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*Phenomenology*  
*and*  
*Difference:*  
*the body,*  
*architecture*  
*and*  
*race*

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## SUMMARY OF THESIS

The aim of the thesis is to consider the position of phenomenology in contemporary thought in order to argue that only on its terms can a political ontology of difference be thought. To inaugurate this project I begin by questioning Heidegger's relation to phenomenology. I take issue with the way that Heidegger privileges time over space in "Being and Time". In this way, the task of the thesis is clarified as the need to elaborate a *spatio-temporal* phenomenology. After re-situating Heidegger's failure in this respect within a Kantian background, I suggest that the phenomenological grounding of difference must work through *the body*. I contend that the body is the ontological site of both the subject and the object. I use Whitehead and Merleau-Ponty to explore the ramifications of this thesis. I suggest first of all that architecture should be grounded ontologically in the body, and as such avoids being a 'master discourse'. Secondly, by theorising the body and world as reciprocally transformative, my reading of Merleau-Ponty emphasises the ways in which his thinking opens up a phenomenology of embodied difference.

It is on the basis of these themes that I develop this thinking in the direction of race, exploring the dialectics of visibility and invisibility in the work of Frantz Fanon and James Baldwin. I argue that embodied difference attests to variations in the agent's freedom to act in the world. If freedom is understood through Merleau-Ponty as being the embodied ground of historicity, we must ask after unfreedom. I suggest that the "flesh" ontology of a pre-thetic community should be rethought as a regulative ideal, the ideal of a justice that can *never* be given. In this light, phenomenology becomes a politics as much as a poetics. Beyond being thought of as conservative, phenomenology henceforth unleashes the possibility of thinking a transformative embodied agency.

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In the main, I agree more with the artists than with any philosopher hitherto: they have not lost the scent of life, they have loved the things of “this world” - they have loved their senses. To strive for “desensualisation”: that seems to me a misunderstanding or an illness of a cure, where it is not merely hypocrisy or self-deception. I desire for myself and for all who live, *may* live, without being tormented by a puritanical conscience, an ever greater spiritualization and multiplication of the senses; indeed, we should be grateful to the senses for their subtlety, plenitude, and power and offer them in return the best we have in the way of spirit. What are priestly and metaphysical calumnies against the sense to us! We no longer need these calumnies: it is a sign that one has turned out well when, like Goethe, one clings with ever-greater pleasure and warmth to the “things of this world” :- for in this way he holds firmly to the great conception of man, that man becomes the transfigurer of existence when he learns to transfigure himself.

Nietzsche, 1885.



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It is a suggestive contention to say that the most important issue in philosophy today is that of the body. In the history of Western philosophy, thought's treatment of the body has tended to follow one of two paths. Either the body has become increasingly absent (such that one can progress quickly to the core of what is problematic in Kant's critical philosophy by asking after 'the body' in his thinking), or increasingly universalised. An example of the universalisation of the body in philosophy would seem to be Maurice Merleau-Ponty's treatment of it in the "Phenomenology of Perception", whereby an account of the 'normally functioning' body is derived from a protracted theoretical examination of one of its pathological and damaged instantiations.

In terms of contemporary thought, I contend in this thesis that in response to the hegemony of the universalised body, poststructuralist thought has failed to articulate the *experience* of difference.<sup>1</sup> As such, it has failed to return

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<sup>1</sup>The gross injustice of collating a massive multiplicity of thinking under the banner of 'Poststructuralism' is evident to the author himself. However, in order to proceed, a simplification and a periodisation was required. Sometimes, for the sake of maximalising an articulation of one's own intellectual position with regard to the broadest context, such devices as 'polemical prefaces' are necessary. Poststructuralism, as a theoretical complex that emerged within late-capital academic institutions in many way spans the dynamic between the abstract and the concrete introduced in the first paragraph. However, to the extent that the

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thinking to the concrete. It has at the most thought the difference proper to language itself. This failure has its origins in the nature of the poststructuralist project as a whole. There is an unbridgeable gap between the thesis that difference occupies the core of the production of meaning and the reality of the experience of difference. This wave of theory has elaborated, in the most technically accomplished manner, the lack of presence 'meaning' has to itself. But it remains caught within a conception of signification that cannot respond to the conditions of existence from which it takes its cue. As one writer puts it, referring in particular to Derrida's 'notion' of *differance*, 'it responds to a world to which it cannot allow itself to refer.'<sup>2</sup>The proponents of poststructuralism locate its value in eschewing ego-centrism and 'presence' in thought. This mode of avoidance itself is open to question however. In a sense, it is possible to say that poststructuralism substitutes a privilege accorded to the immanence of the sign for a privilege accorded to the immanence of the subject. Poststructuralist thought traps itself within *linguistic immanence*. It reduces

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diverse discourses of poststructuralist thought are obsessed with language is the extent to which that project bears the mark of an exaggeration, and ultimately, a failure.

<sup>2</sup>M.C. Dillon, 'Merleau-Ponty and Postmodernism', pxxii, the preface to the collection "MERLEAU-PONTY VIVANT".



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every mode of expression to a form of signification or textuality. In these terms, poststructuralist thought is once more caught by the philosophical seduction of privileging immanence over transcendence. To spell it out, the immanence of signification is the reductive frame into which the transcendence of experience is slotted. The gain for such a manoeuvre is a grand theory appearing in a modest guise. Its cost is that real difference gets dissimulated by a theoretical impostor. As such, I would argue that the articulation of the desire to return to the concreteness of difference through the theoretical frameworks of poststructuralism must end in oblique textuality, frustration and failure.

That being stated, no-one would want to deny the power of the name, its violence, violations and reductions of multiplicity. It would be oversimplistic and reactive to damn wholesale the trends of the last two decades of thinking. The valuable legacy of poststructuralist thought will be its powerful articulation of the risk involved in treating the sign as neutral. Signification in the text has been shown to operate always on the basis of exclusion and supplementarity. In an alternative register, codification always involves a dynamic of territorialisation and de-territorialisation. Henceforth, the rational, the male, white-ness, order, 'and so on', have been



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shown to be installed within an unstable economy of privilege. Or again, a 'perverse' or minor language always threatens to break up the apparently calm surface of molar identity. Beneath the apparent neutrality of the sign, a limited economy of power coerces language's users to repeat its values without question. Poststructuralist thought has therefore donated a vital new level of critique: of power in language itself. Through the diverse styles of its leading lights, language has come to be seen as a prime sight of contestation. As such, language, as the instrument of power, has been revealed as one of the deepest modes of conditioning. This novel and positive form of critique has unfortunately not always met with a positive response. In recent times, what might be called an 'apolitical critique' of the political in language has arisen. That hackneyed term of abuse, 'political correctness', reveals the reactionary backlash against the exposure to juridical and general critical attention of one of the most entrenched totems of privilege - language itself. We will therefore continue to require something like what poststructuralism opened up in order to be vigilant against the reactive forces of privilege at work in the world.

In the same gesture, no-one would want to lessen the insights into an 'ethics of speech' by the 'great' thinkers of our time. In response to the limited

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economy of the coercive sign, an awareness of the potentiality of speech opening itself up to a dialogue with the different has been made available. To begin claiming an ethics of speech involves the contention that speaking to the other involves a relation between the finite and the infinite. The other to whom one speaks can be *touched*, but not *grasped*, to use a distinction from Descartes which shall be explored later on in the text. To try to grasp always involves the potentiality of violation, of reducing the other to one's own horizon of comprehension. Henceforth, the ethical conversation one can adopt with the other becomes that of *l'entretien infini*.<sup>3</sup>In an ideal world without violation, one could never be done with realising the difference of the other in speech.<sup>4</sup>

Without neutrality, within the regulative ideal of an ethics of speech and an ethics of writing, poststructuralist thought has also importantly suspended and problematised a distinction between the 'literal' and the

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<sup>3</sup>Here of course I referring to the original french title of Maurice Blanchot's book, translated as "The Infinite Conversation".

<sup>4</sup>And as an author, one can never be done with realising the difference of the audience assumed within the text. I have to ask myself who I am writing for: is it a white male readership adopting the privileged guise of the universal (again)? This entry-point into an ethics of writing, be it academic or otherwise, is therefore at the same time a *politics* of writing.



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'metaphorical'.<sup>5</sup> The non-neutrality of the sign entails that there is no literal given. But then the sign is not merely a 'metaphor', as if the literal has been merely deferred and not rejected. Rather, words and names exist within their signification context. These contexts, as the saying goes, can never be saturated.<sup>6</sup> The significance of this work in one direction lies in ramifying the discussion of an ethics of speech. Beyond an ethics of speech being at the same time an ethics of writing, it is also an ethics of all relations of signification between any form of author and any modality of reader. There are no merely 'metaphorical' or 'simply literal and factual' interpretations of any form of signification available. Therefore, an ethics of speech implies a vigilance that is vigilant at every level of signification, in every context.

However, having acknowledged all this, it is clear to me that the conditions of existence and experience cannot simply be reduced to forms of language or textuality. Or rather, if we take 'language' and the 'sign' to have a more general extension than the usual, such that they refer beyond the structures of linguistics, even in this case a reduction would be said to have occurred.

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<sup>5</sup>The most important essay on this topic is Jacques Derrida's "White Mythology" in "Margins".

<sup>6</sup>The notion that 'meaning depends on context, but contexts can never be saturated', originally comes from Jonathan Culler's book "On Deconstruction".

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Not all existence and not all experience conform to or can be articulated within the structure or post-structure of the sign. Conversely, the problematisation of the categories of 'experience' and 'perception' by poststructuralist thinkers must be contested, for the salvation of any utility to theory.<sup>7</sup> After the poststructuralist turn, a desire has arisen to figure existence and experience once again, as embedded within difference.

But how can one legitimate this desire? On what basis can it be grounded? Do we turn to the body in despair, in the face of theory's recent inadequacies to speak of our experience and to articulate our places in the world? Or is the body itself an exigency that demands recognition of its place? That is, is the body there by default, as that which remains after a necessary exaggeration of the limits of language, or does the body issue in an ontological primordially of its own accord?

The following questions therefore arise: how do we think the return to the body philosophically? What method do we use? And how do we figure this return in terms of the differences at work in the world that can no longer be

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<sup>7</sup>In "Speech and Phenomena", Derrida writes, 'There never was any 'perception'; and 'presentation' is a representation of the representation that yearns for itself therein as for its own birth or its death.' Derrida, 1973 p103.



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kept silent in theoretical discourses? These are the questions of this thesis. I propose that the beginnings of an answer must be thought in terms of *ontology*. Only in relation to ontological difference can the body be affirmed philosophically, as a positive conception. The body, as the site of return, is no longer taken to be merely just another entity in the world. Rather, the body is taken as playing a crucial role in that world's construction. The body is therefore much more than *just another sign* in the horizontal and shifting economy of difference. The body is both the site of an unstable shifting of its very meaning and that upon which history, pain, privilege and abjection are inscribed. The body is both just another sign and so much more than that. And by claiming that the body must be thought in terms of ontological difference this 'so much more' is allowed an initial opening towards expression.

But how can this ontological difference ascribed to the body be thought? How do we allow the body to become more than just another sign? I will argue that there is a twofold answer to these questions, firstly in terms of the form of critique demanded, and secondly in terms of an alternative methodology that must be formulated. In terms of critique, the suggestion of this thesis is that the body can be thought ontologically only through a



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critique of *transcendentalism*. As the foremost transcendental thinker, Kant, was himself a 'critical' thinker, what is being suggested is something like a 'critique of critique'. Our experience of embodiment is not, as a transcendental argument would claim, fixed within apriori conditions. The Kantian apriori forms of space and time are abstractions from a more fundamental experience of corporeality. In these more fundamental terms, the body is seen as a form of work, or put linguistically, a *verbality*, that *spaces* and *times* itself against the background of a world it is in communication with. The subject is not therefore most primordially a temporal being, as both early-critical-Kant and early-quasi-transcendental-Heidegger maintain. Interiority, the form of inner sense, as the locus of a synthesis of representations across co-existences, or as the site of an impossibly ecstatic being-towards-death, is not privileged over exteriority. The body is not introduced as an invariant factor in our experience only to be de-valued ontologically in the face of a primordially ascribed to time. A transcendental space should not be considered as inferior to a transcendental time. And yet this refusal is the moment of disruption of the transcendental itself, at least in the fully determined sense of its *aprioricity*. One of the key

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elements of the apriori, its universality, is replaced by contingency. We shall have to see what becomes of the apriori in the face of this replacement.

The downgrading of time is achieved once an oppositionality between the inside and outside is questioned to the limit. Through such a questioning, the subject becomes the site of both an interiority and an exteriority. The subject is therefore no longer merely the 'site'<sup>8</sup> of a temporality that always differs from its own present, a succession that itself reaches at least as far back as Augustine, passes through Kant, and closes with Derrida. Refusing to equate and equiprimordially the subject with its own differing time allows thinking, for the first time, to actually consider a form of transcendence that is not a dissimulated immanence. For this refusal of the primacy of the subject's temporality first signals a return to the body. With the opening towards a *space* of the subject, an acorporeal transcendental horizon of possibility is radically questioned. The space of the subject is itself not a purely subjective space, and not the only horizon of possibility. Rather, the subject's space exceeds the sphere of immanence itself. The subject's space *is* its envelopment within transcendence. In other words, the

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<sup>8</sup>As we shall see in the first chapter, it is always impossible to avoid even a preliminary spacing of time in language.



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subject, as a spatiated being, unfolds upon a world which transcends it. Until this 'chiasmic' space is brought to thought, all primordially gets locked within different modes of the immanent.

As a spatio-temporal unfolding upon the world, the subject's communication with the world becomes its 'apriori'. Instead of universal conditions of possibility for experience and representation, conditions which proscribe the incarnation of historicity if not historicity itself, *contingent* conditions of possibility are announced. The body is the site of these conditions being inscribed. The body is the surface of all cultural meaning. Culture, the practice of difference, is fundamentally embodied. The body therefore becomes what was required of it above: it is both a sign and so much more than a sign. It is, that is, the way in which history, pain and privilege get inscribed. Moreover, without the inscription upon the body, these words would make no sense.

First of all, there is then a body, in communication with the world. The body is not therefore the equivalent of a merely *physical* entity, it is not, in Merleau-Ponty's words, the 'momentary' body of this present and then that present. The body does not simply see *or* be seen, touch *or* simply be touched. The body is not simply 'my' body, the grounding site of my

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subjectivity and my sense of interiority. Nor is it simply, from an external point of view, ‘his’, ‘her’ or *the* body, the grounding marker for recognition.

As the ground of being, that from which the subject emerges in relation to the world, the body is therefore seen *in the act of* seeing, touched *in the act of* touching. The body is the quintessential site of ontological difference, opening up, in each act of perception, the limits of the subject and the object. It is not reducible into either a sphere of immanence and interiority or to that which exceeds it, transcendence and exteriority. The body is the ground of all subsequent abstractions: subject, object, Being, beings. It is then, as the phrase above- ‘envelopment within the transcendent’ suggests, a *transcendence within immanence*. The body is prior to the orders of subjectivity and objectivity, grounding both in a pre-oppositional communication of worldly contingency.

Secondly, as I stated, this ontology of difference requires a method. The method chosen here is that of *phenomenology*. In this thesis, I am in fundamental agreement with Heidegger when he holds, in “Being and Time”, that only through a phenomenological method is ontology possible. Phenomenology, as will be clarified in detail in the first chapter, is the project to uncover how things appear in their appearing, *as* appearance.



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Phenomenology is the attempt to raise us to the surface of existence, resisting a fall back into the depths of a conventional mode of perception. In phenomenology, one does not simply accept what one sees. Doing phenomenology requires a vigilance on the part of its subject and its object. More simply, phenomenology requires, in my view, a suspension of the habitual (ways of seeing, ways of doing). Phenomenology in this sense is not a conservatism; it does not seek to return us to what we already knew but had somehow forgotten. For phenomenology, at least under my reading and within the terms of this project, leads by its own light towards rethinking its ontological ground. In other words, when we begin to ask after seeing, after touching, after experiencing our bodies in space and time (both in the sense of the time-space of our bodies and the time-space *situation* within which the body itself is grounded), what is demanded is a rethinking of the subject, and a rethinking of the object. Phenomenology and ontology are therefore reciprocally determinative; only through phenomenology can an ontology of difference be clarified (and the only ontology available is such an ontology of difference), and yet only through ontology can phenomenology be clarified.



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To return to the point just made, that of refusing to consider phenomenology as conservative: this refusal can be seen to take place on two levels. At the level of theory, phenomenology attempts something radically new in the history of philosophy. In returning to the surface of existence, as Nietzsche desires in the opening citation, phenomenology is refusing to capitulate to the patterns of devaluation conventional in philosophy for most of its history. As M.C. Dillon writes of the positive import of phenomenology,

For the first time, the phenomenon began to assume positive importance (against the predominantly negative connotation it traditionally had as something less than real), and the mere-ness of appearance, the essentially negative definition of appearance in contrast to reality, began seriously to be questioned. In short, it became increasingly viable to accord to phenomena some kind of positive ontological status.

(Dillon,1988:4)

This radical positive-ism accorded to the phenomenon has its second level, the correlate of a radical interpretation of our experience itself. Phenomenology returns us to a place from which we were not aware we had

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come from, let alone left. That is to say, phenomenology's reworking in this thesis towards a new formulation of ontological difference has ramifications for our interpretation of concrete experience. We return to the body, as that from which we have been absent.<sup>9</sup> And this return is not the moment of a fall back into an incorporated subjectivism, or an incorporated objectivism. The body we return to, as irreducibly in communication with the world, leads to a phenomenological grounding of both community and history. Chapters four and five will be essentially concerned with clarifying this relation.

These last two chapters require preliminaries. After outlining the significance of the phenomenological method in the first chapter, I go on to problematise Heidegger's neo-Kantian privileging of time over space in "Being and Time". I will argue that for three reasons, this privilege is

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<sup>9</sup>The use of the first person plural in this paragraph can well be questioned. But first of all, for whom of the readers was it an obvious problem? Who are the 'we' being referred to? Is it human-being, or does it conceal a culturally and historically specific event of humanity? My own view is that I write as someone from the West, and as a white male westerner it is always necessary to be aware of constructing false univesalisations of human experience. Therefore, at the most, the collectivity being implicitly brought into question is that of a western collectivity. The 'at the most' here is however significant, and should not be silenced. It leads to another question: that of the evasions of complexity at work in attributing the possibility of reducing experience and difference within the west to a 'we'. In the fifth chapter, using James Baldwin and Frantz Fanon, I will contest such a reduction. Thereby, even such a designation of myself as 'a white, male westerner' will be seen to be inadequate. At this moment in the text however, I leave the 'we' as it is, to display both its power to conceal itself in the guise of stylistic familiarity, and to allow the reader to question his or her own relation to the aporetics of textual construction.



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untenable. Firstly, because Heidegger himself calls it such in “On Time and Being” years later. Secondly, because in the thirties, Heidegger started referring to “Zeit-Raum”, therefore implicitly rejecting his earlier ontological distinction between the primordially of time over space. These first two points however are merely background to my main argument, which is that section 70 of “Being and Time” itself cannot privilege time as the transcendental horizon of Dasein’s being without involving an irreducible spacing of time. Beyond this, I will show that Heidegger’s distinction between space and time from the point of view of ontology leads to a treatment of death which pushes his own phenomenological methodology to the limit. I shall argue that Heidegger’s purely temporal notion of “Being-towards-death” cannot be sustained as phenomenological.

This questioning of the move to split space from time leads to an exploration of its ‘original’ site, that of the first edition of the “Critique of Pure Reason”, in the first part of the second chapter. I will show that this privilege gets put into unstable crisis with the second edition of Kant’s first Critical work. The reason for this is because of a textual insertion which works to undercut the privilege and primordially of time and subjectivity. This comes about principally with Kant’s addition of the “Refutation of

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Idealism” and the “General Remark on the System of Principles”. I shall argue that just as Heidegger’s “Being and Time” is fundamentally destabilized because of an illegitimate devaluation of space in relation to time, so too is the second edition of Kant’s first Critique. The move towards inserting a *spatio-temporal* schematism in the second edition brings Kant’s first Critique into an unresolved tension with itself. In response to this, the second part of this chapter undertakes to explore how a spatio-temporal conception of the object can be constructed, from a phenomenological point of view. In other words, I try to explore how Kant’s second edition of the first Critique can be developed in the direction of a spatio-temporal schematism. In order to achieve this, I shall draw on the philosopher Alfred Whitehead and Marcel Proust. We will see that Whitehead’s notion of a processual ‘object’ is a combination of a process of synthesis *and* analysis (what he calls the prehensive and the separative). In other words, behind appearance, the phenomenon *actually* appears as a gathering of what is always already dispersed. The object individuates itself in the present as a distinct and unique mode of being that nonetheless relates essentially to itself by way of difference.



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This line of research leads to the question of the subject. The question can be raised as follows: if the object can be reconsidered as always already complex, differing from itself within space and time, what implications does this have for the subject? What relation does the object now have for the subject? Or, if it is possible to establish that the subject itself is spatio-temporally *ecstatic*, (to use a word that will have much mileage in the work to come), what difference is there between subject and object? The third chapter will open up a phenomenological return to the subject and its work, in the face of its disappearance by the time of Heidegger's post-turn work. Heidegger's error, I suggest, is to displace subjectivity onto certain forms of apparent transcendence, for example the work of architecture and the saying of language. As displaced modalities of subjectivity, these forms of monumentalist signification are in actual fact dissimulated forms of immanence. What goes missing is the subject, experiencing built space and working with language. In response to Heidegger, I will develop a conception of the subject's *worklessness*, as expressing the way in which the subject re-works what is given (in space, in language). On these terms, meaning is therefore neither the sole domain of the subject nor that which transcends it; it is rather produced from within a relationship between the



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given and the present of its possible transformation. It is in the poetry of Rilke that I locate the most lyrical expression of this possibility of transformation.

This poetic opening will then be developed, in the following chapter, by a reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. I suggest that Merleau-Ponty provides the spatio-temporal schematism that Kant's second edition of the "Critique of Pure Reason" suggested without resolving. In the late Merleau-Ponty's work, "The Visible and the Invisible", this schematism is called 'The Intertwining'. In order for a schematism to be more than just temporal, it must involve the transcendence of the other, beyond the subject. In this chapter, I find myself in agreement with M.C.Dillon when he argues, in his book "Merleau-Ponty's Ontology", that the difference between the early Merleau-Ponty and the late Merleau-Ponty is linguistic, not conceptual. The "Phenomenology of Perception" repeats a Kantian transcendentalism only at the level of appearance. Beneath this superficial reading, I will develop an interpretation which brings to the fore the issue of the embodiment of difference, and the difference of worlds. An apparent universality to Merleau-Ponty's early phenomenology lies in extreme tension with a radical specificity and phenomenology of singularity. As

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such, the prevalent embodied normativity of much of that work is undercut by an implicit ontology of difference.

At this point, we arrive at the goal of the thesis: rethinking a phenomenology of embodiment from the perspective of an ontology of difference. Such a goal would of itself act to reposition how we think of Merleau-Ponty's beautiful, often voluptuous prose. Phenomenology, as much as it involves a poetics, will be seen as the site of the *political*. A phenomenological ontology of the body leads to thinking difference, community and historicity. As such, a phenomenological ontology of the political is broached and opened up to thinking. In my final chapter, I attempt to outline this project first of all by looking at Frantz Fanon's essay 'The Fact of Blackness.' I read this text in terms of its overt relation to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, and the way in which Fanon provides a powerful critique of Merleau-Ponty on the basis of a corporeal capacity to act being undermined by the fact of having a differently coloured skin. This critique of Fanon's is not condemnatory of Merleau-Ponty however; I will argue that Fanon merely develops a capacity for thinking difference that is made available through Merleau-Ponty's work. The importance of Merleau-Ponty today lies just in this fact: that he can be used as a resource for



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thinking the embodiment of difference. That phenomenology of difference was only ever implicit within his text however. As such, a critique of Merleau-Ponty from the position of a thinker like Fanon is a wholly *positive* critique.

After this, I will perform a reading the black American author James Baldwin, specifically passages from his novel “Another Country”. I will read into this work a brilliant thematisation of what is involved in the embodiment of difference. Difference lies prior to epistemology, before questions of what is or is not known. Embodied difference determines the parameters of the known, and as such, grounds it. I argue therefore that Baldwin enacts, in prose form, the very argument of this thesis: that epistemology must be grounded in a phenomenological ontology of the body. It cannot be regarded in itself as primary, for to do so would be to fall into the universalist mode of an ahistorical, aspecific aprioricity; a mode which cannot think its own ontological commitments.

This thesis, in sum, will attempt, through a phenomenological ontology, to think the politics of difference. By doing so, it will *firstly* contribute to the debate on the present and future of phenomenology. *Secondly*, it will ground the current moves away from the abstractions of an overplaced

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emphasis on the sign and codification. *Thirdly*, it will lead philosophy back to a relation with concrete experience itself. In particular, it will ground everyday discourses on the embodiment of difference within theory. *Finally*, it will re-evaluate the position of various themes within philosophy. In particular, epistemology will be shown to be derivative upon a phenomenological ontology.



## CHAPTER 1: HEIDEGGER AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Heidegger and phenomenology. In my view, the relation between these two terms of reference has yet to be fully explored in any secondary text. And yet, I contend, this relation is of crucial importance, if we are to proceed towards understanding and developing either. My interest in Heidegger in this chapter lies in examining this relation in some of his texts, in particular “Being and Time”, with a view to trying to explain its initial form, and to show how this relation changed. The reason for doing this is not in order to uncover another form of scholarly approach to Heidegger’s oeuvre, it is rather in order to begin again with phenomenology.

The situation today is that no-one asks about Heidegger’s relation to phenomenology. This is a curious mode of silence, if we consider the following facts.

- 1) In Heidegger’s magnum opus, “Being and Time”, the destruction of ontology, the philosopher’s project of re-evaluating and transforming the western tradition of philosophy, has an explicitly stated methodology: a phenomenological one. In section 7, entitled “The Phenomenological

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Method of Investigation”, Heidegger writes,

With the question of the meaning of Being, our investigation comes up against the fundamental question of philosophy. This is one that must be treated *phenomenologically*.  
(Heidegger, 1962:49-50)

It would be hard to accord phenomenology with a more significant status in this work.<sup>1</sup> Phenomenology, in this early masterpiece, is the method necessary in order to perform the destruction of ontology. Heidegger repeats and affirms Husserl’s methodological rallying call of ‘*Sachen selbst*’, ‘to the things themselves’. Ontology, as the uncovering of the Being of beings, aspires to return the philosophical project to the concrete facts of existence. In order to do so, it must proceed through an analysis of Dasein’s existence. Phenomenology is the manner in which philosophy begins to do this.

2) And yet. Something occurs along the path of Heidegger’s thinking which decenters an explicit phenomenology to the periphery, if not beyond this to the realm of silence. Phenomenology is abandoned. In Heidegger’s “A

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<sup>1</sup> Readers will recall that the work is dedicated to the founder of twentieth century phenomenology,



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Dialogue on Language”, Heidegger responds to the Japanese enquirer’s puzzlement over the ‘dropping’ of the words ‘hermeneutics’ and ‘phenomenology’ as follows,

That was done, not – as is often thought- in order to deny the significance of phenomenology, but in order to abandon my own path of thinking to namelessness. (Heidegger, 1971:29)<sup>2</sup>

The question that I will address in this chapter is how we are to understand the nature of this transformation of the way in which Heidegger positions his thought in relation to phenomenology. How can Heidegger at once affirm phenomenology’s significance and yet distinguish, in his later work, between a phenomenological methodology and his ‘own path of thinking?’ What is the difference between phenomenology and Heidegger’s voyage towards namelessness that the philosopher suggests here? More importantly still, why does Heidegger begin to *make* the distinction between his own thought and the phenomenological methodology he abandoned? What becomes problematic for Heidegger in relation to phenomenology? In other words, we will try to understand the following passage of mystery, written in

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Edmund Husserl.

<sup>2</sup>As John Llewelyn writes, ‘.if the movement of Heidegger’s reflection is “through phenomenology to thought,” it is “through” in the sense that phenomenology is not left behind. Thought remains a thought of appearing- and disappearing.’ Llewelyn, 1986 p16.

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a late text of Heidegger's entitled "My Way to Phenomenology".

And today? The age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over. It is already taken as something past which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy. But in what is most its own phenomenology is not a school. *It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought.* If phenomenology is thus experienced and retained, it can disappear as a designation in favor of the matter of thinking whose manifestness remains a mystery. (Heidegger, 1962: 82, emphasis added)

In this chapter, the argument put forward is that Heidegger's break with phenomenology occurs within the movement of "Being and Time" itself.<sup>3</sup> In particular, I will argue that the privileging of time over space in that text takes Heidegger's thinking to the cusp of breaking with phenomenology. The reason for this is that the way in which Heidegger enacts the privilege of time over space involves *sacrificing* space. In "Being and Time", time

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<sup>3</sup> By using the word 'break' I am relying on the tension between two of its senses, that of the snapping of a given form of continuity on the one hand, and that of a rest or suspension of activity on the other. As Michel Haar writes in Chapter VI of "The Song of the Earth" 'Heidegger's distance from phenomenology never went so far as to reach a point of rupture'(1990:78).



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privileged involves space denied. But this sacrificial logic of privilege and denial cannot be successful, and this for two reasons. Firstly, to privilege time and to ultimately deny space involves a sacrifice of phenomenology itself. For, as Heidegger himself shows in the early sections of the work, essential to the phenomenological analysis of existence is an uncovering of spatiality. Dasein exists in the world fundamentally as a being directing and directed in space. Therefore, the later privileging of time over space involves discriminating against and devaluing what had previously been deemed essential to phenomenology. In order to discriminate against space, I argue that Heidegger must break with the phenomenological method, which, as was shown in the quote from section 7 above, he would not avowedly want to do. Secondly, and concomitantly, the essential *spatio-temporality* of human existence entails that the attempt to privilege time over space has phenomenological repercussions which Heidegger cannot control. I will show, in my reading of section 70 of “Being and Time”, that Heidegger’s attempt to privilege time over space relies upon a *spacing* of what is designated as time’s ante-spatial character. In other words, Heidegger’s attempt to privilege time over space involves positing a construction of time that already involves a ‘spacing’. And given the ambition of this section, this ineradicable spacing goes against Heidegger’s wishes. These

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phenomenological repercussions take place most obviously on the level of language. Heidegger's attempt to articulate a time free of space involves an irreducibly spatial and temporal vocabulary.

I will argue then that the attempt to privilege time over space in section 70 is illegitimate. After having demonstrated this, I will go on to explore the implications for the rest of Heidegger's analysis in that work. Devaluing his important analyses of existential spatiality in the face of time leaves Heidegger with the apparently more primordial phenomenology of temporality and being-towards-death. I will argue that this phenomenology of death itself is problematic in that it entails the possibility of an impossible revelation. Transcendence is named as the 'possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein'.<sup>4</sup> Named in this way, transcendence must always fall back into immanence, as its unsayable limit. In other words, the transcendence of death lies beyond representation and experience, and as such, 'beyond' phenomenology. This is witnessed in the constant deferral of an answer to whether a *phenomenological* ontology of death is possible in sections 46 to 53 of "Being and Time". Again, I contend that at bottom Heidegger's error lies in eschewing a phenomenological spatio-temporality.

Most fundamentally, Heidegger's error is that of taking space and time to be



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primordially distinct. In this, Heidegger can be seen to be repeating the analytic emphasis placed upon their *apriori forms* in Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". For Kant, space and time are apriori forms of perception. By this, he meant that prior to all actual seeing, hearing, touching and so on, our perception is already conditioned by an understanding of the form of the object perceived as involving both space and time. In other words, space and time do not begin with the object perceived, they are on the contrary the framework by which we perceive. Most significantly, for Kant, space and time are separate apriori forms. One could say that they are in a sense 'ontologically' distinct. This distinction allows Kant, most clearly in the first edition of the "Critique of Pure Reason", to privilege time as the form of inner sense. Time, as the condition of possibility of all representations, has a greater extension than space, which is the form of outer sense alone. Time, as the form of the subject, becomes the transcendental horizon upon which space is grounded. Heidegger repeats this separation or schism between space and time, as well as the privilege accorded to the latter, in "Being and Time", such that space and time are ontologically distinct orders of being. In simple terms, the structure of this work involves an early emphasis on a phenomenology of space giving way to a later emphasis on Dasein's

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<sup>4</sup>"Being and Time", p294.

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temporal nature. Heidegger refuses to think the possibility of a phenomenological *spatio-temporality*. Instead, he begins by holding that space is a vital aspect of existence, and ends by concurring with the first edition Critique's contention that time is more primordial still, to the extent that any apparent primordially of space is annulled. By grounding space in time, Heidegger therefore subjects his thought to a subtle repetition of the subjectivism his pre-dualistic ontology of the phenomena had sought to escape.

I will suggest that perhaps more than anything, the subjectivism which ensures time is given transcendental privilege in "Being and Time" is the motivation for Heidegger subsequently to drop phenomenology. By grounding inner time and historicity in Dasein's ecstatic temporality, Heidegger repeats the subjectivism Dasein's Being-in-the-world campaigned phenomenologically against. In seeking a non-subjectivistic 'ground' for historicity, Heidegger is led to become suspicious of the notion of 'phenomenon' itself.

Therefore, by repeating the Kantian tendency to separate time from space, Heidegger becomes blind to the inevitable spacing involved in any construal of time, and blind moreover to the inevitable temporisation involved in any



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construal of space. Section 70, as I shall show, bears testimony to the difficulties Heidegger gets himself into by overprivileging an analyticity which separates time from space. That is, the error in Heidegger's thinking in section 70 is an error derived from an inadequate attention to phenomenology. Or rather, Heidegger neglects to question the Kantian privileges (of the first edition of the "Critique"), blocking his thought to the possibility of thinking phenomenology *differently*.

The problem for Heidegger, as we shall see, is that section 70 is absolutely crucial in terms of the direction of "Being and Time's" argument. If it is possible to undermine the privileging of time over space in "Being and Time", the whole project collapses.<sup>5</sup> The subsequent analysis of temporality and historicity after section 70 will constantly be nagged by a spacing and a spatiality that must be there at its inception. The analysis of spatiality becomes an essential part of a fundamental ontology. As such, the 'temporocentrism'<sup>6</sup> of "Being and Time", its abiding bias, would be challenged. And Heidegger's desire to ground a notion of historical freedom (or freedom to 'historise' – to be a part of history's unfolding) will take on the mantle of a manifest failure.

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<sup>5</sup>Didier Franck notes, in "Heidegger et le probleme de l'espace," 'if "spatiality" has to intervene in the derivation of inner-time from originary temporality, the whole project called *Being and Time* would thereby

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I will begin by examining how Heidegger introduces and justifies his own methodology. In section 7 of “Being and Time”, Heidegger attempts to provide a determination of what he means by the word ‘phenomenology’ and a preliminary conception of the role it will play in his research. To begin, he states that phenomenology is the *method* by which ontology will be uncovered. The destruction (*Abbau*) of ontology which Heidegger proposes involves ignoring the resources of the tradition of ontology. This eschewal is justified for Heidegger because he thinks it is not possible to derive a methodology from the history of that methodology’s results. The history of ontology has been a history of covering over that which the methods and vocabularies employed in order to proceed have attempted to disclose. The history of metaphysics has been the history of an error. Phenomenology, as a *possibility* rather than an actual historical tradition,<sup>7</sup> will on the other hand allow the Being of beings to be described. Phenomenology will allow, that is, for an understanding of the things themselves which is not buried within the sedimentations of past philosophical movements.

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be called into question.’ p115

<sup>6</sup>I take the term from Ed Casey’s book “Getting Back Into Place”.

<sup>7</sup>“Being and Time”, p63



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Nor will the understanding of the things themselves be merely *ontic*. Or, as Heidegger puts it, he is not interested in the ‘what’ but the ‘how’ of the objects of philosophical research. He explains the relationship between phenomenology and the object of ontic science as follows,

‘Phenomenology’ neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the “*how*” with which “*what*” is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled.(Heidegger, 1962:59)

Heidegger therefore uses the phenomenological method in order to get beneath any technical description of objects available through the various sciences. These sciences work on the presupposition of objective being for Heidegger. The ground of this objectivity remains hidden as long as any of these sciences are taken as primordial. Without an ontological ground, the different ontic sciences therefore remain ‘free-floating’.

Heidegger proceeds by separating out phenomenology into its two ancient Greek constituents: phenomenon and logos. It is through the exegesis on the former that Heidegger somewhat densely attempts to distinguish between an ontic understanding of the phenomena of objects and an ontological one. He

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does this by calling the former ‘appearance’ (Erscheinung), and the latter ‘phenomenon’ (Phanomenon). The appearance of objects is derived from their being as phenomena. Heidegger elaborates several modes of derivation of appearance from phenomena, each of which demonstrates itself as a form of concealment or privation of the phenomena itself. I shall not explore these distinctions. What is more important is to understand that for Heidegger, the etymology of the word “phenomenon” suggests the following definition: “that which shows itself in itself”. The phenomenon is therefore not shown to the subject as a mode of subjectivity. That is, uncovering the phenomenon does not directly involve a research into unmediated forms of experience. And on the other hand, the phenomenon is not self-evidently available in the manner of an apparent scientifically grounded transparency. The phenomenon is not, therefore, of the order of *subjective* nor *objective* Being. Heidegger notes that φαίνεσθαι is a ‘middle-voiced form’. This reference to a form of grammar that lies *between* the subject and object is therefore ontologically significant. The verbality of the phenomenon’s manifestation is neither active, the work of the subject, nor passive, the work of that which transcends the subject. The phenomenon lies prior to appearances as given to the subject and appearances as ascribed to the object. As such, the phenomenon is anterior to the clefting of a dualistic epistemology. Both pre-



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subjective and pre-objective, the phenomenon therefore designates the ‘how’ of how something appears as itself. It contrasts with a mere ‘representation’ of the percept to the subject, a modality that would always be grounded in subjectivity. All forms of appearance of the object where it appears *as something else* will therefore be deemed derivative upon an originary possibility for the object to appear as itself. The appearance of the phenomenon *as appearance* therefore refers to ways in which the object is given, by external or subjective means, a different designation to the way in which it would appear, if it were to appear as itself. I will provide an excursus on an example of this in the following chapter, which can be mentioned briefly here to clarify the distinction between appearance and phenomenon I take Heidegger to be making.

Reading A.N. Whitehead, I will introduce his idea of the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness’. This refers to the way in which modern thinking has reified an abstract conception of reference and the percept and therefore displaced what is most concrete. The most concrete is henceforth in modern ontology deemed to be the ‘simple’ object. The simple object refers to the here and now discrete presence of the object to perception. The object appears as a non-relational entity, independent of its relation to its context in both a spatial and a temporal sense. Whitehead provides a detailed analysis

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of the procedure whereby the abstract is taken to be most concrete, and suggests ways to return thinking to the object according to a non-abstract framework. The object is not simple in the most concrete sense, for it always involves relationality. Under the influence of Leibniz, Whitehead propounds what can be described as a phenomenology of process, whereby the object is seen to always already refer to the unfolding of its spatio-temporal context and vice versa. I shall examine this argument in more detail in the following chapter.

What it is important to note here is that Whitehead can be seen to be providing just the sort of distinction between appearance and phenomenon referred to in Heidegger above. The appearance of the object as appearance (rather than as itself) is its misconstrual as a 'simple' object. And, with Heidegger, Whitehead provides what can be described as a 'genealogy' of the simple object, locating its emergence in the birth of modern conceptions of space and time. In other words, the object acquires layers of signification which *cover over* the manner in which it actually appears as itself. Whitehead's proposed return to the object seen as a process or 'event' therefore marks the move back from a derivative and ontic comprehension of the object to its phenomenologico- ontological source. This movement is, if we read what I am calling Whitehead's



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'phenomenology' in the light of "Being and Time" section 7, phenomenology's very necessity. That is, phenomenology is necessary because our conception of the object has become distorted by the appearances given to it by the tradition of metaphysics and the groundless reworkings of ontic science. As Heidegger writes, '...just because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part *not* given, there is need for phenomenology. Covered-up-ness is the counter-concept to 'phenomenon'.' (Heidegger, 1962:60)

Again, it is not to the point of the work of this chapter to examine in detail Heidegger's mining of the etymological resources of the 'logos', save to say that it produces a middle-voiced conception of 'letting something be seen, in *letting* entities be perceived.'<sup>8</sup> This enables Heidegger to derive the following full-length definition of the phenomenological method: 'to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself.'<sup>9</sup> Again, appearances both subjectively and objectively sourced are therefore derived from an ontological *between*. The phenomenon appears as itself through an exchange between the immanence of subjectivity and the transcendence of the world. The phenomenon is therefore neither the sole work of the subject, a path that would lead to the psychologism

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phenomenology has always sought to counter, nor the work of external being. The character of this exchange of something like a ‘transcendence within immanence’ is clarified in the ensuing sections, where Heidegger introduces the notion of “Being in the World” (In-der-Welt-Sein)

By this stage in his analyses, it is clear that Heidegger is providing a way out of the dichotomous trap of Cartesian dualism. In Chapter III of Division One of “Being and Time”, Heidegger contrasts the modern ontology of the object and space with the phenomenological ontology which he will set out. He writes, ‘..a discussion of the Cartesian ontology of the ‘world’ will provide us likewise with a negative support for a positive explication of the spatiality of the environment and of Dasein itself.’<sup>10</sup> The Cartesian ontology referred to sets out the primordially of the world in terms of *res extensa*. For Heidegger, this ontology is reductive, exemplifying a dualism between extended matter and thinking being which cannot support and clarify the spatiality of Dasein’s relation with the world. The human’s experience of its relation with the world cannot be articulated solely in terms of an interaction between two forms of extension, that of a finite extension (the body) in relation to an indefinite extension (the world). Prior to the ‘appearance’ of

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p58

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.pp122-123.



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objects and the seemingly self-evident givenness of physical being, an existential attachment to the world needs to be uncovered. Preceding the external spatiality of extension, something like an ‘intrinsic’ spatiality has to be sought. Only thus could extension and physical/objective/mathematical being be seen to have legitimacy, as a derivation and abstraction from concrete existential relations. In other words, prior to an ontic layer of description, an ontology of space is required. And again, with Heidegger’s method of phenomenological ontology, this analysis is sought through an examination of the spatiality of Dasein, the being who most obviously resists the reduction of being described merely as a physical entity, extended in a world of extension.

In contrast with the object as it appears within Descartes’ thinking, Heidegger’s notion of the phenomenon in a sense occupies a ‘third space’ between subject and object. With this in mind, the Being of beings which manifests itself in the phenomenon, the thing itself and its spatiality, requires fleshing out and determination. Heidegger elaborates this determination in terms of Dasein’s *In-der-Welt-Sein* being ordered and given significance through use and function. In the simplest terms, the object’s ontological significance lies in terms of its functional relation within Dasein’s world. Dasein exists in a world of objects that signify on the basis of their slot

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within a totality of functions, what we might call a 'praxis horizon.' Instead of Dasein confronting an object that signifies on the basis of its simple here and now presence, its presence-at-hand (Vorhanden) as for example a simple extended thing, Dasein more primordially encounters objects in the world as 'availabilities' (Zuhanden). Each object-thing is not a 'simple object' in Whitehead's sense; on the contrary, it makes sense only in terms of a background of a task-horizon within which it fits. Heidegger's most celebrated example of this are the meanings ascribed to the hammer and nail in the world of the carpenter. Both are understood most primordially not in terms of their present-at-hand signification, as if they would bestow their value to an outsider in terms of a simple inspection in isolation from the purposes to which they are put. Rather, they signify in terms of their role within the carpenter's work. The hammer and nail allow the carpenter to perform tasks which themselves only make sense in terms of the wider context of the work being undertaken. So, for example, banging this nail into this plank of wood, what we might call a 'local' task, itself only makes sense in terms of the boat the carpenter is building. Each tool therefore signifies on the basis of the tasks to which it is put, and these tasks themselves only signify on the basis of the wider context of the job being done. Instead of an attempt to derive the significance of objects from an atomistic, discrete,



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present-at-hand snapshot of the tool, the notion of a tool or object as an 'availability' allows Heidegger to think the complex interrelationality of things in the world.

Heidegger holds that Dasein exists in-the-world through a series of contexts analogous to that of the craftsman. Dasein is not given the ontological privilege of an existence *prior* to the worldly significance of context upon context of praxis. Rather, Dasein exists *ecstatically*, as always already embedded within the world. At the same time, the horizon of worldly praxis is already there for Dasein only on the basis of that horizon being shaped *by* Dasein. Objects are 'available' as *ready-to-hand*, a more literal translation of *Zuhandenheit*. The significance of the equipment of the world cannot be separated from the capacities and availabilities of Dasein's ways of being-in-the-world. Again we return to the middle-voiced character of the phenomenon. The object does not bestow its significance in a manner external or extrinsic to human existence. Dasein is not passive in the face of its encounter with the signification of things in the world. And yet Dasein's shaping of these things is not totalizing. For how could Dasein shape the extra-significational materiality of things themselves? The phenomenon therefore appears as itself, through its involvement within the praxis-horizon of Dasein's taskful comportment in the world. The paradigm example of this

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would be a sculpture in wood or clay, where the materiality of the object is at one and the same time expressive of the work of the hands of the craftsman that worked it.

Dasein's third space of 'being-in-the-world', prior to the clefting into *res cogitans* and *res extensa* is, as the grammar of the middle voice implies, ontologically pre-dualistic. Dasein enters a world already shaped by human ways of comportment, a world of signification and value that we can call 'strangely familiar'. The familiarity of the world lies in its modes of adaption to human possibilities. Things in the world are primordially 'available', that is they fit into patterns and contexts of action which are the traditions of bodily being Dasein will acquire through practice and habitualisation. The strangeness of the world lies in the fact that it pre-exists any signification Dasein might desire to stamp upon it. Dasein is 'thrown' (Gewurf) into a world that exceeds the signification matrices the individual might want to project onto it. And yet this excessivity is not wholly alien, for it offers itself in ways which will become recognisable to Dasein as it learns the ways of the world.

A key aspect of the priority of the world lies in the way in which the always already established practical horizons of comportment are shaped



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around a materiality that Dasein cannot comprehend in advance of experimentation. In “Being and Time”, Heidegger is reticent in developing the alterity of the object in this direction. It is as if every object, whether equipment or a non-artefactual entity, is accorded the same signification value. Natural entities, potential sources of the sublime, are refused their difference. *But this refusal of an excessive materiality does not hold throughout the text*, for Heidegger writes in section 15,

... “Nature” is not to be understood as that which is just present-at-hand, nor as the *power of Nature*. The wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind ‘in the sails’. As the ‘environment’ is discovered, the ‘Nature’ thus discovered is encountered too. If its kind of Being as ready-to-hand is disregarded, this ‘Nature’ itself can be discovered and defined simply in its pure presence-at-hand. But when this happens, the Nature which ‘stirs and strives’, which assails us and enthralls us as landscape, remains hidden.(Heidegger,1962:100)

Despite this brief yet sublime intervention against the functional relativities of the tool, the ‘natural’, as that which is strangely familiar, cannot survive

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the emphasis on an inclusive ontology of the world that Heidegger sets out. The sublime, as that which stirs, strives, assails and enthralls is ultimately reduced to the status of the 'not-yet' available. The worldliness of the world encompasses any possible alterity of the natural, comforting and reducing the possibility of the sublime, that which would exceed the limits of the world. The world is therefore hardly shaken or solicited by nature rearing its face as briefly as it does in this passage. In the third chapter, the possibility of an exteriority and a materiality that lies beyond the remit of the subject will be explored and named as 'worklessness.' The determining force of use and function, as the dominant mode of articulation of the interrelationality between Dasein and the world, silences modes of being that are extra-functional. There is no space in "Being and Time" for an enthrallment not re-appropriated in terms of function. Nor is there any space in this work for any less dramatic forms of extra-functional being-in-the-world: contemplation, absorption, meditation, rapture.

Despite this limitation, it is nonetheless true that the phenomenological ontology of worldliness in sections 14 to 24 of "Being and Time" provides a rich resource for thinking non-dualistically about Dasein's spacing of the world and the world's spacing of Dasein. In addition to what has been outlined above, we should note that these sections also incorporate the



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notions of the 'here' and 'there', and the idea of place or region as the encompassing horizon for Dasein's practical comportment in the world.

However, with all these terms in mind, one could criticise the phenomenological work Heidegger performs here on the basis of an absence of an irreducible temporality at work in these aspects and terms of worldliness and worldhood. For instance, the notion of 'here' and 'there' necessarily involves more than just a spatial proximity or distance. For if there were no *temporal* distance between the near and far, the spacing between them would be pressured by the threat of collapse.<sup>11</sup> The reverse problem occurs, in my view, in Division II of "Being and Time", where a phenomenology of temporality encounters difficulties on the basis of an attempt to think time's irreducibility. In both cases, I hold that an irreducible *spatio-temporality* of Dasein's Being-in-the-world gets distorted as it is first of all pushed through the filter of a pure existential spatiality, and secondly reduced into the extrapolations of an 'ecstatic' temporality. Heidegger commits the methodological (and therefore ontological) error of believing that space and time can be treated separately. In the latter part of "Being and Time", this leads to the isolation and privilege granted to the ultimate form of ecstatic temporality, being-towards-death.

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Before approaching the impossible phenomenology of death, that ‘ahead of which’ that resists manifestation, in my view, in terms of a phenomenological showing ‘as itself’, it is necessary to review how Heidegger tries to persuade the reader against the obviousness of phenomenological spatio-temporality. For this purpose, I now turn towards the work of section 70 of “Being and Time”. It is in this section that Heidegger attempts to assert the ontological primordially of time over space, thereby repeating the privileged transcendental role of time in Kant, which Heidegger will come subsequently to recognise as a recrudescence of the subjectivism he sought to undermine.

In this section, entitled, ‘The Temporality of the Spatiality that is Characteristic of Dasein’ (*Die Zeitlichkeit des daseinsmässigen Räumlichkeit*), Heidegger makes clear the hierarchical relation he wants to install between temporality and spatiality,

Dasein’s constitution and its ways to be are possible ontologically only on the basis of temporality, regardless of whether this entity occurs ‘in time’ or not. Hence Dasein’s

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<sup>11</sup>This idea is developed in terms of the death of architecture wrought by the institutionalisation of other



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specific spatiality must be grounded in temporality.(Heidegger, 1962:418)

I shall begin to explore this transcendental privilege by constructing Heidegger's phenomenological justification of it. Heidegger holds that only with the threefold ecstatic play of Dasein's temporal structure as care (Sorge) can spatiality be made available. He writes,

Because Dasein as temporality is ecstatico - horizontal in its Being, it can take along with it a space for which it has made room, and it can do so factually and constantly.(Ibid:420)

Heidegger is claiming that the space that Dasein is presented with has no in-itself *qualia*, is not 'simply located', rather it is significant only in relation to the dyadic series of 'here' and 'there', or the 'near' and 'far'. Moreover, Heidegger wants to claim that the 'here-there' relation itself is 'grounded' in Dasein's anticipatory temporal horizon. Heidegger in effect is arguing that one is 'here', on the way to the region 'there' (negotiating a specific course across the praxis horizon) only on the basis of a temporal structure which is always already there. One is 'here' in a specifiable relation to any number of regions only on the basis of the present being the locus of time stretching

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modes of communication and information transfer in Paul Virilio's "The Lost Dimension".

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across from the preceding moments (Husserl's 'retention') and into the openness of pro-jective possibility ('protention'), a stretching whose momentum is always futural; one is always *here*, having been *there*, always *on the way elsewhere*. Heidegger suggests that what is present, the matter of how the present *presents* itself, is to be thought of in terms of an exhaustively temporal relationality, '*Only on the basis of its ecstatico-horizonal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space.*' (Ibid:421)

In Heidegger's view, the world, *prima facie* structured by spatial relations, manifold extensionalities, is in fact ordered more primordially by Dasein's projective temporal character, and at the limit, (subverted) by being towards death. The 'here' and 'there' dyadic structure of Dasein's orientation in the world uncovered by Heidegger's phenomenological analysis is itself disclosed and structured by Dasein's three-fold ecstatic temporality. The temporal *distentia* founds the spatialising *dispersion* (*Zerstreuung*). Only because Dasein exists outside of itself *in time* can it emerge as open to the modalities of space.

This phenomenological justification of time's primordially over space is evidently problematic. The phenomenological array of terms Heidegger



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employs to describe worldliness are obviously taken from a spatio-temporal lexicon. To be 'here' on the way 'there', to be in this region of 'nearness', against the background of the far, and above all, to exist *ec-statically* - these references are clearly distorted and reduced when read in terms of a more primordial and solely temporal reference. It is as if Heidegger commits his own version of what the next chapter will call the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness.' He seems to abstract from the spatio-temporal matrix of the body's relation to place, as if a deeper layer of significance could be uncovered beneath the interleaving of space and time. In other words, a transcendental privilege accorded to time appears to be at work which distorts the conclusions Heidegger draws from his phenomenological analysis. As Maria Villela-Petit argues, that in terms of the section's heading, 'The Temporality of the Spatiality that is Characteristic of Dasein',

..Heidegger was trying to eliminate the possibility of adding to this title an 'and reciprocally' which would make it possible to write another paragraph entitled: 'Die Räumlichkeit der daseinsmässigen Zeitlichkeit.' It was precisely the possibility of just such a reciprocity which it was important for Heidegger to exclude. (Villela-Petit,1991:118)

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A spatiality of Dasein's temporality would disrupt the possibility of founding inner-time (Innerzeitlichkeit) and historicity (Geschicht-lichkeit). Here then is one of the supreme tensions present in "Being and Time": on the one hand, Heidegger wants to surpass or subvert the legacies of a cartesian ontology that will not allow thinking to access the phenomena of existence. The notion of 'ecstasis' allows Heidegger to demonstrate the Dasein exists as embedded within the world. The early sections on Dasein's spatiality demonstrate that Dasein has no ontological privilege over the world; that Dasein is shaped by a world itself shaped according to Dasein's ways of being. The 'middle-voice' of phenomena therefore occupies what I have called a 'third space' between the subject and the object.<sup>12</sup> In other words, "Being and Time" distinguishes itself out of all the texts of Western philosophy through a profound attention to the spatiality of being. Heidegger's temperocentrism falls into the seductive trap of conceiving 'a place that is not a place' (*loco con loco*).<sup>13</sup> On the other hand however, Heidegger wants to assert the ontological primacy of time (and therefore, inner-time and historicity) over space. Heidegger can then develop a conception of the authentic (Eigentlich) acting individual whose freedom

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<sup>12</sup> The middle voice of existential phenomenology is most marked in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For instance, in "The Visible and the Invisible", he writes, '...my body does not perceive, but it is as if it were built around the perception that dawns through it.' (Merleau-Ponty:1962,9)

<sup>13</sup> I take this last reference from David Farrell Krell's book "Architecture: Ecstasies of Space, Time and the



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lies in becoming individualised as a historical being contributing to the future of the community. He does this by repeating the Kantian move of ascribing to time the form of the subject. Dasein's ecstatic temporality is taken to be the transcendental horizon from which Dasein's spatiality of dispersion will emerge. As such, only Dasein's ecstatic temporality will be taken to have the ontological significance of Care (Sorge), hence foreclosing the possibility of a middle-voice of ecological conscience.<sup>14</sup> The rich resources of a phenomenological ontology of Dasein's spatiality are henceforth completely undermined.

The phenomenological illegitimacy of privileging time over space has a repercussion at the level of language in section 70. At the end of the section, Heidegger attempts to make the obverse point to the one he makes at its commencement. That is, he wants to expand upon the ways in which Dasein, as temporally grounded across (and ontologically prior to) space, nevertheless becomes fixated or 'dependent' upon space. Dasein's everyday inauthentic temporality, as 'essentially falling', as a mode of losing oneself in the present of concern amidst and towards *objects* of concern, 'makes intelligible' Dasein's spatialising comprehension of the world. Dasein

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Body". The original formulation was made by St. Augustine in the "Confessions".

<sup>14</sup>John Llewellyn's book "The Middle-Voice of Ecological Conscience" is a sustained attempt to think how a chiasmic reading of Levinas and Heidegger can lead to ascribing an ethical relation to non-human others,

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always interprets the world in wholly spatial ways, and this Heidegger explains is because of the nature of Dasein's temporal character. Hence we might say that Dasein's ontic refusal of an ontological comprehension, a failure to maintain an understanding of *Sorge* as 'grounded' in temporality, is itself ontologically 'grounded'. Dasein forgets its own resolutely temporal character, according to its essential tendency to become absorbed and de-individualised in the everyday. Only by becoming an *authentic* historical individual can Dasein uncover its Being-in-the-world as most primordially temporal, not spatial. For Heidegger, the ontic inauthentic interpretation results in

..the well known phenomena that both Dasein's interpretation of itself and the whole stock of significations which belong to language in general are dominated through and through by 'spatial' representations.(Ibid:421)

Here one might imagine Heidegger was thinking of the work of Bergson, especially "Time and Free Will" where Bergson examines the tendency in both philosophy and everyday life of *spatialising* time, of constructing temporality on the unacknowledged basis of a spatial frame. The spatialisation of time hence consists of transposing spatially-based



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predicates into an account of temporality, without registering this transposition or outlining its legitimacy. As Ed Casey writes,

Whenever we think of time as a stringlike succession, we spatialise it, giving to it- supposedly an exclusively mental concern- predicates such as “continuous” and “linear”, which we borrow surreptitiously from the “external” world of space (a world into which we just as surreptitiously reimport these same predicates in order to reinforce its externality).(Casey, 1993:9)

It is just such a string of subreptions that Heidegger sought to avoid in separating space from time in section 70. However, Heidegger’s desire to avoid one conception of time leads to him misrepresenting the phenomenological significance of his alternative. The illegitimacy of the argument in section 70 at the level of language can now be stated. In each instance previously in the section where Heidegger attempts to cleft time from space and construct a ‘grounding’ relation between them, his temperocentrically motivated thinking becomes most plagued by ‘spatial representations’ that work to articulate his concepts. To take just two sentences already cited

Because Dasein as temporality is **ecstatico-horizonal** in its

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Being, it can take along with it a space for which it has **made room..**'(Heidegger,1962:420) '*Only on the basis of its ecstatico-horizonal temporality is it possible for Dasein to break into space.*' (Ibid:421)

Of course, it is not surprising that a phenomenological distortion of Dasein's spatio-temporal existence feeds into subreptions at the level of language. Returning to the concrete facticity of existence implies a return to the how that concrete facticity is *expressed*.<sup>15</sup> I contend that in each of the two quotations, the moment of Dasein's 'irruption into space' enabled and made possible by the horizon of temporality, is figured and articulated according to a construction of temporality that is *already spatialised*. Temporality, as the 'ground' of spatiality, mimes or repeats a space prior to space, a pre-spatial spatiality or a *loco con loco*. As Krell writes,

In the designated section 70 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger tries to show how temporality "founds" the human experience of

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<sup>15</sup>That Heidegger was yet to fully affirm the significance of everyday speech in "Being and Time" is evident towards the end of section 7. Heidegger writes,

With regard to the awkwardness and 'inelegance' of expression in the analyses to come, we may remark that it is one thing to give a report in which we tell about *entities*, but another to grasp entities in their *Being*. For the latter task we lack not only most of the words but, above all, the 'grammar'. (Heidegger,1962:63)

It is in part this avoidance of everyday speech and grammar as given that allows Heidegger to underestimate the fundamental spatio-temporality of experience.



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space. However, the “founding function” of time itself rests on a traditional architectural metaphors of foundation and construction-in space...Heidegger’s own language disrupts what his analysis wants to say, namely that space invariably reverts to time in human experience..(Krell,1997:43-44)

It is hence somewhat striking that in noting Dasein’s tendency to spatialise time *after* the last cited sentence of Heidegger’s, in the passage above, that Heidegger clearly repeats ‘time and time again’ the ‘error’ in his own exposition. This error can hardly be defended by a description of the section as a text where Heidegger himself testifies to the intractabilities of escaping the given paradigms of Dasein’s ontic language. <sup>16</sup>In each section of the work, is it not Heidegger’s aim always to think the ontic in relation to its dissimulated ontological ground? Hence we might say that it is section 70’s purpose to position the spatialised present in relation to the temporality that ‘grounds’ it. Unfortunately, in terms of his explanation of why Dasein is apt to err in not regarding this ‘grounding’ relationship, Heidegger must resort to ‘spatial representations’ in order to install the ‘ground’.

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<sup>16</sup>This is where I part company with Krell. I think Krell is being overgenerous with Heidegger when he continues, ‘His own choice of words...compels him to admit that language itself is permeated by “spatial representations”’. (Krell,1997:44) It does not make sense to argue, as Krell does, on the one hand that ‘Heidegger’s own language disrupts what he wants to say’, and on the other to hold that Heidegger is fully aware of the spatialised nature of his *own* language. At the end of section 7, it is clear that when Heidegger is discussing “spatial representation”, he is referring to Dasein’s tendencies, and not to his own

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But is this failure a failure of language, an inadequacy of Heidegger's such that he could not develop a 'purely' temporal ontological lexicon (or a failure of grammar?), or is it a failure within Heidegger's construction of the ontological ground, a failure wrought by the transcendental privilege inscribed within it? I contend that the latter is the case. On the one hand, Heidegger sought to separate time from space in order to develop a notion of temporality that is not plagued by spatial representations, in other words to develop a non-linear temporality. However, by eschewing the representation of time as a line, Heidegger merely covers over the way in which 'ecstatic temporality' itself involves spacing, in language and as a phenomena. Heidegger failed to see that the ineradicable spacing of time need not be reducible to the linear.

The phenomenologico-linguistic illegitimacy of Heidegger's argument purporting to ground space in time has a further significant consequence. Dasein's spatiality, one can readily agree, is ecstatic. It is self-evident that we commonly experience ourselves in daily tasks as absorbed into those tasks. As I sit typing this chapter into the computer, I am most of the time not aware of an experiential gap between the screen, the keyboard, and my fingers that punch the keys. In Merleau-Ponty's words, 'Our organs are no

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conceptualisation.



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longer instruments; on the contrary, our instruments are detachable organs.’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:178) That is, our everyday experience of the world is one whereby a distinction between ourselves as subject and the world as object breaks down, or is rather a possible reflective moment that is always already preceded by worldly absorption. However, the ‘there’ of ecstatic existence has its necessary corollary, the ‘here’. Absorption implies that the ‘here’ becomes the absent pole of the couplet.<sup>17</sup> It is arguable that Heidegger’s early phenomenology repeats and installs this experience of corporeal absence at the level of thought. By grounding space in time, Heidegger enables Dasein to be conceived as most primordially outside itself in non-corporeal terms. It is not my task to explore this absence or sublimated role of the body in Heidegger’s early phenomenology. However, the avoidance of an engagement with the body through a transcendental privilege accorded to time seriously impairs Heidegger’s ability to resolve problems in ontology bequeathed by Kant, as we shall see. For the moment, I will merely cite several texts which elaborate the point. Erwin Straus writes,

The *Da* in which, in Heidegger’s own words [*Anspruch*], our being is thrown, is our corporeality with the structure of the

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<sup>17</sup>Drew Leder has written a book about the unrepresented half of this dyad, entitled “The Absent Body”.

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world which corresponds to it.” In other words, with a view to getting rid of the dualism of mind and body (which is certainly one of the principal objectives of the fundamental ontology of *Sein und Zeit*), was it really necessary for Heidegger to subordinate the spatiality inherent in corporeality to ecstatic temporality?(Villela-Petit, 1991:119)

We may cite also Ed Casey, ‘We are ahead of ourselves not just in time (as Heidegger emphasizes in his notion of anticipatory, ecstatic temporality) but also in space.’(Casey, 1993:84)

or finally the work of David Levin,

..Heidegger attempts to think the thrownness, the attunement, the binding, and the beholdeness of *Dasein* in the dimensions of time, history, and tradition; but he does so *without* taking up the question of the body, even though- as I am wont to believe- it is by virtue of the body, the body first and foremost, that *Dasein* is claimed and appropriated, bound and beholden, and decisively *thrown* into the ecstasy of an original attunement, in relation to time, history, and tradition. It is because *Dasein* is embodied that it finds itself ecstatically decentered in a



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threefold field of time, a repetition of history, and a living tradition.(1984:173-4)

It is now well known that Heidegger's evident discomfort in transcendentalising ecstatic temporality over Dasein's spatiality in section 70 led to him replacing this operation with the notion of *Zeit-Raum* ('Timespace') by 1935 when he wrote the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. Hence we do not need to posit the much later time of 1952 when Heidegger wrote "On Time and Being" as the occasion when Heidegger finally exposed these particular tensions in his earlier text. This text, we might nonetheless remind ourselves, included the following terse admission, 'The attempt in "Being and Time", section 70, to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable.' [*Unhaltbar*] (Heidegger,1962:23) In the following chapter, I will show that the move from "Being and Time" to the texts written after it repeats a similar transition in Kant, between the first and second editions of the "Critique of Pure Reason". In particular, Kant's addition of the 'Refutation of Idealism' and the 'General Remark on the System of Principles' both insert a block to a privilege accorded to time as the form of inner sense and thereby the essential condition for all possible

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representation.

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Heidegger's phenomenology of finitude, contained for the most part in the first chapter of the second division, becomes more significantly problematic in the light of the illegitimate temporal grounding of space that has been noted above. However, even on its own terms, it is to be expected that death lies in at least a relation of tension with Heidegger's existential phenomenology. For if death is a phenomenon, it is the strangest sort. I shall now examine briefly the sections of this chapter, in order to show that Heidegger's difficulties in expounding a phenomenology of death and dying are understandable, given the strangeness of the phenomenon of death (if it can be said to be such). This argument will allow me to begin to think finitude, as a phenomenon, differently. Again, this difference will involve returning the phenomenology of existence to its spatio-temporal roots.

Heidegger's problem, in the light of the above commentary on section 70 of "Being and Time", is that the most primordial register of Dasein is alleged to be temporality. Of course, so far, apart from the illegitimacy of installing this horizon as transcendental in relation to Dasein's body and spaces, it is not obvious that Heidegger's account of temporality is problematic in itself.



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The problem explored above of space and time being 'out of joint' is not to be construed in terms of problematising ecstatic temporality per se. Indeed, at no point would I wish to argue against the conceptual productivity inherent in the notion of 'ecstasy' itself. However, by examining how Heidegger tries to think the phenomenon of death, Dasein's temporality itself becomes problematic. And the site of this problematic must be ultimately articulated in terms of the legitimacy of Heidegger's phenomenological method itself. For if Heidegger's phenomenology cannot think death as a phenomenon, this difficulty cannot be put at death's door. Rather, death itself must be thought differently.

The problem of Division two's first chapter is easy to set up. We recall that phenomenology, as determined through the etymological findings of section 7, involves the following definition: *to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself*. In terms of the world of functional objects, a pre-subjective and pre-objective uncovering of Dasein's involvement in the world is straightforward to supply. But how can Dasein's 'involvement' with death be shown in an analogous manner as a letting appear as itself? Death of course can be conceptualised, theorised, described from the point of view of an external event, but how is *dying* itself to be allowed to appear as itself, in the non-dualistic terms of the middle-

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voiced that-which-happens? No one has articulated the impossibility of a phenomenology of dying more profoundly than Georges Bataille,

..death, in fact, reveals nothing. In theory, it is natural, animal being whose death reveals Man to himself, but the revelation never takes place. For when the animal being supporting him dies, the human being himself ceases to be. In order for Man to reveal himself ultimately to himself, he would have to die, but he would have to do it while living- watching himself ceasing to be. In other words, death itself would have to become (self-) consciousness at the very moment that it annihilates the conscious being.(Bataille, 1990:18)

For Bataille, death cannot be known *immediately*. One lives death through a subterfuge, the sacrifice of the other. In Bataille's terms, sacrifice is a phenomenon which exists in ritual form and, in western cultures, as the work of tragedy in literature, film and so on. Heidegger, on the other hand, does not so readily accept the impossibility of an existential phenomenology of death. Sections 46 to 53 attest to the difficulties he thereby puts his thinking through. The heading for section 46 is 'The Seeming Impossibility of Getting Dasein's Being-a-whole into our Grasp Ontologically and



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Determining its Character.’ By being-a-whole, Heidegger is referring to the ultimate limit of Dasein’s ecstatically temporal character. As existing futurally in the present, the ‘ahead of which’s’ ultimate limit is of course that of death. If Dasein can think itself in terms of its ultimate demise, Heidegger’s contention is that the human can individualise its own destiny and become a historical being. As such a being, Dasein would have what Heidegger calls ‘freedom towards death’<sup>18</sup> That nothing is resolved finally about the phenomenon of death and dying is evident on the last page of the chapter (thirty pages later), where Heidegger writes, ‘The question of Dasein’s authentic Being-a-whole and of its existential constitution still hangs in mid-air.’

After dismissing the significance of the other’s death for me, and this because the other’s death implies a loss that can have no relation to the experience of dying itself, Heidegger proscribes the possibility of experiencing dying by way of Bataille’s subterfuge. Heidegger writes,

By its very essence, death is in every case mine, in so far as it ‘is’ at all. And indeed death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-Being in which the very Being of one’s own Dasein is an issue. In dying, it is shown that mineness and existence are

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<sup>18</sup>Being and Time” p311

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ontologically constitutive for death. (Heidegger, 1962:284)

As I am arguing, Heidegger's sacrifice of the sacrifice, of following Bataille's move towards *dramatising* the other's death, is the moment when all hope for his phenomenology of dying breaks down, given the terms in which the 'phenomenon' and 'finitude' have been defined. This is at the least regrettable, for in my view it leaves Heidegger with no capacity to appreciate the power of tragedy. Heidegger only later develops an account of tragedy.<sup>19</sup> Every moment of the chapter is witness to a kind of slippage of failures, whereby Heidegger tries one approach to a solution only to concede defeat. The solution, of thinking Dasein as a totality, becomes deferred to a moment of thinking that is never realised. For instance, in section 47, after having denied the potentiality for a phenomenology of dying to be uncovered through the other's death, Heidegger concludes that a 'purely existential' conception of the phenomenon must be attained, or else his project would fail.<sup>20</sup> In the following section, Heidegger distinguishes a sense of the 'not yet' character of death from that required for an existential phenomenology of dying. He argues that the 'not yet' thought in terms of something still outstanding, like for instance the 'not yet' of the unripened

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<sup>19</sup>For Bataille, the death of the other is experienced as *dying*, and this is because of a process of identification with the other (rather than a Heideggerian distance). Bataille writes, 'In tragedy, at least, it is a question of our identifying with some character who dies, and of believing that we die, although we are alive.' (Bataille, 1990:20) In terms of a later development of the tragic in Heidegger, see "Hölderlin's Ister" (Gesamtausgabe 53, 1984)



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fruit, cannot be the sense sought after, for to think of dying as a state that can be reached is to treat death in an ontologically inappropriate manner. Thinking phenomenologically about death as something ‘still outstanding’ involves the ‘ontological perversion of making Dasein something present-at-hand.’(Heidegger,1962:293) Instead, Heidegger suggests that the ‘not yet’ character of death is experienced as something ‘impending’ (Bevorstand). In order to distinguish different possibilities of the impending, Heidegger specifies the impending not yet-ness of dying as the ‘possibility of no-longer being able to be there.’(Ibid:294)

As enmired in everyday absorption in the world, Heidegger argues that Dasein is not explicitly aware of the end of existence as a possibility. The lack of awareness is not completely concealed however, for it surfaces as a mood or attunement (Bestimmung). He writes,

Dasein does not, proximally and for the most part, have any explicit or even any theoretical knowledge of the fact that it has been delivered over to its death, and that death thus belongs to Being-in-the-world. Thrownness into death reveals itself to Dasein in a more primordial and impressive manner in that state of mind we have called “anxiety”.(Ibid:295)

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<sup>20</sup>“Being and Time” p284

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Anxiety therefore reveals the essential everyday concealment of the death of Dasein. As a mood expressed towards the future, anxiety conceals the *dying* that is proper to ecstatic temporality. As Heidegger says, 'Factically, Dasein is dying as long as it exists..' (Ibid:295). Dying is concealed, in Dasein's inauthentic everyday worldliness. This raises the question of whether an *authentic* attitude towards the dying- within-life proper to ecstatic temporality and care is possible. Heidegger asks, at the end of section 52, 'can Dasein maintain itself in an authentic Being-towards-its-end?' (Ibid:304)

At this point, Heidegger's attempt to provide a solution to a phenomenology of dying becomes acutely asymptotical. Death 'reveals' itself as the impossible, as the possibility of the impossible. In other words, dying cannot reveal itself as such, and this impossibility just is the manner in which death is experienced within Dasein's ecstatically temporal unfolding. Heidegger writes,

*The closest closeness which one may have in Being towards death as a possibility, is as far as possible from anything actual. The more unveiledly this possibility gets understood, the more purely does the understanding penetrate into it as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all. Death, as*



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possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualised', nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself *be*. It is the possibility of the impossibility of every way of comporting oneself towards anything, of every way of existing. (Ibid:307 Emphasis in original)

Death, as that which happens to others, cannot be of interest to a phenomenology of dying, for the sense of loss involved always happens to those who did not die. The loss of 'death' is not equivalent to the loss of 'dying'. On the other hand, Heidegger's careful analysis shows what was clear from the outset, that thinking dying as a 'phenomenon' must involve impossibility. But 'impossibility' in Heidegger's sense of the 'possibility of the impossible' *cannot be understood as another modality of the phenomenon*. The impossible impending death, that manner in which dying is lived, cannot reveal itself, let alone reveal itself as such. Dying only expresses itself in anxiety. But a phenomenological analysis of anxiety will not of itself contribute towards a phenomenology of dying, for it is merely a *symptom* of dying's phenomenal deficit.

Therefore, Heidegger's phenomenology of dying is shown, in his own words, as impossible. In this case, it is not dying which must be refuted, for how could it? Rather, what has been uncovered is the limit of Heidegger's

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thinking of finitude. Dying can only be presented to Dasein as that beyond the possible. But as that which cannot reveal itself as such, a *phenomenology* of death must involve death falling back into immanence, at which point its significance 'as such' is lost. Heidegger's thinking of the finite becomes *indefinite*, unthinkable. Impossible. Ontological difference, construed as the difference between immanence and transcendence, is, in "Being and Time", sacrificed for the sake of a failed attempt to construct a phenomenology of dying. This sacrifice is carried out for the sake of a glorified ontological significance bestowed upon a possible subjectivity. Dying presents itself as the transcendent, as that beyond all possibility and project. As such, it simply cannot make itself manifest to Dasein, even in the terms of an impending 'not yet'. In order for dying to maintain its transcendence, it would have to be thought as the other side of immanence as its obverse inverse, not as that which falls back within the terms of immanence. In other words, what would be required would be a *transcendence within immanence*, to use again a locution that will become increasingly important in this thesis. Transcendence within immanence does not entail that the former is somehow contained within the latter, for such containment would again reduce the former into the terms of the latter. The 'within' does not signify *inclusion*; it is rather the presence of difference within the present.



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Transcendence within immanence marks the moment where the present is thought as differing from itself according to ontological difference. This difficult point will become clearer in the following chapters.

Dying therefore would have to present itself as a transcendence maintained within immanence, as the death present as the difference within life, rather than being that which collapses in the face of the subject's presence. As such, dying would become the mystery of the limits of being, the mystery of transcendence itself. It precisely would not be the measure of 'ownness', authenticity, and being-as-a-whole. The crucial point to be made is that dying, thought of as transcendence within immanence, is no longer the privilege of an hypothetically authentic subjectivity. Dying must be renamed *as finitude*.<sup>21</sup> Ontological difference, the question of naming transcendence's relation to immanence, no longer turns on the *subject*, as it does in "Being and Time". The transcendent names not the limits of Dasein's being, but rather the limits of immanence itself. As such, transcendence names the limits of finitude. Transcendence is therefore excessive to the subject, and as such no longer thinkable on its terms. The difficulty to be faced and articulated is that although transcendence and immanence lie beyond each

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<sup>21</sup>It is clear that this is what occurs to Heidegger after "Being and Time", when the subjectivism of Being-towards-death is renamed as Dasein's 'mortal' character, a mortality that is no longer self-appropriable. By the time of the Geviert texts, mortality rests within an interplay with the elements and the divinities. As

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other's limits, they are mutually constitutive. If this thought becomes possible (rather than being impossible), we will no longer need to equate this limit of finitude with a phenomenology of dying. And in this way, I suggest that dying could be made present as the tragedy of existence, without either the need for subterfuge or an heroic construction of subjectivity.

For the moment, it is important to note that dying cannot be considered as a *phenomenon*. And yet the phenomenology of Being-towards-death is crucial for Heidegger in terms of a sustained distinction between an inauthentic, absorbed everyday anonymity (of *das Man*) and an authentic self-possession. Being-towards-death, as a realised possibility of the impossible, determines Dasein's capacity to become a historical individual, free to transform the collective's future in the present of decision. As such, it is important to take issue with the following claim against Heidegger made by Alphonso Lingis,

Heidegger recognized the having to die with all our own forces to be our very nature, but he equated it, dialectically- and to us, incomprehensibly- with the resolute and caring hold on things and on the world. (Lingis, 1994:24)

Being-towards-death, as that which determines Dasein's possibility of becoming its own free historical being, is precisely not a resolute caring hold

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such, a phenomenology of Dasein's finite, spatio-temporal ecstatic being is made available.



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upon things and on the world. The see-saw effect of section 70 is to demonstrate that Dasein's temporality is more fundamental than its spatial dispersion in the world. Authenticity becomes available to Dasein only on the basis of a *suspension* of holding onto the world. The world, and Dasein's historical position within a given world-community, can only be transvalued and transformed on the basis of the world-as-given being relinquished. The Kantian privilege accorded to time as the form of inner sense becomes reworked, in "Being and Time", as the possibility of Dasein transforming the given, as that which is represented by spatial dispersion in the world.

But this transformation is impossible, because dying cannot be the basis for a resolute grasp of Dasein's being-as-a-whole. Heidegger, in this early work, commits something like a hubris of finitude. His hopes for establishing a notion of political freedom based on a phenomenological ontology of death die still-born in the first chapter of Division two. He will not begin to try and install being-towards-death at the ground of political freedom again.

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Earlier, the 'phenomenon' in Heidegger's etymologically generated determination was described as a 'transcendence-within-immanence'. It is now possible to begin to determine how Heidegger's thinking of the

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phenomenon *fails* in terms of the phenomenon being that which incorporates this ontological difference. Heidegger's error is Kant's first-edition error in "The Critique of Pure Reason", that of marking an ontological distinction between space and time, at the same instant privileging the latter over the former. Heidegger's difficulty in attempting a phenomenology of dying is that he takes finitude to be a purely *temporal* phenomenon. In this thesis, I will argue that it is absolutely illegitimate to make any such ontological distinction between space and time. Space and time are inextricably interwoven, from the point of view of a phenomenological ontology. Being-towards-death cannot therefore act as the ground of auto-appropriation and authenticity. Finitude reveals itself in the object, as a spacing of time and a timing of space. The object, if one is permitted to talk in such abstract terms, attests to a fundamental reversibility between space and time. Using A.N Whitehead, I will show in the next chapter that a phenomenological ontology of the spatio-temporal object allows the object's transcendence within immanence to be presented. The object presents itself as a percept in the here and now. But this *hic et nunc* singularity individualises itself on the basis of that of the object which does not present itself in the present. In other words, the object presents itself as itself in the present, and *at the same time* transcends this present through an alterity that is always already co-



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implicated.

This thinking of the spatio-temporal object's transcendence-within-immanence itself raises a question, that becomes the question of the third chapter: how do we think the *subject* in relation to the object's transcendence-within-immanence? That is, how is the subject implied within an ecstasis that is no longer merely *temporal*? How can we begin to think a spatio-temporal phenomenologico-ontological ecstasy of the subject? A phenomenology which must, by its spatio-temporal character, release itself from transcendentalism.

In this third chapter, I will only manage to begin to answer the question by a process of reduction. I will only be able to say how we do *not* begin to think such an ecstasy of the subject. This argument by exclusion involves a return to Heidegger. The significance of the return to Heidegger lies in the fact that it is strongly arguable that after the failings of "Being and Time", which, as I have shown, Heidegger was aware of soon after its publication, he does return to the phenomenon as a spatio-temporal being. Hence, his thinking of the work of art, of the Greek temple, of the bridge, the jug and so on all involve phenomena whose evident spatiality itself lies in relation to a temporality and a historicity. As I shall argue in that chapter, these spatio-

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temporal evocations involve a displacement of immanence itself, from Dasein towards that which transcends it. As such, the *work* of Dasein itself gets reduced to a nullity.

Only then, after the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ have been shown to involve a spatio-temporal phenomenological ontology, can their interlacing be brought together. In the fourth chapter, a positive conception of the subject’s spatio-temporal ecstasy will be presented, through a reading of the thinking of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. By this stage, a distinction *between* the subject and the object will itself be seen to be committing the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Of course, as I have shown, an ontology that privileges an originary schism between subject and object is precisely the position Heidegger sets out to challenge in “Being and Time”. As I have also shown however, his transcendental privileging of time over space leads to a more primordial pre-subjective pre-objective middle voiced phenomenology breaking down.

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology will therefore allow my project to return to the early insights into the nature of the ‘phenomenon’ in “Being and Time”, whilst at the same time absolutely rejecting the subsequent transcendental privilege of time over space which sunders the value of those insights in that



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work. In the fifth chapter, I challenge a ‘purely’ poetic reading of Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmic phenomenological ontology. I argue that it is vital to see that the intertwining of that which is commonly named as the ‘object’ or the ‘world’ and the subject implies questions of community and belonging. As such, I locate a politics of difference at the core of Merleau-Ponty’s ontological work.

So much for a plan of what is to come. For the moment, it is time to return to the first questions of this chapter. In the light of the argument thus far, what can be said about Heidegger’s relation to phenomenology, and what can be put forward as reasons for his abandoning of its imperative in order to follow his own path? I suggest the following as guidelines for a more sustained reflection that will take place elsewhere:

1) As I pointed out through the use of citation, Heidegger never rejected the notion of the phenomenological method as the *possibility* (Möglichkeit) of and for *thinking*, from “Being and Time” section 7 all the way to ‘My Way to Phenomenology’. I contend that Heidegger held onto this formulation precisely because he never wanted to contest the distinction he made between *appearance* and the *phenomenon* he made in section 7. After “Being and Time”, Heidegger began, after his profound engagement with

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early Greek thinking, to establish a more specific historical engagement with ontology. Appearance becomes thought in terms of the framing (Gestell) of modern calculative technological representation. The phenomenon, by implication, persists as that which must be uncovered against this historicised mode of appearance.

2) However, Heidegger does abandon the phenomenological method as an explicit dynamic of his thinking and as a term used as a fundamental of his language. Why this abandonment takes place remains, even in the light of the preceding argument, extremely difficult to ascertain. For it is clear that the work of art, the temple, the bridge, the jug and so on involve a work of signification that bears phenomenological *motifs* at the least. And, as the first point just made has shown, an appearance-phenomenon distinction is always implicit within Heidegger's thinking. Perhaps Heidegger began to associate the evident failure of his phenomenology of dying with as a failure of the phenomenological method itself. Moreover, it is possible that Heidegger began to associate phenomenology as ineradicably bound up with a transcendental subjectivity, a binding that itself could have been questioned had Heidegger allowed his phenomenology of Dasein's ecstatic character to be *spatio-temporal*. For, as I have begun to show, a spatio-temporal ecstasy involves a *transcendence within immanence*, whereas an ecstatic temporality



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must suffer the fate of falling back into the form of subjectivity. As such a spatio-temporal ecstasy, the limits of Dasein's finitude are circumscribed by an alterity which cannot be reclaimed through the hubris of being-as-a-whole. Finitude is no longer equated with subjectivity and an impossible phenomenology of dying. Phenomenology, in allowing the phenomenon to be thought of as *both* immanent *and* transcendent, is released from the horizon of a transcendental subjectivity as it is released from privileging time as the form of inner sense. This releasement would be the form of a return to thinking ontological difference, as that which marks the limits of the finite and immanent, always in relation to an irreducible and paradoxically constitutive transcendence.

In summary, one can say that a phenomenology that does not suspend or withdraw itself through enacting a sacrifice of space for the sake of time is the issue. If we go back to sections 14 to 24 in "Being and Time", we find much by way of a phenomenology of space. But the eventuality of Heidegger's privileging time over space fifty sections later means that we have to find another route to the phenomenological redemption of space. For a redemption of space in phenomenology would have to entail that it cannot

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be reduced into or grounded by time and temporality. To achieve this, it is necessary to see that for the *early* Heidegger at least, space and time are oppositional to each other; Heidegger does not allow for the possibility of a phenomenological *spatio-temporality*. This foreclosure is demonstrated by the basic structure of the book. In “Being and Time”, Heidegger begins by emphasising the spatial character of Dasein’s existence, only later to emphasise the temporal character of that existence. Moreover, as has been said, in this book Heidegger distrusts the very grammar which he is forced to use - as if at the base of this distrust is a distrust for an ineradicable spatio-temporality. Henceforth, at no point in “Being and Time” does Dasein live spatio-temporally. Therefore, the suggestion is that space can be redeemed in phenomenology by contesting the Heideggerian oppositional relation between space and time. If spatio-temporality can be thought in phenomenological terms, the option to privilege one over the other can be eschewed. This is what I attempt to achieve in the following chapter, beginning by looking at Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason”.

Most significantly of all, in terms of the future of thinking, is the following consideration, which will be present in all of the following chapters. A spatio-temporal phenomenology, as one which *incorporates* ecstasy as a spacing of time and a timing of space, itself involves the rejection of a



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transcendental privilege accorded to time as the form of the subject. The transcendental horizon of time as the form of inner sense henceforth becomes seen as that which forecloses the possibility of thinking ontological difference. And yet, dropping the privilege accorded to the form of inner sense does not of necessity involve dropping the subject. On the contrary, only through a *phenomenological* ontology can the possibility of thought be upheld. For we still live in an era dominated by appearance. That is, we still live under the sway of a seemingly ineradicable schism between an 'ontology' of the subject and an 'ontology' of the object.

CHAPTER 2: AGAINST THE SIMPLE OBJECT

In the previous chapter, the central argument lay in the direction of Heidegger's illegitimate privileging of time over space. This argument was performed principally through a reading of section 70. The subsequent argument against the possibility of a phenomenology of death ultimately served to confirm this earlier discussion.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this main argument, it was also mentioned that Heidegger reverts to the notion of 'Zeit-Raum' soon after "Being and Time", with the publication of the "Beiträge". This reversion serves as an implicit critique of his earlier distinction and privilege. On top of this, in "Time and Being", Heidegger refers back to section 70 and rejects it. All in all, the project of "Being and Time", although rich in phenomenological and ontological insight, is ultimately an unresolved one, on these terms alone.

In this chapter, I want to argue that the tensions and philosophical illegitimacies of "Being and Time" are an echo of an earlier work of philosophy, Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason". The problems encountered in

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<sup>1</sup>That is to say, the limits of Dasein's ecstatic temporality exceed the boundaries of what is possible as a phenomena. As the 'possibility of the impossible', Heidegger's being-towards-death suspends the



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Heidegger can therefore be situated within the tradition. I will do this by way of examining Heidegger's text, written at the same time as "Being and Time", "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics".

The reason for approaching Kant through Heidegger's text can be clearly stated. In the Kant book, Heidegger expresses an emphatic preference for the first edition over the second edition of "The Critique of Pure Reason". The problem with the second edition for Heidegger, in particular with the addition of the "Refutation of Idealism" and the "General Remark on the System of Principles", is that the privilege accorded to time as the primordial function of the transcendental imagination is devalued. Kant introduces the condition that the intuition of external objects is equiprimordial, with time, for the possibility of all representation. In other words, Kant no longer takes inner sense to be more fundamental than outer sense. Moreover, Kant seems, on Heidegger's reading, to substitute the transcendental understanding for the transcendental imagination as that which grounds the synthesis between concepts and the receptive faculty. Given this substitution, Kant's thought paves the way for the Idealism to come. Kant ends his re-writing by erring on the side of the concept. In this light, one could say in extension of

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phenomenological project, in a manner which he later will avoid. See note 14 in the following chapter.

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Heidegger's reading that the empiricism of the 'Refutation' acts as a counterbalance to the privilege accorded to the concept granted through the substitution. Put simply, the transcendental unity of apperception, on the one hand, would seem to further sediment the privilege accorded to inner sense. But this second edition substitution comes hand in hand with the sections devoted to introducing an equal primacy accorded to exteriority. Kant seems to exaggerate further the primordially of time, only to install at the same time an attention previously absent on the transcendental conditionality of space. The second edition can therefore be seen, under Heidegger's careful and yet violent reading, to bring the first Critique closer to an unresolvable tension over the question of ontological primordially.

For these reasons, Heidegger's preference becomes clear to understand. Heidegger prefers the first edition to the second because it chimes with his own findings in "Being and Time", especially with the work of section 70. Heidegger wants, in "Being and Time", to privilege the fundamentality of time. It is only in Kant's first edition that it is possible to do this without ambiguity.

The question to put to Heidegger's early Kant text is this: if his privileging of time over space in "Being and Time" has been found to be suspect, and if



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he himself reneges upon the privilege in later work, how are we, in this light, to go on to read his preference for the first edition of Kant's first Critique? If the later Heidegger returns to a time-space of equiprimordial proportion, would it not be possible to establish in retrospect that the specific argument and preference for the first edition of "The Critique of Pure Reason" in "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics" is itself *Unhaltbar*, that is, unsustainable? In other words, when Heidegger recalls section 70 in "Time and Being", should he not also have recalled his preference for the first edition of the first Critique and rejected it?

This question, to be explored in a moment, leads to a further one. If Kant's text in the second edition is witness to an equiprimordialisation of space to time, such that something like a *spatio-temporal* schematism is opened up, what becomes of the apriori conditionality itself? If space gets involved within the subject's construction, in particular the space of the other and the space of exteriority, does not this transcendence occur *aposteriori*?

In order to develop this conception of a 'transcendental' spatio-temporal horizon, I shall have to leave the terms of Kant's Critique. This is because the juxtaposition of both editions in one volume leads to an unresolvable work of philosophy. I shall argue in the fourth chapter that it is only

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beginning with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology that a spatio-temporal schematism can be fully resolved. In this current chapter however I will argue that the 'phenomenology' of Whitehead goes some way towards providing the grounds for such a resolution.

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To begin then, with Heidegger's text, "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics". I propose to concentrate on just two sections of the text, sections 10 and 35. I will show that Heidegger's relation to the two editions of Kant's text is ambivalent. Furthermore, I will ground this ambivalence in Heidegger's own unresolved (at this stage) thinking about time in relation to space. In other words, I will show that the tensions and illegitimacies within the argument of "Being and Time" section 70 have their place in Heidegger's Kant text, at the same time.

Heidegger's preference for the first edition of Kant's first Critique appears, *prima facie*, to be the result of an issue in Kant at the most indirectly linked with the relative ontological import of time over space. Heidegger states that it is the centrality of the *transcendental imagination* in the first edition which leads to his preference. This faculty, as opposed to the transcendental



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unity of apperception (emphasised in the second edition), is the faculty which opens Dasein up to an understanding of metaphysics. The transcendental imagination, Heidegger asserts, is rooted in primordial temporality. As such, the synthesis of the imagination is at the same time the subject's *temporalisation* of time. Time works through the subject, Heidegger claims. And therefore time is a matter of what he calls 'auto-affection'. On these terms, time's grounding in the subject and the subject's grounding in time is a matter of equiprimordiality. Both are grounded or rooted in each other. And henceforth, Heidegger argues that metaphysics, as the possibility of *transcendence*, can be thought.

The interpretation of the transcendental imagination as a root, i.e., the disclosure of the manner in which the pure synthesis puts forth and sustains the two stems [of sensibility and the understanding], leads naturally back to that in which this root is rooted, primordial time. The latter alone, as the original tri-unitary formation of future, past, and present, makes possible the "faculty" of pure synthesis and with it that which it is capable of producing, i.e., the unification of the three elements of ontological knowledge, the unity of which forms transcendence. (Heidegger, 1962:201)

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Heidegger therefore reads a threefolded ecstatic temporality into Kant's notion of the transcendental imagination as being the root of subjectivity's temporisation and the timing of the subject. The transcendental imagination is the ground of transcendence, and therefore of metaphysics. In contrast, the second edition's substitution of the transcendental understanding for the faculty of imagination leads Kant's Critique, in Heidegger's eyes, to fall back on the side of the concept, thus paving the way for Idealism. By falling back on the concept, Heidegger is claiming that the centralisation of the understanding over the imagination in the second edition forecloses the possibility of transcendence being thought. The understanding, as the faculty concerned with the application of the concept, can only think within its own terms. As such, the understanding would, one might presume, remain merely logical, or blind. At the very least, it would be non-metaphysical, stuck within an immanence whose limits it cannot think. Hence, Heidegger states his preference in the clearest terms,

The first edition is more faithful to the innermost character and development of the problematic which characterises the laying of the foundation of metaphysics because, by virtue of its indissoluble primordial structure, the transcendental imagination opens up the possibility of a laying of the



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foundation of ontological knowledge and, hence, of metaphysics. Therefore, relative to the problem which is central to the whole work, the first edition is essentially to be preferred to the second. (Ibid:202)

Because the transcendental imagination, as the 'root' of synthesis is rooted in primordial time, transcendence, as the opening to metaphysics, can be inaugurated. Heidegger's preference for the first edition therefore appears as a clearly stated claim (whether or not one agrees with him). He is claiming that the first edition is the more metaphysical work, precisely because it allows for the metaphysical opening of transcendence to be thought.

However, it is important to note what I would claim to be the more fundamental issue at work in Heidegger's text, beyond a debate about whether the transcendental imagination ought to be privileged over the transcendental unity of apperception. This more fundamental issue concerns the ontological status of space with respect to time.

In the Kant text, Heidegger prefers the transcendental imagination as the root of synthesis because it stands for the synthesis that produces (or is 'produced by' - Heidegger's text unwittingly circles around an abyssal subjectivism that threatens to englobe all other forms of conceptuality) the

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transcendence of *time*. In this respect, the preference for the imagination is a way of stating the metaphysical primordially of time over space by proxy.

The interesting point one notices in reading the two sections under analysis here is that one can witness Heidegger's own uncertainty about the ontological function of space projected into his reading of Kant. In other words, although Heidegger clearly wants to maintain a temporal primordially in arguing the case for the first edition of the "Critique", he struggles to uphold this privilege at key points in the text.

For instance, in section 10, after reviewing Kant's argument concerning time as the pure intuition applied to the data of internal sense, he wonders

We will not pass judgment at this time on the question as to whether this argument in support of the universality of time as pure intuition justifies the central ontological function of time attributed to it. We will also leave open for the present the further question as to whether space as pure intuition is deprived thereby of a possible central ontological function.

(Ibid:53)

Heidegger's concern over the ontological status of space becomes intensified in his later discussion of the two additions to the second edition already



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mentioned. Although Heidegger had stated, a couple of pages previously, his preference for the first edition, later on in section 35 he somewhat confusingly attempts a vigorous defence of Kant's second edition. This defence turns precisely around the apparent destabilising of time's privilege in the second edition. But again, there are moments in this defence where Heidegger's ambivalence over the Kant's argument reveal much about his own quandaries at the time.

Heidegger begins his examination of the second edition insertions by registering Kant's apparent refusal to continue the ontological privilege of time. Heidegger writes

It is true that in the second edition, Kant apparently refuses to acknowledge the transcendental priority of time in the formation of transcendence as such, i.e., he disavows the essential part of the laying of the foundation of metaphysics, the transcendental schematism. (Ibid:204)

Heidegger is referring to the additions of the "Refutation of Idealism" and the "General Note on the System of Principles". As we shall see in a moment, these two sections both introduce, for the first time in Kant, the idea that the reception and comprehension of things requires an outer

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intuition at the same time as an inner intuition. In other words, that the a priori form of space is always already involved in any cognition, through the work of the temporising subject. Heidegger's contention in the above passage is that this novel equiprimordiality accorded to space interferes with the schematism. Until the second edition, the schematism had been taken to be the operation by which the concepts and categories of the understanding are applied to empirical objects. In the first edition, Kant claimed that the mode of this operation is purely temporal. Therefore, Heidegger would appear to be correct in drawing attention to the fact that the two added passages referred to above disrupt the work of the transcendental schematism.

After a brief discussion on the "General Note", Heidegger continues

Here appears the transcendental function of space, which unmistakably opens up a new perspective for Kant. Space enters into pure schematism. It is true that in the second edition the chapter on schematism has not been modified to take this into account. But is it not necessary to conclude, nevertheless, that the primacy of time has disappeared? This conclusion would not only be premature, but to attempt to infer from this passage that it is not time alone which forms transcendence



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would also be a complete misunderstanding of the whole interpretation carried out so far. (Ibid:205)

Thus Heidegger begins his 'defence' of the second edition. In this section, Heidegger notes, in passing, that the schematism would need to be 'modified' in order to take a revamped spatio-temporal ontology into account. This one sentence condenses and contains the root of the trouble, both for Heidegger and for Kant. Before examining this trouble, let us carry on with what Heidegger has to say.

In the next paragraph, we see why Heidegger wanted to minimise the difficulties and disruptions involved in shifting from a temporal schematism to a spatio-temporal schematism. Here, Heidegger attempts to argue that Kant was nonetheless correct in restating the primordially of space in the second edition. Heidegger argues that this restatement does not interfere with the real primordially of time itself.

However, it is not in this form but as pure self-affection that time is the primordial ground of transcendence. As such, it is also the condition of the possibility of all formative acts of representation, for example, the making manifest of space. It does not follow, then, that to admit the transcendental function

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of space is to reject the primacy of time. Rather, this admission obligates one to show how space, like time, also belongs to the self as finite and that the latter, precisely because it is based on primordial time, is essentially spatial. (Ibid:205)

We now have all the pieces of Heidegger's argument put together, so that we can begin to see their fault-lines. Heidegger, in the above passages, attempts to defend the second edition's equiprimordialisation of space with time. This is on the basis that time's privilege does not in reality get displaced. For Heidegger, the transcendental imagination can be considered as spatio-temporal. This is because spatio-temporality itself can only be grounded in the primordial root of all transcendence, time. Therefore, Heidegger agrees with second-edition Kant that space is an essential intuition for the subject's understanding of objects. And he grounds this agreement in an underlying temporality which is not affected by introducing the primordially of the transcendental function of space. Hence Heidegger holds that Kant's second edition schematism can be 'modified'.

In disagreement with Heidegger, I contend that his agreement with the second edition (after stating a preference for the first a couple of pages previously) cannot however be maintained. In refusing the 'apparent refusal'



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of acknowledging the transcendental priority of time, Heidegger attempts to hold on to two incompatible positions:

- 1) That the schematism is spatio-temporal. In other words, that in terms of the subject's intuitions, inner sense and outer sense are equiprimordial. The object's space (a/part from the subject) is woven inextricably into its time. Space and time are therefore reciprocally determinative forms of intuition.
- 2) That time is ultimately more fundamental ontologically than space.

His attempt to resurrect an appreciation of the second edition would turn around resolving these two points into one thesis. And resolution would come if Heidegger himself could provide the 'modification' necessary to Kant's account of the schematism. But, I suggest, how could Heidegger attempt this reworking, on the basis of the absolute value he places on time itself? How can a spatio-temporal schematism, translating or informing our reception of the world in relation to pre-ordered ways of seeing and receiving, be itself grounded in primordial temporality? It would appear that something more than a mere 'modification' to Kant's schematism is in order. That is, Heidegger has two choices. Either he continues to develop a quasi-Kantian spatio-temporal schematism by rejecting the absolute primordially of time, or he maintains time's primordially and rejects the

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transcendental equiprimordiality of space.

In other words, the above cited passages from “Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics” repeat the same problems encountered in the reading of section 70 of “Being and Time” performed in the previous chapter. Heidegger’s phenomenologico-ontological appreciation of the subject’s spatiality is undervalued by the subsequent grounding of space in time. In the Kant book, the question of the transcendental-ontological function of space is in the same way at stake in Heidegger’s repetition of the Kantian temporal privilege. And just as in “Being and Time”, the priority accorded to time feeds into an implicit subjectivism, so too does a subjectivism manifest itself in the Kant book. A form of this was uncovered in the last Heidegger passage quoted. Time as ‘pure self-affection’ is the ground of all transcendence. In other words, it is the subject’s self-differentiating play (operating as the transcendental imagination) that opens up transcendence. Again, it is clear that this construction of the ground must lie in tension with the two added passages of the second edition of the “Critique” that we have been discussing. For Kant, at least the Kant of the second edition, would surely disagree with Heidegger that time as self-affection is the ground of all transcendence. Is it not the very point of these two passages to affirm that time as the form of inner sense cannot be considered as sovereign over



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space? That is, that space itself must be involved in the production of transcendence (or rather, to avoid subjectivism, that transcendence produces *itself* through spacing as well as temporising?)

Subjectivism also rears its head in the earlier passages from Heidegger's Kant text, as mentioned in passing above. It remains unclear all the way through the text whether primordial time is the ground of all synthesis or whether synthesis and transcendence are reciprocally determinative. If we assume the former position, then time itself exists as something outside of the temporising agency of the subject. In other words, primordial temporality becomes something quite mysterious. Alternatively, if primordial temporality just is the manner in which the subject temporises itself through auto-affection, then time and subjectivity become equiprimordial. On this basis, the transcendence of metaphysics is grounded in the subject.

In section 35, the conflict between a primordial time that temporises mysteriously beyond the primordial synthesis of the transcendental imagination and a primordial time that just is that operation of synthesis is condensed into two sentences,

..the primordially unifying element, the transcendental

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imagination, apparently only a mediating, intermediate faculty, is nothing other than primordial time. Only because the transcendental imagination is rooted in time can it be the root of transcendence. (Ibid:202)

In these two sentences Heidegger is making two incompatible claims. On the one hand he is arguing that the transcendental imagination can be called by another name - 'primordial time'. On the other hand, he is claiming that the transcendental imagination is *grounded in* time, as if time had some independent ontological status.

To complete the parallel between the two sections under analysis here and section 70 of "Being and Time", it would be necessary to show how the Kant text employs wholly spatio-temporal language in order to access what are apparently most primordially temporal phenomena. I shall not however rehearse the words and the contexts in which this denial of the spatio-temporality of language is ordained.

How then is it possible to look again at Kant's first Critique in a manner sustained and influenced by the way in which Heidegger looked again at section 70 and rejected it? I suggest that in order to begin to clarify the



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import of the second edition of the “Critique”, we need to return to the question of a spatio-temporal schematism, as something that, in order to be thought, must involve much more than a mere ‘modification’ upon a pure temporality. To begin this task, I will return to look at the two passages in Kant that Heidegger has been discussing.

In the “Refutation of Idealism”, Kant writes

Certainly, the representation ‘I am’, which expresses the consciousness that can accompany all thought, immediately includes in itself the existence of a subject; but it does not so include any *knowledge* of that subject, and therefore also no empirical knowledge, that is, no experience of it. For this we require, in addition to the thought of something existing, also intuition, and in this case inner intuition, in respect of which, that is, of time, the subject must be determined. But in order so to determine it, outer objects are quite indispensable; and it therefore follows that inner experience is itself possible only mediately, and only through outer experience.(1929:246)

Already, in this passage, it is clear that the schematism cannot be maintained in the same manner merely by ‘adding on’ an account of the space of the

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subject. Kant is clearly disagreeing with his claim in the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' that time is the more primordial form of intuition. What needs to be decided is how fundamental this disagreement is. What would have to change in Kant's account in order for the equal primacy of outer sense to be maintained throughout his text?

I suggest that the modification would have to be absolutely fundamental. Time can no longer be taken to be generated out of an 'auto-affection'. This is because, as Kant argues in the above passage, there cannot be an 'auto', an *αυτο* or self, without the experience of outer objects. The self alone therefore cannot be the basis for the genesis of time and temporisation. The 'within' of the subject's time cannot ground itself without the 'without' of exteriority. And therefore, the subjectivism that both Kant and Heidegger are prey to early on in their thinking collapses. The subject's self-differing temporisation of itself cannot be the sole basis for transcendence, for rising above the present moment through an encounter with time's horizon. Transcendence, the opening to metaphysics, would henceforth become grounded in both the within of interiority and the without of the world. Transcendence would be chiasmically grounded in immanence, and vice versa.



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But then a more fundamental collapse still would have had to have occurred through Kant's additions- a collapse of a strong ontological distinction between the inside and the outside of experience and self-knowledge. The figure of the 'mobius strip' would have to be inserted at the core of ontological difference. Through the supplementation of the above remarks, the Kantian notion of self is decentred and displaced from the centre of metaphysics. It is as if Kant is enacting the final flourish of his Copernican turn in the Refutation. Only in this second edition supplement does Kant relinquish a metaphysical equivalence between time and subjectivity. The problem is that he did not realise the absolutely revolutionary nature of this flourish, at least in the terms of the first Critique. The "Refutation" and the "General Note" act like silently ticking bombs that must wait two hundred years to detonate. The subject's inner space is constructed only on the basis of the external world. What needs to be acknowledged is that this equiprimordiality would fundamentally challenge and shake all traditional forms of transcendental argument. The transcendental forms of the subject's representational capacity are, in Kant's words, *apriori*, or set in place prior to all experience. However, with the equal primacy accorded to the experience of outer objects in the passage above, this apriori framework cannot be maintained. The experience of outer objects cannot be a pure

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intuition. Rather, the experience of outer objects can only come, with an obviousness to the point of tautology, *through experience*. The space of the subject would therefore become an *aposteriori* intuition.

And yet the collapse of the transcendental through the collapse of an unambiguous ontological distinction between interiority and exteriority goes further. If interiority is dependent upon exteriority (and vice versa), then the internal time-consciousness of inner sense itself can no longer be a pure intuition. The apriori, the most important and central aspect of all transcendental structures, is put into crisis. Nothing is decided in advance of existence in the world and the experience that takes place within it. Kant's supplementary remarks would therefore, if their work was implemented throughout his text, lead to something close to one of the founding tenets of existential phenomenology. Under these conditions, there is no notion of the 'universal' available, since all beings exist, and on the basis of that existence, they exist in time-space. The transcendental, as the pre-historical and pre-subjective ground of the subject, is shown to have been a chimera. The transcendental is revealed, through a critique of critique, as particularity masquerading as the phantom of the universal. As Gilles Deleuze has shown, Kant's construction of the transcendental merely privileges one arbitrary form of thinking about objects, structuring this privilege around the



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deception of an ahistorical universality.<sup>2</sup>

If we heed the words of the Refutation correctly, I argue that we are forced to the following conclusion: there cannot be a universal subject, nor a universal object. The subject comes to be aware of itself and to express itself only in and through interaction with the world. The subject therefore becomes a self-reflective being only in the *time-space* of the world. Only in this here and now of the present can the subject have any sense of self. The subject becomes something like an event in the history of the world.

As I have said, Kant himself was not capable of registering the revolution in thinking he had set in place. He maintains an epistemic separation between inner and outer intuitions that cannot remain legitimate in ontological terms, given his remarks on their reciprocal nature. For instance, in the ‘General Note’ - the addition that follows immediately on from the ‘Refutation’, he writes

But it is an even more noteworthy fact that in order to understand the possibility of things in conformity with the categories, and so to demonstrate the *objective reality* of the

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<sup>2</sup>See chapter 3 of “Difference and Repetition”.

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latter, we need, not merely intuitions, but intuitions that are in all cases *outer intuitions*.(Ibid:254)

How is it possible to set about rethinking the self and its spaces and times, outside of a privilege granted to the subject to inaugurate those spaces and times? What becomes of what had been referred to as ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ sense, if the space of the outside is introduced as of equal primacy to time in the transcendental realm? How can we draw away from the centrality of the subject, and draw upon its decentering? And how do we think *beyond* transcendentalism, given the crisis of the apriori discussed above? How can we flesh out the idea that far from being a logically necessary hypothesis for the production of sense and cognition, the subject is an event in the history of the world?

I contend that it is not possible to do this within the terms of Kant’s first Critique, even though it is only on the basis of its second edition that it is possible to begin to clarify how one can proceed beyond transcendentalism. Nor, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, is it possible to proceed beyond the impasse of the cleft between space and time in the early Heidegger. In both cases, an attention placed upon the spatiality of knowledge (knowledge of self and knowledge of the world) is critically



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undermined by an illegitimate temperocentrism. In Heidegger's "Being and Time", space, as of the world, is mund-ane. From the mundanity of space, Heidegger is only one slippery step away from describing its banality. The space of the world is henceforth the average, down-levelling space of *das Man*. Time, on the other hand, remains unadulteratable, the repository for all that is higher. Time remains the key to the transcendence which acts both as the base for metaphysics and its ultimate destiny: authentic being.

For these reasons, I will leave Kant and Heidegger aside for the rest of this chapter, in order to proceed towards what both thinkers have thus far been seen to fail in their attempt to think: a spatio-temporal schematism, or a phenomenology of time-space.

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In order to begin outlining such a schematism, I will turn first to the thought of the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. I will examine his book "Science and the Modern World", in particular what he introduces there as the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness'. This thesis is the key to Whitehead's genealogy of the abstraction of space and time in the history of modern thought. Whitehead's aim is to rethink immediacy, and ask after the structure of concrete reality in our experience. As I shall argue, an implicit

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phenomenology governs Whitehead's thought, a desire to return thinking to the facticity of lived or immediate experience which at key points in the work tries to act as ground to what we might call Whitehead's general theory of nature.

The fallacy of misplaced concreteness asserts principally that modern science and thought has posited as most concrete or real that which has what Whitehead calls 'simple location'. Epistemologically speaking, what is most concretely real is paradigmatically an object fixed in a determinate space across a determinate time series. The criterion of concrete reality is hence measured by the degree of an object's separation and fixity, what we might think of as its 'certainty in space'. Perceived objects are non-relational, 'in-itself' entities, and as such are known according to a one to one representational mapping between the subject's cognitive act and the object. In short, the thing as a non-relational, discrete, in-itself entity, is potentially available to the subject as transparent knowledge. In the present of the perceiving act, the object does not refer outside itself, it has no 'ecstatic' value.

For Whitehead, this thesis about the primordial epistemological and ontological constitution of objectality is at one and the same time a thesis



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about the modern epoch's thinking about the nature of space,

There were different theories as to the adequate description of the status of space. But whatever its status, no one had any doubt but that the connection with space enjoyed by entities, which are said to be in space, is that of simple location. We may put this shortly by saying that it was tacitly assumed that space is the locus of simple locations. Whatever is in space is *simpliciter* in some definite portion of space (1946:65).

The connection between the thesis of simple object location and the 'structure' of space as a whole is therefore clear: the object, occupying a simple determinate location itself implies that space in totality consists of the sum of possible simple locations for objects. Space, like the objects within it, has a non-relational character. Each portion of space is an absolute, in-itself zone that may or may not be occupied by objects. Space itself is therefore *absolute*, (onto)logically independent of objects.<sup>3</sup> Space is like an empty container, an insubstantial substance that locates (or dislocates) other substances. Therefore, just as the *relation* between objects is not essential to

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<sup>3</sup> As Whitehead writes, 'According to the absolute theory, which is the traditional view (held explicitly by Newton), space has an existence, in some sense whatever it may be, independent of the bodies which it contains..' (1946:177)

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the character in itself of each object, there is merely a juxtaposed relation between them, so the *relation* between portions of space is not essential to the character in itself of each portion of space, there is merely *juxtaposition across spaces*. Moreover, the space for simple objects is indifferent to them. This construction marks space out as an homogenous and isotropic expanse. There is, in effect, no *depth* to space. Depth is reduced to being a repetition of the x or y axis. The z axis has no unique quality that marks out a difference in the object or in space.

At base, this paradigm of concrete reality can be shown to privilege *analysis* as the most primordial level of being. What comes first are separate entities. They have no attachment, either to other entities or to the place in which they are situated. To repeat what was stated above, entities are therefore devoid of any 'ecstasy'. Entities are given relationality *only after* they are fully constituted in their being. This subsequent production of relationality can be called 'synthesis'. The binary of analysis and synthesis can therefore be seen as a frame which reduces all claims to a precessive non-relationality.

From this summary of Whitehead's characterisation of the epistemology of modern experience as patterned by a scientific world-view, we may extrapolate several points. Firstly, the nature of the object as set up through



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the modern scientific paradigm implies that the object cannot resist the epistemological drive to capture it as a known object. Nothing is hidden about the object; it can potentially be exhaustively analysed and ordered and measured by the systems of thinking of scientific method. The object therefore is transparently assimilated / assimilable into the order of the known, it is without alterity. For this reason, the object is not essentially confined to a certain place- the ideal object of experience is reducible to the pristine possibility of being understood without context. There is no disclosive background or horizon (be it spatial, temporal, historical, linguistic, cultural, or a combination of all five) within which the object must be embedded in order to reveal itself, in a clearing of truth. There is no relation between the object's availability for cognition and a nuanced Heideggerian-style *a-lethe-ia*. The paradigm of locating the object- for instance in a physical space ordered mathematically- as object 'a' located at specific values given within the variables  $x, y, z$ , demonstrates the minimal significance of the coordination of the object in terms of its structure and essence. The object can be wrenched from the specific boundary limitations of the current context, or alternatively those boundary limitations may be left unspecified, and yet the entity would not suffer a reduced epistemological value. The object exist and is known without obscurity and without doubt,

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and it can be known by anyone, at any place and any time. The object is paradigmatically mathematical. In mock-Saussurian terms, one might say that the first principle concerning simple objects is that they have an *arbitrary* relation to their enframing spatial context.

The simply-located object, situated in absolute, non - relational space, is therefore constructed as the most concrete, the form of the most immediate concrete reality, in modern scientific thinking. The idea that knowledge must be embedded within practices, contextualised, in order for it to be such, the founding tenet of existential phenomenology, is rejected. The modern paradigm minimises attention placed upon the *praxis-horizon* of immediate experience, an attenuation that effectively installs a non-horizon as the horizon of experience; that is it conditions any reading of experience in terms of the possibilities of transparent, calculable knowledge.

This claim that the simply located object is not context - dependent, made available only in relation to a placial matrix or horizon, that space itself is absolute, and as such, independent of objects, has severe implications for the status of human 'lived experience' in modern thinking. In terms of the modern paradigm, objects in space are seen as *distorted* by the inherent perspectivism of the subject of experience. Scientific method posits as its



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ideal a non - perspectival standard of recording the object. As with Kant's notion of space as an apriori pure intuition, absolute space returns in the guise of a non-metaphysical necessary hypothesis for the experience and measurement of objects. Space no longer hypostatized as a global entity, an etherous container, but rather understood as an abstract universal form. The "ideal" space of measurement in the modern era would be that of the *axonometric*, an absolute space where all perspectival value is erased. In architectural forms of spatial representation, axonometric diagrams are drawings without depth. Lines going into the distance of the drawing do not converge upon a vanishing point. Perspectivism is, according to the esteemed value placed on the axonometric, a distorting element, a derivative subjectivism. Not an intrinsic value of immediate concrete reality. Although the axonometric is a more recent form of visual representation, in a sense it applies the Cartesian logic and ontology of space as a mathematical coordinating grid, as an abstract frame devoid of content, to the limit. The simple object, slotted into the place it arbitrarily occupies in the grid is therefore 'purely Cartesian.'

Implicit therefore within Whitehead's symptomatology of the conditions of modern experience is an account of the devaluation of the subject's experience of the world *through* an internalisation of the values of modern

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scientific thinking. What we have by and large rejected or forgotten is a sense of the concrete relations at work between the body and place, of the truth of an embodied *perspectival* relation to the world, in favour of a purely 'objective' hermeneutic of experience. For the sake of transparency and certainty in space, our understanding of our experience has lost its depth. Within the conventions of all scientific programmes, perspectival accounts of experience must always, in order to achieve an approximation to the truth of nature, or, in the grandest sense, of a possible metaphysics of the truth of being, be filtered by some version of an axonometric programme. That is, all perspectival value must be sieved out or erased. The vanishing point vanishes. Space is made absolute, ontologically independent of objects, as the site of their possible location, in order that they may be measured. Only after this idealising process has been achieved can concrete reality be determined as an objective actuality, as the relation between an object and a determinate location. This reality of the entity is presumed to be a non-relational, concrete, in-itself object, measured across universally isotropic space, a space of measurement with no characteristics unique to itself beyond this minimal role as the matrix of metrication, of abstract measure, the sum of simple locations.

Against this prevailing devaluation of the embedded character of the



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subject's experience, Whitehead's 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' marks the beginning of an attempt to return philosophy to an appreciation of the immediate profundity of lived experience. Whitehead's text is imbued with an under-theorised drive towards a phenomenological methodology. Hence we come across the following passages and phrases. He writes of a motivation towards 'An analysis *more concrete* than that of the scientific scheme of thought' (1946:91) [emphasis added]. He also suggests a return to the 'ultimate fact of experience' (Ibid:81). Here Whitehead's language comes closest to those of his continental contemporaries, the use of 'fact' approximating to Heidegger's *Faktizität*. As with Heidegger, the subject's ecstatic facticity of being in the world is fundamentally grounded in the corporeal character of Dasein, 'I shall argue that among the *primary elements of nature as apprehended in our immediate experience*, there is no element whatever which possesses this character of simple location' (Ibid:72) [emphasis added]. And later on, he writes, 'In being aware of the bodily experience, we must thereby be aware of aspects of the whole spatio-temporal world as mirrored within the bodily life.' (Ibid:113)

However, it is not possible to find a sustained methodological development behind Whitehead's desire for a return to the immediacy of experience. We can nonetheless glean from what is there in the text certain principles which

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organise Whitehead's phenomenological bias and allow him to develop it.

The key principle at work in his thinking are the possibilities and limitations opened up by the *embodied* nature of perception. In order to begin to see the ontological importance of the body for Whitehead, it is necessary to introduce some of the basic concepts of his thinking.

To begin with, in his opening remarks on the complexity inherent in our actual experience of immediate concrete reality, Whitehead positions his thinking on an abstract level. One has a sense of a residual scientificism driving him to abstract yet again from the complex influence of embodied perception on how we understand spatiality. It is as if Whitehead falls into his own trap of an over-valued abstraction. He starts by distinguishing the 'separative' from the 'prehensive' aspect of space-time. The former refers to discreteness or the interval between things in space. In other words, the separative refers to what I called 'analysis' above. The prehensive on the other hand refers to the ways in which things are 'together' (or 'synthesised') in space or time. He then adds a third aspect of space-time, that of its 'modal' nature. In Spinozist fashion, Whitehead's notion of 'mode' corresponds to the process of individuation and determination of the object. He adds that taking determination or modality in-itself, one is tempted to posit simple location as the most concrete. It is easy to imagine



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that that which is determinate and determined in space-time is that which is simply located *there*. In other words, it is easy to fall into the trap of equating individuation with simple location. Whitehead suggests that only by thinking modality *in terms of* the separative and the prehensive (in terms of analysis and synthesis) that we can escape this inclination to posit an equivalence between individuation and an analytic simplicity. As we shall see, this attempt to think synthesis as equiprimordial to analysis is vital to understanding the radical opening offered up in Whitehead's philosophical project. In the following chapters, I shall be arguing in effect that treating analysis and synthesis as equally significant allows for ontological difference to be thought of as a *transcendence within immanence*. But I am already leaping ahead of myself in suggesting this.

From this basis, Whitehead launches into a quasi-Leibnizian account of the essential relationality of space. The abstract character of this account mentioned just now appears in the form of a minimalist notion of perspectivism. Rather than embodied perception being the essence of perspectivism- a position which demands that embodiment itself is thought on all its levels, or at least that the plurality inherent within a thinking of the body is gestured towards, the perspectival is registered as the mere locatedness within space of the agent of perception. A monadic generality

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invades the text. Whitehead's aim is to show how the perspectival character of the experience of space entails that relationality, or the 'prehensive' is the most important aspect, the 'prime fact.' He introduces an example,

Thus if A and B and C are volumes of space, B has an aspect from the standpoint of A, and so has C, and so has the relationship of B and C. This aspect of B from A is of the essence of A. The volumes of space have no independent existence. They are only entities as with the totality; you cannot extract them from their environment without destruction of their very essence. Accordingly, I will say that the aspect of B from A is the *mode* in which B enters into the composition of A. This is the modal character of space, that the prehensive unity of A is the prehension into unity of the aspects of all other volumes from the standpoint of A. (Ibid:181)

In this passage it is as if the deeply placed relationality of space, its ontologically grounded relationality, subjects the body of perception to a pre-phenomenological perspectivism. Prior to our *experience* of the world from our determined position, prior to reflection on this experience, there is the brute facticity of positionality itself. Whether or not we reflect or are



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conscious of our positioned reading of the world, we are none the less positioned. Perhaps this is why Whitehead sounds quite abstract here; in order to think the relationality of space, we need not refer to the embodied nature of perception, we need only think the *locatedness* of perception that makes spatiality inherently relational. That this is Whitehead's point, that he affirms a basic physicalism in his thinking against simple location- that he locates location itself in the simple manner of a cartographics, a physicalism- is confirmed a few pages later, when he explains the use of the word 'prehension' rather than 'apprehension',

The word 'perceive' is, in our common usage, shot through and through with notion of cognitive apprehension. So is the word 'apprehension', even with the adjective *cognitive* omitted. I will use the word '*prehension*' for *uncognitive apprehension*: by this I mean *apprehension* which may or may not be cognitive.

(Ibid:86)

The 'may or may not', I am suggesting, confirms a preference for thinking perspectivism on the basis of a pre-experiential mathematical positionality, rather than on the complex basis- extra-physical in part- of the embodied nature of perception. The perspective of the subject of experience is

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modelled in the abstract with A's and B's. We shall pause to question this privileging of a certain way of thinking about perspectivism shortly.

Nonetheless, prehension, the gathering of the environment, of Whitehead's A's and B's and C's construed only from the relation between them, already takes us outside of simple location. A thing in space, or a volume of space, can only have spatial significance in and through its relation to the surrounding spaces. What is present, the object of perception, cannot make sense solely in terms of a one to one epistemological mapping between presentation of the object and representation in the mind, the optics of capture. The object of perception, the thing or volume of space, is perceived and made sense of only through the relationality inherent within and through the subject's delimiting *perspective* on the world. 'The volumes of space have no independent existence.' The object of perception, what is given to cognition, cannot be discrete, simple, simply located. It contains *within itself* aspects of its surrounding context. In other words, instead of the inaugurating primordially of *analysis* which acted as the basis of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, Whitehead posits an equiprimordial synthesis or prehension. The thing discloses itself on the basis of its environment, starts presencing from the boundaries that separate it from the other (things in space), a separation that yet affirms relation. The immanence of this mode



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of being in this present (Whitehead's 'prehensivity') only occurs on the basis of its being a gathering of what is always already dispersed or separative. Immanence can only be constructed in relation to a precessive transcendence (and vice versa).

This privilege ascribed to a primordial synthesis accords with the findings of Gestalt psychology's investigations into the figure-ground relation. Whenever we perceive an object, the argument goes, we only make sense of that object in terms of the background of the context in which it is situated. We can only understand and makes sense of this being a tree on the basis that it is a tree in a field near other trees. A tree that floats around as a sprite on a computer screen-saver is sense-less. Or rather, whatever 'sense' we ascribe to it is derivative upon the possibilities of contexts being given. For example, one such possibility is that whenever we see an image of a tree (or any other image) in abstraction from the lived reality of trees (or the lived reality of x), we make sense of that image to the extent that we *associate* it with its context.

For Whitehead, there is no simple interiority, no in-itself objectival transparency. The spell of simple location is broken by the constitutional necessity of exteriority: 'you cannot extract [the volumes of space] from

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their environment without destruction of their very essence.’ (Ibid:81)

Furthermore, one might add that whilst there may be no optimum place for witnessing the presence of the object (for example, how would we determine the perfect vantage point and context within which to experience a tree – from close up, at a distance?) this does not entail, as previously with the simple object, that the object can be viewed from anywhere in the same way.

The object’s presence is at work in its environmental context. This context can never be ‘saturated’; it is always excessive to the imposition of a limiting frame. Beyond this, the object signifies across time as the presencing of the trace, of memory. In other words, after the collapse of the illusion of simple location, there comes the collapse of the dream of a transparent knowledge of objects. We can never be certain of the space of objects. After imbibing the philosophical resources of the following chapters of this thesis, we will be able to say that understanding objects can only occur through a perceptual faith that faces the world in light of an acknowledged and irrevocable uncertainty.

In order to develop the prime significance of the relationality of space given through the pre-reflective prehension of the transcending environment and to show the philosophical significance of such an account, Whitehead returns to Berkeley, in this return enacting a striking subversion of the



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idealism of the latter. Berkeley's idealism, as is well-known, is epitomised by the dictum *esse est percipi*. To be is to be perceived. Beyond perception, the existence of things in themselves, hence the unity of nature, is guaranteed only in the mind of god. Whitehead furnishes several citations where Berkeley is seen to argue that what is taken to be the perception of the thing in itself, of trees in a park or books in a closet, or of the distant object on the horizon, though apparently outside of a perceptual relation, are nonetheless constructions of the mind. The clearest example to demonstrate this argument comes when Whitehead quotes from the Alciphron.

Berkeley argues in the dialogue between Euphranor and Alciphron that the small round object perceived on the horizon cannot be the same thing as the 'large square building with battlements and turrets'- i.e. the small round object when one is much closer to it. Euphranor concludes, 'Is it not plain, therefore, that neither the castle, the planet, nor the cloud, *which you see here*, are those real ones which you suppose exist at a distance.' (1946:85)

In Berkeley, the ontological deficit between appearance and the reality of the thing in itself, between the perceived object and being, is bridged by the mind of God. When the tree in the forest is not being perceived by human (or animal?) eye, it does not cease to exist because God, in his fly-like

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infinite ocularity, continues to watch it. What is of interest for Whitehead in Berkeley is the idea that there is, in this way, always a *beyond* to the present moment of perception. In other words, it is impossible to trap or contain an object through the precision of a rigorous gaze. The object is not simple, and therefore it will not yield to the metaphysical desire for transparency and certainty.

Berkeley therefore provides Whitehead with the beginnings of a solution to the abstractionism of modern scientific thinking. He allows Whitehead to begin thinking the ecstatic transcendence of the here and now of perceiving an object. In order to use Berkeley in this way, all Whitehead must do is substitute transcendence (of this illusion of simple analytic truth) for the 'mind of God'.

This unity of a prehension defines itself as a *here* and a *now*, and the things so gathered into the grasped unity have essential reference to other places and other times. For Berkeley's *mind*, I substitute a process of prehensive unification. (Ibid:87)

Let us try to expand upon this quote. The object that is perceived cannot ever be perceived exhaustively. Each 'here and now' of perceiving leaves a remainder of the unperceived. In Heideggerian fashion, each moment of



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revealing brings with it an attendant concealing. The difference between Heidegger and Whitehead on this point is only one of varying modes of expression. If anything, I would argue that Whitehead allows for a more concrete formulation of the thing's transcendence of the present. It is possible to describe 'the thing in itself' from this framework as an unrealisable virtuality, an ~~inexhaustible~~ resource for actualisation. The possibility of a noumenal absolute realisation of the object therefore becomes strictly impossible. The 'Real'- transparent absolute reality, is the virtual (and as such unobtainable and unrepresentable), whereas appearances are actual. As such, appearances occur within an always already relational spatiality. Spatiality *is* the manifold of appearances across their intervals, or the levels of their being. An object - appearance does not occupy a slot in an independent spatiality; it is rather a **moment** *within* spatiality. It is therefore ineradicably temporal. Space is no longer the absolute form of outer sense, a series of frozen frames or *tableaux vivants*, transcendental. It is no longer purely spatial, or absolutely separate from the pure intuition of inner sense. It is rather always transcending itself across its moments. Introducing ecstasy into our experience of things therefore equates with a realisation of the fundamental *spatio-temporality* of our experience (or our selves and the world). Furthermore, each revealed aspect of an object is *partial*, its

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embeddedness within a relation to other things entails that no one perspective can provide a totalizing comprehension, a saturated context. The sum of all aspects, a view of the object from everywhere, is a non-realizable hypothetical construction. Whitehead can be seen to be providing a spatio-temporal schematism, a phenomenological ontology of the object.

We can therefore begin to re-imagine the basic constituents of each simple act of perception of external 'objects'. It is possible to say that elements of the present prehensive unity have been present before this gathering event of being, and will be present after its evanescence, and yet this elemental repetition does not reside within Sameness. Each actualisation occurs within the singularity of an unrepeatable moment. The virtuality of the thing, the plenitudinous *ding an sich*, is not a universal that receives undifferentiated particularity through each actualisation. Elements, for example colours, are never the same everywhere.<sup>4</sup> They form, in each durational patterning, a 'style' - each element of the prehensive unity mirrors or exemplifies the rest.

For example, the green of this leaf exemplifies its textural qualities, its weight and so on. The prehensive unity of the leaf, the sensuous qualities it gathers, tend towards a 'synaesthetic conformity'. This green differs from



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the greens present on the surface of an apple, even though they may be of the same shade. In other words, the green *transcends* its own 'sense modality'- synaesthetic conformity or styling is the first mark of the thing's ecstatic elemental composition. Each experience of colour therefore resides within the singularity of the thing and the moment of its being experienced. It cannot be reduced to the 'sameness' of the universal colour whose name it shares. This universal colour is a virtual, unrealisable thing-in-itself, a virtuality.

This difference of the singularity of experience becomes more marked when taken in relation to the environmental character of the prehensive unity. For instance, when we move beyond the elemental composition of the thing to the ecstatic relation to its (back)ground(s); the leaf as it rests balanced on this shoot, on this twig, on this tree, in this place, at this time of day, in this season and so on. In this way, we can see that the thing gathers or articulates or exemplifies its context, gives it a significance it would not otherwise have, as the figure is said to articulate the ground of the Gestalt. We begin to see that something like a 'double ecstasis' of style is taking place: the thing's presencing singularity in this moment reflects the background horizon of its

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<sup>4</sup> The painter Josef Albers in "The Interaction of Colour" comprehensively formalises this assertion.

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context, and vice versa. The leaf's tangible greenness would begin to embody the spirit of the place, capture the season, illuminate the light of day, as the place, season or day is articulated by the leaf. Or the smell of the seaweed or the sound of the waves would exemplify the seaside town, the town itself at the same time expressing the way in which this odour or that sound is experienced. The event of perception therefore is seen to occur amidst a dynamic durational field; the particular extends beyond itself both in space, condensing the significance of the landscape or the cityscape into the living essence of a thing, and in time, as the thing and its elemental constituents refer to themselves across contexts, through differentiation.

These insights into the phenomenological structure of experiencing the transcendence of 'things' beyond the simple locationalism of classical epistemology are elaborated, with a nod to Whitehead, in Alphonse Lingis' text , "Foreign Bodies". In the quote below, it is possible to note how singularity, the ground or embeddedness of the perceived object and its synaesthetic essence are registered,

The sensible elements themselves are not really particulars.

They should not be defined as items that are what they are, when and where they are. Not one of them is just a here-and-



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now particular, contingent and unfounded such that it can only be recorded or not recorded. Each of them goes beyond simple location; there is not one that is instantaneous, that does not prolong itself in duration. And there is not one that is simply here: a point of red reduced to itself is not visible and is not red; it needs to be reinforced, prolonged by other spots, to be red. It is not simply red within its own borders since it can be the red it is only if the background is the color or colors it is. And this red looks tangible, is a tangible red. (1994:6)

The colour red cannot, under Lingis' argument, be reduced to an a-contextual essence. In Bergsonian fashion, Lingis is arguing that red endures by differentiating itself from itself across its moments and within its contexts. Red is an immanency that 'signifies' or expresses itself only on the basis of a *transcendence* of that immanence being constitutive of its appearance.

The phenomenology developing out of this model of the prehensive unity in process, of a gathering expressed in two moments- of the perceived object as a synaesthetic conformity of elements firstly, and secondly, of the thing's capacity to articulate and condense its context, suggest that a return in

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philosophy to the complexities of the lived experience of perception is best articulated as a *poetics*, rather than a science. The event of perception, as a singularity, forecloses the universality necessary for strictly universalist categorisation. At the least, the conventional name ontology often at work in scientific discourse must be rethought as naming process rather than object, as Whitehead goes on to argue. Each event of perception, actualising itself by differentiating itself from the paradigmatic recession of the virtual thing in itself, can only be thought as a singularity, in the here and now, as lying in essential (differentiating) relation to other places and other times. And the expression of the singularity of experience (and therefore of the singularity of things in the world, caught within and yet forever transcending the finitude of experience) has often been the ‘aim’ within the poetic work.

For example, such a poetics is exemplified in Haiku poetry, where the particularity of a thing experienced in a specific time and place is captured, the mode of capture often taking the form of a condensation of context, an elsewhere that maybe simply a spatial *there* always in relation to the *near* dwelt upon, or the context of place placed in relation to memory and repetition, as Casey argues.<sup>5</sup> Dancing with the present entails that the

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<sup>5</sup> See Casey’s “Getting Back Into Place” p280.



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footsteps mark the time of the absent. In Western literature, it is Marcel Proust who most profoundly contributes to a phenomenological ontology of difference, of transcendence within immanence. In the last volume of “*À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*” he writes for instance,

An image presented to us by life brings with it, in a single moment, sensations which are in fact multiple and heterogeneous. The sight, for instance, of the binding of a book once read may weave into the characters of its title the moonlight of a distant summer night. The taste of our breakfast coffee brings with it that vague hope of fine weather which so often long ago, as with the day still intact and full before us we were drinking it out of a bowl of white porcelain, creamy and fluted and itself looking almost like vitrified milk, suddenly smiled upon us in the pale uncertainty of the dawn. An hour is not merely an hour, it is a vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates, and what we call reality is a certain connection between these immediate sensations and the memories which envelope us simultaneously with them- a connection that is suppressed in a simple cinematographic vision, which just because it professes to confine itself to the

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truth in fact departs widely from it- a unique connection which the writer has to rediscover in order to link for ever in his phrase the two sets of phenomena which reality joins together.

(1970:253)

Here, with the example of the book, Proust can be read as providing a literary counter to the simple locationism that is endemic to modern thinking. The space of the book's title words cannot remain secure within their own fixed frame of the present. The space of the letters is automatically working within the experience of the narrator as essentially related to other times and other places. Conversely, the pure time of Kantian inner sense is, in the above passage, interrupted by manifestations of outer sense ('an hour is not merely an hour..'). Each 'form' of pure intuition is chiasmically and constitutively interwoven with modes of its transcendence as the involuntary work of memory perdures within the present moment of perception. Moreover, the sensuousity of Proust's prose brings us closer still to understanding the centrality of the *body* in the construction of a spatio-temporal schematism. It is only through the residuum of traces of the experience of the senses (rather than 'sense-experience') that the present can be received and understood. The subject becomes an event in the history of the world it has felt, reached out to, caught hold of, loved....



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This last volume is replete with similar passages whose evident influence from Bergson and <sup>on</sup> Merleau-Ponty's work is striking.<sup>6</sup> There is in Proust's project a strong parallelism with Whitehead. Both want to think beyond objectivism, beyond a false account of how to express the experience of what I have been calling immediate lived experience. In Proust, this takes the form of a polemic against a descriptivist model of literary realism,

And this is why the kind of literature which contents itself with "describing things", with giving of them merely a miserable abstract of lines and surfaces, is in fact, though it calls itself realist, the furthest removed from reality and has more than any other the effect of saddening and impoverishing us, since it abruptly severs all communication of our present self both with the past, the essence of which is preserved in things, and with the future, in which things incite us to enjoy the essence of the past a second time. (Ibid:248)

It is striking that in this passage Proust repeats exactly Whitehead's thesis of

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<sup>6</sup>However, Proust's multilocular poetics may be criticised for an implicit nostalgia. Involuntarily remembering (through the traces of sensibility that alert the body to the past moment) returns the person to the *Ur-* moment, the primal scene of sense. This 'primality' masks the instability of the original. The first context itself must be full of traces, lines of flight, resonances. The 'original moment' that encroaches upon the present is therefore *itself* encroached upon, an encroachment that threatens its originary status as a past-present. Proust seems to solicit the present only to privilege past and future presents; we must, in being

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the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness.’ For Proust, what has been taken by novelists to be the most immediate form of reality is but an abstraction. In opposition to this history of abstraction in the novel (perhaps culminating in the laborious ‘realism’ of Emile Zola, one might suggest), Proust outlines a primordial prehensivity of being. The present, as he says above, is always already in communication with a past which it preserves (through the involuntary retentions and releases of memory). The present, acknowledged as a plenitudinous enfoldment of spatio-temporal difference is, if we trace Proust’s hopes beyond their negative expression in the above passage, a moment of joyful enrichment, which would reach its most resounding epiphany in the poetic or literary work.

By this stage, with the above initial development of a *poetics* of the space - time event, we have come a long way from the abstract frame of modern constructions of space, be it Cartesian or Kantian, axonometric and isotropic. Moreover, we have begun to elaborate a spatio-temporal schematism, at work as the condition for all possible experience. Instead of the apriori forms of pure intuition, space and time have been seen to be constantly and primordially intertwined in our experience. Through Whitehead and Proust

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faithful to the logic of the trace, go further and destroy all presence.



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the remnants of a Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities is thoroughly rejected in favour of what I called a double ecstasis of the thing articulating its context and a context being articulated through the thing. A colour is neither a secondary quality nor the realisation of a universal. It is rather an aspect of a particular thing's 'style of being' that makes sense only according to what I referred to above as a 'synaesthetic' conformity. The thing reveals itself partially, in the present event of perception. What was known in philosophy as the 'universal' therefore always differs from itself across the singularities of its manifestation. The thing is a 'mode' in the singular transaction between sameness (prehension) and difference (the separative) in the present. As Alphonso Lingis writes,

The sensible field is a realm of being where all points become pivots, all lines become levels, all surfaces become planes, all colors become atmospheres, all tones become- as in dodecaphonic music- keys. There are not particulars and universals in the sensible field; what there are are particulars generalizing themselves, a whole landscape concretizing momentarily in this red, a whole love given in the condensation in a vase of flowers, a whole adventure or fatality sounded in the five little notes heard in *Swann's Way*. Each given is the

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spot and moment in which a schema of being is being elaborated. Artists have a precise knowledge of this; their knowledge consists in knowing what a color does to a field, to another color, to a zone of space; in knowing what a line does to the zone it moulds, to the space it bunches up, bulges out, or flattens, to the color, to the field of tensions; and in knowing what shapes move, creep, crawl, leap, set up movement in a whole field. (Ibid:7)

The immediate reality of the perceived object lies in its aspects, not in the virtuality of the thing in itself as the resource of style. The thing's reality lies not in itself, in its simple, discrete, isolateable position, but in the interconnected web of aspects that mesh it to the environment of other bodies around it, as it exemplifies or mirrors them through the double-articulation of prehension. And therefore 'space' loses its ability to function as an abstract noun and therefore to suggest an absolute space, be it logical or ontological. The object produces space, as space produces the object. 'Space' therefore becomes irreducibly singular. To refer to it in the abstract, all that can be said is that it is anisotropic and heterogeneous.

By this point, we can see that what must be central to a way out of the



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fallacy of misplaced concreteness is the *body* of the perceiver. This is most obvious in the passages from Proust above, whereby the present becomes imbued with past resonances only on the basis of sensuous traces imprinted upon the body of the perceiver. The body therefore becomes, in Proust, the locus of all transcendence of the present here and now reality of perception. The multiple and heterogenous sensations which issue out of each perceived image are multiple only through the durational density of the embodied subject's experience.

In Whitehead, it is clear that the body is central to the difference between falling into the trap of modern abstraction and returning our experience to the *multilocationality* of things. We have noted already that in places Whitehead falls prey to his own trap of abstraction and thinks the perspectivism of the body in terms of something like a simple location. It is now time to emphasise how the body is given ontological primordially by Whitehead. I shall begin this by returning to Whitehead placing emphasis on the perspectivism of the embodied subject.

..note that the idea of simple location has gone. The things which are grasped into a realised unity, here and now, are not the castle, the cloud and the planet simply in themselves; but

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they are the castle, the cloud, and the planet from the standpoint, in space and time, of the prehensive unification. In other words, it is the perspective of the castle over there from the standpoint of the unification here. It is therefore, aspects of the castle, the cloud, and the planet which are grasped into unity here.(Ibid:87)

The locus of prehension, the site of the aspect of the object, is the body, as Whitehead indicates. He writes,

In this sketch of an analysis more concrete than that of the scientific scheme of thought, [a gesture towards a 'poetics' of the event is made available here], I have started from our own psychological field, as it stands for our cognition. I take it for what it claims to be: the self-knowledge of our bodily event. I mean the total event, and not the inspection of the details of the body. This self-knowledge discloses a prehensive unification of modal presences of entities beyond itself (Ibid:91).

As Whitehead implies in this passage, thinking the structure of the thing's availability to perception beyond a one to one mapping between the object and its representation to consciousness, beyond an account of perception



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allied to the metaphysics of simple location, leads to another way of thinking the philosophical structure of perception. This in turn leads to a complete re-evaluation of the ground of all metaphysical thinking. Far from it being time, as an 'auto-effect' of the subject, that allows for transcendence and the opening towards metaphysics, it is *the body*, which produces the beyond of the present. It is through the body of the subject that the present is imbued with difference. It is therefore through the body that the perceived object is most primordially a relational complex. It is the ontological primordially of the body that allows for something like 'synthesis' to be equiprimordial with analysis in the structure of perception. form of being.

The ramifications of this conclusion will need to be drawn out. As we shall uncover in the fourth chapter, it is only through a reworking of what it is to *perceive*, that questions of ontological difference can get resolved. And it is only in terms of re-evaluating the ontological status of the body itself that we can understand perception from the point of view of lived experience.

For the moment, one can say that the body we are referring to is hardly the body as an entity in itself of which we may or may not be aware. To think of 'the body' in this way is to fall yet again into Whitehead's fallacy. Perception, through the body, is not *of* the body itself, but towards what is

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outside, beyond the body. Perception is not therefore a matter of reading the data that modifies the sense organs, it rather involves a relation to the otherness of the Umwelt that displaces any possible 'inspection of the details of the body.' In perceiving the world, my sense of simple location, of being this body here, recedes in favour of a sense of bodily ec-stasis. The body as simply located disappears, becomes absent.<sup>7</sup>

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Having voyaged through Whitehead and, along the way, embellished his thinking in various directions (principally with the help of Proust and Lingis), it is now time to begin to expand upon the *philosophical* implications of going beyond the simple object. As I hinted in the last few paragraphs, Whitehead allows us to realise the reciprocity that lies between ontology and perception, *through* a somatocentric theory. For the moment, this drawing out of implications will be succinct, for, as the next chapter will show, a lack has gathered around the argument as it has developed.

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<sup>7</sup> Drew Leder writes, in "The Absent Body" 'My perceptions are never lived as bare concatenations of sense-data but reveal what is Other, a realm of external objects. If I were to apprehend all perceptual events simply as modifications of my body located within the perceiving organs, I would have no experience of an outer world, and thus, ultimately, even of my own body as a worldly thing. My being-in-the-world depends upon my body's self-effacing transitivity.' (1990: 15) As Alphonso Lingis puts it succinctly, 'From the first, not a patch of color or a pressure but some thing touched the sensibility.' (1994:9)



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The leaf in the garden, the sound of the waves slaking against the town's stony beach: each event of perception, gathering as it does within its moment an environment an ambient framing of things through the ecstatic body of perception, therefore embodies an *immanence*. Environmentality, the transcending yet constitutive context of the moment, *dwells within* what is present. What is present, here and now, expresses this context, this place. And yet, as was shown in the account of the double nature of ecstasis, this in-dwelling gathering of the far in the near has a second moment, that of referring or invoking other times and places. The perceptual event's second moment is therefore that of *transcendence*. This event always refers beyond itself in its present gathering of the world. This 'beyond' is both the beyond of the 'far' as the surrounding environment and as the temporal 'far'.

It is now possible to state that through embodied perception, there occurs an incorporation of *transcendence within immanence*. Each moment of an event of perception is imbued with this double movement whereby what might at first sight be taken as simple present and a simple location is subject to both a gathering and a dehiscence. The event of perception involves a drawing in of the far (Heidegger) and a movement beyond itself in space and in time (Whitehead, Proust, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, Lingis). A phenomenology of the difference of the perceptual event incorporates ecstasis as a

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transcendence within immanence. In this way, the impasse of not being able to think the spatio-temporal schematism that Kant suggests and Heidegger repeats and yet does not resolve will become available.



CHAPTER 3: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SUBJECT

Stay loyal to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! May your bestowing love and your knowledge serve towards the meaning of the earth! Thus I beg and entreat you.

Do not let it fly away from the things of earth and beat with its wings against the eternal walls! Alas, there has always been much virtue that has flown away!

Lead, as I do, the flown-away virtue back to earth - yes, back to body and life: that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning!

Nietzsche "Of the Bestowing Virtue" in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra"(1969:102)

In the previous chapter much work was done to counteract the temperocentrism of "Being and Time" by way of Whitehead's argument against the simple object. A spatio-temporal object was thematised as the percept of the embodied subject. The deficit in this account can now be

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introduced. It is not yet clear how the body relates to what it perceives.

What is required is an account of how a spatio-temporal object produces and is produced by a spatio-temporal *subject*. After the last chapter's theorisation of the work of the object, what is now needed is an examination of the work of the subject.

In order to proceed, we need to understand the problem at hand. The problem is that of *agency*. In the previous chapter, the intimate relation between the subject and a transcendental horizon of time was uncovered. This relation was seen to result inexorably in a subjectivism which the early Heidegger and the early critical Kant could not escape. How then is it possible to think of a subjectivity which does not dominate that which there is to think beyond it? How can immanence be thought in relation to a transcendence which it does not circumscribe or reduce? How do we think about the *work* of a subject that does not work solely within immanence?

In this chapter I will argue that Heidegger's attempts to think beyond the subjectivism of "Being and Time" result in a reconstituted or displaced subjectivity. By examining this failure to think transcendence within immanence, the way ahead will be signalled. Heidegger's failure will be shown to lie in over-valuing what he takes to be forms of transcendence, in



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particular that of architecture and language. I will argue that in a sense, for the post-turn Heidegger, architecture and language do too much *work*. As such, the work of architecture and the work of language will be seen as mere dissimulations of transcendence. They are displaced forms of subjectivity masquerading as transcendence.

In order to counteract the work of an apparent transcendence which silences the agency of the subject, I will have recourse to a distinction between work and *worklessness*. It is in the terms of this distinction that a middle-voiced agency of the subject can be expounded. That is, by thinking the worklessness of the subject, it will be possible to begin understanding how the subject communicates with a world it neither dominates nor is dominated by.

I shall begin this examination of a middle-voiced subjectivity by reviewing theoretically the role of the architect in relation to the design of space and materials. Examining in theory the role of the architect is of use here because it is impossible to access this role without encountering questions of agency: does the architect merely use space and materials to fulfill the ends of the client, or is the architect used by space and materials? Who acts upon whom? The architect's relation to space therefore can act as an

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amplified model for receiving different constructions of how the subject acts in relation to the 'exteriorities' of space and materiality.

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Sylviane Agacinski in her essay "Space and the Work" writes the following,

It follows from these different remarks that the theme of the work is on the side of a thought which seeks to master space, while what, for want of a more satisfactory expression, I have termed the experience of space corresponds to the abandonment by the worker (or the *ouvrier*, the one who opens) of any perspective that strives to transcend the playing of space with itself, or matter with itself, for in that play the opener is already implicated, even undone. This experience of space is also that of worklessness, which is the loss of the essentially expressive aim of the work corresponding to the ambition of subjectivity to impose unity to what it believes to be its own outside, i.e. matter or materials in their spacing. Abandoning this position is in itself a response to thought



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beginning to take account of those experiences and tests of alterity that submerge the subjectivity which thought it could contain the other, both in the sense of enclosing it and restraining it by compression. (Agacinski, 1990:19)

In Agacinski's terms, the subject 'works' by attempting to dominate what it works with. A subjective 'worklessness', on the other hand, would allow the worked its own patterns of being. The attempt to master space through work therefore enacts a closure and erects a boundary against exteriority. Mastering space involves enforcing a form or idea upon its outside. In other words, through 'work', the transcendence of the worked is reduced within the terms of immanence. On the other hand, worklessness signals the attempt to work with things in the world in such a manner that their difference is maintained or not dominated. The worklessness of the subject involves an attempt to think transcendence within immanence.

In architectural discourse, what is being called 'work' involves effacing any difference beyond the idea, as Agacinski remarks of the traditional conception of the architect:

As the one who 'builds in his head', he is the classic model for all makers, planners and designers driven by the idea of

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mastering space and time by effacing the gap between the end  
and the beginning of the work. (Ibid:18)

The end of the work is, in the desire to master space, condensed into its very beginning, for all aspects of the beyond to the idea- materiality, site and perhaps most importantly, time, cannot offer resistance to their inclusion within and appropriation by the idea itself. Materiality beyond the materiality already countenanced within the idea becomes noumenal. The architect never leaves his head.<sup>1</sup>

This model of the role of the architect purely in terms of their relation to the space to be designed can be given a name. The privileging of spatial work over worklessness in architecture is the ground of all *monumentalism*. Monumentalism in architecture has been defined as ‘something stubbornly closed in on itself in accordance with a fixed *arche* and *telos*.’<sup>2</sup> The form or *eidos* is imposed in advance, always prior to the actual building of the building.

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<sup>1</sup>In terms of the history of architecture, the stamping of form upon space, transforming the outside of space in effect into a *tabula rasa*, corresponds to one of the founding tenets of high modernism. Le Corbusier’s work henceforth becomes an interesting subject in terms of the polarity set up between work and worklessness. On the one hand there is a tendency for the ground to be imposed upon space, on the other hand a ‘regional sensitivity’ to local materials and so on engenders a complexity and magic to his buildings perhaps unsurpassed in his wake.



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It is possible to ask at this juncture, “what would take the place of architectural *work*?” The answer to this question is gestured to in Agacinski’s use of the term worklessness. A ‘workless’ building would allow the difference of time, materiality, and in fact all factors of differential variation to interrupt the initial formalism of the blueprint. A workless architecture would emphasise and affirm the ways in which the extra-conceptual affects the process of building. A workless architecture would also be interested in marginalising (at least for a while) the control and mastery of space and building, in order to be more receptive to process, chance and domains of the unpredictable. An example of a development in this direction is suggested by the possible implementation of virtual reality Computer Aided Design packages which are beginning to map the complex properties of different materials. A design process centred around the exploration of materiality would be a form of workless architecture.

I will suggest the possibility of a workless architecture at this point without developing it with any degree of completion. This project cannot be continued, I would argue without the resources of the phenomenology of

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Casey, “The Fate of Place” p312.

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Maurice Merleau-Ponty<sup>3</sup>. For now, let us recognise that with the equation between work and monument we have posed, in architectural terms, the problem of the apriori and the transcendental mentioned in the previous chapter: of the imposition of form upon space. An overemphasis on the formal conditions of experience (and building) precludes the possibility of significant *aposteriori* phenomena. The monumentalism of a formalism that excludes time and materiality in architecture and experience proscribes the possibility of *events* that would transform both. The monumental work of an overarching architectural *eidos* or architectonic proscribes the surprise of the processual.

The problem of transcendentalism in architecture (as monumentality) and philosophy is therefore quite simply this: it reduces the experience and difference of time and materiality to the status of insignificance. Transcendentalism threatens any form of experience that cannot be ordered in advance. It is the suggestion of this thesis that this reduction thereby closes off rich *aposteriori* veins of significance and signification. In this

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<sup>3</sup>David Farrell Krell's recent book "Architecture: Ecstasies of Space, Time, and the Human Body" attempts to begin such a project. He writes "The sentient body..occupies a space that cannot be reduced to the mausoleum of Cartesian geometry. This is the perdurant insight of a thinker who had not yet had sufficient influence on contemporary thinking about architecture - Maurice Merleau-Ponty."(Krell, 1997:7)



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way it is possible to begin a critique of transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology can be seen as refusing important aspects of experience. And the monumentalist ideology at work in traditional practises of architecture would equally be held to foreclose important possibilities of building. It is in order to combat this idealist reductivism that Agacinski contrasts a mastery of space with what she calls the *experience* of space. That is, it would seem to be implicit in Agacinski's distinction that she is gesturing towards a non-transcendental phenomenology. Again, the following question must be taken up and answered during the course of the rest of this thesis: how do we think phenomenology beyond the apriori? How do we avoid falling into a brute empiricism? What must become of the relation between phenomenology and ontology in order to rethink the subject and object according to a spacing of time and temporisation of space - a spatio-temporal schematism?

The aims of this chapter are twofold. The first contention is that thinking the worklessness of space, space's transcendence over the subject, is one of the chief differences at work between pre-turn and post-turn Heidegger. After the early works, in the thirties Heidegger begins to think the

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transcendence and alterity of space. As I shall show, this transcendence is however underscored by another transcendence, that of language, in particular the language of the poet. This does not weaken the argument of this chapter. On the contrary, Heidegger's linguistic turn towards recognising the significance of the poetic <sup>reveals</sup> again his Copernican desire to transcend the subject. I shall argue that the move towards a conception of space beyond the subject becomes present within Heidegger's own thematisations of space, after 'the turn'. Space is no longer produced solely by the spacing of the subject. Heidegger's journey from work to worklessness involves, for example, the move from privileging the *tool*, whose materiality and alterity is always secondary, a ranking ordered implicitly by the episteme of modern technology, to privileging the "strife" relationship between the world of the work and the earth upon which it is grounded. Here alterity and transcendence take centre stage in the withdrawing movement of the earth as it shows itself in the work.

Secondly, after arguing that 'the turning' involves turning away from the transcendental conditioning of the subject towards the subject facing transcendence, I shall argue that Heidegger goes *too far* in thinking transcendence. Going 'too far' towards transcendence always involves a



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dissimulation: a transcendence 'too far' turns out to be another circumscription of the outside by a form of immanence. Heidegger comes closest to rupturing a relation to phenomenology beyond its abandonment in no longer thinking the conditions of subjectivity at all. Or rather, the subjectivity of Dasein is displaced onto another form of subjectivity, the subjectivity of the work- of the building and of language. I will argue that something like an 'ontological monumentalism' holds sway in his post-turn work, whether this be the vertical power of the Greek temple or the power of language naming itself through the poet. Heidegger's desire to abandon the subject and take his leave of phenomenology turns out to result in another form of work being expounded. In other words, Heidegger's desire for what I am calling 'worklessness' is frustrated.

I will argue in contrast that worklessness does *not* imply an evisceration of the work of the subject in the face of the transcendence of things and the world. What is required, in the movement towards thinking the transcendence of the world beyond the subject, is a way of accounting for the *exchange* that takes place between the two. The *aporia* of exchange occurs clearly in Heidegger's readings of Rilke, where, as Michel Haar shows, a chiasmus between the subject and the transcending Outside is read

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against itself in Heidegger as a metaphysical retreat into the invisible interiority of the subject. With Haar, I shall show that there is something much more mutable in Rilke; that the poet evoking the Open becomes the site of an exchange between subject and world. I shall show, in the terminology being developed in this thesis, that Rilke thinks the paradox of ‘transcendence within immanence’.

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To argue in full that Heidegger, after “Being and Time”, becomes increasingly concerned with thinking transcendence, against a Kantian background, would take much work, for which there is not space here. One would have to look in turn at each of the following as figures of transcendence in the later work: the Greek temple, the forest path, the region, the bridge, Earth, dwelling, the Event of appropriation, the speaking of Language. Instead of looking at each of these, I shall focus on just two, that of the Greek temple and Language.

Much of the discussion in secondary texts around the figure of the Greek temple in “The Origin of the Work of Art” centres around the work of the Earth (die Erde). I shall be more concerned here to discuss the



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phenomenological import of the temple itself. That is, I want to develop the relation implicit in Heidegger between the built form of the temple and the bodies that look up to it or dwell within it. I will focus the following discussion in this way because I believe the transcendence at work in this figure is first of all phenomenological. As such, it is possible to determine the relations between transcendence and immanence at work in the figure. For instance, I will claim that the transcendence of the building in terms of its effects and affects on the body involves a certain power over the citizens.

To begin, let us read the first two lines of the two paragraphs from “Der Ursprung” in question.

A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley.(Heidegger, 1993:167)

Heidegger gives us the most minimal context here for imagining the circumstances of the temple. We might well want to ask: is that all there is, a temple in the middle of the valley? Or is the temple in the city, or at its outskirts? If so, why does Heidegger neglect to furnish more context here? Why the absence of, or absence of relation *to* the *πολις*? In not furnishing

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the fullness of the temple's context, Heidegger's thought becomes *apolitical*.<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of the argument here, let us assume that the temple is situated in an urban context. The text continues,

The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. (Ibid)

The assumption of an urban context begins to gather plausibility. Does Heidegger's temple not remind one of that most famous of Greek temples, the Parthenon, sheltering the goddess of the city Athena, high up on the sacred rocky edifice of the Acropolis? In Richard Sennett's book, "Flesh and Stone", a description of an imagined tour through ancient Athens further extends the figure Heidegger is sketching,

Leaving the agora by the Panathenaic Way, however, we would find the land begin to rise again, the route now ascending from the northwest below the walls of the Akropolis, the street culminating at the great entry house to the

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<sup>4</sup>This contrasts with another text written in the same year, the "Introduction to Metaphysics", where Heidegger thinks the polis as the historical place (*Geschichtsstätte*). He writes "To this place and scene of history belong the gods, the temples, the priests, the festivals, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of the people, the army and the fleet."(1959:152)



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Akropolis, the Propylaia. Originally a fortress, by the early classical era the Akropolis hill had become exclusively a religious territory, a sacred preserve above the more diverse life in the agora. Aristotle believed this shift in space also made sense in terms of political changes in the city. In the *Politics*, he wrote, “A citadel [an akropolis] is suitable to oligarchy and one man rule, level ground to democracy.” Aristotle supposed an equal horizontal plane between citizens. Yet the most striking building up on the Akropolis, the Parthenon, declared the glory of the city itself. (Sennett, 1994:37-8)

The temple, although bearing in its position on the citadel the signs of a transcendent rule, of an oligarchy, does not in fact signify in such a way. In sheltering the goddess of the city, the vertical ordering of its height returns itself to the ground, to the ground of all becomings, all projects within the city. The temple never imposes itself as an external ordering upon the city, for the temple is an icon of the city itself. An apparent transcendence, of the temple rising above the horizontal plane, turns out to be the token and symbol of immanence, of a reification of an internal order, in Sennett's

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imaginative reconstruction. The subject is however no longer Dasein but the building as emblem of the city. Therefore, the architectural, symbolic and perhaps ontologico- historical power of the temple, of the Parthenon, was a unificatory one. Hence Heidegger can write a few lines down,

It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all- governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfillment of its vocation.(Heidegger, 1993:167).<sup>5</sup>

The temple is *the* exemplary monument and work, in the terms of the definition given above. The temple gathers the people below by imposing a fixed grounding principle and goal. The temple is the determinative background for all events that subsequently take place within its purview.

The temple is, to borrow a phrase from the following chapter, ‘more ancient

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<sup>5</sup>In the German, the ‘historical people’ is repeated in the following sentence in pronoun form. “Dieses geschichtlichen Volkes” stands, in the English translation, for both ‘historical people’ and the ‘nation’.



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than thought'. But should we follow Heidegger in transferring the terms of a transcendental subjectivity from Dasein to the building? Should we follow him on a path which renders Dasein workless only at the price of installing work beyond the subject, on the rocks above? The suggestion that we should not can be developed in the following way. If we remain with my specification of Heidegger's temple as the Parthenon, this auto-presencing power of the temple to unite and unify the Athenians omits to mention other forces at work in unifying the people. For instance, the discourse of Athenian 'love of city', a love which, expressed erotically as *ερασται*, prescribes a unification of desire and place. As Sennett writes,

This choreography of bodies in love shaped the behaviour appropriate to citizens of Athens. Indeed, in the Funeral Oration, Perikles urged that citizens "should fall in love with" the city, using the erotic term for lovers, *erastai* to express love for the city. Thucydides gave Perikles a phrase to speak here which was common parlance, other Athenians employing the sexual term *erastai* to indicate those who love the city..(Sennett, 1994:50)

In light of the fact that the unification of a people might be achieved by

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various means beyond the monumental, a question arises as to the primacy of discourses and powers at work in the Athenian citizenry's sense of identity.<sup>6</sup> On what basis does Heidegger hold that it is the temple-work which first gathers the historical people circulating around it, for instance the Athenians beneath the Akropolis? Why donate and ascribe such a power to the architectural? Why lend silence to the prescriptive discourses of the day? Is it perhaps that the rustle of discourse can be hidden by being translated into a monumentalist theory of architecture? That the figure of the temple on the hill, which 'in itself' has no necessary unifying power (beyond a phenomenological ordering of a vertical element interrupting the planes of horizontal space) is being given a power beyond itself? For how can a temple resonate order and unity beyond itself outside of the context of discourse, the prescriptions of the day and so on? If we concur with Heidegger's neo-classical romancing of the stone, those subjected to the ordering force of the temple-work can no longer be considered as subjects. They do not resist the work of the temple with an *active synthesis* of their

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<sup>6</sup>Of course, the obvious 'Athenians' discounted here are all those not citizens. As Sennett notes, 'certainly throughout the classical era citizens comprised never more than 15 to 20 percent of the total population, or half the adult male population.' (1994:52)



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own.<sup>7</sup>

We are beginning to uncover the way in which the figure of the temple introduces transcendence into the text. In mentioning only the temple, as the paradigm perhaps of classical greek architecture, Heidegger omits to discuss other greek spaces. Why privilege the vertical space of the sacred, over the horizontal spaces at work below and around it? With Sennett, we can continue to explore the space of the polis, and visit the agora,

Those who could participate found in the agora many discrete and distinct activities occurring at once, rather than sheer chaos. There was religious dancing on the open flat ground, in a part of the agora called the orkhestra; banking took place at tables set out in the sun behind which the bankers sat facing their customers. Athenians celebrated religious rites out in the open, and within sacred ground such as a sanctuary called the “Twelve Gods” located just north of the orkhestra. Dining and dealing, gossiping and religious observance took place in the

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<sup>7</sup> Heidegger is by no means alone in privileging the architectural figure of the temple of Athens. For instance, Le Corbusier writes the following, ‘The Parthenon is, by definition, *the* great monument, meeting-place of all possible nuances. It is a true sculpture and not just a building. The number of ‘optical corrections’ due to its situation on a slope of the Acropolis, and to the intensity of the Attic light, is

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stoas, which in Periklean times lined the west and north sides of the agora..*The evolution of Athenian democracy shaped the surfaces and the volume of the agora, for the movement possible in simultaneous space served participatory democracy well.*[emphasis added here] By strolling from group to group, a person could find out what was happening in the city and discuss it. The open space also invited casual participation in legal cases...In the open space of the agora the Athenians did their most serious political business: ostracism, or sending people into exile from the city...Orthos ruled bodily behaviour in the agora. A citizen sought to walk purposefully and as swiftly as he could through the swirl of other bodies; when he stood still, he made eye contact with strangers. Through such movement, posture, and body language, he sought to radiate personal composure.(Ibid:54-55  
Emphasis added)

The agora then presented itself as the quintessential open space. It served as the paradigmatic exemplification of Aristotle's statement in the "Politics"



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that ‘a city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence.’(Aristotle, 1968:310) In mentioning only the temple, Heidegger neglects to discuss the ways in which different bodies negotiate space, be it just the space of the temple or the space of the temple within the context of the urban. As I shall show in the final chapter, the difference between bodies is deeply significant in terms of the availability of the spaces thereby opened up or closed down.

Within Athens, the agora, as the open space of difference, a place that encompasses both the sacred and the frivolous, the functional and the ‘artistic’, counterbalances the *erastai* at work in the temple, situated not only in space but also in discourse. As the last quote implies in the emphasised sentence, the Athenian bodies shaped the agora itself. The agora is henceforth a *chiasmic* place. The shaping movement in simultaneous space reduces any overarching symbolic power of the agora to that of the *site* for politics, the clearing for negotiation and transformation of the law and so on. In contrast to the temple-work as Heidegger would have it, the agora never transcended the movements and activities in space of those (the citizens) that used it. Rather, the agora occupies a middle ground, between an ordering spatio-ontological and

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phenomenological directive, within which bodies are determined (physically, symbolically and so on), and being wholly determined by those bodies and by discourse. And, to extend the argument, the same could be said of the temple itself, situated in discourse as well as in space.

The temple, as figured in the “The Origin of the Work of Art”, shows, according to my argument, a privileging of the vertical over the horizontal.

In a sense, particularly if we imagine the temple to be placed on a rocky outcrop above the city as in Athens, this accords with an ordering force at work phenomenologically and symbolically in built and urban forms which emphasises the vertical over the horizontal. In this way one could *agree* with Heidegger that the temple’s vertical presence effects and affects the bodies of those wandering beneath it, as mentioned above. Heidegger’s ‘mistake’ or exaggeration is that he ontologises this symbolic and phenomenological ordering for the purposes of constructing a monumental historicity. Prior to this ontologisation, one can develop a phenomenology of the vertical and horizontal along the lines of John Lechte in the following passage,

Thus all forms of representation, symbolisation, signification,  
and homogeneity, all objectification- all transcendent



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elements, we shall say belong to the vertical axis, the axis of hierarchy and form, by contrast, we shall say that formlessness and flows, space without boundaries, the unrepresentable abjective elements- elements which are often immanent in the hierarchy of the vertical axis- these belong to the horizontal axis. Following Bataille, we can also note that, by comparison with the illumination of the vertical axis, the horizontal axis, as the axis of non-objectification, is also the one of obscurity and night, of fate and death, of silence, anonymity and absence.(Lechte, 1992:83)

Lechte is here discussing the work of an Australian landscape painter. His text can nonetheless quite readily be generalised. We see in both Heidegger and Sennett moments which accord with the above schema. For instance the emanating light of the vertical is demonstrated by the way Heidegger stresses the temple's self illumination, as if not dependent upon the shining sun, 'The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, first brings to radiance the light of the day, the

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breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night'.(1993:167-8)<sup>8</sup> In contrast, as a differentiated horizontal field, the agora would have been experienced as a relatively obscure place, where all the differences would have made it much harder to see what was going on. The vertical presence of the temple imposes itself phenomenologically and symbolically upon the body through the eye; its ordering takes place through the ocular register. Only thus can the temple establish itself as apart, as transcendent, as a symbolic imperative to the citizens to love their polis. Moreover, the vertical ascendancy of the built work is seen at a distance. Representation, symbolisation and transcendence therefore take place through the ocular affordance of action at a distance. In contrast, the open space of the agora refuses a purely ocular reading to the bodies of those dwelling, banking, dancing and praying there. The horizontal plane introduces a hapticity, a contact space of proximate relations, denying the ocular power and pleasure of a panoptic survey. In the shadows beneath the temple, the rustle of discourse ebbs and flows with the passage of different bodies.

Readers will have noted, beyond its mention in the passage from Lechte

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<sup>8</sup> A correspondence between verticality and illumination can be found in Vincent Scully's seminal work "The Earth, The Temple and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture", where the Parthenon is described as



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above, the presence of Bataille in the ensuing development of the distinction between the horizontal and the vertical. Before passing on, it is appropriate here to make a short comment on Bataille's relation to built form. Bataille's explicit views on architecture are in a sense a generalisation of Heidegger's (at least during the thirties). In his short piece entitled "Architecture", he argues that *all* building involves monumentality, and all monuments impose power. He writes, "Thus the great monuments are raised up like dikes, opposing the logic of mastery and authority to every troubled element...[Monuments are] the true masters of the entire earth, grouping in their shadow the servile masses....it is under the form of cathedrals and palaces that the Church or State address and impose silence on the masses."<sup>9</sup> As Anthony Vidler writes, "for Bataille, it was the presence of architectural composition itself, underlying all the traditional arts, that signaled authority."<sup>10</sup> This view of Bataille's may seem to some to be overly pessimistic, if not a little paranoid. In response to his claims, I would suggest initially that the spatial figures Bataille has in mind are

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'stretching and glowing' p176.

<sup>9</sup> The translation from the *Oeuvres Completes* was taken from Anthony Vidler's "The Architectural Uncanny".

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Vidler "The Architectural Uncanny" p136.

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works of a transcendental kind. It must be left open how Bataille would respond to the notion and creation of a *workless* architecture, an architecture of the event.<sup>11</sup>

This difference between the vertical axis of ordering, clarity, panoptic pleasure and representation and the horizontal axis of obscurity, of an ocular aporetics, an invisibility, is narrativised in a short text of Michel de Certeau's, where he describes a trip up a skyscraper in New York City,

To be lifted to the summit of the World Trade Center is to be lifted out of the city's grasp. One's body is no longer clasped by the streets that turn and return it according to an anonymous law; nor is it possessed, whether as player or played, by the rumble of so many differences and by the nervousness of New York traffic. When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators...His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching

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<sup>11</sup>Bernard Tschumi's term for what I am calling a "workless architecture" explicitly opposes the monumental. Tschumi calls for and designs "eventmental" architecture. See Tschumi's "Manhattan Transcripts".



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world by which one was “possessed” into a text that lies before one’s eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more..Must one finally fall back into the dark space where crowds move back and forth, crowds that, though visible from on high, are themselves unable to see down below?(de Certeau, 1984:92)

The horizontal axis, of the streets of Manhattan, of the space of the agora, of all those obscure planes that reside below and across the auto-illumination of the vertical, resists the ocular survey of power and knowledge.<sup>12</sup> Below the solar eye of the temple, I contend that Heidegger neglected to tell a story of that which it cannot transcend, the invisible spect-actors within the city. Not only all those not privileged to absorb and repeat the discourse of erastai, the metics, the strangers, the non-citizens, the slaves, but also those citizens moving outside of the unifying discourse of Athena enclosed and sheltered on high- the bankers with their eyes fixed

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<sup>12</sup>Paul Auster, in “The New York Trilogy” plays with the relationship between the horizontal axis of obscurity and a vertical axis of clarity. It is only by switching to a plan view of the pursued’s mysterious routes through Manhattan that the pursuer discovers how the former has been “writing” the city.

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firmly on the client and their backs to the temple, the dancers and merry-makers shaded by the stoas and so on. The temple discourse, rather than the temple-work [Das Tempel-werk], is that which attempts, in each enunciation of its prescriptive, to transcend and order the lives of those who dwell in the city. Each attempt is met with forms of resistance, invisibility. The horizontal.

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I shall now put forward an analogous argument in relation to Heidegger's thinking of language, looking especially again at "The Origins of the Work of Art" and at "..Poetically Man Dwells..". That is, I shall argue that Heidegger over-emphasises the *transcendence* of language in relation to its users. Language therefore becomes the source of worldly immanence. For Heidegger, language marks the productive limits (peras) of the world. Like the Greek temple discussed above, language installs a vertical ordering over the speech acts of those that make poetry of it, such that an active poetic reworking of the name by the poet is denied, just as an active synthesis or spacing by the embodied subject in the polis is denied. As I have just suggested, the transcendence of the subject, from Dasein's work towards the worklessness of space, which in "The Origin" essay slips into a form of



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monumentalism and returns to being a *work*, can be thought more openly in terms of a non-vertical play between the subject and the spaces of the external world. For instance, in the example being used the classical sites of function and multi-functionality of the city-state. In an analogous manner, the worklessness of language, which no one, least of all Heidegger, would deny, leads one away from conceiving of language according to a rationalised functionalism, language as the neutral conduit of data transmission. Language cannot be mastered, cannot therefore be thought of as the object of a transcendental category. Heidegger's error is again to exaggerate the claims of this insight; as I shall show, using and critiqueing Michel Haar, this exaggeration undermines difference within language, and at the same time undermines the expression of difference within language on the part of its users.

Poetry, in particular the work of the 'greats' of modern Germany—Hölderlin, Trakl, George, Rilke, begins, with “The Basic Problems of Phenomenology”<sup>13</sup>, to occupy Heidegger's texts as a question for thinking. Heidegger spends much time attempting to place poetry [*Dichtung*] and

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<sup>13</sup>Poetry begins, in this text, to disrupt the structure of ontic differences, between the *zuhanden* and *vorhanden* of “Being and Time”, with the extract from Rilke's “The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge”

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thinking in relation to each other. To investigate and discuss all the textual sites for this juncture would be a lengthy task, well beyond the scope of this section and the movement of its argument. What I will discuss however is the ontological power Heidegger ascribes to ‘great’ poetry, and try to explain the primordially of its work in the two texts mentioned above. This will lead in to my argument about Heidegger’s conception of poetry involving transcendence.

The claim of the ‘argument’ of “...Poetically Man Dwells...”, is that it is only through poetry that we can dwell. It is *essential* that in order to dwell, one dwells poetically. This relation between dwelling and the poetic is not a side issue for Heidegger, for by this stage in his thinking he holds that Dasein is primordially a placial being, ‘..we are to think of what is called man’s existence by way of the nature of dwelling.’(Heidegger, 1971:215)

Here we note the spatial resistance to a temporal grounding of Dasein. Dasein’s being-towards-death, the limit of its ecstatic temporal character, does not uproot the human from the places in which it dwells, as it does in “Being and Time”.<sup>14</sup> And it is through the language of poetry that this

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and his description of the standing wall of a demolished house.

<sup>14</sup>As Heidegger writes later on in the text, “Only man dies- and indeed continually, so long as he stays on



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resistance to the displacement of time takes place.

Heidegger's first premise is that the possible poetics of dwelling opened by Hölderlin is issued in by thinking language differently. He characterises the prevailing conception as follows, 'there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking, writing and broadcasting of spoken words.'(Ibid) The words that circle the earth's communications systems with ever increasing speed and quantity in the time of the planetary dominance of modern technology do not allow language itself to *say* anything. In Heidegger's view, as man speaks, language recedes into silence. Language, far from being listened to by its speakers, is used solely as a medium of expression. Poetry becomes a redundant, unjustifiable distortion of the telos of an ideal communication within an ideal language. Language is modelled on morse code; it is equivalent to a series of blips and bleaps that convey information. Its materiality and resonance, its play, become aspects of fantasy for the idle.

This idea that language is to be valued insofar as it conveys information takes us far from the essence of what language says, for Heidegger. Just as

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this earth, so long as he dwells."(1971:222)

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the shrinkage of time and space in general in modernity gives the modern subject the illusion that through the apparatus of modern technology one can be *nearer* to the world's worlding<sup>15</sup>, so too the structure of the ideal of perfect communication gives the modern subject the illusion that the epoch of planetary information transfer entails that we live in the time of the zenith of the power of the word. <sup>16</sup>At bottom, the modern conception of language is that it can be reduced to a transparent communicating medium. This conception Heidegger refuses, absolutely,

Human being acts as though he were the shaper and master of language,

while in fact language remains the master of man.(Ibid)

Heidegger thus begins to enact in the text his classic post- turn manoeuvre: of reversing the accepted relation of the transcendental or ontological centrality and dominance of the subject in relation to that which it uses or occupies. He continues,

For strictly, it is language that speaks. Human being speaks when,

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<sup>15</sup>In "The Thing", Heidegger writes, "Yet the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in shortness of distance."(1971:165)

<sup>16</sup>Perhaps Heidegger and Adorno draw no closer than this. In the "Dialectic of Enlightenment", we find the following passage, "the more purely and transparently words communicate what is intended, the more impenetrable they become. The demythologization of language, taken as an element of the whole process of enlightenment, is a relapse into magic." p164



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and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal. Among all the appeals that we human beings, on our part, may help to be voiced, language is the *highest* [emphasis added] and everywhere the first. Language beckons us, at first and then again at the end toward a thing's nature..the responding in which man authentically listens to the appeal of language is that which speaks in the element of poetry.(Ibid:216)

Let us note, without commenting for the moment, the work of the vertical in this passage. Now, in order to advance quickly into the heart of the text, let us ask this question: how does poetry speak the appeal of language? For Heidegger, poetry speaks language in the form of being a *measuring*. This measuring does not accord with the conventions of usage of the word however, it is a '*high* and special kind of measuring.'(Ibid:221-emphasis added). Heidegger insists that poetic measuring therefore cannot be a science. Poetry is a 'strange measure'(Ibid:223), 'certainly not a palpable stick or rod but in truth simpler to handle than they, provided our hands do not abruptly grasp but are guided by gestures befitting the measure here to

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be taken.’(Ibid).<sup>17</sup> Measure conventionally orders the movement from the known to the unknown<sup>18</sup>. In contrast, in Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin, measure refuses to assimilate the measured into the order of the known, or to make equivalences. This refusal is confusingly referred to by Heidegger as ‘the Same’. Measuring as the befitting gesture towards the Same refuses assimilation or equivalence; it measures the measured as *difference*. The Same measures ‘the belonging together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference’(Ibid:218).

But what does poetry measure? Poetry measures the between of the heaven and earth, the *dimension* of the place of dwelling. For Heidegger, great poets are esteemed as mediating between gods and men. Such voices allow the gifts of the sacred to be expressed within the enigma of a speech that is not simply human all too human. One could say therefore that poets occupy the interspace formerly reserved for angels. Poetry is thus an unfolding singing of the ground of human existence; a ground that is less a foundation than an *interplay* between the sky and earth. Poets mediate between the sphere of immanence (what is known) and the transcendent, without

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<sup>17</sup>We shall be reminded of this distinction between grasping and befitting gestures shortly.



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collapsing each into the other. Thenceforth, as the ‘measuring’ of poetry refuses equivalence, both sky and earth manifest themselves as withdrawal or self-concealing. The sky and earth reveal themselves as the Unknown. The poet’s measure taking allows Dasein to place his dwelling between the earth and sky. For instance, not poaching on either, the poet allows architects to remain between. Therefore the words of the poet lay the way for all building upon the ground of existence. Before ontic building and construction of material structures, there must be, for a non-metaphysical existence beyond the current episteme, a primordial poetic building. Only by placing his dwelling *between* earth and sky, between immanence and transcendence, will Dasein be able to build. ‘Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture.’ (Ibid:227)

In spite of the rich enfolding of dwelling within poetry in the text, a curious insufficiency haunts “...Poetically Man Dwells...” The worklessness of poetic measure taking bears the mark of a hesitancy, a lack of determination. It bears the lack of a relation to *naming*. This lacuna can be

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<sup>18</sup> “The Song of the Earth” p224

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expressed in the form of the following question: how do we mark the boundaries of the poet's *work* in terms of the unmasterable worklessness of language? For instance, in discussing the interspace between gods and mortals, a region Heidegger at times refers to as the 'dimension', he writes, 'We leave the nature of the dimension without a name.' (Ibid:220) But how can 'measure', taken in Heidegger's sense, avoid a relation to naming, if this measure-taking is a matter of the call of the poets? Is there not an implicit appeal to poetic naming in the following?:

But the poet calls all the brightness of the sights of the sky and every sound of its courses and breezes into the singing word and there makes them shine and ring. The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed *as* that which conceals itself. (Ibid:225)

In other words, can we understand the poetic agency involved in this passage outside of what poets do with language? It is to other texts that we must look in order to clarify the poetic force of naming in Heidegger's conception of poetry. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger describes how the work sets itself back into the earth and brings the earth forwards into the naming power of the word.



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The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to grow, tones to sing, the word to say. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and luster of metal, into the brightening and darkening of color, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word. (Heidegger, 1993:171)

That into which the work places itself back and what it allows to come forward in this settling back we called the earth. The earth is what comes forward and conceals. It is significant that this double movement does not operate through a sort of unmediated procedure; the initial appearance of a materialism is indeed an initial appearance only. The key to the mediation operating in the terms of the double movement is that of *language*. Heidegger at the end evokes the naming power of the word. As Haar notes this double movement between earth and work must be more primordial in terms of language and poetry than all the rest, for all the others depend upon a prior naming of their appearance.<sup>19</sup> This is confirmed in Heidegger's text "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry":

Afterwards it became clear that poetry is the inaugural naming of being and of the essence of all things - not just any speech, but that particular kind which for the first time brings into the open all that which we then discuss and deal with in ordinary language. (Heidegger, 1949: 307)

Language, in the specific mode of poetic naming, acts therefore as the ground of the emergence of things in the world,

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<sup>19</sup> Op.cit. p113.

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‘..language alone brings beings as beings into the open [die Offene] for the first time.’ (Heidegger, 1993:198) ‘Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. (Ibid). The thing does not exist prior to its being named, as if a Platonic primacy could be ascribed to the “signified”. Poetry has ontological significance in that through its naming power things are *gathered together* and *condensed* into the truth of being.<sup>20</sup> Against Heidegger, I hold that the emergence and appearance of the thing in language and being does not shine forth however with an equivalent self-illumination of the vertical, as with Heidegger’s rhapsody on the temple. Each time the work of the name institutes an entity in the emergence of its being, the thing is called to appear in its self-concealing, *as* self-concealing. Poetry, in naming things in their emergence into the *world*, brings with it at the same time the withdrawal that is the earth, the primordial elementality that resists the lighting movement of the world. But poetry only does this through the work of poets. Thus the poet naming the sky allows the sky to appear as the foreign element, as that which resists being appropriated through the name as that which can be known.

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<sup>20</sup>As Haar notes, “*Dichten* means, etymologically, “to condense”, “to thicken”, “to gather



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However, it is important not to overstate the metaphysical prestige of being a poet. This power of the name does not constitute a *work*, in Agacinski's sense. It is not through the *kraft* of the poet that the name acquires its ontological significance. Naming, or taking measure in poetry does not then refer to the poet's subjective appropriation of the world according to an individuality of expression, according to his or her own *genius*.<sup>21</sup> The calling of the poet is first of all a *listening* to language. In this respect there is much of value in Heidegger's text. Heidegger thinks of this aural sensitivity in his work on Hölderlin as a listening to a primordial speech, an *Ursprache* (Heidegger, 1951:43). In other words, Heidegger privileges the work of the poet without recapitulating upon the poet's 'genius'. Prior to the poem of the poet, language gathers itself in a primordial ordinary poem, the *Urdichtung* of language. Poetry itself, beyond that of which it names, carries with it its own earth, its own domain of silence and withdrawal. For Heidegger, the expression of the poetic word carries with it its own inexpressibility, what he calls language's "saying" and the appeal to listen to it.

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together..”(1943:98)

<sup>21</sup>As Heidegger writes in “The Origin of the Work of Art”, ‘Modern subjectivism, to be sure, immediately

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This Heideggerian account of poeticising, of conceiving the activity of poetry thought in terms of a listening, raises a problem. This problem can be articulated in the following way: how do we actually account for the work of the poet? What does the poet actually *do*, in listening to language?

As Haar asks,

Once again Heidegger says nothing about the “poetic art” or the artistic activity itself, seeming to forget that the poet necessarily *works* with language at the same time as “listening” to it..Following Heidegger, must one believe the poet is a *medium* who writes “under the influence,” as though taking dictation from the sacred?(Haar, 1993:116)

Naming as taking measure, as letting the elements and things be in their emergence as the appearing of that which conceals itself, implies, for Heidegger, that the ground of that which names cannot be the subject in an absolute sense. The poet no longer works, and yet is not workless. Heidegger subjects the relation of dominance between the subject and transcendence to an absolute reversal, as was shown above. Human being is mastered by language, and not the other way round. If anything, the ground

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misinterprets creation, taking it as the sovereign subject’s performance of genius.’(1993:200)



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of naming is the sacred and secret primordial poem of language gathering itself, in a silent waiting for the poet. The naming of the interplay of sky and earth cannot be a naming *of and by the poet*, for then what is named would be measured according to a subjective appropriation, of poetic genius. In Heidegger's view the poet transcends the risk of grasping objectality only by returning that which is named to its earthly source within language. As Haar writes, '[naming] does not come about through a purely human labor but follows from a power of language.' (Ibid).

Heidegger does not, and cannot, according to the reversals that dominate his thinking after the turn, engage with the possibility of the poet's encounter with alterity, with naming as measure taking, outside of a return to the transcendence of language's silent primordial poem. Heidegger cannot think the middle-voiced agency of a worklessness in the present. The poet cannot listen and work with the transcendence of language beyond a return to the *Urdichtung* of language.

Notwithstanding his critical voice, Haar's weaving of Heidegger's thinking with his own (a weaving that is often troublingly seamless) makes it possible to highlight the 'transcendent' nature of Heidegger's post-turn conception of poetry. This transcendence is *bad* in the sense that it

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precludes the differences at work in language and the difference of the poet.

Haar writes,

Poetic speech is not recomposed, reinvigorated, recreated language but language rediscovered in its initial simplicity.(Haar, 1993:117)

Here, Haar pointedly shows Heidegger's thinking of poetry (and his own) in the light of its own conservative agenda. The poet, in naming and letting sing the things of the world in their emergence, must, through resorting to the transcendence of language, go back to its 'initial simplicity'. Here we have the first denial of difference, the denial of the difference that poets make to language through their own difference.<sup>22</sup> Language in the poem cannot be about an encroaching inhabitation of the foreign, a minoritisation of language<sup>23</sup>, for what form of initial simplicity would that be? The transcendence of the silent poem speaks itself as an originary purity. Hence a universality:

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<sup>22</sup>This denial would presumably erase the possibility, for instance in the English language, of evaluating post-colonial literature and poetry.

<sup>23</sup>Here I refer to Deleuze and Guattari's "A THOUSAND PLATEAUS" and the plateau called "November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics", where the relation between the major and minoritisation (of language and in general) is unfolded. They write for instance, 'Minor languages do not exist in themselves: they exist only in relation to a major language and are also investments of that language for the purpose of



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Every poem sings the accord- always the same, always changing- which at each moment traverses being-in-the-world in its entirety, modulating the difference between things and world, between earth and world.(Haar . . ., 1993:114)

Despite the reference to the accord which is both the same and changing, the Heideggerian conception of the poem nonetheless inscribes the historical within itself as the entirety of being-in-the-world. There is no *other* world apart from the one which *suspends* all the other possible significances of the naming power of the word: the world *epoch* (= suspension) inaugurated by the 'great' poet. Thus the second denial of difference, the difference that other poets make to the world, shattering the possibility of a universal *In-der-Welt-sein*. This denial is therefore the denial of poetry thought of as a poetic *πολεμος*, as a naming power always in conflict with itself across difference. Thus Haar can go on to write, in accord with Heidegger,

That things occur in the world, in the one true world, and saying a thing are strictly contemporaneous.(Haar, 1993:117)

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making it minor.' (1988:105)

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This double denial, of the difference that poets can make, recomposing, reinvigorating, recreating, subverting, bastardising and above all *reworking* language, and of the difference of worlds opened up outside of the canon of the 'greats', is at bottom a denial of the presence of conflict in naming the present. The transcendence of language opened up by Heidegger and Haar precisely avoids this conflict by universalising the power of naming through the transcendence of the subject. Thus what is 'strictly contemporaneous' in Haar's sense involves, somewhat paradoxically, an absolute denial of the presence of conflict in the present.

Measuring and naming for Heidegger ultimately reside beyond the subject and the work of the poet in the appropriating reserve of language. This transcendent location of the name fundamentally denies the differences within language and the world, as I have argued. The ground of language, through its relation to *Urdichtung*, turns out to be language itself. The transcendence of the subject, beyond the poet's *work*, leads to the assertion of the primacy of the work of language. On these terms, the transcendence of language (with 'of' here referring to language's property of being transcendent) reveals itself as another form of immanence. Any reference to the difference embodied in the speaker or poet must always be subsumed



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under a pious relation to the work of language itself.

The following question thus presents itself to Heidegger and Haar's conception of the poetic work of language: how can the name name, beyond subjective appropriation working according to a mastery of language, beyond genius, in such a way that the work and difference of the subject is not discounted? The problem with both Heidegger and Haar's thinking concerning the work of poetry is that it is based on an oppositional logic of mastery and subservience. Within the terms of this logic, language must either be mastered by Dasein or master it. But it is possible to question the logic that leads to such a diremptive framework. We begin to ask again after the possibility of *transcendence within immanence*.

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This possibility may be read as an opening within the book "The Plural Event" by Andrew Benjamin. Benjamin wants to think the name beyond representation, beyond that is the name naming without reserve. The name would therefore be conceived beyond signification capture of the signified. This will allow him to open up a different way of thinking judgment, or rather of opening up judgment to the difference of the object.

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The paradigmatic thinker of representational naming for Benjamin is Rene Descartes. Benjamin quotes Descartes in the “Discourse on Method”:

..there being only one truth of each thing, whoever finds it knows as much about it as can be known about it.(Benjamin, 1985:590)

For Descartes, the object can be exhaustively ‘captured’ epistemologically through its representation as an idea. Consequently, judgment of that idea would involve its repetition as the same. Descartes thus claims that the *ding-an-sich* is available as an object of knowledge. Benjamin writes,

The ‘thing’ *qua* object must be - exist - such that it can be represented as itself and where the representation represents it in its entirety.(Ibid:56-56)

Within the terms of Descartes’ nomological ontology, naming the name thus fixes the object in its being. Naming becomes the designated site of the ontological, wherein the becoming of the object itself is refused. Representation (de)limits being.

Despite the epistemological totalisation of the object located in ‘Descartes’s Thing’, Benjamin uncovers with the French philosopher the



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opening to a different form of naming. This comes about because of the importance of *forgetting* and *destruction* in Descartes. Precisely because Descartes hopes to found the representation of the idea on its presence in absolute transparency to the subject, a founding that must actively forget the *given* as the gift of history, a reworking of the implicit destruction of the historical is made available. In other words, Descartes' forgetting and destruction of the given's historical character is used by Benjamin as the basis for the opening to transformation of the given. How the given is given by history is open to be challenged precisely by forgetting that the given is historical. As Benjamin points out,

The significance [of the Cartesian beginning] lies in part in the fact that showing the latter allows for the redemption of the inherent potential of inauguration and destruction via their rearticulation or rethinking within repetition. (Ibid:58)

Using Descartes' notion of forgetting in this way, Benjamin, opens up a new way of forgetting, that of the object presenting itself as complex, non-totalisable, an 'anoriginal heterogeneity' (1993:59). The name's given, the gift of an ontologico-historical designation, is suspended in the present of reworking. Each time the naming of the object takes place, a rupture of the

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ascription of essence imposes itself. This rupture of forgetting opens the object up to the temporality of difference. Henceforth, Benjamin's "anoriginal naming" renders the conflation of naming and being impossible,

And yet the impossibility does not hinder the fact that the name names and in naming designates a specific moment which in never being able to be commensurate with the named allows, nonetheless, for the name's repetition beyond itself.(Ibid:184)

The object's inadequation, disrupting the possibility of representation, leads to a rethinking of ontology itself. Benjamin's ontology of the name therefore opens up the being of becoming, or the becoming of being. Each naming names the object's *event*. A difference thus occurs each time the object is named differently, a difference of naming with the force of a necessity, given the necessary difference of each present of naming. The act and sedimentation of a prior naming (what Benjamin calls the 'pragma') is suspended and opened up to the expropriation of what is to come. The difference thus announced is that of the *ontological difference*. The name whose designation and signification is always in question through each act



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of naming itself is the site of a 'plural event'.

The conflict to appropriate the name is unending and yet the name is always appropriated and therefore inevitably taken over. What this necessity entails is that the difference between the name as taken over and the unending conflict over the name needs to be articulated in terms of two fundamentally different modes of being. In other words what is involved here is ontological difference. (Ibid:185)

For Benjamin, the presence of the object is a moment where what the name names becomes a matter of *conflict*. The name is *reworked* in the present of naming; far from returning to Haar's 'initial simplicity', language becomes the site of πολεμος, an *anoriginal complexity*.

Despite this all too brief survey of 'conflict naming' in "The Plural Event", it should be clear that Benjamin has offered a clear alternative to the Haarian and Heideggerian thinking of the name as outlined in my readings of "...Poetically Man Dwells..." and "The Origin of the Work of Art". The name allows both for the *work* of the writer or thinker or artist at the same time as allowing for the *transcendence* of the name's traditional gift itself. The name does not allude exhaustively to the vertical ordering of language,

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at the same time, the reworked creative act is no longer thought of as a possible act of *genius* emanating from the nocturnal angst of the poet. The name does not refer to the site of a singular essence. The essence becomes *plural*.

But this gesture against what we can call the ‘bad transcendence of the originary’ raises a question: does the ‘conflict name’ open up difference *within the present*, such that the present is complex not only in the sense of it being the site of a reworking, but also in the sense of the occlusions of alterity being at work in the space of the present itself? Is the present differential in terms of the order of co-existence, such that co-existence itself becomes differentiated? Is an ‘anoriginal complexity’ of the ‘event - object’ made available outside of the disruption of a historical tradition, such that the aporias installed against totalisation are worked through the difference of the other? Does the other’s voice interpellate the present naming here in the present, opening up different modes of being-in-the-world for dasein? Does the plural event announce the shattering of the one ‘true world’ beyond the plurality of a differential historicity? Or is the pluralisation of essence merely its complexification through the reworkings and ruptures of each present within a tradition? Can Benjamin account for



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the possibility of impossible worlds conflicting in their naming, such that the difference of the conflict lies beyond an intra-traditional spacing of the present?<sup>24</sup>

Whether or not Benjamin's construal of the plural event can accommodate such contestation in the simultaneous space of the present, I will argue now that it is possible to locate alterity in the naming space of the present not only as an opening but as an *actuality* in Descartes. In the Third Meditation, the idea of the infinite, which Descartes must introduce in order to establish a relation to God, indicates that the finite understanding can

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<sup>24</sup>A path beyond mere intra-traditional conflict naming is explicit in Derek Walcott's poem "Names". The poem describes and affirms a consciousness opposed to the naming power of the colonisers. Below is an extract which exemplifies both the description and the affirmation:

Their memory turned acid  
but the names held;  
Valencia glows  
with the lanterns of oranges,  
Mayaro's  
charred candelabra of cocoa.  
Being men, they could not live  
except they first presumed  
the right of every thing to be a noun.  
The African acquiesced,  
repeated, and changed them.

Listen my children, say:  
*moubain*: the hogplum,  
*cerise*: the wild cherry,  
*baie-la*: the bay,  
with the fresh green voices  
they were once themselves  
in the way the wind bends  
our natural inflections.. (Collected Poems p307)

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‘touch’ the infinite or contemplate it. Here we come across, in explanation in one of his letters, the distinction between *touching* (the befitting gesture) and *grasping* mentioned above,

..just as we can touch a mountain but not put our arms around it. To grasp something is to embrace it in one’s thought; to know something, it suffices to touch it with one’s thought.(Descartes, 1986:32)<sup>25</sup>

One may thus touch the infinite without fully comprehending it. Descartes’ argument in favour of touching the infinite is in fact stronger still. He argues that ‘my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself.’(Ibid:31) That is, all forms of immanence are constituted on the basis of a transcendence they do not circumscribe or reduce.

It does not matter that I do not grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God which I cannot in any way grasp, and perhaps cannot even reach in my thought:

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<sup>25</sup>Here we can see Cezanne’s workless working of Mont St.Victoire for all those years as the avowal of the impossibility of grasping, even if might say along with Merleau-Ponty that Cezanne, rather than touching the mountain with his *understanding*, touched it through the reversibilities of the flesh of the world. This transcendence of the understanding will be discussed in the next chapter.



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for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself. It is enough the I understand the infinite..'(Ibid:32)

In Levinas's words, 'The idea of the infinite consists in grasping the ungraspable while nevertheless guaranteeing its status as ungraspable.'<sup>26</sup> In resisting assimilation into the Same, into Ego or Representation, the alterity of the infinite imposes itself upon me as an interruption of my finitude. One does not so much encounter the infinite as much as be encountered by it.<sup>27</sup> The inadequation of the idea of God reverses the intentional structure of perception. Here we have another form of naming opening itself within Descartes' text, a naming that comes very close to the Heideggerian notion of 'measuring'. The difference would be that Descartes does not renounce, as does Heidegger, the immanence of the subject that names, albeit that the former announces subjectivity in a subdued form of subjectivity: Descartes speaks of the 'darkened intellect.'<sup>(Descartes:36)</sup> As Levinas says, 'Descartes thought that by myself I could account for the sky and the sun

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<sup>26</sup> "Transcendence and Height" (1996:19)

<sup>27</sup> I note in passing that here again, as in the first chapter, we return to a phenomenology of finitude that can replace the subjectivistic Being-towards-Death of the early Heidegger.

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despite all their magnificence.’(Levinas, 1996:15) He refers at this point to the very end of the Third Meditation, where Descartes pauses to contemplate God in the form of the ‘immense light’.

As Levinas will exploit in many of his texts, this opening to the inadequation of the infinite in Descartes, in Levinas’ words the transcendence of the face, allows for a naming of the other which is not simply a naming of *historical* difference. Although the other naming introduces itself necessarily in the form of a *difference in time*, this time may nonetheless be ‘co-existential’, in the sense that the present is the site of other namings outside of ‘the tradition’. Henceforth, the ‘time of the other’ may yet be the present, as the site of the conflict naming of that which is contested across difference. This plural event of the world’s worlding would therefore become open to the minoritisation of language, and, in the English language, a ‘post-colonial’ literature and poetry could be acknowledged as vitally significant. Allowing a specific language to become infinite therefore amounts to allowing it to become different to itself, uncanny, subverted and heterogenously stretched.



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I have drawn together as two instances of transcendence key figures in Heidegger's post-turn work which order the world by a sort of phenomenologico-ontological imposition. Heidegger himself makes the analogy in "The Origin",

The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves...The same holds for the linguistic work..it transforms the people's saying so that now every living word fights the battle, puts up for decision what is holy and unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly, what lofty and what flighty, what master and what slave. (Heidegger, 1993:168-9)

In both cases I have suggested different ways of looking at the same phenomena, ways which counter Heidegger's post-turn proclivity to think beyond subjectivism. This tendency leads, as I have maintained, a displacement of the subject, from Dasein and onto built space and language. The transcendence of Dasein therefore leads to the institution of immanence at a different level. In opposition to this maneuver, I have argued that we can return to the *work* of the subject, that of the haptic resistance of the body beneath the architectural work in the temple figure,

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and that of conflict naming in the case of the poetic work. This work, in being through and through a non-voluntaristic working with the exterior (of spacing, of language) is, to add to Agacinski's terms, a 'subjective worklessness'. Another name for this is transcendence within immanence.

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That Heidegger after his *Kehre* could not think what I term transcendence within immanence is perhaps most evident in his reading of Rilke. To finish this chapter, I will look briefly at how Heidegger reads Rilke as falling back into a metaphysics of privileging the transcendent subject. I agree with Haar that this reading ignores the evident interplay between the subject and object in Rilke. By concurring with Haar, and developing the defence of a 'non-metaphysical' Rilke by naming it as transcendence within immanence, I prepare the way for the arguments to come in the following chapter.

For a full and nuanced argumentation against Heidegger's reading I would recommend going to Haar's text. For brevity's sake here I will refer to just a few lines of Rilke:

*One* space extends through all beings: the inner space of the



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world. The birds fly through us...(Haar, 1984:126)

The basis of Heidegger's misreading for Haar is that wherever and whenever Rilke refers to 'the Open', the 'One space' as above, the 'Heart', 'pure perception' and so on, Heidegger takes the poet to be subjecting a rhapsodisation of nature to an aggrandisating domination by the subject.<sup>28</sup>Rilke's poetry therefore becomes a sort of solipsistic pantheism, if that can be imagined. An appeal to modes of the natural is made, as far as Heidegger is concerned, only in order that Rilke can express his own displaced egologism. For Haar, the fault in this reading lies in the fact that it undervalues the *exteriority* at work in each of the terms. The subject opens onto and englobes a world which, by the very force of its ekstatic transcendence to the subject, disrupts an economy of pure interiority. As

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<sup>28</sup>One of the key argumentative passages against Rilke in Heidegger's corpus is to be found in his text "PARMENIDES", in the eighth section, 'The Significance of dis-closure.' For instance, he writes,

Man comports himself everywhere to objects, ie., to what stands over and against him. This implies man himself is the "subject," the being that, positing itself on itself, disposes of its objects and in that way secures them for itself. Rilke always thinks of man in the modern metaphysical sense. That current metaphysical conception of man is the presupposition for Rilke's poetic attempt to interpret the essence of man in the sense of modern biological metaphysics. Man is the living being that, by way of representation, fastens upon objects and thus looks upon what is objective, and, in looking, orders objects, and in this ordering posits back upon himself the ordered as something mastered, as his possession.(1992:156) We may contrast this passage with what Rilke himself says, at the end of his short prose-piece "Concerning Landscape". He writes, of the development of landscape art, "It tells us, that he [man] is placed amongst things like a thing, infinitely alone, and that all which is common to them both has withdrawn from things and men into the common depth, where the roots of all growth drink." (1967:5)

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Haar writes,

It seems that in the Rilkean heart the antinomy between exterior and interior is not unilaterally entrenched, as Heidegger supposed, by the folding back on absolute interiority; rather, it is confronted and resolved by a new possibility for the I and the world to exchange their roles. Rilke does not celebrate the absorption of the world into the subject but the relativisation, indeed the inversion, of interiority...Far from the I being what absorbs the world, the world itself is endowed with interiority.(Ibid:125)

Haar invites the reader to witness the interpenetration of 'subjective' and 'objective' modes of being in the following lines from "The Spanish Trilogy",

Why must a man stand there like a shepherd,  
so exposed to the excess of influence,  
so much a part of this space full of events

.....

So he arises at night and the cry  
outside of the bird is already in his existence



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and he is emboldened because he has taken  
all the heavens into his face....

and the shadows of clouds  
traversing him as would thoughts that space  
would think for him, slowly.

The outside, nature's exteriority, according to Haar's reading, no longer stands outside the subject as a 'pure exteriority'. The force of this 'no longer' would be the mark of a move beyond the metaphysics of subjectivity. The external world becomes part of the subject's 'affectivity of being.' Here in this phrase I am employing a double genitive: on the one hand exteriority manifests itself as an affect upon the subject's subjective being, on the other hand the interiority of the subject imposes itself upon 'being' as an affectivity. As Haar writes, 'Rilke recognises in the "inside" the characteristics of the "outside", and in the "outside" the powers of an "inside"'.(Haar, 1984:126) Far from Rilke attempting to access the supreme interiority of all poetic experience of nature, as Heidegger's reading suggests, the poet is seen as engaging with the possibility that prior to subjective mastery or the capture into objective being, an experience of the

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world can be opened up whereby both 'subject' and 'object' poles can interchange with one another, at different moments inscribing each within the other. There is not simply a 'one-way movement' from objective being into the subjective. Rather, Rilke probes a moment prior to the cleft, a moment which opens on to an inversion of one into the other. In other words, Rilke's 'Heart' expresses a chiasmic ontology, where Being is differentiated according to a fundamental ambiguity over what is inside and what outside.

Moving beyond Haar's reading, I contend that the reversibility at work in Rilke's poetry occupies all the levels of being. Beyond challenging the inevitability of a metaphysical dualism (precisely against Heidegger's reading), Rilke challenges a fixed conception of a disjunctive relation between space and time. For instance, in his poem "To Music", the obviously temporal nature of music in fact articulates our experience of space itself. The poem opens with

Music: breathing of statues. Perhaps:

silence of paintings. You language where all language

ends. You time

standing vertically on the motion of mortal hearts. (Rilke,



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1982:147)

The temporal art of music announces itself in this elegaic poem as at the same time extra-temporal. Music articulates the space of experience and the experience of space. The deepest “within” of our experience is therefore always already ekstastic, and with the experience of music, the spatio-temporality of this ekstasis is emphasised.

..O you the transformation

of feelings into what? -: into audible landscape.

You stranger: music. You heart space *in* us,

which, rising above us, forces its way out,-

[..]

when the innermost point in us stands

outside, as the most practiced distance, as the other

side of the air:

pure,

boundless,

no longer habitable.

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I have shown, in this short end section, that Rilke, as the poet of reversibility, allows the fixed oppositions between subject and object, space and time, to fold into each other. But we may well ask: across what *medium* does this dual movement take place? What *third kind* interposes itself within ontology, in the manner of the  $\chi\omicron\rho\alpha$  of the Timaeus?<sup>29</sup>

In this thesis, I will suggest that the site of this bridge between subjective and objective being is *the body*. As was shown through Whitehead in the previous chapter, the spatio-temporality of the subject works through an ontology that is thoroughly somatocentric. We experience the flight of the birds not just as an ocular spectacle, but *through the body*. But what can this mean? Haar writes of ‘a fit of passion, of an ekstatic outburst, of “sympathy,” of a fluttering of wings that quivers though and beyond us in a space that gathers and envelops us.’ (Haar, 1984:126) The body is no longer of subjective or objective being. How do we think this third level of being, how do we *place* the body? Should we think of the body as a place itself? Not space, not objectality, but the site prior to subjectivity and objectivity?

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<sup>29</sup>See Plato’s “Timaeus” 49a.



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But then, as “To Music” suggests, an ineradicable temporality, a temporisation of the *within*, inserts itself at the heart of our embodied experience. How do we think this time-space of embodiment?

Beyond the exegesis of the poetical that Haar provides, what is required is a thinking that matches it, a *Denken* to correspond with this *Dichtung*. For Rilke writes as a poet, and with this in mind it would be simply wrong to take issue with or concord with his thinking in purely philosophical terms. Rilke’s language cannot itself be mastered by reducing it within the terms of a philosophical argument. Rilke’s poetry ought not to be thought of as metaphysics by other means, for to reduce it thus would be to destroy its specificity within the German language. It is only by looking at the work of a thinker (whether wittingly or unwittingly) in sympathy with Rilke that we can think the basis of the body as the locus of reversibilities between subject and world. Only then can this inversion be thought phenomenologically. Once more, only then can the reversibility of space into time and time into space achieve conceptual coherence. Can this path lead to a thinking that incorporates phenomenological difference within the present? Transcendence within immanence as a phenomenology of the

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event, of the difference of the event? I turn towards the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Although Merleau-Ponty never (to my knowledge) wrote about or even cited Rilke in his work, the two are first of all entwined through a shared obsession: the work of Cezanne. A text has yet to be written on the philosophical background to this obsession: the phenomenological ontology expressed through the mountains and everyday objects of the French painter's oeuvre.



CHAPTER 4: BETWEEN CLEAR SPACE AND THE NIGHT

The solution of all problems of transcendence is to be sought in the thickness of the pre-objective present, in which we find our bodily being, our social being, and the pre-existence of the world, that is, the starting point of ‘explanations’, in so far as they are legitimate- and at the same time the basis of our freedom.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty “Phenomenology of Perception” p433

No matter how sophisticated the work of ontology may become, the problem it must address will always remain simple. The tradition bequeaths a central paradox that is easy to articulate, across different vocabularies. This chapter will look at key aspects of the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in order to argue that he provides a “solution” to the ontological problem. The solution is quoted, perhaps *sous-rature*, because with Merleau-Ponty’s answer, things do not come to an end. The phenomenological treatment of ontological difference leads not to a full stop, a closure. Rather, it leads to an unfolding.

The central paradox of ontology could be named thus: how do we rest

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between clear space and the night? This poetic formulation will have to wait however. For the moment, let us call it: the paradox of immanence and transcendence. For the nth time, it will be introduced. Dualism produces two modalities of expression, two orders of being. Dualism announces that there is objective and subjective being. Each order or series supports itself as the fundamental, but in so doing displaces the fundamentality of the other. But the other order would always seem to retain the prestige of an equiprimordiality. One can introduce the paradox in the following way: the subject is the locus of knowledge. Yet knowledge purports to be knowledge of a transcendent order, of exteriority. Therefore, both the subject and object are deemed essential to what it is to know. And yet the subjective appears to be ontologically disjunct from the objective. As M.C.Dillon writes,

The sphere of immanence is traditionally conceived as the sphere of interiority, the sphere of conscious life, the sphere of the given insofar as it is given. Transcendence is conceived as exteriority, the universe of things existing in themselves and independent of consciousness. Conceived in these traditional ways, immanence and transcendence are mutually exclusive, and the lines of demarcation between them impermeable.(Dillon,1988:36)



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In order to know, Dillon's 'lines of demarcation' must be crossed. The condition for a valid epistemology is an ontology of conjunction, across the apparent divide of subject and object. Something like an philosophical manifesto emerges from this point: all epistemological questions presuppose an ontological problematic. As Dillon says incisively, 'No epistemology can succeed in mediating what an antecedently adopted ontology has defined as mutually exclusive.' (Ibid.) Transcendental philosophy since Kant has tried to conflate these two concerns; for instance Kant's attempt to fix the ontological distinction between the phenomenon and the noumenon within the epistemological framework of a transcendental empiricism in "The Critique of Pure Reason". The response Merleau-Ponty gives is that questions concerning the conditions of possibility of knowledge must be suspended. Although his early period of writings are permeated with the 'language of consciousness'<sup>1</sup>, as we shall see, this is much more the legacy of the constraints of the tradition than that which is affirmed by the sway of his thought. The question of resolving the paradox of immanence and transcendence must be settled before questions of the form of transcendentality are broached upon. In other words, the conditions of possibility for transcendentality are *ontological*. The transcendental horizon

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase is Dillons.

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of transcendentalism is the question of the shape of the boundary between immanence and transcendence. But then this privileging of the ontological over the epistemological must transform the status of the latter.<sup>2</sup>

The idea implicit in the previous chapter was that Heidegger himself suspended transcendental questioning after ‘the turn’, precisely because he came to see more clearly the confusions at work in Kant’s conflation of ontology and epistemology. After “Being and Time”, Heidegger attempts in his own way to resolve the paradox of immanence and transcendence. I argued that Heidegger’s attempts ultimately privilege the transcendent. But this privilege itself can only work by way of dissimulating its real nature: that of a re-instituted immanence. Therefore, by displacing the work of the subject for the apparent worklessness of architecture, Heidegger actually ends up ascribing another form of work and another form of subjectivity onto building. This is the origin of his monumentalist thinking of architecture. The subject of architecture ends up becoming the architecture of a displaced subjectivity. In this way, Heidegger fails to provide a bridge between subject and object.

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<sup>2</sup> The transformation of epistemology away from a latent or manifest hylomorphism first emerges in Merleau-Ponty’s interest in the figure-ground relation of the Gestalt psychologists. However, one could argue that the privilege of an a priori form of experience over experience itself is inverted by the time of Kant’s second edition, in particular through the introduction of the “Refutation of Idealism”. As Krell reminds us in his book “Architecture” “Heidegger is right to wonder whether *everything* in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* would have to change because of this new emphasis on *outer* sense.” (Krell, 1997:50)



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The previous chapter argued in addition that the same goes for Heidegger's post-turn account of language. By displacing man's mastery of language- the ideology of the nascent age of information, Heidegger ends up ascribing to language a mystical transcendence. But this can only be in actuality another form of subjectivity, another layer of immanence. The evidence for this comes in Heidegger's attempt to declare what poetry refers to. Instead of allowing a space for the *work* of the poet, albeit a work that tarries through mediation, Heidegger brings in a 'silent poetry' of language itself. In other words, Heidegger's post-turn thinking of language brings us to the very brink of a linguistic immanence.

Put in this light, I suggested that Heidegger's attempt to solve the paradox of ontology refuses to think the body. In discussing the work of architecture, the ambulant body of the spectator is not referred to. This is a very strange and significant omission, considering that architecture has no work beyond those whose bodies come into contact with it or within the sway of its visibility. In his account of language, on the other hand, Heidegger seems unable to think the work of the poet- a work that must always involve a mediation through the embodiment of difference. Moreover, Heidegger's emphasis on the event of language would seem to distance the relation between language and embodied being-in-the-world.

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How then can the paradox of ontology be resolved? Up until this point, immanence and transcendence have been considered as oppositional poles that must be 'bridged'. The bridges offered by Heidegger, of the work of architecture and language, merely re-institute the paradox at another level. Instead of an oppositional relationship between the human subject and its outside, post-turn Heidegger leads us to an oppositional relationship between architecture, language and their outsides. The difference is that in the latter case, the outsides are silenced. We do not hear from those subjected to architecture. And we do not hear from those subjected to language. We are left wanting another set of bridges to a reconstituted set of outsides.

As I shall show, Merleau-Ponty radically transforms our approach to the paradox of ontology. He argues that immanence and transcendence are not oppositional modes of being that need to be bridged in order for us to know. The subject and the object are, in fact, co-implicatory orders of being. For Merleau-Ponty, the sphere of immanence does not require and yet oppose the transcendent. On the contrary, the sphere of immanence can only constitute itself on the basis of an inter-involvement with the transcendent, and vice versa. Far from requiring a 'bridge', in Merleau-Ponty's thought a precessive intertwining between subject and world demands that we articulate its nature. We do not need to search for or invent a bridge- say in



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architecture, art or language, for there is no water to cross.

It is clear that such a solution would radically transform how we think ontology. But on what basis can we begin to implement such a transformation? What is it that always already precedes the frantic search for a bridge, that makes the water disappear?

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In the preface to his “Phenomenology of Perception”, Merleau-Ponty states his indebtedness to and difference from the phenomenology of Husserl. The key statement is the following

The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:xiv)

The phenomenological or transcendental reduction to the sphere of immanence must remain incomplete. Husserlian phenomenology suffers from the same flawed attempt at ontological reduction as the critical philosophy of Kant. It is impossible to reduce the transcendent world into the eidetic evidence of essential meaning without ontological remainder. Immanence *suggests* transcendence and must be thought at least in part on

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its terms.

But how is transcendence suggested? What is the ontological remainder that reminds us of the impossibility of a reduction of the transcendent world into noematic essences?

For Merleau-Ponty, immanence cannot reduce transcendence (and therefore act as its ground- another form of displacing ontology) because immanence is always already constituted through a relation to the transcendent. In his thought, the nature of this precessive constitution arises out of *the embodied nature of subjectivity*. The subject cannot eviscerate itself of all transcendent contents because those contents are elements constitutive of subjectivity.

Before going into detail on how the embodied nature of subjectivity entails that transcendence and immanence presuppose each other in the “Phenomenology of Perception” and Merleau-Ponty’s later works, I would like to draw a series of analogies between the philosophical significance of Merleau-Ponty’s ontology and that of Plato’s ontology in the “Timaeus”. This will, I hope, provide initial clarification of what I take to be the import of Merleau-Ponty’s work. I contend that in the history of western philosophy, only Plato and Merleau-Ponty have ‘resolved’ the ontological paradox of transcendence and immanence. Fortunately, in the case of the



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latter, important recent work has contributed to an appreciation of the profound significance of Merleau-Ponty's ontology.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Plato, perhaps only Jacques Derrida's reading of the text begins to allude to the ontological significance at work.<sup>4</sup>

The key ontological shift at work in the "Timaeus" takes place with the introduction of the notion of the Receptacle of Becoming, which Plato also calls "Chora". Prior to its introduction, Plato's cosmology was constituted by the oppositional poles of the Ideal or intelligible and the material. In the beginning, the text therefore operates on the basis of a ontological disjunction between Being and Becoming. Chora, as becoming's receptacle, fits into neither the Ideal or the material. It is what Plato calls a *triton generis*, a 'third kind' of being. Chora allows the relation between Being and Becoming to take place. Chora therefore suggests itself as the most primordial ontological register, displacing the privilege previously accorded to Being. Plato is careful to maintain this displacement; for Chora is not to be subsequently reinscribed *within* the order of Being or Becoming. Chora therefore allows Being and Becoming to take place, without thereby being

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<sup>3</sup> Here I am referring principally to Dillon's important first monograph on Merleau-Ponty, "Merleau-Ponty's Ontology".

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Derrida's essay "Khora" in "On the Name". Whilst being a highly important essay contributing to an understanding of the difference between the crude aberrations of Platonism and the subtlety of the original, Derrida however reduces Plato's text to an abyssal series of displacements. The ontological significance of *chora* is not given sufficient treatment.

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placed within either. Chora therefore operates as an originary palimpsest; a surface for being that does not get rewritten *as* Being.

We do not begin, so to speak, with the Ideal, with the Platonic forms, with the geometric Ideal that orders platonism and its residues in Spinoza's method and beyond. Nor do we begin with the materiality of the things themselves. We do not find ourselves in the panic of displacement caused by not knowing which side of the river we must place ourselves. It is not a question of privileging the one or the other, or the One or the Many. The search for a bridge has forgotten that it begins by already assuming the value of oppositionality. The brief ontological interlude that is Plato's thinking of Chora suggests another founding value: that of a third space of becoming.

The history of metaphysics has always been apt to forget this suggestion of a third space beyond oppositionality, even if a counter tradition can be assembled which attempts to remain in relation to it.<sup>5</sup> This is understandable, given the brevity and enigmatic formulation accorded to Chora in Plato's text. If we read Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment as fulfilling the same ontological space as Chora, we can for the first time begin to see the power of Plato's suggestion. Moreover, we see Merleau-Ponty's work as the

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<sup>5</sup> The compendium compiled by Shmuel Sambursky "The Concept of Place in late Neoplatonism" is the most significant attempt to furnish such a counter-tradition.



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response to an enigmatic suggestion not adequately addressed since its being written.

When one re-reads the “Phenomenology of Perception” with the third kind of the Chora in mind, the way in which Merleau-Ponty thinks embodiment in such proximately similar terms seems uncanny. Perhaps beyond Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and the Gestalt Psychologists, Merleau-Ponty was most fundamentally, in that text, in dialogue with the “Timaeus”.

The first reference to a third space in the “Phenomenology of Perception” comes in the context of a discussion of the figure-ground relation of the Gestalt psychologists. The figure-ground relation can be regarded as an analogon to the hermeneutic circle. Just as the latter is in essence an insight into the virtuous circularity at work between interpreting parts of a text in light of the con-text of either the text itself or the corpus of texts (an oeuvre), so the figure-ground relation expresses the inter-involvement and mutual implication of the parts and wholes of perception. An object within my visual field only makes sense in terms of the background or context within which it is situated. But, conversely, the background or context signifies only on the basis of the object-figures which configure it. Merleau-Ponty’s

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point is that the figure-ground relation of the Gestalt psychologists involves a tertiary ontology,

As far as spatiality is concerned, and this alone interests us at the moment, one's own body is the third term, always tacitly understood, in the figure-background structure, and every figure stands out against the double horizon of external and bodily space. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:101)

The palimpsestical nature of the body manifests itself here; for the body-as-third-term is 'always tacitly understood.' The body does not reveal itself, in ordinary perception, as either of the order of a figure or as con-text. The body acts as a horizon for the appearance of the figure-ground relation, but does not get reinscribed within either series. The body is the horizon of both, as chora 'acts' as horizon to the Ideal and the Actual. The body is not objective. Merleau-Ponty writes that the patient observed is 'conscious of his bodily space as the matrix of his habitual action, but not as an objective setting; his body is at his disposal as a means of ingress into a familiar surrounding, but not as the means of expression of a gratuitous and free spatial thought.'(Ibid:104) In this case, the patient reveals how under 'normal' conditions of embodiment we are not aware of our body as a physical entity like other entities in the world.



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It is crucial to understand that Merleau-Ponty makes a clear-cut distinction between the 'third space' of embodiment and a common-sense understanding of the body as a worldly entity. As always in the work under consideration, Merleau-Ponty's language varies from section to section and within sections, as the author struggles to break his thought out from the legacies of a hegemonic dualism that resides within the language of philosophy. In the section entitled "Space", he writes

What counts for the orientation of the spectacle is not my body as it in fact is, as a thing in objective space, but as a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenal 'place' defined by its task and situation.(Ibid:250)

Between the Ideal and the Actual, Merleau-Ponty expresses the third space as *virtual*. We look back to the "Timaeus" once again as the first articulation of the possible as a non-Ideal, non-Actual virtuality. Chora becomes the horizon of possibility for all subsequent oppositionalities. Oppositionalities that necessarily disavow their relation to the seat of Being and Becoming in order to valorise disjunction. It would be wrong however to consider Chora as a *transcendental* horizon. Chora is not the horizon of possibility for all *knowledge*. Rather, Chora occupies a space prior to all epistemic concerns -

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an ontological space.

A little further on in the text, Merleau-Ponty marks the distinction anew. Embodiment is ‘not that momentary body which is the instrument of my personal choices and which fastens upon this or that world, but the system of anonymous ‘functions’ which draw every particular focus into a general project.’(Ibid:254). The virtual, third-space body is therefore not ‘simply located’ in space and time. Merleau-Ponty’s incarnation of internal time-consciousness releases the body from an analytic capture within the present. The embodied subject projects itself from the space-time of the present, ecstatically across the *stretch* of time.

The residual language of consciousness tempts Merleau-Ponty into reworking one of its key terms. He asks, ‘Does not the experience of space provide a basis for its unity by means of an *entirely different kind of synthesis?*’(Ibid:244-emphasis added). The suggestion of thinking ‘synthesis’ anew occurs at different locations throughout the work.<sup>6</sup> These references jostle for linguistic hegemony with an emergent and contestive vocabulary, outside of dualism.

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<sup>6</sup> Note however that Merleau-Ponty argues against the use of the word ‘synthesis’ as a way of accessing the primordial in other parts of the book. He argues that we cannot use the word ‘since a synthesis presupposes, or at least, like the Kantian synthesis, posits discrete terms..’(Merleau-Ponty,1962:265) Eleven pages later in the English translation, at the end of the long footnote on Bergson, Merleau-Ponty prefers the word ‘synopsis’.



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First, the body is thematised as a kind of place, 'My body is the place [le lieu] or rather the very actuality of the phenomenon of expression..' (Ibid:235 translation modified) A formulation that lies in tension with the body's virtualisation 15 pages further on. Then, Merleau-Ponty develops the textural metaphor, 'My body is the fabric [le texture commune] into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'. (Ibid) It is possible to highlight moments in the text where Merleau-Ponty begins to develop a language for the third term that leaves behind completely the Kantian/transcendental framework. For instance, he writes,

We cannot understand, therefore, the experience of space either in terms of the consideration of contents or of that of some pure unifying activity; we are confronted with that third spatiality towards which we pointed a little while ago, which is neither that of things in space, nor that of spatializing space, and which, on this account, evades the Kantian analysis and is presupposed by it. We need an absolute within the sphere of the relative...(Ibid:248)

Those moments where Merleau-Ponty discusses his ontology of embodiment

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in relation to the valorization of disjunction that must always privilege analysis in spite of attentions put upon synthesis are those points where the new vocabulary installs itself. At the furthest from dualistic language and the transcendental framework, Merleau-Ponty writes

Now the body is essentially an expressive space...But our body is not merely one expressive space among the rest, for that is simply the constituted body. It is the origin of the rest, expressive movement itself, that which causes them to begin to exist as things, under our hands and eyes.(Ibid:146)

In this light, it is possible to see more clearly why it has taken so long to begin to comprehend the ontological significance of chora. Chora 'operates' as that which *places* Being and Becoming. Chora therefore resembles a proto-place. And yet, Plato's ontological rigour demands that chora is not installed as another place. We are left with the enigma of a relation between an ontologically primordial proto-place and that which it places, a relation that has no name, that resists thematisation. Although Merleau-Ponty likewise introduces a third term into ontology, his notion of a 'synthesis' (which is not a synthesis) involves a difference. Put simply, Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment introduces *movement*, as synthesis, or as the motility



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essential to the *third space*. The consequences of this innovation are essential. The time-space and space-time of the body inscribes Being and Becoming within history. Instead of an atemporal precessive cosmology (Chora), the receptacle of the body that moves through space and time, opening things up to themselves across its horizon, allows us to think tertiary ontology's relation to temporisation. Things reveal themselves only upon the 'double horizon' of the context and the body. But this possibility of manifestation is not *purely spatial*. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of motility demonstrates the irreducibly inter-articulated, interwoven nature of space and time:

By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and, moreover, time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actively assumes them, it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplaces of established situations.(Ibid:102)

I will show in a moment in more detail how the phenomenology of motility advances upon the "Timaeus" suggestion of a 'third term' in ontology because of its relation to time. Just before that, I want to discuss a passage

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from the “Phenomenology of Perception” on the body-as-third-space. This will allow me to develop a final correspondence between chora and Merleau-Ponty’s ontology. This passage shows Merleau-Ponty at the edge of an absolute break from the transcendental framework of all previous phenomenology. The ‘absolute break’ comes when one questions the *reference* of this body-as-third-space. Does it just refer to individual human bodies? Or does ‘the body’ refer, like chora, to that which installs the poles of being and becoming in a more general sense? The early Merleau-Ponty retains transcendental-ism, in most cases even when his language strays away from the conventions of its articulation, by limiting the pre-personal third-space body to that of individual human bodies. In that case, the corporeal schema, the ‘I-can’ that *incorporates* the Kantian ‘I-think’, thereby always retaining a latent transcendentalistic inflection. In this quote however, Merleau-Ponty for once begins to *loosen* the equivalence between the third-space of embodiment and that which manifests itself subsequently as this or that physical body. He writes,

The body is our general medium for having a world. (Ibid:146)

Here the anonymity of ‘the body’ is extended beyond being merely ‘pre-personal’. The body does not automatically refer here to the body *of the*



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*subject*. And the notion of a ‘general medium’ suggests that an ontology of the middle term, no longer thought of as a *bridge between opposites*, but rather as a ‘chiasm’, has emerged. Nonetheless, the plural pronoun suggests a community, and the verb suggests a possession, both of which act to reinscribe the thought of the sentence within the terms of transcendentalism. To see what is meant here, I will contrast the previous quote with a similar passage in the late, unfinished work, “The Visible and the Invisible”. Here, Merleau-Ponty writes,

We must not think the flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit- for then it would be the union of contradictories- but we must think it, as we said, as an element, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being.(Merleau-Ponty,1968:147)

The substitution of the ‘flesh’ (*la chair*) for the body, from the “Phenomenology of Perception” to “The Visible and the Invisible” marks the complete break in Merleau-Ponty’s thought away from the language of consciousness, from the traces of dualistic ontology, and from the framework of Kant’s Critical thought. In the latter stages of this chapter, I will delve further into the non-transcendental ontology of the late Merleau-

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Ponty. For the moment, I will return to one last correspondence between chora and the third space of the body.

As Derrida notes in his essay, the nomological substitutions of chora demonstrate that in fact it has no name. Each naming of chora, as ‘receptacle of becoming’, as ‘the nurse’, ‘the midwife’, as ‘the sieve’, as ‘the virgin wax’, and each of the form of its traces in the text- the ideal society whose children are not owned by their parents, the ‘bastard logic’ of the language of chora and so on, demonstrate that the chora cannot be fixed through a proper name. Chora is anonymous. This anonymity is entirely consistent with chora’s un-inscribable position *prior* to Being and Becoming, *situating* both but not *situated* by either.

Although Merleau-Ponty cannot completely separate the third space of the body from a formulation in terms of its conditions of possibility, embodiment itself likewise remains anonymous. Here it is possible to mark a strong affinity across the centuries, an affinity born by excavating a precessive ‘bastard logic’. A logic that elides possession, and thereby lets each name for it slip away.

My personal existence must be the resumption of a prepersonal tradition. There is, therefore, another subject beneath me, for



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whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it. This captive or natural spirit is my body, not that momentary body which is the instrument of my personal choices and which fastens upon this or that world, but the system of anonymous 'functions' which draw every particular focus into a general project...(Merleau-Ponty,1962:254)

The physical body that comes after the virtual, 'synthesising' body is that which can lay claim to possession, both of itself and of entities in the world. The body of experience on the other hand does not possess itself. One does not 'have' a body, in the most primordial layer of experience. Rather, one 'inabits' the body (Ibid:139)

In a remarkable dense poetic text entitled "Genesis", it is possible to read Michel Serres as making the same comparison between chora and the body that I have been making. For Serres, the body is that which underlies and inscribes within itself (without being thereby inscripted) all subsequent signification. The body therefore becomes the fulcrum of a forgotten fundamental ontology, giving place to signification. As such, thinking the body becomes a way of deconstructing a privilege recently given to the sign. Serres is also sharply aware that the 'body' being referred to, as a third kind

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of being, is not at all to be equated with the physical body. This body operates as a spatio-temporal schematism, the condition of possibility for worldly existence. *As* spatio-temporal, the body in a sense is always a *dancing* body:

All come to dance in order to read without speaking, to understand without language. They are all, nowadays, so exhausted, so saturated, so hagridden with discourse, language, writing. In the end fugitive meaning passes through there, taciturn.

The dancer's body is the Platonic *Chora*, the virgin wax on which one writes, pure location or pure place or naked space.(Serres, 1995:40)

One can read Serres here as saying that every-body is a dancing body. That is, it is just through the spatio-temporal agency of the motile being that 'writing' takes place. One can only write or express on the basis of a body which transforms meaning itself. And as the dancing body is constantly keeping meaning within play, this meaning becomes an expression only of the present, and as such, fugitive. I shall return to the dancing body shortly.

Before I move on to examining how Merleau-Ponty develops this 'third-



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space' of the body, I will summarise the points of correspondence and difference between his notion of embodiment in "Phenomenology of Perception" and the chora of "Timaeus":

- 1) Chora and Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment both displace dualistic ontology with the introduction of a 'third term'.
- 2) The 'third term' is not however functioning as a 'bridge' between ontologically disjunct orders of Being. Rather, the third term is the primordial conjoint origin of those orders. Merleau-Ponty will later call this conjoint origin the 'chiasm', the 'intertwining' (*entrelacs*).
- 3) The body introduces movement across space and time into the ontological conjunction. As such, the third term inscribes time. Chora remains enigmatic because it does not. The body is the locus for a spatio-temporal schematism (the goal of thinking opened up after reading Heidegger's "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics" in the second chapter, in light of the first chapter's critical reading of "Being and Time" section 70). In Serres' words, the body is the *dancing* body.
- 4) The body, at least in the "Phenomenology of Perception" remains quasi-transcendental. It remains a form of subjectivism, even though it functions as the 'pre-personal'. Chora is not. The flesh of the Merleau-

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Ponty's later work is in this sense closer to the a-subjectivity of chora.

- 5) Chora and the body are anonymous. Serres says, 'Whoever thinks is naked and whoever dances is nobody.' (Ibid:45)

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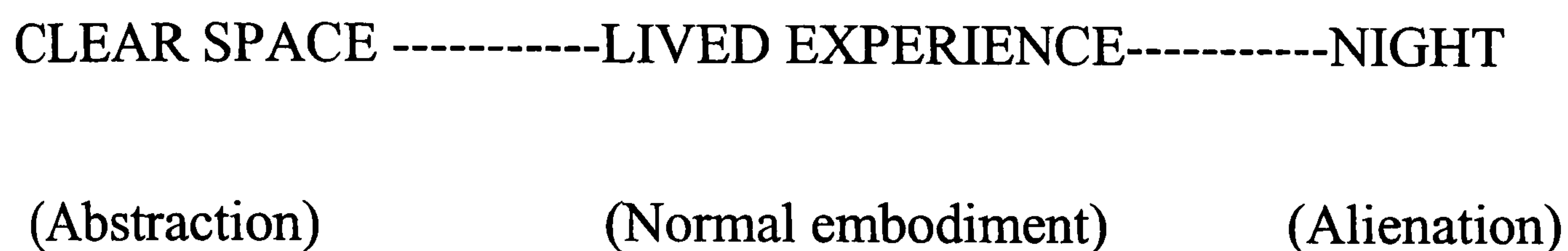
By taking Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment as preceding the spheres of subjective and objective being, the paradox of transcendence and immanence is resolved by challenging a primordial ontological disjunction. The body answers to a transcendence *within* immanence. Transcendence is chiasmically intertwined with immanence, not opposed to it. This intertwining always originates in the body of experience. I shall now examine in more detail the notion of embodiment at work in the "Phenomenology of Perception", in order to show how the body performs this chiasm between subjectivity and world.

Instead of going into detailed exegesis of the text, I will reinforce and exaggerate an implicit schema within the text itself. This will allow the reader to have a clear overarching framework in which to position the 'how' of the body as third term. I contend that in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment, the lived experience of the 'normal' body contrasts with two modes that lie at its extremes. These two modes are that of abstraction on



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the one hand, and alienation on the other. It is possible to see the lived experience of the ‘normal’ body as occupying the middle position along a continuum between abstraction and alienation. This relation may be diagrammed as follows:



Although the spaces of the body are always more complex than this diagram suggests, I will continue with its development in order to show how the nature of space changes when it is grounded in the normal lived experience of the body.<sup>7</sup> I will begin by examining the nature of clear space and its relation to the norm, then I will look at the figure of the night. Finally, I shall broach upon what takes place between clear space and the night.

Clear space in the “Phenomenology of Perception” is the space of classical geometry. It is the space of the ‘simple object’ (of Chapter two). Objects are posited in space, and are measured according to their breadth and height.

Their third dimension, depth, is merely an equivalent dimension. That is to

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<sup>7</sup> In the final section of this chapter I will begin to deconstruct the normativity that runs throughout the text. In terms of the complexity gestured towards by Merleau-Ponty, let us note that he writes, ‘The description

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say, depth can be considered as either breadth or height turned through 90 degrees.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the three axes of measurement have no intrinsic orientational or phenomenological value; they do not designate an ‘up’, ‘across’ or ‘distance’. Objects in clear space therefore have no relation to the body as ground, to the earth or the sky. They have no relation to themselves across time except in terms of the *logic* of identity. Objects in clear space receive their paradigmatic form when represented as objects from the vantage-less perspective of the axonometric grid. The object is projected axonometrically, such that the most distant façade appears as no more distant than that which is closest. The object has no background or context from which it appears. It resembles an in-itself, a self-contained transparency of being. Clear space is ‘clear’ precisely because there is no real ‘depth’, no real *position* or *perspective* upon things. There are just objects, in a neutral space, all equally available for representation. Merleau-Ponty describes clear space as ‘that impartial space in which all objects are equally important and enjoy the same right to existence..’(Merleau-Ponty,1962:287).

Merleau-Ponty argues that philosophy, when concerned with the problem of

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of human space could be developed indefinitely.’(Merleau-Ponty,1962:287)

<sup>8</sup> On page 255 Merleau-Ponty reminds us of Berkeley’s famous definition of depth as ‘breadth seen from the side.’



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the 'perception of space', has restricted itself solely to examining how we come to experience the space of objects. It has not, that is, sought to question the *primacy* of this level of experience. No-one would doubt, least of all Merleau-Ponty, that we do often experience our bodies and the entities that surround it as objects that approximate to the geometric idealities of clear space. Moreover, no-one would want to refute the legitimacy of the axioms of classical geometry, for the least reason of their efficacy. However, Merleau-Ponty is concerned to show that up until this point, the philosophical enquiry into the perception of space has not been grounded in the body of experience. To counter this argument, he argues that classical geometry must be grounded in the proto-geometry and rationality of embodiment.

The traditional problem of the perception of space and perception generally must be reintegrated into a vaster problem. To ask how one can, in an explicit act, determine spatial relationships and objects with their 'properties', is to ask a second order question, to give as primary an act which appears only against the background of an already familiar world, to admit that one has not yet become conscious of the experience of the world. In the natural attitude, I do not have

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*perceptions*, I do not posit this object as beside that one, along with their objective relationships, I have a flow of experiences which imply and explain each other both simultaneously and successively. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 280-281)

If clear space refers to bodies as equivalent to discrete objects, a reification of the exterior such that it threatens to reinstitute itself as fundamental reality (as with Whitehead's 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness'<sup>9</sup>), Merleau-Ponty's 'night' constitutes a reification of interiority. The subject can no longer rationalise the distance between itself and the world. The subject loses its sense of self and becomes possessed by that which lies in front. Merleau-Ponty's description of night is one of the most lyrical of the entire work and is worth quoting at length,

This is what happens in the night. Night is not an object before me; it enwraps me and infiltrates through all my senses, stifling my recollections and almost destroying my personal identity. I am no longer withdrawn into my perceptual look-out from which I watch the outlines of objects moving by at a distance. Night has no outlines; it is itself in contact with me and its unity is the mystical unity of the *mana*. Even shouts or a distant light



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people it only vaguely, and then it comes to life in its entirety; it is pure depth without foreground or background, without surfaces and without any distance separating it from me. All space for the reflecting mind is sustained by thinking which relates its parts to each other, but in this case the thinking starts from nowhere. On the contrary, it is from the heart of nocturnal space that I become united with it. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:283)

In this passage Merleau-Ponty holds that a collapse of boundaries between self and world results from an interiorisation. However, the solipsism of the night is not ‘purely subjective’. Interiorisation is not an act of the subject. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty shows that this phrase does not make any sense, *unless* it is figured in terms of an absolute immersion in the world, to the limits of a subjective evisceration. In the night, the world immerses itself in the subject more than the subject immerses itself in the world. The subject announces the night in the passive voice. And at this point we encounter the uncanny liminal asymptote of a rigorously solipsistic logic: that an absolute interiority cannot be distinguished from an absolute exteriority. That Heidegger did not follow this logic to its limits is his greatest error in his reading of Rilke mentioned in the previous chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter two.

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I will summarise clear space and the night in poetic terms:

Clear Space: alienation of being. Copernicus at the limit. No centre of being, no more gravity. No vestige of home. No centre. De-centered from being de-centered. No space for the body -for *somapsyche* - the soul of the body squeezed out, strung out. Infinite, cold space. The nihil of the Axonometric.....

The Night: closing down of limits - an infinity intrudes absolutely. Even the stars oppress. No distance, no space to breathe. No arc of respiratory joy. Inspiration and expiration cancel each other out as the boundary between the outside and the inside collapses in a metaphysical autism.

Between clear space and the night lies the rational experience of space; a space not so distant from things in the world as to imbue them with an exteriorising neutrality- making them into objects. But then again a space that avoids collapsing the gap between the embodied subject and its midst, plunging the subject into the confusion of the night. This 'rational space' is the perceptual delimitation of an optimum vantage point. It is that point whereby the skyscraper neither teeters above us with a reversed vertigo, nor loses its awesome proportions through distance. It is the interval that allows for an exchange between the near and far, such that figure and ground can



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make sense in terms of each other. In contrast, clear space involves an abstract objectality, a derivation upon a primordial experience of space.

The night, on the other hand, is *not another derivation*. The above quote provides a clue in this respect. The reference to a 'pure depth' above shows that what Merleau-Ponty calls the night is the *origin* of our embodied experience. Merleau-Ponty continually stresses that any clarity of spatial experience is itself dependent upon a generalised spatiality of depth that threatens to absolve the subject of all individuality. He writes that 'Clear space..is not only surrounded, but also thoroughly permeated by another spatiality thrown into relief by morbid deviations from the normal.'(Ibid:287) Night, as the space of schizophrenia and other forms of insanity, is at the same time the general medium from out of which emerges the sense of things held apart from the subject. Merleau-Ponty therefore provides a theory of insanity which is thoroughly spatial.<sup>10</sup>

What is this maddening 'pure depth' (*la profondeur pure*) that is at the origin of all experience of space? If we remind ourselves of the equivalence between the three axes of geometric clear space and how this compares with

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<sup>10</sup> 'What protects the sane man against delirium or hallucination, is not his critical powers, but the structure of his space: objects remain before him, keeping their distance..What brings about both hallucinations and myths is a shrinkage in the space directly experienced, a rooting of things in our body, the overwhelming proximity of the object, the oneness of man and the world, which is, not indeed abolished, but repressed by everyday perception or by objective thought, and which philosophical consciousness

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‘lived space’, it is possible to begin answering this question. The difference between clear space and the space of embodied experience is one of *depth*.

Merleau-Ponty outlines the demands of the enquiry,

..we have to rediscover beneath depth as a relation between things or even between planes, which is objectified depth detached from experience and transformed into breadth, a primordial depth, which confers upon the other its significance, and which is the thickness of a medium devoid of any thing.(Ibid:266)

Again, we are forced to ask: what is this primordial depth? The kernel of an answer was already developed in the second chapter’s examination of Whitehead’s notion of simple location and the thesis of complex location- the ‘event of perception’, which he developed in response. I contend that Merleau-Ponty’s notion of depth refers to the spatio-temporal complexity at work in each act of perception. When we perceive an object, we only derivatively perceive the object on its own, in abstraction. Typically, the object can only be understood in terms of the double horizon of its context and the embodied position of the perceiver. This double horizon is always already temporal- therefore the object presented to us refers to itself and its

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rediscovers.’(Merleau-Ponty,1962:291)



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relation to context, and also to other contexts and objects, across time.<sup>11</sup> Each act of perception of an object involves the presentation of a façade of its being, a partial manifestation. But, by co-implication, the object is presented in plenitudinality. Unlike Husserl's account however, the co-implication of depth in Merleau-Ponty involves other objects, as the loci of other possible positions of perception.<sup>12</sup> Merleau-Ponty holds that 'When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can 'see'..' (Ibid:68). Depth therefore is the implication of plenitudinality of the object, a fullness of being which is latent within the partiality of its manifestation.

This being simultaneously present in experiences which are nevertheless mutually exclusive, this implication of one in the other, this contraction into one perceptual act of a whole possible process, constitutes the originality of depth. It is the dimension in which things or elements of things envelop each other, whereas breadth and height are the dimensions in which

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<sup>11</sup> The object presents itself as an image open to multiplicity- as Proust declares in the quotation on page 134. The presentation of an image, always already complex, can be the opening to a *delire* of the writer. Merleau-Ponty enters into a similar sort of delirium in discussing red in "The Intertwining" chapter of "The Visible and the Invisible". See p132.

<sup>12</sup>See Husserl's "Cartesian Meditations", especially the 3rd and 4th meditations.

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they are juxtaposed.(Ibid:265)

Our primordial experience of 'objects' is one of co-implication, of inter-involvement and an interweaving of beings. With a phenomenology of depth, the surface of beings revealed through the narrow limitations of perspective, a potential unbearable lightness of being, is filled through the monadological device of the other. The two-dimensionality of being merely a point in the visual field is enriched by spaces for the other - loci that surmount the occlusions of situatedness. The other is always elsewhere *in space*, guaranteeing that this surface has its concomitant depth. It does not matter that the other is only a chimney, a wall, or a table, that is possible perspective enough.

The delirium at the heart of pure depth is that of the loss of self. The intertwining between things in space threatens the subject's ability to achieve distance from the world. To change metaphor, the monadological surface of mirrors threatens to confuse the gap between the self and its infinite reflections elsewhere in the universe. The monadological mirror sends a shiver of indistinguishability through the core of the subject's space. Depth is, to repeat, 'the thickness of a medium devoid of any thing.'(Ibid:266). Pure depth, the intertwining of being, emerges in the night.



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The night introduces insanity as the origin of our embodied experience. Merleau-Ponty makes it a condition of embodied being-in-the-world that its possibility occurs only on the basis of the risk of the subject-world gap collapsing. At the limit of our embodied existence, depth opens experience to the delirium of an Undifferentiation. Our embodied subjectivity occurs on the ground of a pre-personal anonymity of being. Another name for this is depth, a depth that always originates through an undifferentiation of being. This intertwining of depth will later be named as 'flesh' [la chair] in "The Visible and the Invisible". The earlier work shows that the pure primordial depth, being of nocturnal origin, is always already a space of insanity. The embodied subject-world relation emerges out of the thickness of this undifferentiated medium. The flesh too will therefore perdure as the space of insanity, or the insanity of space.

The desire for certainty in philosophy has found two divergent but parallel articulations- that of empiricism and intellectualism. The former valorises the object of experience, and in so doing opens itself to the skepticism of an incapacity to provide the grounds for a connection between this object and the transcendent thing. The latter esteems the subject of experience, but by reducing experience to the sphere of immanence, obtains certainty at the

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price of there being no transcendent measure of truth and falsity.<sup>13</sup> By thematising the night as the core of our emergent experience, Merleau-Ponty is implicitly resisting another philosophical formulation of certainty. Our experience of the world, an experience that always implies maintaining a distance vulnerable to collapse or over-extension, cannot thereby be certain. Merleau-Ponty writes that ‘If myths, dreams and illusion are to be possible, the apparent and the real must remain ambiguous in the subject as in the object.’(Ibid:294) How then do we establish a relation to the opacity of transcendent things, and to the uncertainty of all our experience, without giving in to a generalised skepticism? Merleau-Ponty’s answer in “Phenomenology of Perception”, an answer which is developed into the subheading for an entire section by the time of “The Visible and the Invisible”, is that we have *perceptual faith*.<sup>14</sup> It is only through perceptual faith that the interval between clear space and the night is maintained. Knowledge of the world, as has by now been established, is guaranteed only by the ontological inter-involvement of transcendence and immanence. However, Merleau-Ponty’s situation of the origin of the rational experience in space on the basis of a distancing from the night of indefinitely ramifying

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<sup>13</sup> In making this comparison between intellectualism and empiricism I am grateful to M.C.Dillon for the lucid first two chapters of his book “Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology”.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Perceiving is pinning one’s faith, at a stroke, in a whole future of experiences, and doing so in a present which never strictly guarantees the future; it is placing one’s belief in a world.’(Merleau-Ponty,1962:297)



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co-implication, the distancing of perceptual faith, raises a question: how is rationality maintained? Or, put another way, whence perceptual faith?

I shall not venture answers to these difficult questions here. However, what can be said is that the linear security of the diagram above must be complexified. The night is the core of the emergence of depth. From this 'primordial' depth emerges a depth at work in rational experience: a depth between clear space and the night. And again, at the outer extreme, depth empties itself of all existential content, becomes neutral, in clear space.

Having established the fragility of the lived experience of space for the 'rational' subject, we can now develop some of the main themes of embodiment Merleau-Ponty introduces in the "Phenomenology of Perception".

The body is, for Merleau-Ponty, a precessively orientated being. The body therefore is that diagram of capacities to act towards and in the world in certain ways.<sup>15</sup> These capacities are wrought through a combination of the corporeal practices at work in the body's grounding culture- its *habitus*, and the physiological limits of the body itself. Whenever an embodied subject

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<sup>15</sup> Feminist commentators on Merleau-Ponty such as Iris Marion Young have criticised the functionalism of his notion of the 'I can', comparing it to an embodied female 'I cannot' (see her essay "Throwing Like a Girl"). These criticisms, while valid and opening up his thought to difference, do not however challenge his work itself as a resource for thinking. See also, for a critique of Merleau-Ponty's functionalism, Alphonso

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intends to act, it does so subsequently only on the basis of a postural or *corporeal schema*<sup>16</sup> It acts in this or that action on the basis of a predispositional matrix of ways of occupying and dealing with the world.

The world, on the other hand, is not merely the pointless grid of clear space. The ontological remainder of a transcendental reduction is that of a space that is always already directed. Beyond the incorporated intentionality of the subject, the world offers itself through the directives of what we might call a 'worldly intentionality'.<sup>17</sup> The precessive space of the world suggest ways of embodied negotiation of it. As Merleau-Ponty writes,

Generally speaking, our perception would not comprise either outlines, figures, backgrounds or objects, and would consequently not be perception of anything, or indeed exist at all, if the subject of perception were not this gaze which takes a grip upon things only in so far as they have a general direction..since every conceivable being is related either directly or indirectly to the perceived world, and since the perceived world is grasped only in terms of direction, we

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Lingis' paper "Phantom Equator".

<sup>16</sup> In the *Phenomenology*, see especially pp 137-142.

<sup>17</sup> It is by emphasising the directives of space itself that we can approach the work of the sculptor Anish Kapoor. His 'objects' suggest forms of comportment towards them (rather than vice versa). Kapoor can be seen to be revamping a sculptural motif first developed by James Turrel in the 1970's.



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cannot dissociate being from orientated being..(Ibid:253)

The 'primordial encounter with being'(p252) therefore is the site of exchange, the interplay of a double intentionality, that of the subject and world. The body directs itself towards and within the world on the basis of the patternings of habit. The world in its turn suggests directions of orientation for that body.

However, within the account thus far set up, it is not possible to account for the genesis of either embodiment or world. This is the task now before us.

The primordial encounter with being is the site of origin. The most significant insight of the whole of the "Phenomenology of Perception" is found on page 254 of the translation, where the interchange and exchange between body and world takes the notion of origin in a new direction for thinking. I shall now examine this insight in detail.

On a naïve level, the body acquires the patternings of a postural schema through the embodied cultural practices of its grounding places, its habitus. The place of the ground is therefore taken to be a uni-directional linear causality. The origin of a particular set of cultural practices happened once and once only. In this way the origins of a culture take on the semblance of occurring in an immemorial time, and of being the authentic foundations of

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the beginning. These embodied practices get taken up by the child and repeated.

This model of repetition is rejected by Merleau-Ponty, and the rejection is given its most emphatic statement on this page. We will continue with the quote given a few pages ago, where, it will be recalled, Merleau-Ponty distinguished the momentary body from the anonymous body-as-function gathering every particular focus into a general project.

Nor does this blind adherence to the world, this prejudice in favour of being, occur only at the beginning of my life. It endows every subsequent perception of space with its meaning, and it is resumed at every instant. Space and perception generally represent, at the core of the subject, the fact of his birth, the perpetual contribution of his bodily being, a communication with the world more ancient than thought.(Ibid:254)

In the French, the last sentence from this extract reads, ‘une communication avec le monde plus vielle que la pensée.’ The “vielle” here is ambiguous; it could be read in the sense of “ancient” or “old”, at the same time however, it could be read in the sense of “previous to” or “prior to”. Through this



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ambiguity in the French language, Merleau-Ponty is able to convey how the given is saturated with the past, such that at each moment of the encounter with the given (which itself is of course historically constituted at and through each moment), all of the past is at stake, from the immemorial mythic foundations to the most recent transformations.

The double intentionality of the subject's exchange with the world, of a transcendence within immanence, therefore constructs the origin *within the terms of the present*. For Merleau-Ponty, the origin does not reside within an untouchable immemoriality, rather it is taken up anew in each communication between the body and world. The origin of culture therefore is transformed from a simple repetition to a repetition of difference. *The origin of culture is founded upon the difference of the embodied subject in the present*. 'Culture', the place or site of grounding for a set of specific practices for bodily being, is constructed around the transformative difference of the present. In Merleau-Ponty's thinking therefore, the questions of who is the subject, and who the object, who is the agent and what is being acted upon get completely enmeshed within each other. The embodied subject is at the same time the locus for the transmission and transformation of culture. At one and the same time, it is possible therefore to see the agent as an individual *and* as the way in which a cultural horizon

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articulates itself in the terms of the present. The “Phenomenology of Perception” is replete with an inchoate reversibility. The embodied subject therefore acts within the terms of a cultural horizon, and yet is acted upon by that horizon.

Returning to Serres’ figure of the dancer may be helpful at this moment. He writes,

The more I dance, the more I am naked, absent, a calculation and a number. Dance is to the body proper what exercise of thought is to the subject known as I. The more I dance, the less I am me. If I dance something, I am that something or I signify it. When I dance, I am only the blank body of the sign. The sign is a transparency that tends towards its designation. The dancer, like the thinker, is an arrow pointing elsewhere. He shows something else, he makes it exist, he makes an absent world descend into presence. He must thus himself be absent. The body of the dancer is the body of the possible, blank, naked, nonexistent. (Serres, 1995:39-40)

Serres is clear that subjectivity is questioned once the ontological priority of the choric dancing body is brought into play. An individualist or



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psychologistic reading of a dancing body (and by this, we can assume once again that any body is a dancing body) forecloses the communication with a world that is essential to all embodied movement. Through motility, the individualism of a 'subject' alone, suspended from history, disappears. Henceforth, the more I dance, the less I am I. The dancing subject embodies a world that is given and to be transformed, *through* movement, through the dance. Dancing the body discloses history and being as transformable potentialities, within the motile arcs of the present. And this transformability always thereby points 'elsewhere' - to a future whose course is about to be reworked, in the present. The reworking of the future, for Serres as for Merleau-Ponty, is settled in the present, as a descent from the virtual to the actual. And this reworking takes place both within *and* beyond the ambit of the subject, as a transcendence within immanence of the anonymous agent. The dancing body is a *spect-actor*, a body that is both witness to transformation and its agent.<sup>18</sup>

To continue with this Serresian trope, with each step, the dancer alters not only their relation to the tradition of dance to which they belong, but they also transform that tradition itself. Again, I am employing 'dance' in the widest sense possible, as demarcating patternings determining the intentional

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<sup>18</sup>By using the word 'spect-actor' I am referring to the important work of the radical Brazilian 'playwright',

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arcs of motile being. But the nature of the double-intentionality has profound ontological implications for the subject itself. *The origin of embodied subjectivity is founded within the difference of the present.* The ontological core of embodied subjectivity, the being of its identity, is constructed around difference. The body's motility, its movement through time and space, a pattern of gestures and postures of being, only takes place on the ground of habitus. But this ground only offers itself through being reworked in the present. In this way, Merleau-Ponty offers us the most profound ontology of the relation between history and embodiment,

In every focusing movement my body unites present, past and future, it secretes time, or rather it becomes that location in nature where, for the first time, events, instead of pushing each other into the realm of being, project round the present a double horizon of past and future and acquire a historical orientation..My body takes possession of time; it brings into existence a past and a future for a present; it is not a thing, but creates time instead of submitting to it..(Ibid:240)<sup>19</sup>

The subject's primordial encounter with the world is mutually

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Augusto Boal. See his book, "Games for actors and non-actors."

<sup>19</sup> For a parallel account in terms of embodied memory, see Merleau-Ponty's lecture "The problem of sleep,



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transformative. The ground of embodiment, the practices of a culture, is a ground itself based upon the difference of repetition. This repetition is the transformation enacted through the bodies which incorporate that ground in the space-time of the present. Cultures and the beings that embody it do not alter themselves across time through a difference that is in some sense external. Rather, the shifts and movements of culture are enacted through the most intimate ontological exchange. This exchange, Merleau-Ponty is clear, is pre-representational. Neither corporeal ambition nor the directives of the world transform each other most primordially within consciousness. The foundations of our identity as embodied beings is structured by a pre-personal repetition enacted only through difference. Transformation and the opening up of history and tradition takes place in obscurity, an activity of the *dusk*. And the gravity of this exchange is also clearly marked: history and the future are not dead concerns beyond the reach of the embodied subject, they are on the contrary the very means by which that subject takes up the world.

In this sense, we arrive at a significant insight into the nature of freedom. Freedom becomes, under this reading of Merleau-Ponty, the possibility to transform the cultural horizons given to one. Freedom is freedom to act

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the unconscious and memory” in “The Paris Lectures”

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within the terms of the historical patternings and habitus, in such a way that this action can now express itself according to the difference of the present. Freedom is therefore not a simple voluntarism. Nor must we dismiss freedom for the sake of an extreme historicism (such as Foucault's for example).<sup>20</sup> Freedom is essentially about *agency*, and the most fundamental form of agency is that of the body expressing its world (of corporeal traces and conditionings) in the present. The difference of the present ensures that the body must act to transform its givens, or else suffer the fate of no longer being an agent, of being less of a historical being. History therefore stops becoming an external fate that descends upon all whose destiny it is to have been born into its time. The historical is most primordially the expression of the body's truth in the present of its being; all other forms of 'history' are derivative upon this. As we shall see in the next chapter, the conditions which allow for freedom are not however always dependent upon the 'spectator' themselves. The corporeal schema of agency, of a possibility of communicating with a world prior to thought, can itself be blocked, through the other.

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<sup>20</sup>I am referring to Foucault's notion that history works through the body by imprinting itself upon it- as if the body was incapable of agency and resistance to a hegemonic inscription. For instance, in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", he writes, 'Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.' (Foucault, 1984:83)



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But before we can begin to discuss this, we must understand how freedom is put at risk by fragility of the space of rational existence in general. As was shown above, the sanity and rationality of a spacing between the subject and world is permeated by the possibility of the night, a possibility that may fulfill itself as either pathological or as a momentary hallucination. The obscurity of communication between subject and world is but a few shades away from an all-encompassing night. If we gather this possibility in light of this communication, we must conclude that the emergence of an embodied identity occurs on the cusp of insanity. Our embodied subjectivity transforms the world through a faith that battles with the possibility of a collapse into con-fusion.

This threatening lack of distance has implications for the relation between the body and time. The fusion between subject and world that is the mark of a nocturnal ontology puts us at risk of losing our status as *historical beings*. In the night, we lose our relation to the movements of our body whereby what is past and what is future gets renegotiated. An extrapolation of Merleau-Ponty's thinking of the night and what I have called the 'dusk' of an ancient communication is therefore that those lost in dreams or the pathologies of a medium without thickness no longer occupy the space-time of the transformative present. Here we may picture the sidestepping of

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history by the drunk, in confused conversation with himself, pointing at phantom interlocutors. His confused steps are out of time with the steps of history, and he goes by unnoticed in the shadows of time. Again, as the following chapter will show, it is through the other that a denial of historical agency (and this last phrase by now should appear as tautologous) is often wrought, through the violence of the gaze.

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I will now turn to the later work “The Visible and the Invisible” in order to argue that the relations outlined above between the body, subjectivity, space, time and history are not radically altered by the time of the late work. The difference this work introduces is rather that of a *de-centering* of the subject, to the extent that the quasi-transcendentalism of the earlier work is absolutely foreclosed. In terms of the radical notion of origin developed above however, the later work does not offer a different approach. In both cases, a phenomenology of the present is offered which is at the same time an ontology of difference within repetition.

The key notion introduced into “The Visible and the Invisible” is the concept of *reversibility*. The other innovations in vocabulary- the ‘chiasm’, ‘intertwining’, ‘flesh’, all are developments of this founding term.



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'Introduced' has to be taken with the caveat that its operation was implicitly present within the "Phenomenology of Perception". It is an essential aspect of embodiment in that first work that the embodied subject is able to perceive only because their embodiment is both immanent and transcendent. Our perception opens out onto the world only because our bodily being is the ground of both our status as subjects and our visibility as 'objects' in the world. As the phenomenologist writes, 'I apprehend my body as subject-object, as capable of 'seeing' and 'suffering'' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:95) With this in mind, the notion of reversibility is simple to introduce. Instead of founding ontology with a disjunctive relation between the subject and the object, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodied being grounds ontology in an intertwining of both. What is 'subjective' is always already of the object, and vice versa. The concept of reversibility enables us to follow more clearly the explicit work of this pre-dualistic ontology.

In the later work, the transcendence within immanence of embodiment, the crux of its reversibility, is modelled on the perception of touch. The hand that touches the other hand, or that touches another object, can only do so if it can at the same time be touched. The only possibility of avoiding this outcome is if the touching hand is insensate, if the nerve endings which enable the sensation of touch have been disabled in some way. But then,

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touching with a set of numb fingers is hardly *touching* at all! Under normal circumstances, my touching the other at the same time involves my being touched. The status of the ‘at the same time’ however is crucial. Merleau-Ponty argues that there is never simultaneity with reversibility; the touching of one hand by the other is not at the same time reversible. There is always a gap, an *ecart*, between touching/being touched and its reverse.

In the case of other modes of perception, the reversibility thesis works by extension. For example, I am able to see objects in the world only given the fact that my eyes are located in my body, and that vision requires a motile body that only sees through a sort of ‘embodied dialogue’ with the seen. Furthermore, the seen is at the most merely a surface, a partial percept, if the act of perception is limited to the analytics of a subject-percept relation. The “Phenomenology of Perception” showed, through the resources of Gestalt Psychology, that perception requires the horizon of a ground upon which the percept is situated, in order that the percept be comprehended. In that earlier work, Merleau-Ponty argued that in addition to this, the perceptual field gives the percept ‘depth’ on the basis of the surrounding objects occupying roles as other possible positions for perception. The co-implication of a background and a terrain of other possible views, across time as well as space, furnish the surface of the percept with a plenitude and a relation to its



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environs it would not otherwise have. In terms of the later work, the visual field of perception therefore works only on the basis of this field being potentially occupiable by the embodied subject, *reversing* roles with surrounding objects.

The notion of reversibility in “The Visible and the Invisible” occupies many levels of conceptuality. For example, beyond being the ontological prerequisite for perception, it enables us to understand the complex nature of percepts. The object perceived is not first of all this colour and this size and this shape and this form of movement, as if objects acquire the gravity of ontological status by *addition* of qualities. Rather, the object’s colour and so on are dependent upon all its other qualities. Only on the basis of its texture is this coat this shade of red.<sup>21</sup> Reversibility therefore enables us to understand the implicit ontology of the ‘style of being’ that appears in the earlier work.<sup>22</sup> A pre-representational synaesthesia works through the object, an internal horizon of co-dependent qualia that is the ground of its unity. The advancement the later text makes if any is in underlining the background of repetition within immanence at work in the object’s *style of being*. Just as the embodied subject takes up its matrix of compartments only by

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<sup>21</sup> In the delirium of his discussion of red things mentioned above, Merleau-Ponty writes ‘And its red literally is not the same as it appears in one constellation or the other..’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, 132)

<sup>22</sup> See the “Phenomenology of Perception”, p327.

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transforming the habitus of their ground, so too the object's gathering or embodying of sensory qualia only occurs through transformation of the 'given' of those qualia. Hence Merleau-Ponty describes each incarnation of red as 'a punctuation in the field of red things'. Previously, on the same page, he returns to the textural metaphor employed in the earlier book. He writes

..this red is what it is only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation, or with other colours it dominates or that repel it. In short, it is a certain node in the woof of the simultaneous and the successive. It is a concretion of visibility, it is not an atom. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968:132)

The "Phenomenology of Perception" contains all the motifs of the later work, if only implicitly, in the case of certain concepts. The radical introduction of a 'third kind' in ontology is the cause of all of the tension of the earlier work, which is half written in the wake of the transcendental language of perception and consciousness, and half written in a language beyond dualism. The disturbance of this triadic ontology is resolved more fully in the later work, which succeeds in abandoning most of the traditional



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vocabulary of ontology in introducing its own.

The primordial pre-personality and anonymity of the embodied subject in the “Phenomenology of Perception” leads to the origination of identity in the miasma of the night. Identity is always already threatened on the basis of that which founds it. In the earlier work, this threat is undermined or reduced to an extent by the competency of the ‘rational’ subject- the subject who can maintain a distance from the night. It is a matter of uncertainty whether one can name the implicit ontology of this work as a reversion to monism. This is because rationality and sanity occur by standing *apart* from their ground. Although not posited in an acosmic space, the embodied subject attains rationality through a distancing whose ontological status is unclear.

In “The Visible and the Invisible” however, this unclarity is resolved. Reversibility is not maintained through a reversion to a subjectivity that resists a collapse into the monism of the night only through an embodied competency of being. The quasi-transcendental ‘I can’ drops out in the final unfinished work, leaving no ontological ambiguity. The implications of cutting out the transcendental ‘I can’ are clear: no ontological separation can be fixed between what is ‘subject’ and what is ‘object’. The thesis of reversibility maintains, as an explicit treatment of what was already implicit

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in the earlier work, that the object thoroughly interpenetrates the subject and the subject thoroughly interpenetrates the object.

There are two stages in unfolding the ontological implications of the reversibility thesis beyond this:

- 1) Merleau-Ponty writes, ‘..between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the things.’(Merleau-Ponty,1968:123) From the point of view of *my body*, I can no longer determine what is *my own* in terms of the separation of subject and world. Authenticity, ownness, *jemeinigkeit*, are all annulled by reversibility. Merleau-Ponty therefore has taken the phenomenology of ekstasis to its logical conclusion: my embodied projection towards the world is the primordial layer of worldhood available to me. This projection does not overlay a previously existing world, rather this projection is the very means by which we inhabit the world, and the very means by which we can say that the world inhabits us. By this stage, Merleau-Ponty has become the thinker to match and support the poet of reversibility discussed at the end of the previous chapter: Rilke. The interpenetration of the ‘outside’, of the perception of



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nature, with an alleged interiority leads to the poetic installation of the ambiguity of reversibility. All reference to the 'personal' in Rilke, the 'heart', the 'Open', the 'pure perception' and so on, are not, as Heidegger believed, a recapitulation within a grand metaphysical subjectivity. Rather, the Rilkean interior always leads itself to the outside according to a poetically and conceptually rigorous transcendence within immanence. As with our fingers tracing the 'surface' of the mobius strip, the Rilkean inside leads inexorably towards its outside.

- 2) But this limitation to the personal itself is no longer tied to an implicit resistance to monism grounded within quasi-transcendentality. The transcendental privilege of the 'I' is no longer maintained. The primordially of depth, renamed as 'flesh' or 'wild being' *displaces* any residual privilege ascribed to the subject. Instead however of a reversion to a Kantian double-aspect theory or to a psycho-physical parallelism, Merleau-Ponty's reversibility thesis plays an ontologically more primordial role. Again, as was stressed at the outset of the chapter, an ontological clefting is derivative upon an originary conjunction. The embodied subject's relation to the world is reversible to the extent that the two poles of the relation are ontologically equiprimordial. In Heideggerian parlance, the twofoldedness of immanence and

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transcendence is at the same time a onefoldedness. Flesh is, ontologically, an 'absolute within the sphere of the relative.' But, given the reversibility of (1) above, the separation or spacing between subject and world is an *intertwining* gap. It guarantees therefore that the possessive is no longer absolutely fixable. We uncover a deeper level of anonymity to that of the "Phenomenology of Perception"; a nomological ambiguity over what is addressed as 'subject' and what is named as 'world.' Henceforth, the equiprimordiality between subject and world holds only for a subject and world that themselves are reversible.

In a key passage of chapter 4, "The Intertwining", Merleau-Ponty condenses the twofold explication of the ontology of reversibility into one dense passage, which is worth quoting in full,

If the body is one sole body in its two phases, it incorporates into itself the whole of the sensible and with the same movement incorporates itself into a "Sensible in itself." We have to reject the age-old assumptions that put the body in the world and the seer in the body, or, conversely, the world and the body in the seer as in a box. Where are we to put the limit between the body and the world, since the world is flesh?..The



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world seen is not “in” my body, and my body is not “in” the visible world ultimately: as flesh applied to a flesh, the world neither surrounds it nor is surrounded by it. A participation in and kinship with the visible, the vision neither envelops it nor is enveloped by it definitively. The superficial pellicle of the visible is only for my vision and for my body. But the depth beneath this surface contains my body and hence contains my vision. My body as a visible thing is contained within the full spectacle. But my seeing body subtends this visible body, and all the visible with it. There is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other. Or rather..there are two circles, or two vortexes, or two spheres, concentric when I live naively, and as soon as I question myself, the one slightly decentered with respect to the other..(Merleau-Ponty,1968:138)

There is scarcely any mention of the ‘night’ in “The Visible and the Invisible”. By decentering the subject’s quasi-transcendental spacing *apart* from primordial depth, the anxiety of a recrudescence of an englobing monism evaporates. The rationality of the embodied subject is no longer accorded the tenuous position of an epi-phenomenal suspension over the abyss of the anonymous thickness of being. Rather, the distance of a rational

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embodied subjectivity is maintained by the gap of reversibility: the subject envelops its world as the world enfolds the subject within it. The reversibility of this envelopment is, unlike double-aspect theory or psycho-physical parallelism, non-coincident. The transcendental function of an embodied intentionality is no longer the sole guarantor against the night; any such intentionality is interpretable as englobing a world and as englobed by that world- but not at one and same time. The gap of non-coincidence allows for 'subject' and 'world' to sediment themselves from out of the flux of emergence. Only thus does the subject attain 'rationality'.

The reversibility thesis therefore explicitly opposes an individualistic thesis of the transformation of the world. The individual is at most the *conduit* of the world's transformation. Merleau-Ponty's last work does not undermine a first-personal perspective upon action, embodiment and its grounding within culture. Through the notion of reversibility it does however force the tendency towards a covert ontological separation through a quasi-transcendentalism to be stopped in its tracks. The 'biggest picture' of an expressive development and transformation of the world folding back upon itself through the conduit of individuals is the non-coincident correlate of all first-personal accounts of experience. As M.C.Dillon holds,



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..we must learn to think of the relation of body to world as relation of flesh to flesh after the model of one hand touching the other- but we must think this folding of the flesh back on itself as decentered, as taking place at a level prior to the emergence of conscious, I-centered, personal reflection. At the level of perceptual faith, where I do not see, but “one perceives in me”, it is misleading to think of a body-subject in relation to a world-object; it is more accurate to think of an anonymous perceptual unfolding, dehiscence, *ecart*.(Dillon,1988:164)

In both the “Phenomenology of Perception” and “The Visible and the Invisible”, Merleau-Ponty positions the transformation of history within the present of embodied subjectivity. The ‘communication more ancient than thought’(p254) produces an origin of embodiment that is reconstructed at each of its instances. Prior to the individuality of personal embodied existence, our bodies partake of a general manner of being which reworks the ground of that being, and thereby its past and its future. The world unfolds through the transformations and reversibilities of the flesh. The name of this unfolding is history. The site of this unfolding is the present of

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transformation. In order to achieve linguistic as well as conceptual rigour, all reference to 'structure' must always be grounded therefore in the difference of a repetition. The embodied transformation of the present leads to novel formulations of the structure of being, but this structure always supervenes upon an anterior drama of difference. In this way, some commentators have begun to think of Merleau-Ponty's work as offering a way out of a prevailing phobia against the present.<sup>23</sup>

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In the final section of this chapter, I want to introduce a further level of reversibility that can be seen at work in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. This reversibility is always only ever *implicit* in his overtly non-political works. It is a reversibility between a *poetics* of the embodied present and a *politics* of that present. Although I have called Rilke the *poet* of reversibility, it is vitally important to see that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology itself has serious ramifications for developing a political ontology.

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<sup>23</sup> I refer to M.C.Dillon's penetrating phenomenological critique of deconstruction in his preface to the compendium entitled "Merleau-Ponty Vivant". Dillon argues that Derrida holds phenomenology's treatment of the present to be reducible to Husserl's main contentions on the matter- that is that the present is the arena for the subject's self-coincidence. By introducing Merleau-Ponty's notion of the present as always-already fissuring from itself, as a non-coincident unfolding that works through the body, Dillon argues that existential phenomenology offers a way through the impasse of a-referentiality he takes to be intrinsic to the 'linguistic immanence' of *differance*.



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In order to begin this work, I will focus on the “Phenomenology of Perception”. It would be equally possible to begin to explore a political ontology of the later work, however I will suspend that task for a future project. In both texts, this political ontology, although implicit, remains so for a reason. This reason is the legacy of a Leibnizian tendency in phenomenology that neither Merleau-Ponty nor his most recent readers have begun to challenge. In my reading, I find the grounds for a challenge within his work itself.<sup>24</sup>

The Leibnizianism of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is found in most explicit form in a passage that has already been alluded to. I will now quote it in full in order to begin its deconstruction,

Thus every object is the mirror of all others. When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can ‘see’; but the back of my lamp is nothing but the face which it ‘shows’ to the chimney. I can therefore see an object in so far as objects form a system or a world, and in so far as each one treats the others round it as spectators of its hidden aspects and as guarantee of the permanence of those

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criticising Merleau-Ponty from the perspective of a suspicion towards universalisms, I am aligning myself with the feminist critiques of his thought. Apart from Iris Marion Young’s important essay “Throwing like a Girl”, see also Elizabeth Grosz’s “Volatile Bodies” chapter 4, where she explores and unfolds the implications of a blindspot around sexual difference in Merleau-

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aspects. Any seeing of an object by me is instantaneously reiterated among all those objects in the world which are apprehended as co-existent, because each of them is all that the others 'see' of it. Our previous formula must therefore be modified; the house itself is not the house seen from nowhere, but the house seen from everywhere. The completed object is translucent, being shot through from all sides by an infinite number of present scrutinies which intersect in its depths leaving nothing hidden.(Merleau-Ponty,1962:p68-69)

As the subject perceives the thing, the limitations of perspective entail that only one spatio-temporal facet of the thing reveals itself. The possible locations beyond the subject represented by the furniture of the room act therefore as guarantors of the thing's depth. At the limit, the accumulation of depth would render the thing absolutely transparent, a totality. This view from everywhere is of course, given the limitations of embodiment, an impossibility. But as a hypothetical extrapolation, the monadological manouver of the above passage allows Merleau-Ponty to distinguish between what he calls the 'world' and the 'universe'. The universe is the thought experiment of every object seen from all possible perspectives. The universe would therefore involve a 'completed and explicit



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totality' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:71). The universe would be the world reviewed as an absolutely clear space. Again we return to the line diagram set out above in order to revise it. Clear space is depth at the limit. The collapse of the night is therefore very close to that which was previously considered as its opposite. Absolute interiority folds out upon absolute exteriority, as in the previous chapter the transcendence of transcendence turns out to be the dissimulated strategem of a displaced immanence. The difference between clear space and the night is that with the former, the interrelationality is explicit. Instead of a solipsism, the subject is shrunk to a point in the field of totality. Standard accounts of perception must repeat this reductive alienation by assuming perception occurs on the basis of a 'point' in the visual field. Instead of the insanity of the night, clear space, as a mode of subjectivity, leads to absolute alienation. The Copernican Revolution is indeed put to its limit, for with clear space there is no space for God or for the soul. The soul looks out upon a universe that denies it its own space for being.

As finite beings, the thought of the universe must necessarily remain an impossible hypothesis. The world on the other hand refers to the possibility of other locations for perception that are not given or are not what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'presumptive synthesis'. (Ibid:70) The world is, in Merleau-

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Ponty's words, that 'open and indefinite multiplicity of relationships which are of reciprocal implication.' (Ibid:71)

Given the limitations of embodiment, the above portrait of the other horizons for perceiving the object situates it somewhere between a world and a universe, or between a world and a 'system'. The extrapolation of co-existence and co-implication *could* result in a space that is both absolute and clear, if we read the passage in isolation. We *could* assume that co-implication itself implies a coincident and absolute unfolding. To do so would however be to ignore the indefinitions of embodiment. Moreover, the other locations for perception, the chimney, the lamp and so on, are not themselves simple locations. Perhaps the deception of the above passage lies in its assumption of other spaces *as* simple locations, as if an embodied being could be re-placed by a lamp without reduction. But this deception would only be the deception of objectivity, by which it is taken to be primary reality instead of the asymptote of a totality.

Prior to the clear space of objective being, the embodied perception of the thing places it in competition with other features of the visual field. By concentrating attention on this object, one necessarily must background other objects. The perceptual field works by *occlusion*. To be presented by



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one object is to put other objects out of view, on the lee- side of the percept.

Merleau-Ponty writes, 'To see is to enter a universe of beings which *display themselves*, and they would not do this if they could not be hidden behind each other or behind me.'(Ibid:68) The embodied nature of perception entails therefore that the object before me inhabits a world, and by this term is meant both a field of open and extendable relations and a set of limitations to the perspective on offer.

Just as between clear space and the night, this gap between the universe and the world has ontological significance. Beyond the question of how phenomenology sets up the relation between the finite and the infinite, the significance lies in the direction of how *difference* is thought. In the preamble to Part One of the "Phenomenology of Perception" entitled "Experience and objective thought", the section from which the above citation was taken, there is a fundamental ambiguity as to where Merleau-Ponty draws the line. On the one hand, he wants to begin introducing the phenomenological value of *depth*, whereby one can contrast an atomistic, isotropic account of space with the lived experience of an embodied perspective on the world. This leads Merleau-Ponty in the direction of Leibniz's monadology. On the other hand, the fact of embodiment at the same time restricts the possibility of an infinitisation of perspectives,

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towards the 'indefinite', and henceforth openness of a 'world'.

The stakes for this tie-off between the infinite extension of views and the limitations of an embodied perspective are therefore not 'purely' ontological. The most important question to be addressed in this section is not what relation the body has with possible other locations and thereby with infinity. Rather, the most pressing reading of the section is *political*. Between the infinity of perspectives explicit with the notion of a universe (an ideality which is revealed as such by the unresolvable tension between the universe's infinity and the requirement for the universe at the same time to be a totality) and the limitations of embodiment in the world lies the question of difference. On the one hand, the Leibnizian passage above suggests the smoothness of a logical passage of co-implication from the finitude of embodied perception to the universe. On the other hand, at other moments in the section, Merleau-Ponty attempts to show how this infinitisation is always resisted by the specificities of incarnate being. The closest he gets towards thinking difference occurs on the page following the above quote,

But, once more, my human gaze never *posits* more than one facet of the object, even though by means of horizons it is



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directed towards all the others. It can never come up against previous appearances or those presented to other people otherwise than through the intermediary of time and language.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1962:69)

Here we have the problem: how do we think the other in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology? In terms of depth and its implications, the other is merely the facilitator of extrapolation, the representative of worldliness. The other therefore functions as the token of community, and of the Same. The other is therefore the stranger who yet belongs, who belongs to the polis of the One. There is only one world, however indefinite. In terms of difference however, the other must be something in sharp contrast. The other as other *does not* belong to the same community. The other would not therefore *recognise* the object in terms of a different one of its 'facets'. The other advances as the threat of not recognising the object as such. In this case, the other resists the community that wants to extend itself. The other is the strange avatar of the impossible. Is this other thought in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology?

The danger of a phenomenology that wants to place objective thought in relation to an embodied situatedness that precedes it is that it gets caught up in the chimeras of infinity that the former appears to require. Merleau-

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Ponty's section under discussion is full of tensions between the finite and the infinite. It is my contention that these tensions must always be read in terms of a *political ontology*, for what is always at work in thinking the infinite is of course a transcendence of finitude. But all attempts to think transcendence, I hold, are always already attempts at thinking community in relation to difference. Merleau-Ponty is implicitly aware of this in his reference to 'other people' in the last quoted sentence. The question of a phenomenological political ontology is apparent in this reworking of the simple locationism of the lamp and the chimney from one page to the next.

How are we to negotiate between an other who encourages us into a world that promises more and more depth within our experience, an other who promises to redeem us from the insanity of the surface, from the unbearable lightness of being, and an other who transcends the boundaries of that experience? Is there merely a for-itself in community, who encounters the other as alien, as an object, like a lamp or a chimney? Or does the other occupy a more *ambiguous* role, such that its status is neither one of community *or* difference, but both, in varying degrees? In order to advance further towards a phenomenological thinking of embodied difference, the next chapter will examine Franz Fanon's reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, in an effort to think how race is just such an ambiguity that



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can be clarified by a political ontology.

CHAPTER 5: THE DIFFERENCE OF PHENOMENOLOGY

I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and  
of my future

Frantz Fanon "Black Skin, White Masks" p227

The concluding paragraphs of the last chapter began to suggest that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is not prior to politics. By concentrating on a few pages in the "Phenomenology of Perception" I argued that Merleau-Ponty remains ambiguous concerning the phenomenological and therefore ontological status of 'the other'. At one point at the beginning of Part One, as was shown, the other is reduced to a quasi-simple locationality. The other is the lamp over there, the chimney in front of me; in fact the other is essentially any other position from which I might deepen the facet of the percept currently available to me. The logical conclusion of this process of 'profundification' is the translucency of the object 'seen from everywhere'. The object thereby takes its place in the totality of the 'universe'. Merleau-Ponty is however always mindful of the finite limitations embodiment places



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upon this phenomenological monadology. The subject inhabits space, and only on the basis of this inhabitation can it perceive. This inhabitation entails that the co-implication of the other produces a depth that is *indefinite*, not infinite. The embodied subject can only be aware of a finite number of other possible locations for perception across space and time. The difference between an infinite co-implication and an indefinite one is the difference between logic and perception. As a perceiving subject, my inhabitation within the world entails occlusions in the perceptual field. The perceptual field is populated by other bodies which block and obscure a panoptic mastery. A translucent objectivity is the asymptote, at the limit of the world's horizon.

So where does this leave the place of the other in the world? The only other reference to the other in this section comes where Merleau-Ponty is describing the limits of depth. He refers, as was stated in the previous chapter, to the facets of the object given to the other, 'through the intermediary of time and language.' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:69). The question therefore would be, "what is the force of inflection of the 'intermediary'?" Does the intermediary involve difference? Do the time and language of the other belong to the world, *contributing*, through mediation, to its depth? Or does the other *resist* contribution? Furthermore, given the resistance of the

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other, are we not lead back into something like Benjamin's 'conflict naming', as discussed in chapter 3?

In order to proceed further, it is necessary to focus on the relation between the other and the world in the "Phenomenology of Perception". To do this, I will briefly examine in more detail Merleau-Ponty's notion of world.

The notion of the universe, for Merleau-Ponty, is an ideality, an hypothesisation of a totality of translucent beings, each mirroring all the rest through a hypothetical locationality. In contrast, the notion of world refers to the limit context of bodily being in the world. The world is the ultimate ground of all corporeal intentionality. Embodied actions are always already situated on a contextual horizon, a signification matrix without which those actions would be senseless. As such, its boundaries are indefinite or horizontal. The world horizon is the

horizon of all horizons, the style of all possible styles, which guarantees for my experiences a given, not a willed, unity underlying all the disruptions in which we have discovered the definition of the body. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:330)



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For Merleau-Ponty, this ultimate horizon is not merely a spatial limit to existence. The world-horizon is at the same time grounded in temporality. Each incarnate act of motile behaviour signifies on the basis of a contextuality that is always unfolding. As Dillon writes, 'The world horizon as the context of all contexts is a temporal horizon, and its historical unfolding influences all themes, perceptual or linguistic, emerging within it.' (Dillon, 1988:78) Therefore, 'the world' refers to the limit of all horizons to any embodied action, according to the possibilities of the present. So, given a particular action of a particular subject, the action's significance occurs on the basis of at least a two-fold layer of contextuality. First, there is the immediate context of the action, the football pitch, the law chambers, the rules of the game being played. But this figure-ground relation itself only 'makes sense' in relation to the horizon of the temporal present within which this enactment is being played out. Beyond the immediate horizon, which itself is often open to multiple readings (for instance in football is it the physical feature of the pitch, the skills and characters of the players, or the current styles of playing the game?) there are many sheaves of contextual richness before the 'world' is reached. But then, as the context of all contexts, it is illegitimate to think of the world as a horizon that can be 'reached'. As Dillon explains,

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As the “horizon of all horizons,” it [the world] is ultimate and all-inclusive because it does not permit thematization. It is characteristic of other horizons that they can be thematized, placed within the context of a more encompassing horizon. But, since every thematization is contextualisation within a more encompassing horizon, it follows that there is always a horizon that eludes thematization. It may be that a horizon that functioned as the world horizon at some stage in history subsequently becomes thematized, bounded conceptually, and objectified. Thus, for example, one can speak more or less determinately about the eighteenth-century world or the world of Christian civilisation, and one might even claim to be able to speak this way about the twentieth century. (Ibid, 78-79)

A monadology which is suggested through the logic of depth in one moment of Merleau-Ponty's thought is therefore resisted, by way of its connection to the notion of 'world'. The resistance the world offers is that of the unthematizable and unrepresentable. The world is the boundary or limit for all existence, 'boundary' being taken in the positive sense of that which



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allows for existence. <sup>1</sup>However, the temporality of the world is not both determinative and yet somewhat mysterious, as one possible extrapolation of this passage might claim. The world-horizon must, to whatever degree, according to the findings of chapter 4, be in ‘communication’ with the embodied subject. The temporality of the world horizon is grounded in part by the motivations and motivations of the subject, transforming the historical given in the present<sup>2</sup>. It is impossible however to posit any simple *causality* from one to the other. The relation between the *figure* of the embodied agent and the *ground* of the historical world of the ‘now’ is an *indeterminate* relation. Both are acting upon and transforming the other. Neither world nor embodied agent are either entirely passive or entirely active in relation to each other. An important consequence of this is that the locus of historical transformation, the present of the embodied moment, cannot be transparently articulated. The present presents itself as a rupture within any constructed linearity which works to establish it as lying in a non-transformative continuum with the past (and thereby entailing a predictable future). The

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<sup>1</sup>Casey writes in “Getting Back to Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World”, ““Boundary” (*horos*) or “limit” (*peras*) is not the nugatory notion of mere cutting off; nor is it the geometric concept of perimeter ..Boundary or limit, construed cosmologically, is a quite positive presence.’(Casey,1993:15)

<sup>2</sup>Of course, the world-horizon is also grounded in the changes in materiality and virtuality afforded by technology.

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present therefore is the site of openness, the horizon for multi-directional change. The temporal sense of the horizontality of the present referred to by Dillon therefore emerges: the horizon of the present itself cannot be thematized. The historical given and the project of the future are open to the differentiation of the present. As open, the horizon of the present cannot be re-presented. Or rather, each representation of the present is worked through difference, the difference of the new 'present' and the ruptures it enacts through new sheaves of embodied signification. The boundaries of the present body-world relation remain ultimate in the sense that they cannot be rendered explicit to representation. As Dillon says above, representation of a 'world-horizon' can only take place retrospectively. But beyond this, one can say that this retrospection only works through the intermediary difference of time and place, and itself can be retrospectively anew and differently in the future.

The world-horizon of any possible action is therefore all-encompassing of that action. In Merleau-Ponty's words, 'the world is not a sum of things which might always be called into question, but the inexhaustible reservoir from which things are drawn.' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:342) For both Merleau-Ponty and Dillon, although always already *temporal*, and as such is what we might call a 'horizon of becoming', there is only *one* world. The world is the



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grandest of Merleau-Ponty's terms, his approximation for the Absolute, an approximation always maintained because of its temporality. As such, the distinction between world and universe is reduced, at least for Dillon,

There is one world, one universe, because 'world' and 'universe' name the horizon of all horizons.(Dillon,1988:79)

The present is therefore both the locus for the transformation of the traditions and sets of cultural horizons to which the embodied subject belongs, as well as the all-encompassing horizon for all possible action. Again we move here from the immediate context of the present to its unrepresentable ultimate context. In the latter sense, the present of the world provides a theorisation of that notion of popular *currency*: the "Zeitgeist". The present is both the immediate context for embodied 'agency' and its ultimate context. In Dillon's words, the immediate context is 'nested' within the world. But the conditions of possibility at work here are not unidirectional. The world alone does not provide the axioms of agency for the subject. Temporality and historicity are generated out of the reversibilities between ultimate and immediate context. That is, the ultimate context of the grand 'now' of history is the finite horizon for all comprehension of agency, yet at the same time, this finite horizon is openly determined through the

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significational ramifications of transformations of the immediate context. And transformations of the immediate context are enacted by way of communications with the embodied subject. Therefore, the subject's dialogue with the world of immediate context can lead to new precedents of behaviour and disrupt the meaning-grid of the world. The anachronistic figure of the 'hero' would be one form of this 'bottom-up' disruption. By way of example, we can say that football 'signifies' according to the present historical context. To embellish this, a cultural commentator could start by pointing to the increasing commercialisation of the game, in the West at least. However, the historical position of this particular branch of the leisure industry in the present is articulated by the immediate context of particular teams, particular players and so on. It is possible that a particular player could transform the way in which the game is played. The position of football in the historical 'now' of the West is therefore a function of the interplay between its immediate and ultimate contexts.

So, to return to the question of the situation of the other: where does the other 'fit' into the world construed by Merleau-Ponty as the all-encompassing, 'universal' *inexhaustible reservoir of all beings*? It would seem that the answer is obvious: the other must belong to the world. As the context of all contexts, the indefinite, open and productive boundary for all



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existence, the over-arching nature of the world horizon entails that the mediation of time and language referred to above must therefore occupy a space *within* the world. Confirmation of this position being Merleau-Ponty's comes in the late chapter of the "Phenomenology of Perception" entitled 'Other Selves and the Human World'.

Merleau-Ponty's aim in this chapter is principally to resolve the paradox of interpersonal relations generated by Sartre's extrapolation of cartesian ontology in "Being and Nothingness". That is, Merleau-Ponty wants to argue that the subject does not encounter the other as first of all an object, thereby avoiding the polarities of being constructed, through this encounter, as either subject or object. Merleau-Ponty's alternative account begins with the ontological ambiguity of the embodied subject. It is not necessary to go into details here, for enough was said in the previous chapter about the primordial third space of the body being both subject and object for it to be clear that the transparency of the subject's gaze in Sartre is at its inception undermined by Merleau-Ponty's idea of the reversibility of the subject's corporeality. The impossibility of the subject constituting the other as another subject through first of all encountering the other as object is rejected, precisely because an object-ality, or rather a corporeality, is already grounding the subject itself. Interpersonal relations therefore are not

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construed by Merleau-Ponty on the basis of two centres of consciousness perilously bridged via the 'objectivations' of two bodies. Rather, interpersonal relations emerge through the *intercorporeity* of bodies open to the flesh of the world. Interpersonal relations are not given as 'subject to subject' through the intermediary of the body. The body's openness to the world, its pre-personal communication with it, is what enables an openness to the other. Merleau-Ponty can therefore write,

..we must learn to find the communication between one consciousness and another in one and the same world. In reality, the other is not shut up inside my perspective of the world, because this perspective itself has no definite limits, because it slips spontaneously into the other's, and because both are brought together in the one single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception.(Merleau-Ponty,1962:353)

For Merleau-Ponty, the world is always already given to the embodied subject. The subject's freedom lies in inhabiting the present of this given through the agency of the body. Freedom is the freedom of a historical being, situated within the openness of the present. This present is, as has just



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been shown, an enfolding unfolding of layers of contextuality, from the immediate to the ultimate. Freedom is therefore the freedom for an embodied subject to refuse the mere repetition of embodied patternings, according to an incorporating linearity. The subject encounters the other across time and language, and yet always within the world. The embodiment of difference therefore does not solicit the monism of the world's horizon of becoming.

The politics of difference made available through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology would thereby seem extremely limited. Any embodied difference works within the community of the world, that context of all contexts. The time and difference of the other is always reduced, at the last instant, into the same of the world. The 'intermediary' of time and language would therefore always be vulnerable to collapse, given the ultimacy of the worldly 'now', from difference to forms of equivalency. All leavetakings of phenomenology are therefore justifiable on political grounds alone: it would seem that questions of community and difference cannot be asked on the basis of an already assumed community.

Were this the conclusion of my research thus far, phenomenology would have been exposed as the ultimate form of conservatism, despite any

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transformativity drawn out from the ‘communication more ancient than thought.’ Phenomenology would allow for the presentation of embodied difference only on the basis of a reduction to the ultimacy of the One world. This however is not the conclusion of the thesis. I shall now attempt to transform the way in which Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology can be read. This reading has already begun: the communication more ancient than thought developed in the previous chapter already lies in tension with a universal world-horizon. The tension arises because the differential repetition of the present of the corporeal schema does not need to assume an ultimate context. Indeed it would seem more plausible to assume that contexts of cultural patternings do not fold outwards *ad ultimum*. Rather, the incarnating ground of a cultural given is such precisely on the basis of its irreducible *specificity*. The world is on the cusp of breaking up, of no longer being harmonised through its function of contextualising contexts to the limit.

I shall argue that the ‘inexhaustible reservoir’ of the world is not given, certainly not as a *universal*. Such a reduction is the reduction of politics to nationalism, to the polity of the One. *The universal can only be given as the*



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*ideal*.<sup>3</sup> If phenomenology can think this, then phenomenology can think a phenomenology of difference that is at the same time a phenomenology of worldly difference. A politics of embodied difference that thinks the universal as that which is deferred precisely on account of difference. A politics of the Kantian/Derridean ‘yet-to-come’: the ideal of a universal community that many have taken phenomenology to have assumed as already given. In order to move further in the direction of this project, I shall turn to one of Merleau-Ponty most productive critics, Frantz Fanon.

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Frantz Fanon’s most significant philosophical influence is often taken to be the existential phenomenology of Sartre. Whilst Sartre’s shadow is undoubtedly cast across many of the pages of Fanon’s “Black Skin, White Masks”, it is important to register that Fanon was also engaged in a dialogue with Merleau-Ponty.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that Merleau-Ponty’s inclusive notion of

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<sup>3</sup>David Michael Levin reminds us that Merleau-Ponty did think, in one place at least, of the flesh as ideal. In the “Themes from the Lectures” Merleau-Ponty describes reversibility as ‘the correlate of an ideal community of embodied subjects, of an intercorporeality.’(Merleau-Ponty, 1970:82). However, in Levin’s paper (‘Visions of Narcissism’), the form of this ideality is not clarified. Levin later writes ‘Although of course only in a rudimentary and preliminary way that needs to be appropriately cultivated, intercorporeality already schematizes the embodiment of a self deeply rooted in an ethics of caring and open to the kind of communication necessary for the building of a society truly organized by principles of justice.’in Dillon, 1991:77. I would argue that it is precisely the vagueness of the ‘rudimentary and preliminary’ nature of the ideal that needs to be both clarified and challenged.

<sup>4</sup>In his book, “Fanon and the Crisis of European Man”, Lewis R.Gordon acknowledges the influence of Merleau-Ponty on Fanon, without developing the nature of the dialogue in depth. See p14.

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world is both the point of criticism for Fanon and the source of the construction of his ideal of 'disalienation'. Only by looking at the implicit dialogue between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty that Fanon constructs will we be able to comprehend Fanon's politics of difference. As Fanon's method in "Black Skin, White Masks" is phenomenological, an excursus into the well known essay of chapter 5, "The Fact of Blackness", and an examination of the final chapter, "By Way of Conclusion", will, in the light of the political critique of Merleau-Ponty's ontology already undertaken, lead to a radical phenomenology of difference. It will also lead to a novel construction of political ideals, grounded in a phenomenology of the body.

It is not difficult to show how "The Fact of Blackness" involves a dialogue with Merleau-Ponty. What is essential beyond this however is to bring to light the force of the critique at work, a force that is matched by the vigour of the ideals that emerge within the frame of the analysis. That is to say, Fanon's critique of Merleau-Ponty is undertaken only for the sake of exposing a redemptive politics which is latent in the latter. Fanon allows for a reading of Merleau-Ponty that cuts out the conservatism of the function of the 'world' and emphasises the transformativity of embodied communication. In this way, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is developed into the arena of difference. This is the task I am attempting here.



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In “The Fact of Blackness,” Fanon’s opening argument is that a phenomenology of blackness cannot be understood in the context of the ‘black man among his own.’ (Fanon, 1986:110). It is only in the encounter with whiteness that an analysis of the experience of skin difference, of being the black other, can be undertaken. In the Antillean setting of Martinique, the coercion and internalisation of racial inferiority cannot be understood at the level of experience. Before entering the ‘white world’, Fanon was ‘satisfied with an intellectual understanding of these differences.’ (Fanon, 1986: Ibid) Everything changes in the cross-racial encounter however. Fanon writes,

In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. (Fanon, 1986: Ibid)

Fanon proceeds to explicate Merleau-Ponty’s notion of corporeal schema in the following paragraph. He ends the paragraph with the summative statement,

A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world- such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive

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structuring of the self and of the world- definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world.

(Fanon,1986:111)

Fanon therefore agrees with Merleau-Ponty's insight that the self and the world are constructed through the work of the body. As we have seen, he has also made the initial suggestion that the black construction of self is inhibited in the West. Concomitant with this initial suggestion therefore is the idea that the world itself is inhibited, or at least encountered as a difficulty. Fanon then articulates the character of this inhibition,

Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema. (Fanon,1986:Ibid)

The move announced here against the primacy of the world in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is dramatic. Fanon is suggesting, in one sentence, that the corporeal schema, the locus of the co-eval emergence of self and world, is undercut or undermined in the case of the black subject in the West. Fanon therefore challenges the universal 'one-world' thesis that I have shown is the outcome of Merleau-Ponty's monadological tendencies. Fanon is suggesting that not all subjects *belong*. The non-belonging of the black subject is the work of the 'historico-racial schema', the *de-composition* of



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self and world. Fanon therefore introduces an account of the *mediation* of difference which shakes the security of belonging to the world that Merleau-Ponty held to be unquestionable. As Nick Crossley writes, without any further expansion,

Merleau-Ponty is clear that one's experience of one's body is mediated but he does not identify the social devices whereby differences are introduced. Race and more particularly skin colour provide a useful example here. They demonstrate that bodies are categorised differently and invested with different meanings, with the consequence, in many cases (in the context of European societies), that persons are treated differently-which, in the context of a world of interdependencies, amounts to a differential in agency capacity.<sup>5</sup>

Hence the illocutionary force of the 'Fact' of blackness. The Merleau-Pontyan ambiguity over the status of the body, as either subject or object, is reduced to the painful clarity of being designated solely as the latter, for the black subject. Blackness is an unambiguous fact of being which is encountered as an external reality, and the reality of its embeddedness within

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certain signification structures cannot be disavowed.

The fact of blackness therefore raises the issue of *visibility*, in a sense beyond those stipulated by Merleau-Ponty in either “Eye and Mind” or “The Visible and the Invisible”. Beyond the ambiguity of the phenomenological reflexivity of always ‘being seen’ in each act of seeing, the fleshy birth of subject and object in each act of perception, the fact of blackness overdetermines the ‘being seen’. Given the fact of blackness, the black subject’s being seen in seeing cannot perform according to the ambiguity of reversibility. Rather, each act of perception confronts the possibility of being marked out as ‘other’, as a stranger to the world, or rather somehow beyond the world. In this sense, it becomes clear that the ambiguity and reversibility of the world requires a form of invisibility which Merleau-Ponty did not take account of. The visibility of skin difference becomes an *irreversible* facticity.<sup>6</sup>

Fanon sets up the historico-racial schema by way of a simple narrative

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<sup>5</sup> Nick Crossley, “The Politics of Subjectivity”, p39

<sup>6</sup> At this point it is meet to mention the important distinction between *race* and *ethnicity*. Although it is not my concern in this chapter or in the thesis to address the complexities at work in this distinction, I will offer the following brief comments. One way in which the distinction can be introduced is in terms of visibility and invisibility. Race difference tends to involve inalienable forms of visible markers of difference, whereas ethnic difference tends to involve invisibility. I say ‘tend to’ because it would be easy to think of specific examples where there is more ambiguity. In general one can say that each form of embodied visibility (in terms of being seen and ‘marked out’) involves at the same time modes of invisibility, and



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which recurs in fragments throughout the rest of the essay. It is the experience of a white child saying to his mother on a train, “Look, a Negro!” This is the moment of alienation for the black subject. Fanon’s fragmented style in this piece invites a reconstruction of the historico-racial schema in a more systematic manner. The two aspects of this undercutting schema I want to highlight are its effects on freedom and the way in which another form of objectivity is constructed which contrasts with the objectivity of science that Merleau-Ponty discusses.

Firstly then, the opening pages of the essay mark the difference between the freedom of the subject receiving and transforming the gift of cultural patternings discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis and the unfreedom of the alienated black subject. To begin, in Fanon’s experience, the encounter with the white other who subjects the black male subject to his gaze is taken lightly. “Look, a Negro!” It was true. It amused me” (Fanon, 1986:ibid) This amusement is annulled as the child continues badgering his mother, this time adding to the expression of the gaze a component of fear. The fear of the child is read as the outcome of all that Fanon’s skin represents. The child is no longer merely pointing to the skin difference as a

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vice versa. This point will be developed in future work.

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form of naive rejoicing in the novel – the surprise of seeing (perhaps for the first time close up) a black human being. The child, this figure allegedly prior to coding, has in actual fact already imbibed various presuppositions beyond the simple physicality of skin difference. That is, the black skin is already operating as a kind of metonym for the child, representing a specific construction of otherness. The child gazes upon the Fanon's black male presence as a representation of the primitive.

I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all *historicity*, which I had learned about from Jaspers. Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. (Fanon, 1986:112)

The violation of the train episode is therefore given a more dramatic context because of the gaze being expressed by a child. The power of the gaze resides in its exemplification of the permeations of racist attitudes in the West to even the 'innocent'. Fanon's brilliance lies in the way in which he subjects his own experience to phenomenological analysis. The collapse of the corporeal schema is the moment whereby alienation becomes *embodied*.

I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other...



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and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea...(Fanon,1986:Ibid)

Here Fanon reproduces Sartre's threefold model of the subject in relation to others. The subject is first of all an outlook upon the world, the locus of perception. In encountering the other, the subject is forced however to accept secondly a view of itself from the outside, as a location or entity in the world, as an 'other'. This tension between a subjective and an objective account of the subject's embodiment must be resolved, for as it stands the two views are opposed. As is well known, for Sartre this resolution, the dream of a *for itself in-itself* is a futile one.<sup>7</sup> Double consciousness always involves non-coincidence – and this remains faithful to the logic of the excluded middle. The tension between being experienced as an object in relation to one's own interior experience can only lead to the unresolved modality of nausea. In a moment, this state of sickness will be named as 'abjection'. Fanon is therefore naming the collapse of the corporeal schema by the epidermalisation of the subject in Sartrean terms. Beyond Sartre however, Fanon is critiqueing Merleau-Ponty's thesis of freedom taken as

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<sup>7</sup>In "Being and Nothingness", Sartre writes, 'Everything happens therefore as if the in-itself and the for-itself were presented in a state of disintegration in relation to an ideal synthesis. Not that the integration has ever *taken place* but on the contrary precisely because it is always indicated and always impossible.'(Sartre,1958:623)

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the freedom of the historical agent. The nausea Fanon felt on the train is therefore only the first stage of the experience of alienation and unfreedom. This unfreedom develops in terms of the weight of a past constructed by the other in caricatural fashion.

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'."(Fanon,1986:Ibid)

Beyond the experience of nausea, of the paralysis of bodily being, the gaze of the child effects an unfreedom. Instead of the body being located in the present of a 'communication more ancient than thought', of being the site of a possible transformation of the cultural givens of bodily patternings, the black 'subject' experiences his own skin as the metonym for a parodic primitivism. Black skin is indissolubly connected to a history constructed by a white imaginary. The black subject finds himself no longer in the present of possible transformation, but thrown back into a past that was never his own. Fanon writes, "The Negro, however sincere, is the slave of the



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past.”(Fanon,1986:225) Fanon therefore is showing that he is in strong agreement with Merleau-Ponty’s insight that freedom is the freedom to change the world, and to change the meaning of one’s history. But the way in which this agreement is expressed is in the form of a critique from the point of view of those *excluded* from freedom. Merleau-Ponty only ever explored the outside of history in the sense of those outside of the bodily *norm*, in the “Phenomenology of Perception” the figure in point being Schneider. Schneider’s disabilities permit Merleau-Ponty to construct an account of a bodily norm.<sup>8</sup> But Merleau-Ponty does not ever think the difference of bodies in terms of the differences of race, class and gender. As Fanon’s analysis of his own experience shows, the politics of exclusion embodied in the child’s gaze impose another form of disability: the disabling of the corporeal schema. This disabling is at the same time an alienation of the subject from the embodiment of freedom in the present.

Later in the essay, this unfreedom is expressed succinctly in two words, “Too late.” (Fanon,1968:121) From this mournfull shibboleth everything that pertains to Fanon’s analysis unfolds. The black subject enters the arena

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<sup>8</sup>As Krell says, the production of an embodied normativity from out of an exploration of abnormality is not performed by Merleau-Ponty for the sake of reifying or privileging the normal. He writes, ‘Merleau-Ponty advances along the *via negativa* of a pathology of the human body. He does so, not to deduce the normal from the abnormal, but to show that the geometric space of modern science, metaphysics and mathematics

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of interpersonal encounters in the West with his or her history already constructed and given. The already given history, the parodic primitivism most powerfully represented by cannibalism, is the form of the denial of giving the black subject historical agency. Once on the scene of the present, the black subject encounters his historical agency as already decided. Any possible uniqueness or singularity to the subject is undermined by the imposition of a representational framework. The black subject represents black subjectivity. 'Everything is anticipated, thought out, demonstrated, made the most of. My trembling hands take hold of nothing; the vein has been mined out. Too late!'(Ibid) Fanon cannot even grasp something anymore- the schemas that permit the hands and arms to draw things close to the body according to the culturations of habit are attenuated into insignificance. The fact of blackness (in the West) annuls the Heideggerian distinction between *vorhanden* and *zu-handen* by annulling the agency of the hands completely. Without the agency of the body occupying the free space of the present, the subject lies absolutely exposed to the gaze of the other. The black subject at this point loses his sense of interiority. At the brink of the decomposition of self and world, all Fanon's hands can do is tremble.

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is fundamentally pathological' (Krell, 1997:140-1)



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At this point we arrive at the second aspect of the undermining of the corporeal schema by the racial schema: *objectification*. As was shown briefly in the previous chapter, the ‘object’ in Merleau-Ponty refers to the asymptote of translucency of the percept. The object is that hypothesis of the limited perspective of my perception being deepened by an infinity of other perspectives. The object is, in Merleau-Ponty’s example, the house ‘viewed from everywhere’. In contrast, the object in Fanon’s sense is that of the subject viewed from *elsewhere*. Not just any neutral elsewhere however. The gaze of the other denies the perspective of the subject and the capacity of the subject to perform embodied transformations of a specific cultural trajectory. The limit point of this denial of freedom comes when the subject acquiesces to the onslaught of the alienating gaze and *internalises it*. At two points in his essay Fanon describes this moment with acute force,

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. (Fanon,1986:112)

I sit down at the fire and I become aware of my uniform.  
(Fanon,1986:114)

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In sum, the white other fixes the black subject as different because of their skin colour. The fixity of this difference resides in it operating as an inextricable and unquestionable metonym for a parodic construction of black history. Objectification therefore is the objectification of history, not science, for Fanon. The subsequent *internalisation* of the other's fixing point of view results in a self-inflicted inferiorisation. As Fanon writes, 'I have ceaselessly striven to show the Negro man that in a sense he makes himself abnormal..' (Fanon, 1986:225) The black subject repeats the other's gaze, and in a panopticon-like manner, the other no longer needs to be there.

In this state of exteriorised being, the subject has become *abject*.<sup>9</sup> Not quite object, and yet no longer secure within an assuring framework of interiority, the subject is decentered by a paralysing double-consciousness. Not completely reducible to the names the other would ascribe, but then no

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<sup>9</sup> Kristeva's term, most fully explored in her book "Powers of Horror", has been subsequently read by others beyond the confines of its original psychoanalytic context. For instance, Iris Marion Young in "Justice, Politics and Community" explores the concept from the point of view of the embodiment of difference outside of the 'universalisms' of modern reason. In chapter 6 of Cataldi's book "Emotion, Depth and Flesh", the author takes up Young's reading and carefully distinguishes between the abject subject and the object in terms of the threatening proximity of the former to a stable sense of selfhood,

Today the Other is not so different from me as to be an object; discursive consciousness asserts that Blacks, women, homosexuals, and disabled people are like me. But..they are affectively marked as different...The face-to-face presence of these others..threatens aspects of my basic security system, my basic sense of identity, and I must turn away with disgust and revulsion. (Cataldi:143)

It must be noted that the stated equivalences between different modalities of the abject here does not account for differences in visibility, for instance the 'fact' of blackness. I will discuss this in more detail in



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longer able to legitimate the names the subject would give himself, abjectification expels the subject from the community of citizens and rational beings.

But there is still a further moment of alienation, according to Fanon's text. Beyond the objectification alienating the black subject from the freedom of an embodied historical being, it excludes the externally constructed black historical narrative from being part of worldly history itself. That is, instead of being seen as historical beings in the world, with their own specific cultural inflection of worldliness, at the limit subsumable within the context of all contexts of the 'world', the caricature of black history is kept separate from this universal world.

I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away  
my joy. I was told to stay within bounds, to go back where I  
belonged. (Fanon, 1986:114-5)

This extract powerfully reminds the reader of the essential relation between voice and community. To be part of a community is to have a voice. Belonging has a vocal imperative that the voice is heard and recognised and accepted. In any place where the voice is either not heard, not recognised or

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my reading of Baldwin's "Another Country" below.

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not accepted, an implicit disavowal of community is at work. In the field of race difference, this disavowal can become one of the most subterranean forms of constant racial abuse. Fanon strives to combat the incessant subtlety of this dynamic in the above quote by personifying the amorphous pressure of ‘the world.’

Let us take stock of Fanon’s critique of Merleau-Ponty. The racial-epidermal schema denies the universal freedom Merleau-Ponty ascribes to all ‘normal’ bodied beings. In this sense the ‘ontology’ of the same collapses under the pressure of difference. This denial of the universal acts as one form of a wave of difference according to race, class and gender that combine to resist the notion of the context of all contexts, the ‘world’ to which all embodied subjects belong. The world to which Fanon shouted a greeting is refused by the (white) other in the refrain of “The Fact of Blackness”. A phenomenology which recognises the embodiment of difference therefore must confront the difference of worlds which differently positioned subjects experience. Fanon argues implicitly that phenomenology cannot legitimate its purported discovery of universal commonalities between embodied subjects such that every subject belongs ultimately to the same world-horizon of the ‘now’. Not all embodied subjects are capable of becoming historical beings, due to this capacity being refused by the objectifying and



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abjectifying positioning of the other. Not everyone can experience their own embodiment of history. Therefore, some are denied the potentiality to transform the history of the world (or the history of *their* world). The internalisation of inferiorities based on the embodiment of difference works to deny a first-personal take on the 'now' of this present historical moment. Fanon himself is forced to live according to the weight of a fake past instead of a present open to possible change. Through internalisation, the now of the black subject is lived through the caricatured constructions of the white other. The excluded subject is alienated from their body, their history, and that history's relation to the 'history of the world'. Far from beginning with an always already given sense of commonality within a world-horizon, the nauseous objectified subject begins with an exclusion, a denial of a relation to the universal, and a denial of his belonging to the present.

With this in mind, we can understand more fully Fanon's initial antipathy towards 'ontology'. He writes

Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. (Fanon, 1986:110)

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For Fanon, the collapsing of ontology into difference enacts the collapsing of ontology itself. Fanon repeats the Levinasian move here of construing ontology as the field of the same. He is in effect arguing that ontology, by way of a phenomenological methodology, refers to a 'world' whose community of being discounts phenomenological visibilities such as the fact of blackness. To be black is to be seen as black, an *irreversible* facticity which Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology cannot articulate within its own terms. However, although an explanation for Fanon's rejection of ontology has been established, I would argue that the act of rejection is too strong. In thinking the embodied character of difference, an ontology of difference must be developed in order to demarcate the form of the boundaries between immanence and transcendence, between sameness and difference. The Fanonian critique of Merleau-Ponty is an attempt to highlight the omissions of embodied difference in the latter. But to reassert difference in phenomenology, as Fanon does, cannot be undertaken without recourse to the terms of ontology. This is explicitly recognised in the conclusion to "Black Skin, White Masks", where Fanon writes, 'I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it.' (Fanon,1986:229) Far from ontology demarcating the community of being that excludes difference, ontology itself is rethought as differential. Ontology therefore marks the limits of the



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same, and allows for a spacing between it and the other, such that a univocal 'world' is deferred and reconstituted as the ideal. Ontology is always an ontology of difference. If ontology was delegitimated by difference, difference itself would be rendered impossible to thinking.

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In order to embellish the implications for phenomenology of a world that is not universally given across the embodiment of differences, I will now examine some key passages from James Baldwin's novel "Another Country".<sup>10</sup> Written in Istanbul and set in New York in the late fifties, this novel can be read as an extended critique of the universalist normativity between the body and space that a text such as the "Phenomenology of Perception" represents. However, as with Fanon's "Fact of Blackness", the poetics of the text lead us back to phenomenology, through the sparks of difference. In this sense, Baldwin's novel, like the text of Fanon's, can be read in the light of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in order to open it to difference. Although dense and turbulent with many other themes, for instance a portrayal of homosexual love thematised as non-deviant, and an

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<sup>10</sup> I am aware that the bulk of the work of this chapter faces the potential criticism that in order to construct a phenomenology of race difference I have narrowed my reading down to just two thinkers, viz Fanon and Baldwin. This narrowing was necessary in order to speak with sufficient depth within the limits of a

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account of pretension in the face of artistic failure, the novel is most disturbing and powerful in highlighting the blindspots of embodied difference.

By 'blindspots of embodied difference' I refer to the way in which the bodily schema is coded with difference to the extent that vision itself can no longer be seen as opening on to the neutrality of a 'perceptual field'. Using Fanon, I have argued that the embodiment of difference suspends the possibility of a universal world being available to all subjects. Baldwin's novel shows that this leads, in the case of densely coded zones like 'downtown' New York and 'uptown' Harlem, to the same spaces themselves being read differently. In Baldwin's New York, issues of visibility and invisibility are raised to the forefront of what it is to perceive the world, across difference. It is the 'privilege' of the white subjects in the novel to see the places they occupy as neutral zones. In contrast, those whose bodily capacities are challenged, principally in the novel the two central black characters, brother and sister Rufus and Ida, do not have this prerogative. As such, Baldwin is able to uncover a racism beneath its most obvious forms; a racism in perception.

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chapter length text. In future work I hope to expand upon the scope of thinkers involved in this direction.



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In order to develop this reading, I will examine a passage detailing Rufus' consciousness of the white other's blindspots, and then Ida's. Both examples turn on that most covertly coded of urban spaces, the park. In the first example, Rufus is walking with his new girlfriend, the 'white trash' Leona, and his best friend the Italian-American Vivaldo. They are in the apparently free space of Washington Square, the park at the centre of Greenwich Village. Vivaldo has just been stopped by a drunken woman, leaving Rufus alone with his partner,

Without Vivaldo, there was a difference in the eyes which watched them. Villagers, both bound and free, looked them over as though where they stood were an auction block or a stud farm. The pale spring sun seemed very hot on the back of his neck and on his forehead. Leona gleamed before him and seemed to be oblivious of everything and everyone but him. And if there had been any doubt concerning their relationship, her eyes were enough to dispel it. Then he thought, If she could take it so calmly, if she noticed nothing, what was the matter with him? Maybe he was making it all up, maybe nobody gave a damn. Then he raised his eyes and met the eyes of an Italian adolescent. The boy was splashed by the sun falling through the

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trees. The boy looked at him with hatred; his glance flickered over Leona as though she were a whore; he dropped his eyes slowly and swaggered on- having registered his protest, his backside seemed to snarl, having made his point.

‘Faggot,’ Rufus muttered.

Then Leona surprised him. ‘You talking about that boy? He’s just bored and lonely, don’t know no better. You could probably make friends with him real easy if you tried.’(Baldwin, 1990:38-9)

Although the couple are both challenged by the general ambience of suspicion in the square and the particular confrontation with the youth, only Rufus reads this suspicion as a challenge to his being. This is not to say that Leona is not aware of the statement they make. ‘He’s probably bored and lonely’ gives the game away, a reference to an act which Leona does not bring into the open. The most Leona can do is effect a silent relation to the challenge, without speaking it. Prior to this encounter, the difference in readings of the space of the park is startling. On the one hand, Leona is ‘oblivious’ to the atmosphere, whereas Rufus is painfully self-conscious. Leona gleams in the pale sunlight, as if the sun’s rays carry the force of the



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eyes looking at them. In other words, the sun's rays on Leona are a metaphor for her *basking* in the attention of the park dwellers. The surface of Leona's skin is glorified and illuminated by a concealed transmission of ocular power (in a manner that corresponds to the self-illumination of Heidegger's temple in the third chapter). On the other hand, Rufus cannot reflect the sun's rays or the gaze of the others, he can only feel their eyes sink into his being. Rufus' skin is non-reflective - the sun burns his neck. And only Rufus is aware of this difference, to the point of insanity. The insanity emerges at the point where Rufus is brought to challenge his whole reading of the situation. If the park is not full of suspicious eyes, then Rufus is aware that he must obviously be projecting his own paranoia onto the others. This possibility becomes present in Rufus' mind, as the possibility that his own mind is distorting the situation in which he finds himself. As such, Rufus is led into considering that he is mad, that he can no longer access reality beyond the delusions of his being. Being brought face to face with Leona's blindspots, the silence of the places where the sun does not shine, Rufus is led to question his whole orientation within the world.<sup>11</sup> Leona, in contrast, is not

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<sup>11</sup> Here we broach upon a development of the spatial phenomenology of insanity mentioned in the previous chapter. The unresolvable double-consciousness of an exteriorisation that threatens to reduce the doubling to a 'pure' (and of course impossible) exteriority is an attack on the *rationality* of the subject. The outside impends as that which threatens the very viability of an 'inner groundedness of being'.

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provoked to question her sanity. For her, the gaze of the others in the park is an occasion for display, an inversion of suspicion into admiration which turns on the self flattery of vanity. The subsequent particularisation of the suspicion in the figure of the adolescent therefore does not trouble her as a question put to their being together. Rather, she reads the youth's behaviour as a local problem, put down to his boredom.

This first excerpt from "Another Country" demonstrates Fanon's point that racial coding leads from a difference in embodiment to a difference in worlds. Baldwin shows the consequence of this when those 'worlds' happen to be superimposed upon the same space. The white world of Leona plays the part of Merleau-Ponty's 'corporeal schema', a privilege and a freedom to occupy space as unproblematic and uncontested. The strength of the privilege is manifested in Leona's power, even as mere 'white trash' to resist the gaze of the others, to not internalise it into her being. For Leona, all space is orientated with the possibilities for a postural schema, unlike a scientifically 'objective' space devoid of such latent or manifest value. However, these possibilities are assumed to be universally available to other subjects. The place of the other for Leona is therefore the possibility of another position for perception, and nothing more. On the other hand, the world as it opens up for Rufus is an incarnation of Fanon's 'racial-historical-



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epidermal' schema. The positioning of the 'bohemian' others in Washington Square fixes him into a decomposition of self which leads him to the brink of the paralysis of insanity. The world is not, and has never been, universally available to him, at least the white world south of Harlem. But then this distinction between uptown Harlem and downtown Manhattan for black subjects is enough to shatter the notion of a worldly 'nest' for all. Local aspects of the world cannot add up indefinitely towards the limit of the worldly 'now'. The embodiment of difference resists such extrapolation. Rufus therefore lives between the 'freedom' of Harlem and the prison of Manhattan; however, the presence of the police and whites venturing north mean that even Harlem cannot be considered a zone affordant with undisturbed possibilities for him.

In the novel, Cass, the white wife of the failed novelist Richard exemplifies the reverse of Rufus' experience. As she makes the trip north to Harlem to Rufus' funeral, she experiences herself with reduced bodily competence, a decomposition of subjectivity which is the result of being positioned as other in a predominantly black space,

One small, lone, white woman hurrying along 125th Street on a Saturday morning was apparently a very common sight, for no

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one looked at her at all. She did not see any stores with ladies' hats in the window. But she was hurrying too fast and looking too hard. If she did not pull herself together, she might very well spend the day wandering up and down this street.(Baldwin,1990:120)

The interesting difference between Cass and Rufus in terms of their being positioned by the racial other is temporal. Cass experiences a breakdown in the bodily competence of her corporeal schema on a trip to Harlem. She finds the simple task of going to buy a hat disturbingly difficult. Her imagined sense of being exteriorised as 'other' takes her out of a bodily competence she would blindly take for granted in the streets to the south. Although perhaps rattled, her return to the white safety of downtown New York encloses her again in the security of the illusion that the world is there for everyone. For Cass, the blindspots against difference are accommodated for by the normative power of the white space of downtown. Rufus on the other hand is some part on the way towards a Fanonian crumbling of his corporeal schema. The possibility of being positioned as an object denied freedom is an ever-present threat. The constancy of this threat is often represented by the anonymous figure of white authority, the police, that populate the novel, always suspicious of the black subject. 'The policeman



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passed him, giving him [Rufus] a look.' This appears on the first page of the novel. Rufus' decision to embroil himself in the white world below 100th street ends in his suicide.<sup>12</sup>

Ida's race-consciousness entails that she is always already aware of the ever-present threat of positioning of the white other. She lives most of the novel in Harlem, working downtown. Unlike her brother Rufus, she resists the decomposing and crumbling effects of the racial-epidermal schema by exploiting it to her advantage. She uses the power of being read as an 'exotic' source of sexual intrigue to her gain in controlling her relation with the wheeler-dealer Ellis. She allows herself to be read in Fanon's parodic fashion as a way of manipulating the other's gaze. Ida therefore testifies to a reversibility in the power of the gaze, a competency which has yet to be explored in theory up to date.

The following dialogue between Ida and Cass takes place as they are journeying uptown to Harlem, passing by Central Park.

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<sup>12</sup>Although Rufus cannot help being aware of the epidermal schema, Baldwin portrays him as being in denial about it. This contrasts with the critical attitude his sister Ida has. Baldwin writes, 'he knew Ida would instantly hate Leona. She had always expected a great deal from Rufus, and she was very race-conscious. She would say, You'd never even have looked at that girl, Rufus, if she's been black. But you'll pick up any white trash just because she's white. What's the matter- you ashamed of being black? Then, for the first time in his life, he wondered about that- or, rather, the question bumped against his mind for an instant and then speedily, apologetically, withdrew.' (Baldwin, 1990:37)

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They were in the park. Ida leaned forward and lit a cigarette with trembling hands, then gestured out the window. 'I bet you think we're in a goddam park. You don't know we're in one of the world's great jungles. You don't know that behind all them damn dainty trees and shit, people are screwing and fixing and dying. Dying, baby, right now while we move through this darkness in this man's taxicab. And you don't know it, even when you're told; you don't know it, even when you see it.'[..] And she, too, looked out at the park, trying to see what Ida say; but, of course, she saw only the trees and the lights and the grass and the twisting road and the shape of the buildings beyond the park.(Baldwin,1990:341)

In this short exchange, Ida shows that Cass's blindspot's are *embodied*, an essential aspect of her corporeal schema. Cass does not suffer merely from a lack of knowledge. It is not as if she can, in true liberal fashion, learn to know the problem and thereby transcend it. Knowledge here will never be enough to surmount the asymmetries between the two women. The blindspot refers to an aporia more profound than merely an epistemic limitation. The blindspot is part of her being-in-the-world. The depth of her blindspots on the coding of space are powerfully evinced in the above passage. Ida *tells*



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Cass that she won't notice the jungle that is Central Park even when she *sees* it. Cass is obviously listening to Ida at this point. And yet, even in the knowledge that she may have a blindspot to the difference of perspectives upon the same space, she still cannot eradicate the aporias of her embodied, positioned and privileged perspective on the world. Cass' positioning as a white subject entails that she cannot see the world except in universal terms. A space such as Central Park therefore offers itself as available to everyone. As such, the social codings of the space drop out, and Cass is left staring at the trees and the grass.

The contestation of urban spaces witnessed in "Another Country" therefore shows how this contestation is *asymmetric* across the racial divide. For white subjects such as Cass and Leona (representing the middle class liberal and the Southern white trash respectively), the fabric of the urban as contested is repressed by their positioned embodiment as subjects of skin privilege. For the two central black protagonists, Rufus and Ida, (representing the uncritical and the critical modes of race awareness respectively), their positioned embodiment leads them to an awareness of the contestation of every space. As was shown in the case of Rufus in Washington Square, the pivot between the reading of space as universally available and reading it in terms of opprobrium and exclusion is itself the space of insanity. Either the

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lived experience of space is one which is universally available to all, and therefore it is possible to say that ‘we live in the same world’, or it must be accepted that there are imbalances and privileges in having a white subjective positioning over and against other forms of positioning. The main form of this privilege lies in being able to claim that the world does not exclude the other. This leads to the privilege of reading public spaces such as Central Park and Washington Square as uncontested spaces. This privilege therefore results in privileges afforded to the body’s sense of freedom in space. In many cases, this positioning can be seen to reach its zenith of privilege in the white *male* subject. In “Another Country”, Cass’ journey uptown to Rufus’ funeral is fraught with fear as she senses her bodily difference. This contrasts with Vivaldo’s freedom of movement in both uptown and downtown New York. The difference between Cass and Vivaldo could be expressed in terms of the extra layers of privilege Vivaldo’s masculinity gives him. The white male does not encounter the contestations the white female faces, for quite obviously, the contestation of space works not only on racial lines, but also in terms of gender. The white male therefore is supported by a two-fold privilege in his access to social space: firstly in terms of not encountering exclusion based on race, and secondly in terms of not facing contestation based on gender.



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After reading “Another Country”, it becomes ever more clear that there is no middle position between the thesis of a universal world and that of worldly difference, or rather those forced to occupy this middle position can be driven to experience the unbearable nausea that Fanon felt. Whereas those who do not encounter opposition and contestation in their movement through social space exist outside of nausea, and can therefore be blind to its possibility. The condition of black western subjectivity then becomes a sickness unto death.

Baldwin’s novel therefore can be read as urging those interested in developing Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology to rethink it in the light of differences of race, class, and gender. The spatial codings of difference between uptown and downtown New York in the late fifties should not be read as a ‘classy throwback’ to the dramas of the jazz age and black and white American movies. For those films should not and cannot be read as purely historical documents. As Fanon writes, on the last page of “The Fact of Blackness”,

I cannot go to a film without seeing myself. I wait for me. In the interval, just before the film starts, I wait for me. The people in the theater are watching me, examining me, waiting for me.

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A Negro groom is going to appear. My heart makes my head swim. (Fanon, 1986:140)

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When difference is grounded in the body, not merely in concepts and discourses *about* the body, the universal world to which we all allegedly belong is put in crisis. The social spaces of our existence become *contested spaces*. The nature of the contestation involves asymmetry. The reading of Fanon and Baldwin above has established that this asymmetry works through visibility and invisibility. In terms of race, the visible occupies two levels. Firstly, the 'fact' of blackness refers to the unambiguous difference of skin colour, a difference which, as was argued above, interrupts a phenomenological reversibility. Secondly, the visible in terms of a phenomenology of race highlights what lies beyond the blindspots of white embodied perception. The two examples given in my reading of Baldwin's text, of Rufus in Greenwich Village and Ida in Central Park, both show differences in 'visibility' in both these senses. Moreover, the contestation of space between white and black subjects in Baldwin's novel involves a relation between invisibility and the architecture of urban form. The 'uptown' area of Harlem, which in actual fact is mostly low-rise buildings,



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has a sort of panoptic privilege over the skyscraper landscape of downtown Manhattan. In much the same way as Michel de Certeau's descent from the World Trade Center quoted in chapter 3, Baldwin's Manhattanites occupy spaces invisible to each other. This contrasts with the one character rooted in Harlem, Ida, who can see into the invisibility of downtown sociality. Ida therefore represents the site and sight of embodied *counter privilege*. The visibility of black skin therefore leads to an affirmation of its corollary, the insight and vision of being embodied differently. Beyond white embodied blindspots of perception, beyond the skin privilege that covers over the contestive nature of social space and makes it invisible, the black subject uncovers a potentiality of insight.

It would be possible to extrapolate here a conflict naming of space from my generalisation of Andrew Benjamin's notion of 'conflict naming' in the third chapter. In the long footnote to Derek Walcott's poem "Names", precisely such a move was made. To remind the reader, in this poem, the naming of spaces and places by the coloniser are challenged and re-worked or re-named by those formerly colonised. At this point poetry becomes overtly political: questions of language and naming explicitly refer to issues of community and enforced community. Universality is revealed, through conflict naming, to be the ruse and strategy by which the forces of victory

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conceal themselves as such. In this case, it is possible to draw a parallel between Cass' blindspot in Central Park and the operations of the names of power. Cass can only see the obvious, she has a 'natural attitude' which reifies the obvious in her perceptual field. She cannot see how the undisturbed neutrality of her perception is constructed on the basis of privilege. In the same way, the names of power installs and continues a certain framework of references and privilege (in the Walcott poem, a European privilege), without revealing itself as a form of power as such. If in the field of difference one can maintain the legitimacy of Heidegger's statement that 'language is the house of being', one can only do so under the rubric of plurality; there are many different houses of being. This, as has been shown, is the motive behind Fanon's rejection of ontology. For Fanon, ontology cannot 'accommodate' the difference of conflict, the difference of the black subject. But as we have also argued, the difference of the black subject can in actual fact only be secured by returning to ontology, as ontological difference. As the third and fourth chapters have argued, only through an ontology of difference can transcendence be thought within immanence. A phenomenological ontology of embodiment leads, through Fanon and Baldwin, to the notion of social space as contested. There can therefore be no 'pure' space of immanence, of a community that assembles



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itself prior to the question; any such claim could only be made on the basis of the blindspots of embodied privilege.

Conflicts of space, place and names are therefore opened up by a phenomenology of difference grounded in the 'third space' of the body. The body, be it white, black, mixed race, female or male, old or young, occidental or oriental, makes available certain ways of seeing and being in the world. In this way, an ontology of difference becomes necessary, to which I believe Fanon would concur (given his remarks in the conclusion). Given that social space is always contested, the immanence of immersion within a world always opens out onto the transcendence of other ways of seeing and being. The specific positioning of the subject to an extent determines whether this opening is a matter of coercion or repression however. The awareness of a difference beyond one's bodily groundedness in a world depends therefore to an extent on a critical consciousness. Critical consciousness opens the subject therefore to two forms of transcendence. Firstly, one's communication with the world through the pre-personal body, as has been argued, announces a transcendence of what has been given. The present, as the site of corporeal reworking, is not necessarily part of a line of time and tradition, rather it is the site of a potential rupture of that time and that tradition. But beyond this intra-conflictuality of the name (again

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apparently the most significant form for Benjamin in his notion of conflict naming), an opening onto the traditions and ways of seeing of the other is also emergent. The second form of transcendence the body is opened to is the transcendence of the other, grounded differently in their body. This transcendence is not the alterity of Infinity, rather it is the alterity of conflict. Through an inevitable reciprocation, the recognition of the embodied difference of the other leads to one also marking one's own body out as different. Recognition of the markers that ground one's body in difference, a recognition grounded in a critical consciousness, therefore leads to the arena of conflict.<sup>13</sup> No-one can be exempt from the direction of such a programme, for to claim exemption would be to capitulate to the strategies of power that wish to overrule and undermine a critical consciousness of difference. But then such a capitulation itself can only lead to conflict in the face of the other, against one's will or inclination.

But is that the end of the story, for one who reads difference into and against Merleau-Ponty such as Frantz Fanon? Are we merely led to the arena of

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<sup>13</sup>Fanon cites Merleau-Ponty in the conclusion to "Black Skin, White Masks" '...for a being who has acquired consciousness of himself and of his body, who has attained to the dialectic of subject and object, the body is no longer a cause of the structure of consciousness, it has become an object of consciousness.' (Fanon, 1986:225) In this sense, the other allows the subject to become aware of his or her *own* difference. As such, Merleau-Ponty allows community to be thought in terms of intrinsic embodied differences, what I am calling the 'arena of conflict'.



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conflict, of the name, of place, and of the body, that is if we were not already forced to encounter it? Does a critical awareness of the implications of embodied difference lead to a fragmentation of the socius, and a splitting of history into a thousand minor histories? Does difference therefore preclude the ideal of justice and community for all? Is the only 'justice' available through critical consciousness a promotion of the awareness that if your bodily being in the world is different from mine, then we are by reciprocation different from each other? But what sort of justice would that entail?

The response from Fanon must be clear: a critical awareness, of the body no longer merely as the structure but as the *object* of consciousness, performs no splitting, and certainly no fragmentation. All it does is discover, against the grain of a beguiling rhetoric of universalism, that all is not equal. Embodied difference is the *starting point* for a critical awareness, and should not be confused, as the basis of a pessimistic critique, as its goal. In Fanon's case, the critical awareness on race he preaches<sup>14</sup> is for wholly redemptive, or dare I say it, *spiritual* purposes.

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<sup>14</sup>Here 'preaching' is not meant as pejorative or as connoting proselytization. I am referring to the vociferous and pithy style of Fanon's voice, particularly in the final chapter "By Way of Conclusion".

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In the 'Fact of Blackness', Fanon expresses his political desire as follows,

All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together. (Fanon, 1986: 112-3)

Fanon's desire is to belong in the manner a phenomenologist such as Merleau-Ponty decries is already possible to all 'normal' humans. Fanon's critique of the universalism in Merleau-Ponty is therefore a *suspension* or *deferral* of it. The world to which he shouted his greeting slashed away his joy. Merleau-Ponty's insights are yet of the blind. The world is not *given*, it must be fought for. The world therefore signifies a freedom that resembles the Kantian regulative ideal, or the Derridean '*a devenir*'. The thought of embodying difference necessitates the deferral of a universal world. The world therefore is transformed from being the always already given ground of being, the 'inexhaustible reservoir from which things are drawn'. Instead, the world becomes the token of justice and freedom. The world is a futural destiny for those who dream of transcending the fixing of the other's gaze. The body is both subject and object, as Merleau-Ponty says. Freedom lies therefore when the objectification of the body is not the work of the other, but the 'object' of consciousness for the subject.



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For Fanon, this redemption from the gaze is articulated in terms of a transformative historicity, outlined forcefully in the final chapter. Fanon begins with Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body becoming an object of consciousness for the subject, inscribed within the *present*. Freedom for Fanon is first of all freedom from the weight of the past,

The problem considered here is one of time. Those Negroes and white men will be disalienated who refuse to let themselves be sealed away in the materialized Tower of the Past.  
(Fanon, 1986:226)

The present is therefore the site of possible transformation, the horizon for the possibility of justice and community. A *specific* construction of the past has therefore to be dismissed. 'I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and of my future.' (Fanon, 1986:226) The only past that is legitimate for the purposes of freedom is a *universal* past. 'I am a man, and what I have to recapture is the whole past of the world.' (Fanon, 1986:226) However, this project of recapture is secondary to securing a freedom for the black subject through the present. Here I will merely list some quotes, for even a mere list of Fanon's conclusion makes available the force of his polemic:

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I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny.(229)

In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.(229)

I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors.(230)

I am my own foundation.(231)

Here then, Fanon argues that the present is the site of a potential rupture of the historical, the unbearable *weight* of Being. Fanon's redemption from the past involves not responding or *reacting* to it. Freedom for Fanon involves the active force of transformation of the 'now', rather than a reactive valorization of recrudescence. It is not possible to avoid the parallel with the account of historical transformation found in the "Phenomenology of Perception"- with the notion of a pre-personal communication between the body and its habitus. Fanon's 'endless recreation of himself', his existence as his own foundation, are the equivalent of Merleau-Ponty's 'resumption at every moment' of the perpetual contribution of his bodily being.'(Merleau-Ponty, 1962:254) In both philosophers, freedom is a function of the present, as the site of a possible transformation of the given. In such a manner, the



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linearity of the past is broken, and the future is opened to difference, the difference of a transcendence of the same.

There is however an important, if subtle difference between the two. For Merleau-Ponty, the possibility of transformation in the present is given with the ease of a 'perpetual contribution.' It would seem that the present is the site of rupture of the given's linearity, and that this rupture is guaranteed merely by the motility of the agent. That is, it is not clear whether rupture is automatic or potential in Merleau-Ponty. The problem with a decision on this issue is that one would want to recognise two patternings which lie in tension with each other. On the one hand, one would want, as Merleau-Ponty surely does, to articulate the insight that bodily repetition involves differentiation and transformation as the norm. A repetition that circles within the Same would be the exception, which in cultural production is usually enforced through work and discipline.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, to the extent that one marks this tendency, the risk of automatising and naturalising transformativity arises. I would argue that Merleau-Ponty articulates the former and encounters the risk of the latter, without attending to formulating

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<sup>15</sup>The discipline of 'classical' music is a good example. Only by codification in terms of score can approximation to a repetition without difference be achieved. The fact that music scores themselves cannot accommodate all nuances of musical expression is in part that which allows for new interpretations of classical works. This contrasts with the 'metaphysics' of jazz, or other improvised musics, where difference

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a relation between motility, transformation, and work. There is a sort of flattery of difference at work in Merleau-Ponty's idea of a 'communication more ancient than thought'. In contrast, Fanon's freedom from the past involves a great deal more effort and resolve. For Fanon, transformation of the present requires a 'critical consciousness'. Without that, the weight of the past disavows and disables the possibility of transforming the present. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty's insight into the body's relation to freedom therefore again is blind to the weight difference can make to the past. For Fanon's text ends with the most solemn of vows to a vigilancy of the corporeal,

My final prayer:

O my body, make of me always a man who questions!

(Fanon, 1986:232)

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In this chapter I have argued that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body privileges a construction of the 'other' as within the world. The world's circumscription of difference in effect reduces all difference to the

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within repetition is the norm.



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same horizon of being. Merleau-Ponty is cautious enough to suggest that the other sees the object through the ‘intermediary of time and language’. Using Fanon, I have argued however that this mediation cannot resist a collapse back into the Same. Although Merleau-Ponty’s monadological tendencies are always restricted by the facticity of embodiment (unlike Husserl’s)<sup>16</sup>, the other is nonetheless inscribed within the temporality and historicity of the worldly ‘now’. No-one escapes the Zeit-geist, Merleau-Ponty’s spirit of time. I have used Fanon and Baldwin to show how embodied difference denies the possibility of an already given community and commonality between human subjects. Any assertion of an always already given Same is blind to the difference between the world named by power and the worlds which contest it. But then Fanon and Baldwin’s insights are not ways of damning Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology to an ontology of the Same. Rather, my readings of both have been undertaken to tease out the ontology of difference that lies implicit within Merleau-Ponty’s text. The ‘communication more ancient than thought’ of the “Phenomenology of Perception” in particular provides the most powerful and resourceful way of thinking embodied identity grounded in the difference of the present. Only on the basis of the richness of Merleau-Ponty’s work can Fanon’s critique

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<sup>16</sup>See for instance Husserl’s “Cartesian Meditations”, sections 55 and 56.

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result in a productive phenomenology of difference which repositions community as the Ideal, and not the given.

Fanon and Baldwin in their different ways attest to a spatialisation and racialisation of Benjamin's notion of 'conflict naming'. As such, difference is seen to be grounded in an *ontological* problematic, rather than being reduced to mere epistemology. Difference involves blindspots in being engendered by the limitations of embodiment. The invisibilities of privileged forms of embodiment in the socius are matched by the insights of the 'unprivileged', insights which I called 'counter-privileges'. In this way, the social spaces of urban zones become seen as contested spaces, whose forms of contestation are asymmetrical, from the blindspots of privilege, to the insights of the differentiated. But this contestation is only uncovered to its very depth through a phenomenological ontology of embodiment. This methodology reveals that there are no 'pure' spaces, spaces of immanence. The transcendence within immanence discussed in the previous two chapters therefore in this chapter is articulated in terms of contested space.

However, as the last pages of this chapter have sought to point out, a critical awareness of embodied differences between the subject and the horizons of its being does not seek to denounce justice and community for the sake of



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irreducibility. Rather, the phenomenologists' dream of uncovering a pre-thetic community is shown to be the vigilant goal of those who seek to question their bodies in the present.

## CONCLUSION

In the last five chapters I have been attempting to resurrect a phenomenological ontology of the body, through difference. I have sought, that is, to show that the body allows thinking to escape from the trap of dualism. By thinking the body as different, philosophy no longer needs to privilege either an objective or a subjective mode of thinking.

I have argued that the early attempts by Kant and Heidegger provide the resources for other philosophers to develop the method by which the body can be allocated a central role in ontology. It is through a phenomenology which questions the privilege ascribed to the universal (questioning, that is, the transcendental apriori) that the embodied subject is revealed as the motile agency that articulates the world in its historical unfolding. In the language of the third chapter, this agency is ‘workless’; that is, the subject does not dominate its world (its spaces, language, buildings and so on), nor is it dominated by them. It is rather through a ‘middle-voiced’ interplay that the world and the embodied subject express each other, as history.



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In this way, the embodied subject is seen to act on the basis of a cultural and historical horizon of difference. This horizon is not immemorial or prescriptive of a certain form of authenticity. Such constructions of the horizon are derivative upon a more primordial corporeality - that of the culture and the history being transformed by agents of the present. The present is therefore the site of transmission and transformation of the conditionings and patternings of a cultural given. The cultural given or *habitus* is re-worked according to the different demands of the present.

Through my readings of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, I have argued that this 'communication more ancient than thought' that takes place between the body and its world is inherently *political*. The politics of difference begins with the embodied subject, situated within a cultural horizon. This cultural horizon is the simulacrum of the Kantian transcendental horizon. Like the Critical model, it operates as a given, as the condition of possibility for accessing and living within a world. Unlike the transcendental apriori however, this horizon is not universal and does not forever recede. Rather, the horizon is gathered up within each embodied action, and the possibilities of transformation of a particular world are opened up. In this sense, freedom, as I began to argue in the fourth chapter, becomes the freedom to be a *historical being*.

## *Conclusion*

It is not granted that historical agency within the present of a cultural horizon facing its future can always express itself within the terms of that present. There will always be conservative and reactive forces which construct the cultural and historical given as 'pure' and 'originary'. Ideologies of an 'uncorrupted before' promote the desire to repeat the past without difference, to transmit but not to transform.

In relation to this, perhaps the most significant ambiguity in Merleau-Ponty is that he does not spell out the difference between active and reactive modes of motility. It is as if Merleau-Ponty romanticises the body's capacity to incorporate difference by addressing the needs of the present. For Merleau-Ponty, transformation of the cultural given itself operates as a given. But the absence of a distinction here ends up as a form of phenomenological flattery. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty is left unable to address all the forms of conditioning which the institutions of modernity and post-modernity have imposed upon the body.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the freedom of a 'corporeal schema', of celebrating the simple motile agency of bodily being, can be constricted and paralysed by the

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<sup>1</sup> It is this lacuna in Merleau-Ponty's thinking that Nick Crossley addresses by inserting the work of Michel Foucault in his book, "The Politics of Subjectivity".



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other. Through the work of Frantz Fanon and James Baldwin in the final chapter, I began to articulate a serious challenge to the idea that Merleau-Ponty's flesh ontology brings us justice in the form of an always already given intercorporeity. In order to acknowledge the difficulties of difference, I read into Fanon an *idealisation* of the flesh ontology. That is, I contended that for Fanon, the union through difference of the flesh ontology *cannot be considered as given*. The fact that as embodied subjects we are all chiasmically entwined to our own worlds of difference entails that the flesh, as the Ideal of the universal, must be struggled and fought for. To consider the flesh as somehow vaguely already given is therefore a dangerous move. Within the terms of this move it would be correct to describe phenomenology as a conservatism.

It has been my principal aim in this thesis to argue that phenomenology does not necessarily fall back into such a conservatism. On the contrary, it is only through a phenomenological methodology that difference can be thought, ontologically and therefore philosophically. Phenomenology, read through its development from Heidegger through to Merleau-Ponty, at last allows philosophy out of the current impasses of poststructuralist obsessions with the sign. The body, as spacing and temporising its world, dances with difference in the moment. Again I return to the words of

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Michel Serres,

All come to dance in order to read without speaking, to understand without language. They are all, nowadays, so exhausted, so saturated, so hagridden with discourse, language, writing. In the end fugitive meaning passes through there, taciturn. (Serres, 1995:40)

It is time to return to 'the body', through a phenomenological ontology. The body marks out its being-in-the-world. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty fall into the trap of considering this engagement with the world to be within the terms of a reconstituted monism of being. Both tended to assume that there is only one world, and that 'world history' is World History. It is possible to read Heidegger's entire oeuvre as a shift from grounding such a World History in the subject to its displacement in language and, finally, a mysterious Event of being. Only in the Merleau-Ponty however is it possible to discern tensions beneath the surface of the text - tensions of difference. Against the prevailing reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as opening up to thought the lived experience of the motile body and yet closing itself off to the thought of difference, I have discerned a political ontology that works 'against the grain.'



## *Conclusion*

If philosophy does not engage with difference in the world, then it will become less and less relevant to the multiple voices that demand expression in theory today. Philosophy will become an anachronism, the worst form of being 'untimely.' No-one will continue to believe in and cherish the universalisms and the proffered certainties of language, truth and logic. Nor will they accept a grand historicism that disables and paralyses the possibilities of grounding human agency in a world open to transformation. And finally, nor will people continue to be seduced by the simulacra of difference, operating in a textuality which absorbs all transcendence within its own terms. Philosophy must speak difference, or it will be drowned out by voices of the contemporary.

For instance, by not engaging with issues around race, philosophy falls increasingly into the trap of being necessarily racist. For being blind to the difference of race is the least overt (but most powerful) form of racism at work in society. The fact of race and racism in the West alerts us, at a theoretical level, to the fundamental difference embodiment can make to identity. As Fanon so painfully exposes, in "The Fact of Blackness", racism, beginning with apparently the most innocent of gestures (from the child on the train) has the capacity to destroy the capacity to *be* in the world.

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And so, as I acknowledged early on, I have to be alert and vigilant to my own positioning as a white male westerner. I write and exist in the world with a given set of privileges (and disadvantages), which allow for a specific set of insights and blindspots to be made available to me. It is only on the basis of my bodily being in the world that my 'knowledge' takes on the form it does. Again, from a philosophical point of view, all epistemic claims are grounded within a corporeal horizon of difference. Epistemology cannot be privileged over a phenomenological ontology without falling into the trap of not being able to ground difference. I choose my subject, but I cannot choose my audience. In this case, I cannot speak for difference, but I can attempt to allow difference to be spoken.

The body. Difference. Phenomenology. As these themes get taken up and developed in the thinking to come, I end with the vulnerable struggle of the dancer as a figure for the efforts required to place embodied difference at the centre of philosophy today.

The dancer is the sole hero, he remains when the others have gone, when music withdraws from the space. He is the sole hero, for he is helpless. His body is helpless, his gestures



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and the sign that he attempts are not aided. Dance is without recourse. It is alone, and it is first. (Serres, 1995:46)

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