acting with great courage in trying to save my life might suddenly push me into a shop doorway as I walk down a street, but my encounter with virtue on such an occasion could hardly be said to involve an apprehension of beauty. Yet my contention at this point is that certain features of the essential nature of virtue, and of the phenomenology of the experience of virtue in someone else, predispose virtue toward being seen, under the right conditions and from an appropriate standpoint, as being beautiful. One of the underlying reasons for this lies in the Platonic insight that virtue is connected with a state of internal harmony in the person. But the apprehension of beauty is also attributable to the facts that the Other's lived experience and personality are capable of being given

to the empathising consciousness in the manner of a semblance; that the discovery and unfolding of values can involve an experience of what Beardsley would call felt freedom, and a feeling of being in harmony with the Other; and that observing someone behaving consistently in different situations according to a stable set of moral principles can be the basis for an experience of uniformity in variety. One thing that a work of literature can accomplish is to place the reader in the right kind of vantage point from which the virtue of an implied author can be apprehended as beautiful, because empathy as Husserl and Stein understand it is, as I have argued, capable of being implied within the phenomenological structure of reading a literary work. When implied authorial moral virtue is grasped imaginatively as being beautiful by a textually attentive empathising reader, the apperceived moral virtue can be said to be contributing to the aesthetic value of the work.

In the course of this chapter, I have sought to explicate the aesthetic value of virtuous beauty in terms of a set of more fundamental aesthetic values like internal and external harmony, mimesis, felt freedom, active discovery, and uniformity in variety. These fundamental aesthetic values are ones which have tended to recur in one form or another throughout the history of western aesthetic thought; their philosophical roots, perhaps most notably in Platonic, Aristotelian, and Kantian thought, are not difficult to see.²⁹ At the hands of a

²⁹ It would have been remiss of me had I not at least sketched out for the reader some of these philosophical aesthetic roots in the course of this chapter's discussion. I should add that I don't regard the ones that I have picked out as being fundamentally mutually incompatible. Kant never placed a great deal of emphasis upon the importance of mimesis, presumably because he wanted to provide an account of beauty relevant to both natural and artistic objects. But I don't regard this as a reason for supposing that Kantian aesthetics is incompatible with the Aristotelian valuing of mimesis. To be sure, Kant would be among the first to point out that the virtuous person does not imitate virtue, just as the eagle does not imitate majesty (see Kant (1911), § 49, p.177), and that artistic genius is not something that would-be artists can profitably attempt to imitate. But it does not follow from the Kantian position that mimesis has no role within the phenomenology of the apperception of virtuous beauty, or of the majesty of an eagle. On the

skilled artist, I want to suggest, such fundamental aesthetic values can be coordinated and combined to produce an appresentation of virtuous beauty in the implied artist or implied author, or alternatively in characters depicted within the work. But we need to recognise that they could also be combined to produce other second-order aesthetic values, such as satirical acuity, grotesquerie, comic incongruity, or moral doubt and uncertainty. We find emerging here, then, a kind of aesthetic pluralism operating at two distinct levels. At the basic level, there seems to be a pluralism of the fundamental aesthetic values to which aesthetic thought seems to return time and again. Yet at a secondary level, we discover a plurality of derivative values that different combinations of fundamental aesthetic values can produce.

In a sophisticated work of art, the overall aesthetic value is usually the product of a complex interaction of different subsidiary aesthetic values. Sometimes an attempt to satisfy one particular aesthetic value can compromise the satisfaction of another. Let us suppose, for example, that while composing *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), Alexander Pope imagines an episode which in itself is extremely amusing due to its comic incongruity, but which involves neither mock-heroic allusion to classical myth, nor incisive satirical critique of the eighteenth-century English aristocracy. Suppose further that, on reflection, Pope realises that although including the episode would increase the comic value of the poem, it would also compromise the work's overall aesthetic value, on the grounds that the episode does not blend well with the satirical nature of the poem that Pope envisages. In this case, a version of the poem (say, an early draft

contrary, if my phenomenological argument in this and earlier chapters is correct, then virtuous beauty and the virtuous personality are given to an empathising consciousness in the manner of a semblance, and for very similar reasons, I would suggest, so is the majesty of an eagle. And, as I pointed out earlier, the notion of the Kantian form already fits extremely well with the fine arts of painting and drawing, which, in Kant's day at least, were almost invariably mimetic.

by Pope) which includes the episode but which is otherwise identical to the published version could be said to be aesthetically inferior to the published version. It makes sense here to ascribe an aesthetic *flaw* to the early draft, since the tension between comic incongruity and satirical acuity can be rectified without diminishing the overall aesthetic value of the work. The successful poem addresses a number of different aesthetic values, including comic incongruity, mock-heroic allusion, and satirical acuity, and manages to blend them into an harmonious whole.

There are, of course, some aesthetic values which *The Rape of the Lock* does not purport to address at all, e.g. tragic poignancy. It doesn't seem right to say, in *pro tanto* fashion, that *The Rape of the Lock* is aesthetically flawed to the extent that it fails to address the aesthetic value of tragic poignancy. What counts from a critical perspective is not that all aesthetic values are catered for, but that the work satisfies a recognisable subset of important aesthetic values which blend well together in the particular context of the work. Robert Browning's dramatic monologue *My Last Duchess* (1842) satisfies a number of important aesthetic values such as fidelity to certain unpleasant facets of human nature, and the skilful appresentation of a grotesque personality. The appresentation of virtuous beauty is not an aesthetic value which this work purports to satisfy. And it doesn't seem any more plausible to claim that *My Last Duchess* is aesthetically flawed to the extent that it fails to depict virtuous beauty than it is to say that *The Rape of the Lock* is aesthetically flawed to the extent that it neglects tragic poignancy. *My Last Duchess* requires of its readers a certain minimum level of moral competence in order for the poem to be adequately comprehended, and a critic who expresses disapproval of this work

for its lack of virtuous beauty can be said to have misunderstood the nature of the work.

One reason why ethicists maintain that an aesthetically relevant ethical flaw in a work must count as an aesthetic shortcoming is that ethical virtue is beautiful, and wickedness ugly. If ethical virtue is beautiful, then according to the ethicist's logic, a literary work which evinces an immoral attitude is aesthetically flawed because such an attitude is ugly. Accordingly, on the ethicist view, Browning's *My Last Duchess* will have to be regarded as aesthetically flawed to the (considerable) extent that it evinces an immoral attitude. But, as I indicated earlier, one is only entitled to ascribe an aesthetic flaw to a work if the putative "flaw" could be rectified without diminishing the overall aesthetic value of the work. In the case of *My Last Duchess*, this is not possible, because the overall aesthetic value of the work depends upon its evincing an immoral attitude. There is a tragic conflict between the aesthetic value deriving from exhibiting to the reader a grotesque personality, and the aesthetic value of virtuous beauty. In order to be the valuable work of poetry that it is, *My Last Duchess* needs to evince an immoral attitude.³⁰ *My Last Duchess* therefore represents a counter-example to the ethicist claim that an aesthetically relevant ethical flaw must count as an aesthetic flaw. The reason that ethicism runs into difficulty here lies in its insistence upon the criterion of virtuous beauty, when virtuous beauty is an aesthetic value that some works quite properly do not purport to satisfy. If a particular aesthetic value is logically precluded from belonging to the subset of aesthetic values that a work purports

³⁰ The immoral attitude evinced is not *prescribed* for the reader, but *exhibited* to the reader. For this reason, the ethicist's merited-response objection to this counter-example, that the work prescribes an attitude which is immoral, and therefore unmerited, cannot be raised.

to satisfy, then the work in question cannot be said to be aesthetically flawed to the extent that it fails to satisfy that particular aesthetic value.

In the opening stages of this chapter I developed a phenomenological account of the experience of beauty, involving such aesthetic criteria as mimesis, internal harmony, external harmony, active discovery, felt freedom, and uniformity in variety. I proceeded to argue that all of these recognisably aesthetic criteria are capable of being satisfied in the experience of observing virtue in someone else, along with a certain form of disinterestedness which permits of an interest in the idea of the existence of values, and in particular, an interest in the idea of the existence of a virtuous personality. The upholding of the virtuous beauty position formed the central basis for my conclusion that occasions can arise in which ethical flaws in an artwork really do count as aesthetic flaws. However, in order to undermine ethicism, it is sufficient to locate, within the extraordinary richness and diversity of English literature (which happens to have a long tradition of villainous “Vice” figures), a plausible counter-example in which implied authorial moral defect is neither dispensable to the aesthetic meaning and value of the work, nor undermined by the work. Browning’s *My Last Duchess*, properly understood as a remarkable example of Victorian grotesquerie, fulfils this role.

Coda

In the introductory chapter, I argued that a careful attempt to extract a coherent theoretical understanding of poetry from Keats’s posthumously collated letters turns out to raise certain important and, on Keats’s account, unanswered literary theoretical and meta-critical questions pertaining to the

artistic disclosure of truth, the relation between reason and literature, the relevance of emotion to moral truth, the relevance of intersubjectivity to the encounter with a literary work, the nature of the cognitive capacities of the imagination, the moral cognitive significance of literature, and the relation between ethical and aesthetic value. The research hypothesis that I outlined in that chapter, based upon certain important features of Keatsian meta-poetical thought, was that the resources of Husserlian phenomenology may be able to assist us in investigating the problems that Keats seems to be raising. However, it was perhaps not immediately obvious at that early stage just why it should be that theoretical problems suggested by the letters of an English Romantic poet should be amenable to elucidation not only by the philosophical thought of Immanuel Kant, whose prolific life, as it happens, was drawing to a close when Keats was an infant, but also by the thought of later phenomenologists like Husserl and Stein.

As its title indicates, this chapter as a whole, and not merely this brief coda, represent the concluding thoughts of my thesis's investigations. There is little point in mechanically repeating at this late hour conclusions which have been stated clearly enough either in the course of this concluding chapter, or in the concluding paragraphs of the preceding ones. It may, however, be worth spending a few moments now to reflect at a meta-argumentative level upon the nature of the discussion that has now unfolded, and in particular upon how it has been possible to acquire some traction in the application of Husserlian phenomenology to questions about literature.

Historically, the lives of Rousseau and Keats did not quite overlap (Rousseau died some seventeen years before Keats's relatively short life began

in 1795), but in terms of their respective takes on the inter-relations between emotion and truth, and the implications of such inter-relations for literature, Keats's letters show that, whether he knew it or not, intellectually, in important respects, overlap they certainly did. They both loved truth, and valued highly the love of truth. But they were both dissatisfied with reason, and suspicious of self-conscious reflection. They both saw truth as bound up with the passions, and configured intersubjectivity in terms of a disclosure of the truth of others. They both wanted to pre-empt a topology of the self as comprising an inside and an outside. They both had aspirations toward primordial unity with others, and understood, in their own ways, literature to be a passage toward the authentic disclosure of the truths of phenomenal being.

For all of these reasons, Starobinski's critical encounter with Rousseau has helped us to begin to find a way into some of the literary theoretical and meta-critical questions that Keats seems to be raising. One way in which Starobinski accomplishes this is by bringing to light certain blindspots in Romantic conceptions of literary self-expression and of the intersubjective significance of literature. One of the Romantic aporia that concerns Starobinski is the mistaken conflation of self-expression with self-disclosure, a conflation which neglects the important idea that something is always deferred in the empathic encounter with the Other. The necessity of a truncation in empathic precision means that what Starobinski calls the "purity of immediate sentiment" is irretrievably lost for even the most careful of readers, other than the author him/herself. The result, by implication, is a proliferation of possible meanings for different readers, and the hermeneutic danger for critics that in attempting to

see what cannot be seen, one is often prone to fill in the void with a narcissistic projection.

It would be too restrictive to try to cast Starobinski as simply an Husserlian literary theorist, for his thought is also influenced, in ways whose adequate exploration lies beyond the remit of this thesis, by Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. We may say with certainty, however, that Starobinski's theoretical understanding of literature is profoundly influenced by the way in which the phenomenological movement that Husserl founded became deeply interested in certain forms of co-givenness involving the structure of the constitution of a phenomenal unity which cannot be rendered intelligible by appealing to notions of signification or indication, and in the phenomenological discovery that under certain conditions, as Stein paraphrases Volkelt, "[t]he experiences we comprehend in expressive appearances are fused [*verschmolzen*] with the phenomena of expression".³¹ The beauty of Starobinski's conception of the implied author lies in the way he draws upon the phenomenological tradition in order to find a way of upholding the Romantic conviction in the centrality of feeling and empathy in literary experience, while recognising aspects of the interpersonal encounter, and of the relation between appearance and reality, that Romantics like Keats and Rousseau preferred to ignore, but which turn out, on the Husserlian account at least, to be constitutive of intersubjectivity itself. It is in this crucial sense that Starobinski's account of the implied author turns out to be pivotal, within the trajectory of this thesis, in linking the purely phenomenological exploration of intersubjectivity and the imagination discussed in chapters 2-4 with the investigations in chapters 6-8 of literary theoretical

³¹ *OPE*, p.127, Note 102.

questions pertaining to moral cognition and the relation between ethical and aesthetic value.

Explaining convincingly just why the pleasure that we take in observing someone else's moral virtue is in substantive respects the same kind of pleasure that we take in the beautiful has proven to require a great deal of phenomenological work. My approach to this question has required us to spend some time thinking carefully not only about what it is to have an encounter with somebody else, but also about what it is to have an experience of beauty. Kantian thought assisted us significantly in this latter enquiry, especially in relation to the aesthetic values of external harmony and felt freedom. Yet in the process of investigating the phenomenology of beauty, certain weaknesses in Kant's aesthetic theory have come to light. For one thing, I have argued that Kant seems to neglect the relevance of intersubjectivity to aesthetic experience, both in terms of the subject's relation to an implied artist, and in terms of the significance of critical discourse in the formation of the judgement of taste. Secondly, I have also argued that Kant overlooks the phenomenological centrality of mimesis to the aesthetic experience of both artistic and natural beauty. My claim that mimesis is relevant to the phenomenology of the experience of natural beauty relies upon my claim developed in earlier chapters that authentic empathy, in the Husserlian sense, is in its mature phases given in the manner of a semblance. This latter phenomenological discovery depends in turn upon the Husserlian account of the imagination, both in terms of the reproductive representation found in such acts as remembering and imagining, and the kind of perceptual representation that takes place during picture-consciousness. Our investigation into Husserl's account of the imagination was

itself prompted by a prior analysis of the Husserlian understanding of intersubjectivity.

Ironically for the ethicist, it is precisely the kind of aesthetic pluralism that emerged in the course of my attempt to substantiate the virtuous beauty position that turns out to be instrumental to my reaching the view that ethicism is mistaken. In this sense, the relationship between the virtuous beauty argument and ethicism is more complicated than the ethicist realises. Granted, implied authorial moral virtue could contribute to the aesthetic value of a literary work for the reasons that I have identified. However, it does not follow that implied authorial moral defect must automatically count as a reason for disvaluing the work aesthetically, if it is contributing to an aesthetic value which logically precludes virtuous beauty. The relation between ethicism's cognitive argument and ethicism is similar. To be sure, sometimes we value a literary work aesthetically because it conveys thematically relevant moral truth by artistic means. Yet a work which suggests something false about morality is not *ipso facto pro tanto* deficient aesthetically, because conveying moral truth may conflict irremediably with the aesthetic values that the work supports. Ethicism's merited-response argument makes the mistake of assuming that if a literary work evinces and exhibits an immoral attitude, then it must be prescribing it for the reader. I concede that a work which is likely to arouse an immoral response in its readership is susceptible to censure from the merited-response argument, on the grounds that ethical criteria are applicable to our responses to art. But the fact that a work could evince an immoral attitude without prescribing it weakens the ultimate plausibility of the ethicist position.

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